



Volunteerism in Transition **Strategies for Nonprofits**

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Your Presenter



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Word Origin and Definitions

Latin: **Voluntas**, meaning “of one’s free will”

Initially used in military context “offering to do service”

Formal

Addressing large-scale issues, in organization or with structured methods & guidelines.

Informal

Spontaneous, less structured, helping on personal level, not documented. Difficult to measure.

- House burned, neighbors helped.
- Christian County Deputies killed.

Is Volunteerism a Universal Concept?



Helping others? Yes!

Formal volunteerism? No. Mostly a Western construct. In some cultures, formal volunteering is discouraged.



- Stealing paid job.
- Amateurish, untrained.
- Cultural mismatch.

2026 - International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development

Key Pillars

Emphasizing Volunteer Power: Highlighting the transformative impact of volunteers across formal, informal, digital, and grassroots efforts.

Encouraging Investment: Urging governments and the private sector to dedicate financial and institutional resources to volunteer infrastructure.

Creating Enabling Environments: Removing systemic barriers to entry and providing proper training, safety, and inclusive policies for participants.



Federal and
state funding



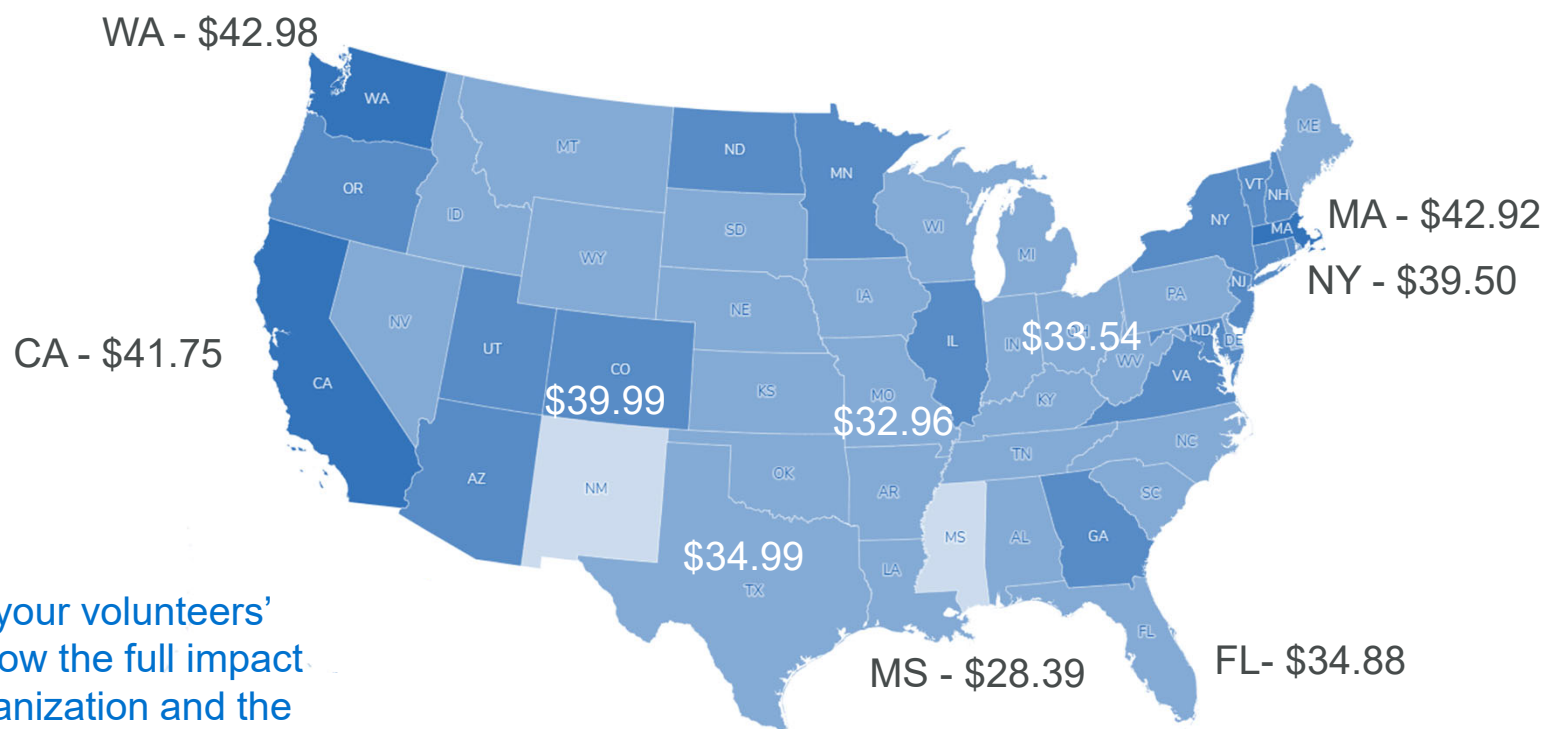
Operational
costs (inflation)

