

# Initiative for Strategic Volunteer Engagement Webinar 10-4-23

[00:00:00] **Betsy McFarland:** 400 people and counting in our session, and so we're going to go ahead and get started today because we have so much content to cover. We want to make sure you don't miss a moment of it. So just to kick us off today. I am Betsy McFarland. It is wonderful to be with you. I am one of the co-directors for the Initiative of Strategic Volunteer Engagement, along with my um, co-director Jeff Glebocki, who's not one of the hosts today, but he is a partner in crime with me on this project.

[00:00:31] I'm so grateful to be able to work with him. And I'm joined today with a co-host Jennifer Bennett. She is the Director of Education and Training at VolunteerMatch. And I'm so excited to have my friend and colleague with me today and you'll get to meet her in just a few moments, uh, in order to get us kind of started today.

[00:00:51] I want to start off with just a few housekeeping items before we get into the good stuff. We're going to be using the Q&A feature of Zoom for the questions today. The chat, where all of you are placing your locations, is for you to have conversations, for you to talk amongst each other and with us.

[00:01:11] To submit a question, please use that separate Q&A feature, which you should find in your Zoom menu bar. Because there's so many folks on this Zoom, we're afraid the questions will get lost in the chat. So if you have a question for any of the panelists today, please put it in the Q and a that way. We can be sure to elevate it.

[00:01:32] Obviously, we have so many folks today. We're going to be having everyone except our panelists on mute, but we do welcome you to participate and collaborate with one another by the chat and the Q&A. We also want to provide a few acknowledgments before we get into the content today. And we wanted to let you know that the Initiative for Strategic Volunteer Engagement is really a newer initiative in the last couple years of non profits and funders who've come together to help elevate the importance and the resource for strategic volunteer engagement.

[00:02:06] And we've been doing research into how non profits and funders view volunteer engagement. And what it would take to ensure it is well-resourced in order to be effective in organizations. Um, and so we're excited to

share a few research findings with you today and some examples of how non profit leaders in particular can support strategic volunteer engagement and hopefully gain more resources to help resource it properly within your organizations.

[00:02:36] Because we, we know, uh, while volunteers may be donating their time, engaging them well takes strategy and it takes resources. Um, and so they are not free, right? It takes some, some effort to do that and we want to help you do it effectively. And I want to give acknowledgment to the funding partners of this initiative, The Leighty Foundation, the Lodestar Foundation, the National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement.

[00:03:02] UJA Federation of New York and Volunteer Match. They've all been on this journey with us, um, for the last couple years to help elevate this issue and we're so grateful to them. And we wanted to also provide a shout out to Fidelity Charitable. They provided, uh, grants to the initiative to help us disseminate the research findings and some of the other materials that hopefully you have seen or by the end of this session you will have seen, uh, as we go forward today.

[00:03:28] So thank you to them. And of course, this webinar itself wouldn't have been possible without such great support from our webinar partners who are with us today. We have the National Council of Nonprofits, VolunteerMatch, and Independent Sector. Thank you so much for helping to get the word out and for understanding the importance of these issues.

[00:03:48] And we also had additional support from the ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation. So, as you can see, this takes a village, right? We have lots of great, uh, colleagues at the table today, all who are dedicated to elevating and supporting strategic volunteer engagement to help nonprofits meet their missions.

[00:04:07] And of course, uh, last but not least, I want to, uh, take a moment to acknowledge our phenomenal. This is a real treat for all of you who are with us today. Dr. Sue Carter Kahl . You will hear from Jermaine Myrie. And you will hear from Alisha Rulapaugh. All three of them bring such a wealth of knowledge and experience in the non profit space.

[00:04:28] And I'm excited to hear what they're going to share today. And lastly, I want to welcome and acknowledge my co host for today. Jennifer Bennett, as I mentioned, is the Director of Education and Training for VolunteerMatch, and she also co hosts the Time and Talent podcast. She is a

Director of Knowledge on the Board of the Council for Certification and Volunteer Administration.

[00:04:59] For those, uh, out there in the world who have the CVA certification as both Jennifer and I do certified volunteer administrators. And she's also a co editor of the fourth edition of the Volunteer Administration Book, a professional practice that is used for the certification in volunteer administration.

[00:05:16] And among other many talents and, uh, uh, smarts that Jennifer brings to the table, she also is a volunteer herself. So I have to add that and to share that she fosters kittens, which I think is fantastic. So Jennifer, I am going to spotlight you. Take it away, please. Thanks, Betsy. And unfortunately, I am currently without kittens right now.

[00:05:37] **Jennifer Bennett:** So I'm using a green screen background. So there's no kitties popping up behind my shoulder, but maybe next time. Um, I wanted to just circle back to one of the things that you said, um, about today's session and about ISVE and that we really want to encourage folks to think differently about how nonprofits engage.

[00:06:00] People to help them meet their mission, whether that's volunteers or paid staff or supporters. And so we're really coming together today to take a look at some hard facts and some research, but also to hear from a couple of leaders in the field about their experience. Implementing this type of work or these ideas within their causes and their organizations.

[00:06:21] So I'm really excited about that. We're going to be taking a look at this concept as it's applied to mentorship and to a food bank in Northeast Iowa. So, I know we had a few questions submitted in advance and Betsy talked about putting questions in the Q&A, so we are going to have a lot of time for that today at the end.

[00:06:41] And I know that there can be this sort of feeling that this is your chance to ask all of your questions about volunteer engagement, but because we have just such a limited amount of time together today, I'm really going to be selecting those questions that are. Specifically about strategic volunteer engagement and the research.

