

**What is Skills-Based Volunteering?**

---

Any time a volunteer uses their abilities, talents, networks, expertise, or resources to support a nonprofit organization.

Typically, opportunities are committee or project based.



## TREND

“Skills-based volunteering is the fastest growing form of corporate giving, with nearly 50% of companies reporting having a skills-based volunteer program in place.” – *Common Impact*

## WHAT



### Skills-Based Volunteering Enables:

- Volunteers to put their skills or specialized expertise to use
- Companies to help their employees build leadership skills, increase project management skills, and improve morale and brand awareness
- Nonprofit organizations to expand services, increase capacity, and take on new challenges

## WHAT

### Skills-Based Opportunities on the Volunteer Spectrum

Making Budget	Extra Hands	Infrastructure and Leadership		
Financial Support	Hands-On Volunteering	Skills-Based Volunteering		
		General Skills	Board Service	Donated Expertise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cash grants</li> <li>- Dollars for Doers</li> <li>- Matching gifts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Playground clean-up</li> <li>- Soup kitchen</li> <li>- Habitat for Humanity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tutoring</li> <li>- Literacy programs</li> <li>- Science fair judge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Board placement</li> <li>- Board member training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IT assistance</li> <li>- Collateral design</li> <li>- HR consulting</li> </ul>

- Taproot Foundation, July 2023

## WHAT

### What are Typical Skills-Based Volunteer Opportunities?

- Board Development
- Strategic Development
- Marketing Strategy
- Financial Management
- Social Media Strategy
- Software Development
- Organizational Management
- Operations and Process Improvement
- Web Development
- Training and Professional Development
- Content Marketing and Blogging
- HR: draft policies, write job descriptions, or develop an employee handbook
- Marketing: advise on digital and social media advertising strategy teams, sponsorship sales, or marketing and fundraising campaigns
- Business strategy: conduct SWOT analysis, strategic planning, or process assessment and improvement
- Data and technology: develop technology requirements for new software, set up QuickBooks, or create data analytics dashboards and reports
- Skills-based volunteers can also teach nonprofit staff and/or volunteers a specific skill, for example, how to use accounting software or understand their website's Google Analytics. They can also work directly with community members to provide skills training that the nonprofit's constituents need

- handsonsuburbanchicago.org

- Submittable, March 2023

## WHAT

### Pro Bono vs Skills-Based Volunteering

- Pro bono volunteers are a subset of skills-based volunteers providing nonprofits with expert consulting services that they would otherwise be unable to afford.
- Typically, pro bono projects directly impact a nonprofit's internal operations. These projects are based on the nonprofit's ability to implement change while focusing on strengthening the organization's infrastructure and overall capacity.

*While most commonly associated with law firms, [pro bono] applies to any donation of professional services that an organization would normally charge for. A technology consulting firm's employees might conduct a cybersecurity audit for a nonprofit, for instance. - Submittable, March 2023*

*Research conducted by Fast Company reveals that 92% of nonprofits express a need for additional pro bono support.*

## WHY



Volunteers want to share their personal and professional skills while nonprofits get access to expertise that helps address organizational needs.



Expertise provided is not a skill that the nonprofit needs every day on staff.



Employees develop significant skills which benefit them and their companies.



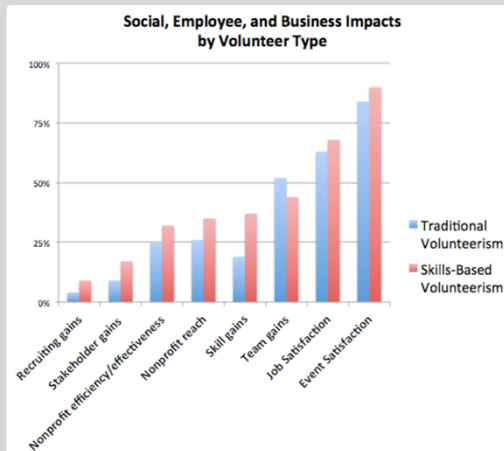
Skills-based volunteers better understand nonprofit organizations and the complexities of the social challenges they are trying to address.



## TREND

"89% of employees who participated in skills-based volunteering reported an increased awareness of societal issues and a greater understanding of the challenges faced by nonprofits." – *Centre for Corporate Citizenship at Boston College*

## WHY



- Skills-based volunteers were significantly more likely than traditional, hands-on volunteers to increase the organizational capacity of the nonprofits they were serving
- Skills-based volunteer projects help **build new, job-related skills and experiences by offering greater management responsibility, increasing client or stakeholder interactions, and/or exposing volunteers to new subject matter** - at 95% the rate of traditional volunteer projects
- Skills-based volunteers were also significantly more likely to create and strengthen relationships with regulators, legislators, advocacy groups, or other stakeholders

- True Impact



## TREND

“85% of nonprofits reported that skills-based volunteers helped them increase their capacity and effectiveness.” – *True Impact*

## WHO



**NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATIONS  
AND THEIR  
TEAM LEADERS**



**INDIVIDUAL  
VOLUNTEERS**



**EMPLOYEE  
VOLUNTEER  
PROGRAMS**



**INTERMEDIARY  
ORGANIZATIONS**

## WHO

**Skills-based volunteers come in “all shapes and sizes”, including:**

- Individual volunteers
- Corporate paid/unpaid volunteers
- Loaned executives
- Students/interns
- Retirees
- Local to national to international

