



2017 UWECI COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT



United Way
of East Central Iowa

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & HIGHLIGHTS

Volunteers are a valuable resource to help United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI) and its partners improve lives and break the cycle of poverty in our community. UWECI's Volunteer Engagement team conducts a local volunteer engagement assessment regularly to understand the needs of local agencies and assess the current state of volunteerism. Comparisons to the 2011 and 2015 results show growth but also continued challenges.

As a national Service Enterprise organization, UWECI focuses on building capacity in six key areas and enhancing volunteer engagement strategies. Nonprofits that effectively leverage skills and talents of volunteers into their core operations are more adaptable, sustainable, and capable of scaling their impact in comparison to peer organizations. As a result, they are able to deliver on their social mission more effectively.

Volunteerism Highlights: Locally



20%+ of respondents are organization leaders, showing a **BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT.**



72% of organizations said volunteers were either a **LARGE PART OR THEIR MAIN WORKFORCE.**



64% of organizations reported they have the capacity to **MANAGE MORE VOLUNTEERS.**



Organizations need anywhere from **2-100+ VOLUNTEERS.**



Of organizations that use a matching website, **42% USE UWECI'S VOLUNTEER NOW WEBSITE.**

Nationally



Research found **LESS THAN 15% OF NONPROFITS** nationwide effectively engage and leverage volunteers to meet their core mission.



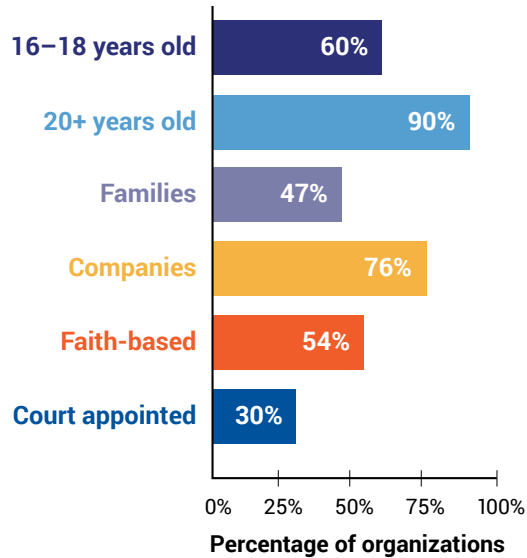
Every \$1 invested into effective and efficient volunteer engagement can yield a **\$3-6 RETURN.**



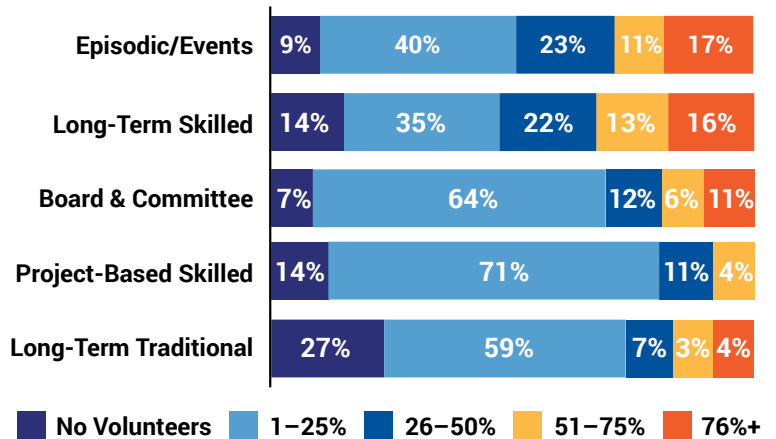
Opportunities to Volunteer

Organizations that responded to the survey provide opportunities for an array of individuals and groups. The number of individuals who volunteer for organizations varied annually.

- An impressive 26% responded they engage more than 400 volunteers (note, this does not indicate frequency).
- On the contrary, 15% engage 50 or fewer volunteers.



The assessment also measured types of volunteer engagement (long-term skilled, project-based skilled, board and committee, long-term traditional, and episodic) and the percentage of the organization's volunteers who serve in that capacity.



Capacity to Engage Volunteers

An organization's ability and capacity to manage volunteers is crucial to successfully engaging those volunteers. The assessment revealed many respondents can readily accommodate more volunteers but do not have those positions filled.

- 25% stated they have not turned away volunteers.
- 40%+ cited mismatched skill set as their main reason for not engaging volunteers.