[00:07:01] So, if you do have other general questions, please let us know, you know, we can reach out to you or point you in other directions as a follow up to this email. But if your question doesn't get answered, it might be because we ran

out of time, or because we're really going to try to. Um, so again, use that Q&A feature to type in your questions and feel free to have a conversation in the chat.

[00:07:23] So, with all of that, I'm really pleased to introduce you to Dr. Sue Carter Kahl. She's an independent scholar and the president of Sue Carter Kahl Consulting. She has spent her career working and volunteering within the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. She infuses her work with lessons learned as an executive director, as a board member, a state service commissioner, and as a volunteer and a researcher.

[00:07:48] Sue has her PhD in leadership from the University of San Diego, where she's studied the impact that volunteers have on nonprofits. So I'm really excited to hear what she has to share with us today, because she's definitely committed to bridging theory and practice and turning research insights into practice.

[00:08:07] Practical recommendations welcome Sue. Thanks so much, Jennifer. And I will be just switching over to make sure I can move the slides.

[00:08:24] **Sue Carter Kahl:** Let's see. It worked earlier. There it goes. Okay. So thanks so much for your time today. I'm looking forward to digging into some of the research that Betsy had mentioned earlier. We're gonna highlight some of the findings that really can translate well into recommendations. So hopefully everything we're talking about today will help you frame Um, so that you can get additional resources for it.

[00:08:47] So let's go ahead and dig into that. Something that came out of the research that probably isn't very surprising to you on this call is that we, the surveys that went out to nonprofits, we had over 1200 respondents. And, uh, those folks told us that over 64 percent of them were reporting an increase in demand for services that translated into 51 percent of them having an increase in delivery of services and of course the staff workload went up, um, unsurprisingly to, um, at the same time, we're finding that.

[00:09:22] Organizations are really struggling to find volunteers to keep volunteers and the surveys suggested that over 13 or only 13 percent of organizations were engaging more volunteers now than they were before the pandemic. So, there's a real crunch on organizations, um, that ends up being a real strain on them because we know that when organizations are engaging volunteers well, that that enables them to do almost everything else that nonprofits need to be successful.

[00:09:51] Volunteers are an important part of labor. Um, they're bringing in talent and passion and resources. We know that people who volunteer give more than those who don't volunteer and often to the organizations where they're serving. Volunteers can be some of our very best ambassadors, um, into the community, helping us bring the organization out into the community and the community into the organization.

[00:10:13] And all of that brings a sense of trust and transparency. Again, when they're engaged well, that we can't buy, right? There's no trust and transparency store. We can just get that off the shelf. And so volunteers are an important strategy for many of our organizations. And yet we found in the research that.

[00:10:30] Even though volunteers were essential and even though funders were telling us they know this is how the work gets done, particularly in smaller organizations, volunteers were hidden in plain sight. Funders were not asking this as part of their funding requests, their grant processes, nor were non profits including volunteer engagement in the requests.

[00:10:50] And so we want to talk a little bit about, about how we might shift that today. First and foremost, unsurprisingly, we are going to suggest that you start to make that ask and for those of you who are executives. This might be making an ask first to your board um to be talking about how we want to make volunteers visible because they are so integral to the work that we're doing and then putting that into a request for a funder for those of you who I know we also have some volunteer managers and Fund development professionals as well.

[00:11:21] Those might be talking to each other, bringing in the executive staff and senior leadership so that the ask can be really something that is aligned with where the organization is going in the strategic plan. There are a variety of ways that funders said they would be interested in funding it. One for those of the funders who said, you know, we might not even know that we're funding it already because it could be built into an operating grant.

[00:11:45] For other funders who really focus primarily on program, they said this would be a good way to build in all of the related costs associated with volunteer engagement into the program request so that this was something that wasn't quite so invisible, this whole volunteer powered part of it. And then finally, they talked about volunteer engagement being important capacity builder for the rest of the organization and that it needed capacity.

[00:12:10] And so this was another way to integrate volunteer engagement into funding requests. When we asked, uh, when we were talking with the funders,

um, from across the country, uh, we dove in deep with about 27 different funding partners and asked them, what would be compelling evidence to support a request for volunteer engagement?

[00:12:32] And they told us a variety of things that really came down to the next bucket. As you're talking about this with your funders in your grant proposal in your site visits, they wanted to know more than what those volunteer numbers and dollars represent. So a lot of times we're talking about how many volunteers we have their hours that they serve, what the financial wage replacement rate is, and they said that doesn't really tell me.

[00:12:55] what volunteers are doing in the organization. That doesn't tell me if you've got the right number of volunteers or the right types of volunteers to get the work done. And so they wanted some context for those numbers. They wanted to know what does it mean that you have all of those volunteers? What does all that volunteer time accomplish?

[00:13:14] And to that end, they said, we'd really like to know, what are some of the benefits and results of volunteerism? How are volunteers supporting a particular program? What do they, what benefits result as a volunteer gives their time and talents to that program? How are they benefiting the operations? What happens when we have volunteers participating in our, our fund development requests or part of our, um, major gifts requests or part of our events?

[00:13:42] So talking about what is it that volunteer time is accomplishing for the organization and then what happens Be over and above what volunteer, what the organization could do without volunteers. A number of the funders talked about, we know volunteers, there is a return on that investment. And so we'd love to see how organizations are leveraging that unique value add that volunteers can give.

[00:14:07] Because there is a staff and volunteer partnership. What is the organization able to do that it wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. And then finally, the other big thing they wanted to hear about was how are volunteers helping to support other agency goals? Are they bringing in new volunteers? Are they, are volunteers donors?

