Results of the 2019 Massachusetts Volunteer Sector Survey

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Methodology

• **Aim of the study:**
  1) better understand the needs of the Massachusetts volunteer sector and
  2) measure the value that volunteers bring to organizations across the Commonwealth

• **10-15 minute online survey:** Targeting nonprofits in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

• **Broad outreach across Massachusetts:**
  • Survey invitation was emailed to individuals on the MSA listserv
  • Nonprofits such as the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network shared the survey invitation among their own network
  • Promoted through social media, other nonprofit listservs, and on [www.massnonprofit.org](http://www.massnonprofit.org).

• **Sample size:** 338 individuals responded
## Organization Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Operating Budget</td>
<td>$1 million</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$4.5 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Paid Full-Time Employees</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>~23K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Paid Part-Time Employees</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Volunteers Annually</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>~13k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Hours Served by Volunteers Annually</td>
<td>3.4k</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>495k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 Domains of Volunteer Success Practices

1. Volunteer Management Practices
   • Provide volunteers with clear expectations
   • Onboard volunteers effectively
   • Ensure a high-quality experience for volunteers
   • Effectively communicate with volunteers

2. Volunteer Sustainability Practices
   • Regularly collect volunteer data and measure impact
   • Assess and evaluate your volunteer program
   • Allocate sufficient organizational resources to your volunteer program

3. Organizational Practices
   • Annually assess needs for volunteers and volunteer position descriptions
   • Have senior leadership and board members be invested in your volunteer program and results
   • Train staff to ensure they are comfortable and confident working with volunteers
Volunteer Success Practices (%)
Domains of Organization Success

Mission Success
• How effective is your organization in fulfilling its mission?
• How critical are your volunteers to...
  …fulfilling your organization’s mission?
  …the quality of services that your organization provides?
• Each on a scale of 1 to 10

Net Benefits of Volunteers
• Adapted from a measure created by researcher Mark Hager (2005).
• To what extent do volunteers provide BENEFITS to your organization?
  • More detailed attention to the people you serve
  • Increased public support for your programs, or improved community relations
• To what extent are the following issues a CHALLENGE/PROBLEM for your organization?
  • Recruiting a sufficient number of volunteers
  • Recruiting volunteers with the right skills or expertise
• BENEFITS TOTAL - CHALLENGES/PROBLEMS TOTAL = Net benefits of volunteers score
• Score that could range from -14 to 14.
Net Benefit of Volunteers: Compared to National Study

- 6% of Massachusetts nonprofits in our 2019 survey
- 8% of charities nationally in Hager's 2005 survey

Research Question #1: Is there a relationship between volunteer practice success and organization success?

The short answer: YES!

- When volunteer practices and organization success measures are considered individually...almost without exception, the better job an organization does with volunteer management, volunteer sustainability and organizational practices, the higher the organization success.

- Further, there is a strong correlation between the overall # of volunteer success practices endorsed and an overall index of organization success (rho=.444***).
Organization Success Index By Volunteer Practice Success

Volunteer management practices
Volunteer sustainability practices
Organizational practices
Research Question #2:
What organizational characteristics or practices are related to volunteer practice success and/or organization success?

The short answer:
(...in order starting with the most significant)

#1: having a dedicated volunteer coordinator (full-time or part-time)
#2: participating in the Service Enterprise Initiative certification training program
#3: having the capacity to respond to all volunteer inquiries
#4: engaging SeniorCorps members or Encore Fellows (older adults)
#5: having hired a volunteer for a paid position (part-time or full-time) in the past 2 years
Research Question #3:
What type of volunteer frequency (one-time, episodic, regular) is related to the highest levels of volunteer practice success and organization success?

The short answer:
Regular volunteering is related to the highest and one-time volunteering to the lowest
With Regard to Volunteer Practice and Organizational Success…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer Practice Success</th>
<th>Frequency of use of one-time volunteers</th>
<th>Frequency of use of episodic volunteers</th>
<th>Frequency of use of regular volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Management Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Sustainability Practices</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Success</th>
<th>How effective is your organization in fulfilling its mission?</th>
<th>+</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How critical are your volunteers to fulfilling your organization’s mission?</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How critical are your volunteers to the quality of services that your organization provides?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Net Benefits of volunteers</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interesting finding…

52% of responding organizations said that within the past 2 years someone who started as a volunteer was hired for a paid position in the organization.
Take away points…

Volunteers matter and strong volunteer practices matter!

• Many organizations have room for improvement when it comes to volunteer practices—particularly in the arena of volunteer sustainability practices!
• The better job an organization does with volunteer management, volunteer sustainability and organizational practices, the higher the organization success.
• Having a dedicated volunteer coordinator, participating in the Service Enterprise Initiative certification training program, more frequent use of regular volunteers vs. one-time volunteers associated with better outcomes.
• Volunteering can be a pathway to employment!
Thank you!!!

Questions?
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