Measures of Effective Volunteer Engagement

Characteristics of effective volunteer engagement include:



Planning and Development

Develop a strategy and infrastructure for mission-driven volunteer engagement.



Resource Allocation

Allocate sufficient resources (i.e., time, money, people, and tools) to volunteer engagement.



Tracking and Evaluation

Track outputs and outcomes of volunteer contributions and monitor quality of the volunteer experience.



Outreach

Conduct outreach and volunteer recruitment to sustain ongoing volunteer engagement.



Effective Training

Train volunteers and staff on their respective roles and equip them to work with each other.



Onboarding and Supervision

Match volunteers to appropriate positions, clarify their roles, and orient and support them throughout their service tenure.

Planning and Development

Organizations vary in how they involve volunteer managers/coordinators in strategic planning and determining the organization's volunteer needs.

- 37% of respondents stated they include a volunteer manager/coordinator in all strategic planning efforts to help identify the organization's volunteer needs.
- 38% of respondents stated their volunteer manager/coordinator regularly meets with program/initiative managers to assess volunteer needs.
- More than 50% also reported their strategic planning does not include volunteer engagement as a key resource, and they do not have written volunteer positions or pro-bono consulting agreements for all positions.

Resource Allocation

Effective and efficient volunteer engagement can have great returns; yet, nonprofits do not financially invest in volunteerism.

- 48% of respondents stated they do not have a budget dedicated to engaging volunteers.
- Only 42% have one or more paid full-time staff with the primary responsibility of coordinating volunteers.

Tracking and Evaluation

When tracking volunteers and their impact, organizations use a variety of methods. By far, the most common things tracked are:

- Number of volunteers (91%)
- Number of hours (86%)
- Frequency of volunteering (56%)
- Hourly value of volunteer's role (40%)

Recruitment and Outreach

Although most organizations stated they need more volunteers, UWECEI's assessment indicates organizations gain most of their volunteers through passive methods.

Recruiting Methods

The top recruitment methods include word of mouth, the organization's website, previous engagement as a donor or event attendee, and outreach activities with higher education institutions.

- 46% do not use a matching website.

Matching Skills with Needs

The most commonly needed volunteer roles are special events, fundraising, board/committee, administrative/clerical, community organizing and outreach, and volunteer recruitment. Assessment respondents indicated volunteers most needed by their organizations are also hardest to recruit and retain.

We have seen an increase in organizations that assess their skills gaps/needs before recruiting volunteers from 30% to 38%; only 26% reported they do not.

Retention

Local organizations are doing well at retaining volunteers. Of organizations that track retention:

- 56% reported they retain more than half of their volunteers after one year.
- Only 8% reported they retain 25% or fewer of their volunteers.

The assessment also examined practices that have an impact on an organization's ability to retain volunteers.

- 64% consistently use a volunteer screening process.
- 65% only somewhat or do not currently give staff training and recognition for working with volunteers.

Effective Training

Many respondents indicated they are interested in receiving training. The most popular training topics include retention and appreciation, evaluation of volunteer service, volunteer recruitment, and tracking volunteer data. Collectively UWECEI, Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, and Leaders in Volunteerism will work together to address local organizations' needs.

- 37% of respondents allocated money for training staff and/or volunteers.

Onboarding and Supervision

Since volunteers are vital to many nonprofits that participated in the assessment, we looked at how they match volunteers to appropriate positions, clarify roles (between staff and volunteers), and orient and support volunteers during their service with the organization.

Solutions and Recommendations

Based on the responses to the 2017 Volunteer Engagement Needs Assessment, there are several ways nonprofits can improve their ability, efficiency, and effectiveness in engaging volunteers. Some notable areas include more training opportunities and documenting the investment and return on volunteer investment for the organization.

Top Five Recommendations

At the end of the assessment, nonprofits had the opportunity to write in the top three things that could vastly improve their volunteer program. Here are five key improvements:

- Marketing, outreach, and recruitment
- Strategic volunteer engagement plan
- Diverse and skilled volunteers
- Staff trained in volunteer engagement
- Community awareness of volunteer opportunities

Top Three Training Topics

UWECI's Volunteer Engagement team works to increase community volunteer engagement and provides a variety of resources and services to help nonprofits enhance and strengthen their volunteer programs.