[00:14:25] Are bringing in donors? Are they helping make referrals to participants or, uh, clients of the organization? So they knew that volunteers were not just a source of labor, but they were also a link to connections and resources and out into the community, and they wanted to know more about what that looked like.

[00:14:45] We also asked funders why they do and don't invest in volunteer engagement. We received a lot of feedback on this, and so we grouped them into three categories, one being, uh, the community, the other the agency, and finally, um, funders, funder reasons that they were and weren't investing. We'll start with why they didn't invest.

[00:15:04] And the first one, um, in terms of the community was they were concerned that volunteers might go rogue, that volunteers could be flaky. Uh, the volunteers were not held to the same standards as paid staff, and that could compromise the integrity of a program because volunteers weren't really a solid high quality part of the organization.

[00:15:23] And so one of the ways that you can address this is by building into your funding request the ways that you are making sure that volunteers are staying on track the ways that you do hold them to standards that what are the values. And so it doesn't have to be for those of you who are smaller, it doesn't have to be a really sophisticated, complicated system.

[00:15:44] It can be talking about the types of support and training you give to volunteers so that they can stay on track and that they're working in partnership with your team. Next, we heard that sometimes, uh, Funders were concerned that the agencies were not investing enough in the volunteer function to make it really successful.

[00:16:03] They knew that you had to invest in it, uh, to get a return on that investment. And so some of the things you could do would be talking about if you have a dedicated volunteer engagement professional, what kind of training and resources are you giving to those, um, to your, um, volunteer engagement professional, and then are they sitting on the executive leadership team?

[00:16:25] Are they. Bringing the ways that the communities involved into the senior leadership so that this is a really strategic way to engage them. And then finally, we had 2 big buckets that we're following. Um, funders were concerned, uh, 1 that there was an uncertain ROI when it came down to volunteer engagement and some funders, of course, were more interested in serving or supporting programs rather than operations.

[00:16:50] And so in those cases, we encourage you to build in again, the, to the funding request, the ways that volunteer expenses are supporting those programs, and then to get ahead and be proactive, um, in talking about the ways that volunteers are bringing in a return on the investment. Um, on a related note, they said why they do invest in volunteer engagement, and that's because.

[00:17:12] Volunteer engagement is one of those ways that we bring the community into the organization. It amplifies community voices, and this is a way that we can actually take our DEI commitments. And translate them into action. Volunteer engagement is that link between the community and the organization and can be a really strong way to make sure that we're Activating the community.

[00:17:33] We're asking the community what they want and what they need and how we can help serve them best next um on there's a flip side of you need enough capacity to do a good job engaging volunteers, but a return on that is that When you do that, a good job with them. It turns out being a capacity builder for us to the agency.

[00:17:54] And so you can talk about how volunteers are building the capacity of a particular program, how they're building the capacity of a service that you offer how they're. Expanding and extending the reach of the organization, how they are helping raise money and bringing that in. And when you start to get more specific about the ways that volunteers are contributing to your capacity overall, particularly for small organizations that might not have the luxury of not engaging volunteers, these are ways that you can help demonstrate that proactively to prospective funders.

[00:18:27] And then finally, they wanted to know, you know, how are. Your volunteers supporting not just your goals, but how does that how do you connect the dots between what the funders goals are so one funder, for example, said our goal is to serve kids in the community and one of our partners does that by engaging volunteers, we knew that if they had a really strong volunteer strategy and that they had a way to retain the volunteers that were doing a good job and to bring in more volunteers and to support them.

[00:18:57] Well, thank you. That that would help the organization meet their mission as well as helping us meet our, our goal to serve more kids too. So those were a number of the ways that, um, concerns that funders had opportunities that funders had to hopefully help you consider how you would reframe a request for this, um, to a funder.

[00:19:19] And now I will turn it over to Akilah Watkins, who is the CEO of Independent Sector and one of our partners today. And I'll turn it over to you. Thanks so much.

[00:19:30] **Akilah Watkins:** Thank you so much. Well, hello everyone. My name is Akilah Watkins and I'm president and CEO at Independent Sector.



Now, for those of you who do not know, Independent Sector is a national association of nonprofits, foundations, and corporate social responsibility institutions.

[00:19:52] Coming together to build a strong civic nation, independent sector regularly assesses the overall health of the nonprofit sector and volunteers are critical component volunteers help their neighbors serve their communities and provide their expertise, no matter what kind of volunteer work they do, they are contributing in an invaluable ways.

[00:20:18] And when we estimate the value of their time, we find that it's increasing and our value of volunteer time report this year with the do good Institute. We estimated the latest value of a volunteer of a volunteer hour to be 31 dollars and 80 cents. A 6. 2 percent increase from the previous year as many of you here today will agree volunteers help hold up the foundation of civil society and are vital to the sector's overall health right now.

[00:20:53] Our sector is facing many challenges. and volunteer engagement is one of them. Independent sector recently released research on trust in civil society. We found a continuing decline in trust in non profits and an increase in the public's expectations for the sector. Luckily, we also found that familiarity breeds trust the more people engage with nonprofits, the more they trust them.

[00:21:22] And, of course, volunteerism is an excellent way to engage with nonprofits. Independent sector is thrilled to continue to support the work of the initiative for strategic volunteer engagement. Because strategic volunteer engagement has the potential to increase trust in nonprofits and improve the health of our sector so that everyone can thrive.

