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Ensuring SBV Success

The impact of a skills-based program on the work of a nonprofit depends on the organization's readiness to take skilled volunteers on board. Intermediary experts and volunteer centers are two resources that individuals, nonprofits and companies can tap into to help them prepare for and effectively implement SBV programs.

Intermediary Organizations

Intermediary organizations connect individuals and companies seeking to put their employee volunteers' expertise to work for their communities with nonprofits that can benefit from the skills and talent of these vital human resources. Intermediaries, often nonprofits themselves, offer a number of services to ensure that nonprofit organizations are ready to engage skilled volunteers. They work with nonprofits to identify their needs and define projects. They partner with companies to recruit skilled volunteers and match them to the right projects. Intermediary experts can also help manage projects and evaluate the results. National nonprofits may also serve as intermediaries, connecting their affiliates with private sector companies in multiple locations.

Volunteer Centers

Volunteer centers across the country can help facilitate SBV projects by working with nonprofit organizations on a readiness assessment – often assisted by an SBV Facilitator or an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer acting as a consultant – who identifies the elements the organizations need to put in place to prepare for and implement SBV. The centers' staff can also provide an SBV Volunteer Leader to help define projects and manage volunteers, as well as to ensure the completion and evaluation of the results.

This document has been developed in collaboration with a consortium of national nonprofit organizations focusing on capacity building for volunteering and nonprofits convened by the Corporation for National and Community Service and co-lead by HandsOn Network.

Skills-Based and Pro Bono Volunteering Resources

Organizations

Common Impact commonimpact.org

Compass DC compassdc.org

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) nationalservice.gov

Executive Service Corps escus.org

HandsOn Network HandsOnNetwork.org and 1-800-Volunteer.org

Idealist idealist.org

The Jericho Road Project jerichoroadproject.org

Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation lexmundiprobono.org

Points of Light Institute PointsOfLight.org

Pro Bono Institute probonoinst.org

Pro Bono Partnership probonopartner.org

SmartVolunteer smartvolunteer.org

Taproot Foundation taprootfoundation.org

United Way unitedway.org

VolunteerMatch volunteermatch.org

Online Resources

Skills-Based Volunteering: A New Generation of Service offers a complete overview of SBV. www.nationalserviceresources.org/sbv/SBV-a-new-generation-of-service

The Nonprofit Readiness Toolkit for Pro Bono Volunteering is a CNCS online self-assessment resource for nonprofits. www.nationalserviceresources.org/news/non-profit-readiness-toolkit

The Skills-Based Volunteering page on the CNCS Web site provides links to more information on SBV and its benefits for nonprofits, companies and volunteers. www.nationalserviceresources.org/sbv

SBV Case Studies

Common Impact commonimpact.org/work

Points of Light Institute/HandsOn Network PointsOfLight.org/our-work/research/sbv

Pro Bono Action Tank probonoactiontank.org/case-studies

Skills-Based Volunteering: A New Generation of Service

The nonprofit community finds itself increasingly called upon to address a wide range of challenges – from unemployment, to failing schools, to natural disasters. To respond effectively to these growing demands, nonprofit organizations are looking to access external resources that can help them strengthen and maintain their infrastructure and services. Volunteers – with the vital knowledge, skills and experience they bring – represent an essential resource for nonprofits seeking to meet organizational challenges and grow service capacity.

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SBV is a strategic type of volunteerism that exponentially expands the impact of nonprofits by incorporating a whole range of skills that strengthen the operations and services of nonprofit organizations.

Skills-based volunteering (SBV) is an innovative approach that is rapidly gaining recognition as a powerful driver of both social impact and business value. Skills-based volunteerism utilizes the skills, experience, talents and education of volunteers and matches them with the needs of nonprofits. Many people are familiar with the term *Pro Bono*, which originated in the legal sector and involves providing consulting services at no cost. Pro Bono is actually a subset of SBV, and provides a nonprofit with the kind of professional expertise critical to maintaining a productive organization.