- Points of Light

## WHEN & WHERE



### Typical Time Commitment

- Short, medium, and long-term projects
- Ongoing efforts such as board or standing committees
- Individual volunteers work remotely after work or on weekends



**Virtual or  
Remote**



**Nonprofit  
or Office**





## TREND

“Skills-based projects can be divided into multiple groups: micro-volunteering, short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects.”  
– *Benevity*

## HOW



Organizational  
Planning



Networking



Project  
Management

1

IN

4

Only about one in four nonprofits is ready to engage skilled volunteers. - Common Impact



## HOW

### Attracting Skills-Based Volunteers

- **Promote specific job titles/roles ...** nonprofits should provide precise job titles and detailed role descriptions; additionally, promoting specific job titles allows volunteers to highlight this information on resumes
- **Communicate ...** the required skills, project details, and desired experience level to potential volunteers
- **Focus on professionalism ...** this indicates to prospects that an organization values its image and respects its time by effectively communicating goals, impact, mission, and values
- **Leverage networking/social media sites ...** professional networking and social media platforms offer excellent opportunities to connect with talent, establish relationships, and promote volunteer opportunities; this creates a talent pool and cultivates a professional following
- **Create corporate partnerships ...** as mentioned, almost 50% of companies have some form of a corporate volunteer program; connect with business leaders in your community

- VolunteerHub, May 2023



## TREND

"A nonprofit's readiness to engage in an SBV project is also one of the most significant determinants of project success. One should consider both organizational readiness (the nonprofit's level of stability in operations and leadership and the effectiveness of its program model) and project readiness (whether this is the right project at the right time)." – *Stanford Social Innovation Review, The Promise of Skills-Based Volunteering*



## Organizational Planning

### Checklist: Organizational Planning

- ☐ What are our organizational goals for the next few years?
- ☐ Do we have the capacity to manage external resources?
- ☐ Looking at organizational goals, what could be supported by skills-based volunteering?

***Designate a point person with the time, tenure, and project leadership skills to manage the project effectively. This will streamline communications and keep volunteers focused on the project. This staff member should:***

- Have substantial knowledge of the project's focus
- Be able to respond quickly to keep project moving forward
- Make or facilitate decisions regarding project
- Feel comfortable providing feedback and keep volunteers on-course
- Cultivate skilled volunteers to be engaged with your organization long term
- Have the trust of your staff to know what is best for your organization



## Project Management

### Checklist: Project Management

- ☐ What is the role of this project within the overall program or organization?
- ☐ Upon project completion, what will we be able to do that we are not able to do now?
- ☐ What are we currently doing to address this need?
- ☐ Are there any roadblocks that have affected our ability to meet this need in the past?
- ☐ Have we vetted this idea with stakeholders to gauge value of the project?
- ☐ How will we define project success?
- ☐ What skills, resources, products, or processes are we seeking?
- ☐ Do we know what kinds of deliverables we are looking for from skilled volunteers?
- ☐ Do we know what information and resources we need to provide volunteers?
- ☐ Do we know how we will support the project after it is delivered?
- ☐ What are the major milestones? What should be achieved at each of these stages?
- ☐ What would happen in the event of a potentially protracted timeline?



## Project Management

### Tips for Managing Skills-Based Volunteer Projects

- Be flexible with meeting times since volunteers usually contribute their free time
- Break project into distinct phases/deliverables
- Identify key milestones for project timeline
- Set a reasonable time commitment (usually 1-2 hours/week over 4-6 months)
- Ensure project is not time sensitive
- Preplan and provide all information and materials needed for remote work

### Meeting with Your Skills-Based Volunteers

- Touch base weekly with your volunteer(s)
- Schedule 30–60-minute meetings between your organization and the volunteer
- Include a kickoff meeting, milestone meetings, and a project wrap-up meeting
- Share your organization's mission, project goals, and expected outcomes
- Provide your volunteer(s) with the opportunity to experience your direct services
- Give thoughtful, candid feedback
- Involve all relevant staff and ask for feedback to build employee buy-in



## Project Management

### Address Fears/Concerns/Challenges

- ☐ Communicate next steps with staff
- ☐ Share the finished project with staff, board members, media, volunteers, etc.
- ☐ Determine what, if any, resources are needed to sustain the project long-term
- ☐ Measure community engagement, project outputs, and overall outcomes

### Post-Project Support and Evaluation Checklist

- ☐ Is this worth the time and investment?
- ☐ How timely will the project be completed?
- ☐ Can we keep the project from becoming too vague or too large?
- ☐ How do we find the right expertise (volunteer) and leader (staff)?
- ☐ How do we communicate outcomes in addition to outputs?

## HOW WE DO IT

Heart of Illinois  
United Way



### Skills Link

Volunteers have the skills, nonprofits need the talent, and we offer an easy way to connect.

THANK YOU TO  
OUR UNDERWRITER:  PNC



[skillsvolunteer.hoiunitedway.org](https://skillsvolunteer.hoiunitedway.org)

*"...connecting the talent of the private sector with the needs of the social sector - at scale - can't happen without a network to bring them together."*

- Stanford Social Innovation Review, The Promise of Skills-Based Volunteering



Gina Edwards, CVA, Vice President of Marketing and Community Engagement  
Heart of Illinois United Way  
309-674-5181, ext. 1234  
[gina.edwards@local.unitedway.org](mailto:gina.edwards@local.unitedway.org)

Heart of Illinois  
United Way