[00:21:48] I have the pleasure of introducing Jermaine Myrie. Jermaine just finished his first hundred days as the new CEO of MENTOR. The builder of a unified youth mentoring movement that has expanded the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships in our country. Jermaine is a highly accomplished and dedicated nonprofit leader with a unique background in education, business development, and external affairs.

[00:22:20] Jermaine comes to mentor after serving as the chief external affairs officer. At you aspire a national nonprofit with the mission of ensuring that all young people have the financial information and resources necessary to find an affordable path to and through college. He has held leadership roles at Edna student health.

[00:22:45] Johnson controls and Xerox Corporation. Jermaine began his career as a middle school English teacher in Boston, Massachusetts. An experience that allowed him to see firsthand the power that mentoring can have. Without further ado, and Jermaine, let me just say, as a person that has benefited tremendously from mentoring in my life, both as a mentee and now as a mentor, I'm really excited about welcoming you to today's panel and I'm looking forward to the message you're going to be delivering to all of us. So welcome, Jermaine.

[00:23:24] **Jermaine Myrie:** Thank you, Akilah, for that kind introduction. Um, and thank you to the Institute for, for hosting this, what has turned into an international gathering, Betsy. I'm hearing all of those places and spaces that, uh, this valuable message around volunteerism is, is moving towards. It's a privilege and a pleasure to be with everyone and to talk about the power of mentoring and, um, here at Mentor, the national partnership, um, that we are talking about the critical need for volunteer mentors today.

[00:23:55] Um, recently we, we authored and, and researched a new study who mentored you, looked at a multi generational view of folks between the ages of 18 and 80 around their reflections on mentoring. And what that study found is a, is a blend of good And and not so good news. The good news is that today's young people are more likely to have a mentor and other relational supports them than older Americans.

[00:24:23] The unfortunate side of that is that Gen Z is experiencing some level of a backslide and access to mentors, if you will, because still there's one in three young people who are will grow up across this country without a mentor, an actual Karen. Individual that is a volunteer, a community person, um, a lay person in, in their area.

[00:24:46] And so this backsliding is happening as youth and the more broad mental health crisis is making itself throughout many aspects of our society. And is that at all time high? Folks are feeling isolated and disconnected and the youth mental health challenge. And might I add just the general mental health challenge across the country is growing.

[00:25:08] So volunteerism and mentoring is critical at this moment. And what we know is that there are recruitment challenges. To fill this void to not only fill the void of one to one in three young people, but fill the void of many of the organizations that you all serve in or lead or in communities that are connected to them.

[00:25:30] And what the research that has taken us to the brought us to this conversation has shown is that there is an increased demand for services from the nonprofit sector. Nearly a third are operating with less funding and staff than the pandemic, so the resources aren't there to really meet the programmatic needs and the community needs and almost 50 percent almost half of CEOs of organizations say recruiting volunteers is a big challenge.

[00:25:56] Our affiliate in New York City, our mentor, mentor, New York in New York State, for that matter, took a look at some of the supports that are needed there or and or the gaps that are available when we talk about successfully recruited mentors in the future. And staff and capacity is 1 of the areas where volunteerism can fill that gap, uh, consultation for best practices, how we bring knowledge into organizations such that organizations can deliver, um, even greater impact and greater innovation, uh, if you will.

[00:26:32] So, there's a mixed area of opportunity here, um, according to 1 of our more discreet analysis coming out of our New York affiliate around. Mentoring programs and the gaps in areas where volunteerism could prove, uh, powerful. Um, and so volunteerism was a primary point of ours and has been consistently since our 30, 30 plus year founded.

[00:26:59] We have had the privilege of having some high impact moments to galvanize our volunteer recruitment and realizing that not all things are created equal. I will share some of what we have experienced and articulate some points of how this can be more grassroots. In effect, the success that we had a number of years ago was through a celebrity campaign with former President Obama and the Golden State Warriors, Stephen Curry.

[00:27:27] Around a partnership that we have with the N. D. A. And there was a video that articulated what it was to be a mentor mentee. And we did this what's called mentor and flip experience where in 11 shot. The President Obama was mentoring Stephen Curry and any other experience. Stephen Curry, the mentee was mentoring the mentor.

[00:27:49] If you will, we went from on average about 4000 views or connections a month to over 55, 000 searches through our mentor and connection database. A tremendous uptick by any stretch of imagination. Um, and Led to about 4000 successful mentoring connections. Now again, that's the power of celebrity, right?

[00:28:13] And how celebrity can bring bring connection to organizations. But again, I will not sit here and kind of pontificate or prove positive that everyone

has access to this. But so what we do know and what we have found on the grassroots lens that have enabled us to keep moving forward in our recruitment and volunteer effort is that.

[00:28:36] Ongoing training of volunteers is critical. Uh, we encourage organizations to provide ongoing training opportunities for volunteers after an initial onboarding experience, because. This provides the space and the opportunity to translate one volunteer into another, uh, and multiply that, um, we also recognize that to solve some of this volunteer recruitment gap that regular match support is critical.

[00:29:05] We cannot simply look at organizations to train match. Uh, and then leave volunteers out there to do the job of what sometimes would be a full time job. We need to stay connected. Um, we have to encourage, um, we encourage organizations to have regular check ins, um, to, with volunteers to ensure that the experience and the return on investment that they're doing with their sweat equity is really aligning, and that alignment still exists.

[00:29:33] And, and the third thing is recognition. Um, we know that there are many good willed folks out there that are looking to support all of our organizations, but we also know that nudging and highlighting spotlight in a volunteer goes a long way, whether in an informal way through personal recognition. Uh, moments or just simple thank you notes.