Ultimately, SBV is about matching the right person with the right skills and knowledge, at the right time, to the right project to achieve greater impact.

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SERVICE** ★★ ★



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NETWORK**

Benefits for Nonprofits

While it is important for nonprofits to inspire others to volunteer with their organizations and to solve the most challenging problems of today, we know that just “showing up” is not enough. Nonprofits must do more than persuade people to care about their missions; they must also engage volunteers in meaningful, highly productive ways.

Today, the focus of volunteer service is on results, matching available expertise and talents to nonprofit business goals. Targeted recruitment of skilled volunteers can help nonprofits do more with less by focusing volunteer work on a wide variety of projects at no cost.

Volunteers today bring with them a range of personal and professional experience: a boomer might work with low-income families on financial education, while a millennial trains nonprofit staff on using social networking technology to raise brand awareness. In addition, SBV serves as a point of entry into the local business community, offering nonprofits the opportunity to make connections with companies and expand their sources of support.

Benefits for Funders

By replacing high cost contract services with skilled volunteer services, nonprofits can stretch grant dollars. In addition, through support of SBV intermediary organizations and SBV projects, funders help nonprofits to access Pro Bono expertise and to establish relationships with corporations that may result in future funding. Now is the time to invest in SBV, recognized as one of the best solutions to increase the nonprofit sector capacity.

• • • • • Tips for Nonprofits

ENSURE welcome, training and ongoing support of volunteers.

MANAGE expectations and clarify with the staff the role of the volunteers in the organization and in its strategic plan.

RECOGNIZE volunteers' contributions and the direct impact of their work on the organization's mission.

Benefits for Companies

Corporations can strategically focus their social investment by making available to the nonprofit sector their most competitive asset – their talent. This factor is especially important as companies look for ways to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the communities.

SBV programs also help companies recruit and retain employees; job seekers are increasingly interested in a company's community engagement particularly young people entering the workforce. In fact, companies are beginning to take advantage of SBV as a leadership development and training tool, using it to expand employees' variety of tasks and challenges, and increase skills-sets.

• **Tips for Companies**

- **BE OPEN** to supporting more than one cause in order to broaden your organization's scope of impact in the community.

KEEP SBV projects going year round. Skills-based volunteerism is part of a strategic approach to community involvement, not a once-a-year program.

SHOW the value of the volunteers' work by putting a dollar value on it.

BEGIN small and successful and deploy when ready.

Companies are increasingly recognizing SBV programs as an opportunity to reward employees and offer a broader approach to their work. Some global corporations give high performing employees the opportunity to travel overseas to participate in community-driven economic development projects. These unique experiences expose current employees and retirees to the 21st century context for doing business – including emerging markets, global teaming, diverse cultures, and working outside the traditional office.

Benefits for Volunteers and Communities

Skills-based volunteering opens the door to individuals seeking to use their personal and professional skills and talents for the benefit of their communities. For those participating in their company's SBV program, volunteering also provides a refreshing, creative change from daily work that enhances the overall work experience. Because SBV enhances organizational, leadership, communication and decision-making skills, it can often lead to career development within a company. For younger people or those transitioning to a different field of work, SBV offers the chance to network, build and develop new talents, and establish relationships with potential nonprofit employers. Volunteering also fills gaps between jobs with expanded, tangible work experience and may lead to opportunities in new fields, including the nonprofit sector.

The value of any social service is the degree to which it creates real change in disadvantaged communities. Skills-based volunteers help nonprofits expand and improve their services, making it possible for them to reach farther and do more. Through this increased civic engagement, communities find they can alleviate social problems and build better overall quality of life. SBV creates relationships among communities, nonprofits and businesses that, in turn, result in stronger local, regional and national economies.

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ASSESS the knowledge, skills and experience you can offer a nonprofit.

CHOOSE an organization whose work is important to you, and identify ways you can support its mission.

ESTABLISH goals and expectations for each project.