- Volunteer recruitment
- Strategic mission aligned volunteer engagement
- Skills-based volunteer programs

Volunteer Now

UWECI's Volunteer Now is a volunteer matching website that provides a one-stop shop for volunteers and nonprofits. UWECI uses this matching site to promote volunteerism through outreach activities, social media, newsletters, and our community partners.

Workplace Volunteer Council

As leader of the Workplace Volunteer Council (WVC), UWECI maximizes the impact businesses can make in East Central Iowa. WVC brings social-minded companies together to create and grow a culture of volunteerism. Working collaboratively with businesses connects diverse and skilled workplace volunteers to meet the needs of local nonprofits.

Training and Capacity Building

UWECI provides peer support, training, coaching, and resources by leading roundtable discussions and connecting volunteer coordinators to local and statewide trainings that help strengthen volunteer management practices.

Service Enterprise training helps nonprofits strategically engage volunteers to use their time and skills in effective mission-aligned activities. It addresses planning and development, training, staff buy-in, leadership support, and investing in resources to support volunteer engagement.



Methodology and Overview

In spring of 2017, UWECI assessed nonprofits and faith-based organizations in Linn and surrounding counties. The purpose of the assessment is to understand local challenges and opportunities organizations face in engaging and managing volunteers. Of 100 individuals surveyed, 82 completed the assessment.

- More than half of respondents represent health/human service organizations
- 84% provide services in Linn County
- 36% provide services to the broader UWECI service area (Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Jones, and Linn Counties)
- 38% of respondents are volunteer coordinators/managers
- 51% of the organizations that responded are small (0–10 paid employees)
- 15% have between 11–25 employees
- 17% have more than 100

Local Organizations Invested Time to Improve Volunteerism

We thank all organizations that participated in the 2017 Volunteer Engagement Needs Assessment. With these organizations sharing their state of volunteer engagement, we are able to extrapolate the local state of volunteerism. This will shape how United Way and local organizations fight together to increase the impact of volunteers.

Aging Services	Families Helping Families of Iowa	Metro Catholic Outreach
American Cancer Society	Foundation 2, Inc.	Mississippi Valley Regional
American Diabetes Association	Friends of Noelridge	Blood Center
Area Substance Abuse Council	Girl Scouts	National Czech & Slovak
Benton County Volunteer Program	Green Iowa AmeriCorps	Museum & Library
Bridgehaven Pregnancy Support	HACAP	Prairiewoods
Brucemore	Hawkeye Area Council,	Riverview Center
Camp Courageous	Boy Scouts of America	RVAP
Care Initiatives Hospice	His Hands Free Clinic	SCORE
Catherine McAuley Center	Horizons	Southeast Linn Community Center
Catholic Charities	Indian Creek Nature Center	The Arc of East Central Iowa
Cedar Rapids Community	Iowa Humane Alliance	The History Center
School District	Iowa Legal Aid	The Salvation Army
Cedar Rapids Metro	ISU Extension and Outreach	United Way of East Central Iowa
Economic Alliance	Jones County	UnityPoint Health–
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art	Jane Boyd Community House	St. Luke’s Hospital
Cedar Rapids Public Library	Jones County Conservation	UnityPoint Hospice
Cedar Valley Habitat for Humanity	Jones County Safe and Healthy	Waypoint Services
Cedar Valley Humane Society	Youth Coalition	Willis Dady Emergency Shelter
City of Cedar Rapids	Junior Achievement of Eastern Iowa	Workplace Learning Connection
College Community Schools	K9COLA	WRAP
Community Health Free Clinic	Kids First Law Center	Young Parents Network
Community Housing Initiatives	Kirkwood Community College	
Cornell College	Linn County	
Cystic Fibrosis Foundation	Conservation Department	
–Iowa Chapter	Mercy Medical Center	

Note: Not all organizations completed contact information and some wish to remain anonymous.

Join Us for a Volunteer Management Six Part Webinar Series

January–April 2018 | Cost: \$125

1. Understanding Volunteering: Exploring the Heart of the Volunteer Sector
2. Planning: Building a Solid Foundation
3. Recruiting & Placement: Matching Volunteer Skills with Service Needs
4. Training & Orientation: Achieving Service Excellence
5. Supervision: Maximizing the Volunteer Experience
6. Evaluation: Improving Results Using Data & Feedback

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