[00:29:55] How are organizations translating, um, their, you know, their appreciation to, to volunteers? And lastly, all of this goes into funding many organizations, as we've talked about earlier in the findings, that funding is critical. Um, to continue an ongoing volunteerism is not good enough to simply recruit. But how do we sustain and maintain volunteerism and finding that funding?

[00:30:22] Helps to bridge the recruitment gap overall. And so I guess the point being made here is that recruitment requires training matching recognition and funding. If we are to really see the market gains that we're looking for in our perspective. Organizations and so with that, I'll turn it over to, um, my colleague at the National Council of nonprofits for for this next representation of how volunteerism and the gap can be resolved.

[00:30:54] **Donna Murray-Brown:** Thank you, Jermaine. Hello, my name is Donna Murray-Brown, and I serve as the vice president of strategy and development at the National Council of Nonprofits, the largest network of nonprofits in North America. Through our vast network of more than 30, 000

nonprofits across the country, we know volunteers are the very backbone for how many nonprofits advance their missions and serve their communities.

[00:31:15] They bring diverse perspectives, lived experience, and a motivation to serve that is important. And impactful. I have the pleasure of introducing to you, Alisha Rulapaugh. I recently had the privilege of meeting Alisha. And one thing I can tell you for sure is that she is committed to volunteer engagement and believes in the transformational power of service, not just for the nonprofit and those that they serve, but also the volunteers themselves.

[00:31:41] Alisha is the senior director of operations for the Northeast Iowa Food Bank in Waterloo, Iowa, where she works in support of its mission to provide food for those who are hungry in Northeast Iowa as a senior director of operations. Alisha oversees the leadership team and works to make sure that all aspects of food bank of the food bank are going in the same direction to ensure they are providing access to all for every meal every day.

[00:32:09] Alisha holds a bachelor's degree in family life ministry and has been at the food bank since nearly 2011. She also has over 20 years of experience in the non profit sector. Alisha is passionate about serving others and coaching the next generation of changemakers. I know you will be inspired by what Alisha has to share.

[00:32:33] **Alisha Rulapaugh:** Thank you, Donna. I am really happy to be here and I come to you just with some knowledge of what we've already done here at the food bank. Um, I unfortunately didn't have the the resources for all of the research that I wish I would have had when we first started about 5 years ago in this endeavor. And so, um, I made mistakes along the way.

[00:32:56] Uh, but we have really seen, um, what we have done in the past 5 years really make an impact for those that we serve. So I just want to walk you through a little bit of what we did. Um, so maybe you could take away, uh, into your organization what worked for us. So the first step is really volunteer engagement needs to be a strategy, not just a program, not just a department.

[00:33:23] It needs to be in everything that you do as a nonprofit, and it should not only just be trans, transactional, it should be transformational, not only to you as the organization, but also to the volunteer. The strategy goes be on just your volunteer department. Um, it needs to hit every single aspect of your nonprofit for our nonprofit.

[00:33:50] We. It hits, it hits our custodian and hits our warehouse, our drivers, our onsite pantry. It literally hits everything that we do. And so the focus of that, it needs to be a strategy specifically. And I will tell you that building this internal volunteer engagement is super hard. You have a wide range of staff who may not think that non volunteer engagement is important for their job, but I will tell you.

[00:34:29] It is hard, but keep on going, I promise it's going to come out in the end. And it's just some things that we did at the food bank to get this buy in is to have leadership buying when the leadership buys into volunteer engagement. It shows that the nonprofit values relationships over transactions. When I 1st started in this about 5 years ago.

[00:34:55] It wasn't hard to push our other leadership to to invest into volunteer engagement and into getting that into their department. We also, I was at that time, director of development and. I was part of the leadership team, so have a volunteer department staff be part of that leadership team. So that way it comes with passion and it shows throughout your organization.

[00:35:27] Um, the other thing that we did, we actually built a volunteer engagement line in everybody's job description here at the food bank, even for our volunteers. Um, this not only is important, but. It helps keep us accountable during reviews, and that that is the thing that we need to do. And it's super, super important.

[00:35:50] And it's not going to go away. The other thing we need to do, you need to shift your culture, so your staff can embrace the volunteers. You need to do that. In a lot of different ways, you could do that by trainings, coaching, and honestly, just plain psychology. You need to get in there. You need to go and go into your volunteer groups and work beside them show that it's important to you.

[00:36:18] So that way. Other staff can see that it's important to the organization as a whole. Um, I, we need to allocate resources. We didn't have it in the budget 5 years ago and the next year I put it in the budget. Uh, it was a line item and here's a so much so much money. Um, 5 years ago, we only had 1 volunteer.

[00:36:40] Um. Coordinator, and now we have 3. so that shows you how important that we found this and that you just need to do it. Even if you don't have funding, you need to find it someplace and you might need to push for it. Um, the other thing is to celebrate and recognize be vocal on how the volunteers

are helping your organization that not only is externally, but also internally, if staff doesn't see.

[00:37:07] The reason why volunteers are there, um, they don't hear that communicated from all levels. They're not going to buy into it. So you absolutely need to communicate that over and over again. And the other thing is to integrate your volunteers and to strategic planning, um, bring them in, help them be your ambassadors.

[00:37:30] And so you're all probably saying, yeah, this is great. Like, but how do I do this? Right? Like. All this information is great, but give me, give me some things to do. And so this is, these are some things that I, I suggest, um, again, it's been said before. It's more than the number of volunteers and hours. It's about the impact of those volunteers.