Volunteer Growth Patterns

860 Million	People worldwide volunteer at least once a month.
75.7 Million	Americans formally volunteered in 2023 (latest numbers)
Formal Volunteering	Dropped significantly during the Pandemic
Informal Volunteering	Rose during the Pandemic (neighbors and family)

The share of Americans who volunteered in the past year has climbed back near pre-2020 levels after hitting a low in 2021.

Value of Volunteer Time



Document your volunteers' hours to show the full impact of your organization and the real cost of doing business.

Volunteers in Nonprofit Organizations

	Total	501c3
IRS BMF	1,935,635	83.1%



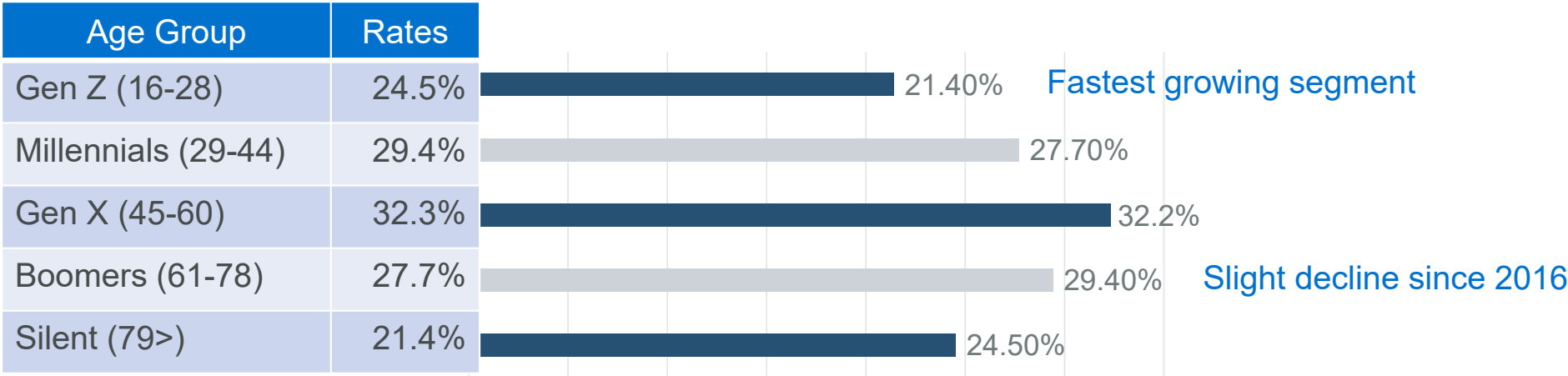
Forvis Mazars article
in NonprofitPro

1/3 of the entire nonprofit workforce is composed of volunteers.

75% say volunteers are critical to their operations.

17% say they have a strong volunteer management program.

Volunteer Profiles



Education is less of a predictor now than in years past.

Many lower-education populations are engaging through informal and community services.

Attainment	Formal	Informal
< High School	8%-12%	46%
HS or GED	14%-15%	50%
Some college	27%	50%
Associate's	27%	55%
Bachelor's	38%	60%
Graduate	47%	65%

Preferred Causes & Issues



Gen Z (16-28)

Mental Health, Social & Racial Justice
Environment & Climate Change
Affordability (education, housing)



Millennials (29-44)

Economic Security, Racial Equality
Personal Well-being
Reproductive Rights



Gen X (45-60)

Economic Stability
Family Security
National Security



Boomers (61-78)

Social Security & Medicare
Traditional Institutions
Religion

5 Volunteer Trends

- 1.** **73% of Gen Z** want easy ways to volunteer **online**, showing high interest in virtual and flexible engagement.
- 2.** **1 out of 5 formal volunteers** now serve partially or completely online (more hours per month, great for disabled).
- 3.** **Youth (16-17 years)** have a record-high volunteerism rate of 34.1% (AmeriCorps).
- 4.** **Episodic or micro-volunteering** is growing. Once or a few times each year; low number of hours (fits busy lifestyle).
- 5.** **Corporate volunteerism** continues to grow (strengthens employee engagement and helps develop employees).

