



REVEALING VOLUNTEER VALUE

BEYOND NUMBERS, HOURS, AND DOLLARS

Volunteer numbers, hours, and hourly financial value are popular statistics for describing volunteer activity. Their use has benefits AND limitations, not the least of which is that they can obscure the need for other volunteer value indicators.

What we
measure informs
what we do.
And if we're measuring
the wrong thing,
we're going to do
the wrong thing.

-Joseph Stiglitz, Economist

Benefits and limitations of using numbers, hours, and dollars:

- + Provides dollar value for financial statements and in-kind grant matches
- + Shows how many volunteers were exposed to agency mission
- + Demonstrates community involvement
- + Indicates people power needed to deliver mission
- + Feasible to track and calculate
- Prioritizes quantity over quality
- Risks managing for volunteer numbers rather than agency mission
- Omits results of volunteer time
- Does not link to mission
- Reduces diverse volunteerism to one value
- Confuses dollar value for cost savings
- Commodifies community

Try These Alternatives*

Integrate numbers and stories to describe the impact volunteers have on the mission and community.

*These indicators emphasize volunteer impact on the agency. Other indicators may be a better fit for demonstrating impact on the community or volunteers.

- Number of people served by volunteers
- Amount of service or advocacy provided by volunteers (rides given, meals served, patient falls reduced, representatives met, doors knocked)
- Amount of money or in-kind gifts raised by volunteers
- Satisfaction of program participants (or their loved ones) served by volunteers
- Stories about quality of volunteer service or connections made
- Type or range of tasks performed by volunteers
- Number or type of volunteer referrals (for program participants/clients, donors, board members, other volunteers)
- Images and quotes about volunteer impact
- Program or process improvement suggestions made by volunteers
- Increased skillsets available because of volunteers (language spoken, lived experience, professional or community expertise)

For more information visit <https://volunteercommons.org>

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