[00:37:51] You need to utilize storytelling. To tell the impact of the volunteers. For example, 1 story that we've used in our newsletters and different things that we've put out to the community, but I'll start to our staff. We had an onsite pantry. 1 of our volunteers walked out groceries to somebody's car, and the client just cried because he hadn't had help before somebody to take their time out of their busy day to help walk groceries out to his car.

[00:38:20] It was just something for him that was. Very impactful. And so you stories like that, uh, use stories to, to tell the funders why, why volunteering is so important with you. Also, remember no group is too big or too small to have engagement. Um, yes, it's always great to have those big groups where you can hurry and, um, get a big impact.

[00:38:47] But those small groups to, um. You definitely need a volunteer engagement. And the last thing is just ask, ask your funders, ask your funders for this. For funding, uh, we all need to have a relationship with our funders and it's not just transactional. So, if you have that relationship going. Just sit down with them, have a cup of coffee.

[00:39:12] They are more than willing to listen to you because they want to support what your organization needs. And so with that, I'm going to turn it back over to Betsy and Jennifer for our Q&A. Thank you so much.

[00:39:28] **Betsy McFarland:** Excellent. Of course. Great, uh, words to live by. And while I'm doing this, I'm going to bring in my co host and our other panelists, and we'll get the Q&A started.

[00:39:42] So again, a reminder. Um, if you have a question for this esteemed group of panelists, please add it to the Q&A box. Not so much the chat because we may miss it. There's so much going on in the chat with all 550 of you talking. It's so awesome. Um, but, uh, Jennifer, do you see a question to ask or do you need me to find one for us?

[00:40:04] Um, yeah, well,

[00:40:05] **Jennifer Bennett:** again, so many great questions. And, um, again, We're trying to keep this right on the research and the examples. Um, so if you have a question, I'm doing my best to answer some of those questions that are coming in that are off topic and so many great resources. Thank you to everyone who's sharing in the chat.

[00:40:22] Um, we had a question, uh, that maybe gets to some of that storytelling and Alisha, maybe you could expand a little bit on some of those things that you found that have really resonated.

[00:40:36] **Alisha Rulapaugh:** Yeah, it's really just a simple interactions that we encourage volunteers to come back and tell us. Um, they're not, they're not going to automatically tell you because they don't think it's a big deal.

[00:40:49] Um, you need to ask them, you need even the program managers, um, they need to be intentional by asking what those stories could be. It could be super simple as. Taking groceries out to somebody's car, or it could be as. easy or as big as you helped my family of 10 eat for the next two, two weeks. Like it, it doesn't have to be huge.

[00:41:12] It, um, but those little things definitely would help.

[00:41:17] **Jennifer Bennett:** That tie back to the mission and to the work that you're doing in the community. And do you ask your volunteers? Um, cause you, you said that like, they just think it's regular sort of everyday work, but do you sit down and sort of like, get them to tell you your

[00:41:32] We do.

[00:41:33] **Alisha Rulapaugh:** It's intentional that when they come back from Delivering a mobile food pantry or something. We do ask them specifically about those stories or, hey, kind of not sit down and say, tell me your story today, but it's those questions that you ask. How was it? Who did you meet? Um, just kind of gentle nudges.



[00:41:53] **Jennifer Bennett:** Fabulous. Betsy, do you want to point us towards another question?

[00:41:57] **Betsy McFarland:** Sure, I'd love to. I saw one in here that, um, ensued not to put you on the spot, but I'm going to put you on the spot because I know you can handle it is, um, I saw a question around, um, asking about kind of the role of volunteer engagement professionals and helping with funding requests.

[00:42:11] And, you know, we have a mix on this webinar of executive directors and CEOs of nonprofits, volunteer engagement professionals themselves and others. So Sue, would you mind starting us off speaking to, you know, maybe for for the executives out there.

[00:42:25] Sure. Why include the volunteer engagement professional and in what ways can that person possibly help with some of these funding requests to get more resources and maybe even a little tip or two for the volunteer engagement professionals themselves?

[00:42:37] **Sue Carter Kahl:** Sure. One of the ways that we, if you're looking at where the organization is going and you're putting together a strategic plan, you want to consider all of the resources you have to bring to bear on that. And a lot of times volunteers don't get included in that. And so weaving volunteer engagement, um, having your volunteer engagement professional, um, be part of that strategic planning process, be part of your leadership team, means that that resource is tapped in and connected, linked to the purpose of the organization.

[00:43:11] So it's not that we just have these volunteers over here doing some things, it's that we have strategically. Um, thought about recruiting the right people for the right role so that we can achieve our mission. And these then are the ways that we're doing that. So I think that's an important way. And there's some research that shows that organizations that have Their volunteer engagement professionals, part of the leadership team are stronger and more adaptable and flexible and more successful over the long term.

[00:43:39] Um, and I think for those volunteer managers who are trying to make that case then. You know, saying, bringing up some of this research, talking about the webinar today, um, talking about how sometimes, um, what happens is that somebody goes, Oh, we're having an event in two weeks. We should get some volunteers for that and goes striking over to the volunteer office.

[00:44:00] And now everybody's just sort of in chaos. And so thinking about how do we look ahead? How do we be proactive about our volunteer strategies? Um, so that we are being very intentional about how we're engaging the community. We're thoughtful about who we want to engage, what skill sets, what backgrounds, what lived experience.

[00:44:20] And I think that, um, by having a sense of what kinds of things your executive director or your, your board are talking about and linking the volunteers to that can help you get. I'm on the executive's schedule.