Do Volunteers Really Make a Difference?



CASA
Court Appointed
Special Advocates



COLLEGE
of the
OZARKS



Volunteering Improves Your Health

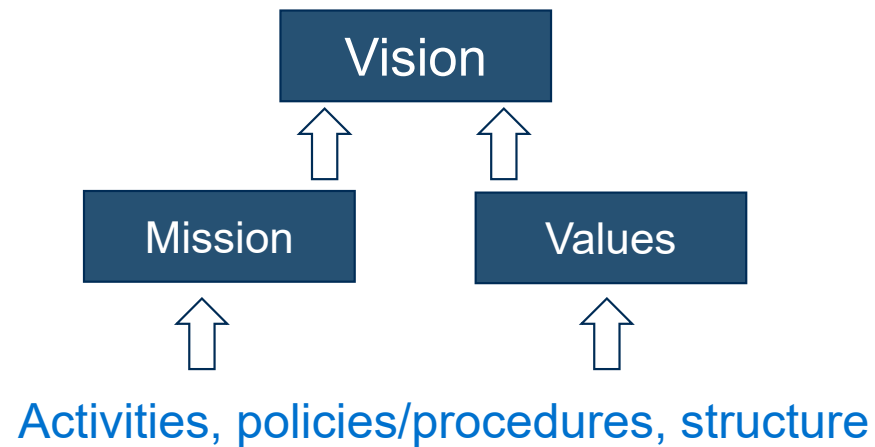
Mental Health	Physical Health	Social Health
Lowers rates of depression & anxiety	Lowers blood pressure	Reduces isolation and loneliness
Releases dopamine → reduced stress	Lowers mortality rates	Builds stronger social connections
Greater life satisfaction & self-esteem	Increases physical activities	New friends, broader network
Enhances cognition (older adults)	Better sleep quality	Gives sense of purpose and meaning

The Volunteer Journey



Connecting the Dots to the Big Picture

When everyone clearly understands the vision, they see how their tasks contribute to the broad goal.



Volunteer Motivations

Why they **START**

Must align with
VALUES

Not “what” but
“why”

They are also motivated by the belief that their gift of time can make a real difference.

1. Personal Experience (give back)
2. Because someone they know invited them
3. Family, cultural, or religious practice
4. Sense of belonging, social connections
5. Social status (Peer Pressure)
6. Altruism (Happiness)
7. To help address a need, improve someone's life
8. Resume building (develop skills)

Volunteer Motivations

Why they STOP

Mismanagement

- 
1. **Disconnect** (tasks didn't match description)
 2. **Insufficient training & support** (unclear responsibilities)
 3. **Lack of Recognition & Appreciation**
 4. **Lack of Voice** (no say in how work is done)

Disorganization

- 
5. **Rigid Schedule** (lacking flexibility)
 6. **Isolation** (lack of connection to others)
 7. **Burnout** (heavy workload)

External
Factors

- 
8. **Economic pressure** (no time to volunteer)
 9. **Personal Life Change** (family events, work, etc.)

Connection between Donating Time and Money

There is a significant overlap between those who volunteer and those who donate money.

Volunteers donate 10x more than non-volunteers*

79% nonprofit volunteers also give \$ to that organization**

- Emotional investment
- Insider knowledge of cause and where money goes
- Social connectedness

Your volunteer program is not separate from your fundraising strategy.

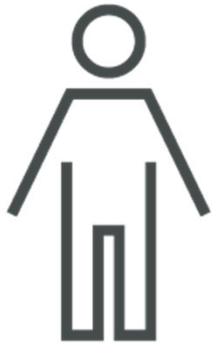
Nonprofit Boards

Duty of care

- ➡ Board members must use their best judgment in all dealings with the organization
- ➡ Regularly attend & participate in board meetings, attend special events/fundraisers & other activities
- ➡ Raise proper & necessary questions
- ➡ Provide careful oversight

Boards must make sure volunteers are properly vetted, supervised, and evaluated.