[00:44:39] Thanks. So,

[00:44:40] **Jennifer Bennett:** um, I have saw I've seen some sort of, um, sort of both sides questions. So, uh, participants asking about engaging short term volunteers or day of service volunteers. As well as asking for those longer commitments. And I know we have both represented here on the panel. So maybe your top advice for thinking about strategic volunteer engagement for either shorter term or longer commitment term volunteers.

[00:45:09] When you're thinking about strategic volunteer engagement, Jermaine, do you want to kick us off?

[00:45:16] **Jermaine Myrie:** Yeah, sure. Jennifer, I think number of the organizations that we, you know, as we partner across the country from. From a short and long term, we tend to look at opportunities where there's community visibility to galvanize kind of long term, uh, volunteerism.

[00:45:34] And by that, it's how organizations are looking at placement and communication. Around the opportunities that are out there. Also, relatability, um, relatability of the actual cause, um, seems to drive the time and tenure that folks are looking to invest in a particular opportunity. And so to the extent that we make opportunities relatable from a community standpoint, and either a corporate standpoint that could drive and proximity, uh, how we Approximate our folks to the volunteer experience will drive also their ability to stay connected or not There there are issues around transportation and security.

[00:46:14] And so those considerations come into play when you talk about the type of Of volunteerism, um, that is out there. And so overall, I guess the idea is, you know, longer term engaged opportunities, um, are driven a lot by kind of high visibility efforts. And then the shorter term, uh, relatable ones tend to be ones that you can galvanize.

[00:46:40] A good group of people, um, and across sector folks over time. So those are some areas around visibility, relatability and proximity.

[00:46:50] **Jennifer Bennett:** Fabulous Alisha, you want to add anything there?

[00:46:53] **Alisha Rulapaugh:** Yeah, we actually start everybody out as a short term volunteer. We don't ever expect them, um, to come back more than once, uh, maybe to keep our expectations low. I don't know. Um, but we then capitalize on that. It's the little touches from there and getting to know them.

[00:47:12] And what area they would be better suited for than maybe the 1st time that they were here and it's those little touch points of, um, showing their showing the impact of what they're doing right then how it's helping us and so we just build off of that.

[00:47:30] **Betsy McFarland:** Awesome. Thank you so much. Great, great input here going.

[00:47:34] There's so many questions. Uh, I'm seeing one that I really want you all to answer. Um, and that is around, uh, funding proposals, like how to weave this into those kinds of proposal requests for funding, like your grant applications. bonders don't, uh, advertise that they, uh, will

[00:47:58] Um, so be the training or the tracking or the professional who's going to do the coordination. So what might be a way to approach this from a grant application perspective, any insights there.

[00:48:14] So maybe you can start us if you don't mind, because I know you also have thoughts on that.

[00:48:19] **Sue Carter Kahl:** I saw Jermaine. I saw you on mute. And so it's so hard to know who's going to go.

[00:48:24] **Jermaine Myrie:** I spoke in the last segment. So you can go first, please. And then I could chime in afterwards.

[00:48:29] **Sue Carter Kahl:** I just I think it's really helpful for folks to hear directly from the executive directors who've had some success with this.

[00:48:35] So, um, one is that we found that when we were talking with the funders, they said, Oh, sure, we'd be open to that. Thank you. And we said, well, how are you collecting, um, data about this? And he said, oh, we really

aren't. Um, so I think this is a matter of being proactive. And I know that sometimes with word counts, we have to keep it, you know, short.

[00:48:53] But what are the ways that you can build that in, um, when you're talking about the programs, when you're talking about the resourcing, when you're talking about, um, the expenses actually in the budget, um, to include the pieces that are related to volunteerism. Um, and it's, it's a process of educating the funder, um, as well as doing a request around that.

[00:49:14] So you can say, this is what it takes to be successful. Um, volunteers are an essential part of our staff volunteer partnership. We can't do what we do without them. Um, and it does take resources to engage them well, and I'll just stop there and turn it back over to Jermaine.

[00:49:30] **Jermaine Myrie:** Yeah, no, that's great. So I think the 2 things I'd say is that 1 area of opportunities that volunteerism as a, as a real targeted experience towards wellness that isolation and belonging and volunteerism breaking through that.

[00:49:42] That is a funder. You not necessarily are funding volunteerism, but you're funding a greater wellness opportunity that you're getting communities of people moving and connected and rebuilding. Um, community across the board. And the other piece is that volunteerism as a retention strategy, especially for corporate foundations, uh, that, uh, you know, workers and employees want to have a value based system in their employment.

[00:50:07] So, you know, if a foundation or corporate foundation or an entity believes that they're looking for a real holistic retention strategy, um, speaking to that proposal in a way in which it makes business sense as well, um, really translates the volunteerism, which has the, the, the, the. The organizational impact, but then the retention strategy has the foundation or funder impact. So those are just two, two pieces I might add there as well.

[00:50:33] **Betsy McFarland:** Those are excellent points. And, and I think what I'm hearing you say too, is this issue of when we're talking to funders about this, we don't necessarily have to approach it from a, Hey, will you fund volunteer engagement? It's really, will you fund this program or this goal that we're working towards this effort, the mission based work.

[00:50:51] But in order to achieve it, we need the people to do it. You know, there's somebody has to be doing the mentoring or doing the work at the food bank in order to accomplish it. And that takes those resources. So kind of back

ending the volunteer engagement into those broader programmatic, um, proposals and requests can go a long way.

[00:51:08] I think a lot of times they're just not thought about and we don't think to include those kinds of costs in our asks. Um, Alisha, did you have anything you want not to put you on the spot, but do you have anything you want to add to that? Um, Okay.