Volunteer Risk Management



- Safety: Must maintain safe environment
- Screening: Background checks and references
- Labor laws: Not performing work of paid employees
- Clear policies that are communicated & enforced
- Volunteer Liability Insurance (and D&O)

Liability

An organization can be held responsible for a volunteer's negligence if the volunteer was acting within the "scope of their duties" and under the organization's direction at the time.

Volunteer Protection Act (VPA)

Volunteer Protection Act (VPA): Protects organizations from "ordinary negligence," but not for harm caused by volunteers (gross negligence, motor vehicle harm, criminal activities, etc.)

Volunteer Recruitment & Retention

match.com



eharmony

They analyze personality, core values, hobbies,
and interests to determine compatibility.

NOT EVERYONE IS A GOOD MATCH!

1. Know what/who your organization needs before recruiting.
2. Take time to learn about candidates' motives and expectations.
3. Have high standards for your organization and your volunteers.

Volunteer Recruitment & Retention - Tips

1. Role Clarity (time, skills, length)
2. Job description with boundaries/expectations
3. Onboarding (various training methods)
4. Buddy System support
5. Ongoing support/contact person (vol. coordinator)
6. Feedback (performance evaluation)
7. Social connections with others in organization
8. Ongoing annual training/refreshers
9. Recognition (birthday, vol. anniversary, other accomplishments)
10. Consistent organizational news/updates



A few more tips

- Personalize the ask (peers trust each other)
- Offer diverse positions (one size does not fit all)
- Be flexible to accommodate lifestyles
- Use multiple channels (print, electronic, in-person)
- Impact: How their time meets a real need



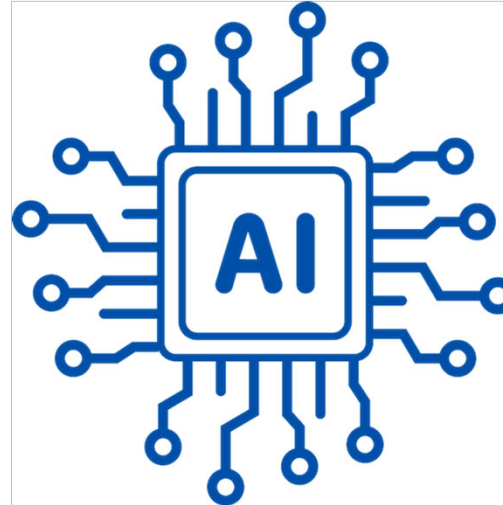
The Future of Volunteerism

Will AI replace Volunteers?

AI cannot replace:

- Human empathy
- Emotional support
- Lived experiences
- Peer mentorship
- Relationship-building
- Community-building

AI can replace *tasks*, but not *people*.



Let's shift the narrative from artificial intelligence to artful intelligence!

Tom Watson, CEO
Forvis Mazars

The Future of Volunteerism



**POINTS
OF LIGHT**

**Points of Light
\$100M Initiative**

Goal: Double volunteerism in the U.S. by 2035.

Three-phase strategy

Phase 1: Laying the Foundation

Unite leaders across all sectors. Update digital volunteer tech to make recruiting/tracking smooth.

Phase 2: Learning and Testing What Works

Use community pilots, provide NPs with infrastructure. Focus on young adults and teenagers.

Phase 3: Igniting the Movement

Expansive awareness campaigns, secure corporate partners to establish volunteerism as part of regular work life.

I would like to volunteer, but I'm not sure where to start!

WHY	• What really excites you or warms your heart? Or causes you rage?
LANDSCAPE	• What organizations in your area focus on this cause or specific situation?
YOUR CONTRIBUTION	• What specific skills or talent do you have that might be an asset to one of these organizations? • One-time events, short-term projects, or long-term roles? Online? • How much time are you able/willing to commit? (balance work/fam)
TAKE ACTION	• Review website • Attend a gala or orientation session • Call or email the organization • Find a volunteer site or association
REMEMBER	• Not all volunteerism is through a formal organization. • Look for ways to help family, friends, neighbors (even strangers)

Questions?



Thank You!



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