[00:51:20] **Alisha Rulapaugh:** That's exactly what I was going to say. You just need to weave it in everything, even a sentence.

[00:51:24] Um, just do it in all your grants and the more you talk about it, it'll be reality.

[00:51:29] **Betsy McFarland:** I love it. Thank you so much. Jennifer. Do you see another question while I was doing that one?

[00:51:35] **Jennifer Bennett:** Um, maybe just getting to some of those brass tacks. Um, there was a question about sort of the amount of money or like, not setting your goals too high, but not asking for too little any advice as we get down to sort of the nitty gritty.

[00:51:55] Sue, maybe or Alisha, go ahead.

[00:51:58] **Alisha Rulapaugh:** Yeah, real quick. Um, we just started out, um, at the very beginning. We asked for 1 more person and a small budget of 5, 000. just those small engagements. Um, it doesn't take very much at all. Um, so don't be afraid to build it.

[00:52:17] **Jennifer Bennett:** That's a great point. Like a phased approach. Like, this is what we could do in year 1 with this much.

[00:52:21] And then, wow, now we could do this more moving forward.

[00:52:26] **Sue Carter Kahl:** And not everyone will have a dedicated volunteer professional who's in that role. So it may be that you're part of a program person salary or part of, um, your fund development director is also, um, a part of the program. So looking at how does a part of someone's salary, how is a part of someone's work on the operations team to support maybe in your HR department?

[00:52:50] If you have one, you know, or someone, your operations director. Who's doing that thinking about who are all the people who are um, contributing time? To finding the volunteers, to training the volunteers, to supporting them on a day to day basis, thinking about the technology, thinking about the recognition.

[00:53:09] There are a variety of ways that you can start to weave in some of those expenses that go along with it, um, from the people side to some of the other aspects in terms of, uh, we think about professional development that can apply to our volunteers as well. Right, and there's I'm seeing a couple of questions.

[00:53:27] **Betsy McFarland:** I think we have time for 1 more. Uh, and I'm seeing 1. I'd love to ask maybe as a closer here about, um, the benefits of volunteers as potential funders, or kind of that relationship of volunteers To donors, given that we're here to talking about resourcing volunteer engagement and supporting, um, and funding these these efforts.

[00:53:49] Um, I first, I guess I'll just open it up. Any thoughts around that or ways that your organization views volunteers and donors, whether they're the same or different.

[00:54:04] **Jermaine Myrie:** I think volunteers can become board members, right? Advisory members, a council of thought partners. I think constructing communities of thought partners through volunteerism gets people closer to the work. They see the outcomes, right? And then they translate into your best kind of. Market marcom's team, basically, right?

[00:54:24] They're your best communicators and translators. So, so I think volunteerism has the opportunity to get organizations in at the ground level at full individual philanthropy, where people are starting to make decisions around what their time and treasure will be committed toward and so creating, um, community conversations and, um, spaces where volunteers can get closer to your organization and you bring them in Not as a full duly elected board member per se right away, but as, um, true advisory members and thought partners, um, as you try to bridge some skill sets and other knowledge gaps that Sue spoke to in the research that she outlined earlier.

[00:55:06] **Betsy McFarland:** Well said. Thank you. And there is, uh, there is actually from the research, um, not our research, but other data that does show, um, a strong connection between volunteerism and donating that people do, um, often give their money where they give their time and many will use their

volunteer experience as a way of kind of test driving an organization to see if it's one they want to financially invest in.

[00:55:28] So all of this is interconnected, right? Related to how we create thriving, healthy environment. Organizations. And so I'm being mindful of time. We only have a minute or so left. So I want to wrap us up and thank you to our amazing speakers and panelists today. Um, really, really great discussions. Um, so grateful to you.

[00:55:49] Um, and just briefly, we'll quickly share, uh, which I think we've gone over pretty well, but let me share just a couple of final takeaways for you to consider as we, um, depart this session today. And that is, um, first of all, Thank As a nonprofit leader or a volunteer engagement professional within an organization, just take the time to begin prioritizing volunteer engagement.

[00:56:10] Build it into your strategic plans. Hire those volunteer engagement professionals. Make sure someone's responsible for coordinating the volunteer efforts and include them at your leadership table and involve your volunteers throughout the organization. As you heard our speakers talk about, it's important to build volunteer engagement into those funding requests.

[00:56:28] We need the volunteers to deliver on our programs, services and our goals. So be sure to account for some of those costs and start having those conversations with your funding organizations. And lastly, be sure to demonstrate and communicate the impact that volunteers make. It's not just about how many volunteers you have and how many hours they serve.

[00:56:48] Served. It's what did they help you accomplish? How did they contribute to the mission of the organization? That at the end of the day, is what both volunteers themselves and funders need to know and want to know. So be sure to translate that. Don't stop. It's simply the numbers of people you have involved with you.

[00:57:06] And lastly, wanna encourage you to please stay connected with us at, uh, [strategicvolunteerengagement.org](http://strategicvolunteerengagement.org). Uh, please connect with us on LinkedIn, and if you want to hit that QR code with your phone, you can download the Conversation Starter, or you could just go to the website to get it. But the Conversation Starter is a great guide for, uh, non profits and how to begin having conversation with your funders.

[00:57:28] What to prioritize and how and for funders things to consider when you're talking to your grantees and talking to nonprofits about volunteer

engagement. So, with that, I want to thank again, our partners in today's webinar and all of our amazing speakers. We are so grateful to have everyone here with us today.

[00:57:48] The recording will be available tomorrow on our website. Have a great rest of your day. Everyone. Thank you so much.