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Cheney-Resch, Lisa, "Measuring, Reporting and Communicating Volunteer Impact" (2022). *School of Professional and Continuing Studies Nonprofit Studies Capstone Projects*. 27.
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Measuring, Reporting and Communicating Volunteer Impact

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April 20, 2022

NPS 590U

I pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance
during the completion of this work.

Abstract

This study seeks a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of volunteer impact reporting. Volunteers serve as an essential and inspirational resource to nonprofits. They also assist organizations in a variety of ways that touch lives, build philanthropy and help to sustain a legacy. So, how can nonprofits recognize the value of a volunteer program? This study will examine existing literature's best practices and methods of reporting volunteer impact, the challenges facing impact reporting and the benefits obtained when an organization communicates to all stakeholders about volunteer impact. Specifically, the study interviews local healthcare nonprofit volunteer directors to ascertain how volunteer impact reporting is being utilized and shared across an organization. The findings detail the types of data being measured and tracked, how impact data is reported and to whom, and lastly, in what ways volunteer impact is communicated. The overall objective of the study was to determine how volunteer impact directly influences outcomes for an organization.

Measuring, Reporting and Communicating Volunteer Impact

Volunteers are the Heart of Nonprofits

An essential and inspirational resource to a nonprofit's mission begins with its volunteer program. The act of volunteering brings substantial meaning to many lives including the life and vibrancy of a nonprofit. Without volunteers how would nonprofits conduct business, facilitate programs, raise philanthropic funds, or serve client/member population (Tooley & Hooks, 2020)? Even a nonprofit's top leaders – the board of directors – include volunteers whose duty is to govern the organization. Thus, how would nonprofits function without community volunteers to support them? One could argue that volunteers are the very heart of nonprofit organizations. The work volunteers perform enriches and touches so many lives while their commitment helps to sustain a legacy. Hence, the nonprofit sector's history reminds us how volunteer participation has become a significant, positive, and powerful influence in assisting organizations to achieve and sustain their missions (Graff, 2006, p. 25; Pidgeon, 1998, p. 48).

An example of volunteers supporting a legacy is that of Sheltering Arms Hospital which is one of the oldest nonprofits in the Richmond, Virginia area, celebrating 133 years of service to the community. I am employed by Sheltering Arms Foundation, and I am proud to share a small portion of the incredible history that inspired my passion and appreciation for volunteers. Sheltering Arms has served patients and their families for more than a century by making critical nonprofit sustainability decisions as healthcare, the economy, and needs have shifted over time. Remarkably, and most impressively, for the first eighty years of Sheltering Arms' existence, the hospital operated, and withstood because of the dedication of volunteers. The hospital never sent a bill to a patient or had paid staff; it was all managed by volunteers through their acts of philanthropy and commitment of time.

The spirit of Sheltering Arms was created by founder, Rebecca Peterkin, and her St. James' sewing circle. Peterkin had a vision to take care of the working families of Richmond by building an acute-care facility in 1889 that was free to the community ("Sheltering Arms," n.d., *History*). The very foundation of Sheltering Arms was established by individuals who were inspired to make a difference – to better their community – to help the needy; they were volunteers. As the lead volunteer, Peterkin found a donor to gift a house, a group of physicians to perform surgeries for free, a board of managers that provided skills such as bookkeepers, negotiators, and caregivers. She pursued partnerships with the University College of Medicine and Old Dominion Hospital to provide nursing students and doctors who would rotate duties. The free hospital was built on donations: gifts of time, talent, and treasure (Lower, 1989). That vision resonates as Sheltering Arms continues care of the community through its physical rehabilitation services and revitalizes its vision for the future.

Meaningful Roles of Volunteering. The one example of Sheltering Arms shared above helps to define the meaning of volunteering. Throughout time, individuals who care about their communities championed the contribution of volunteering to become one of the “most productive and positive energies created in our society” (Pidgeon, 1998, xi). In effect, volunteering has become a global act to improve one’s local community and is considered a component of a healthy lifestyle. Volunteer interest is initiated when an organization communicates the need for a particular type of service by promoting their mission and fulfilling a need in the community.

Therefore, volunteers commit a portion of time and provide free services performing tasks such as greeting visitors, delivering meals, or helping to fundraise. For many nonprofits, volunteers also serve in specific staff positions because of a talent or special skill set. An

organization can leverage skills-based volunteering by supplementing the skills held by staff. Frequently, volunteers are recruited for this very reason because staff cannot be expected to possess every skill or talent needed to perform the job. For instance, these skills can be very specific such as an interpreter for a free clinic, helping to fill out medical forms or being able to create a newsletter or less tangible acts like mentoring to a stroke patient or counseling someone in debt (Ellis, 1999, p. 14). Indeed, this can be a cost-effective measure that provides relief to an organization and helps to extend the budget. But, most importantly, it brings impact. Certain nonprofit professionals allude that skills-based volunteering increases impact because a volunteer is using unique skills, bringing expertise and garnering a sense of making a difference (Volunteer Management Report, 2021b).

Another role of volunteers is to be advocates for an organization. A volunteer will develop a deep understanding of the organization and the mission that leads the work; volunteers then become influencers. A volunteer's motivation is sincere and not profit-seeking which key stakeholders might feel has more credibility than a paid staff member. Thus, volunteers are seen as assets who have access to friends, companies and organizations in the community who will hear the organization's story and mission. Accordingly, this could lead to getting others involved and create interest in supporting the nonprofit (Ellis, 1999, pp. 8-10).

Lastly, most volunteers support an organization both with a commitment of time and money; some nonprofits would agree one's best donors are volunteers. In fact, philanthropy and volunteering can and often do intersect with each other. When volunteers feel connected to an organization and its mission, a deeper relationship forms to prompt giving (Fidelity Charitable, 2020, p. 7). Ultimately, volunteers assist an organization in a variety of unique ways and bring a multitude of benefits to enhance outcomes.

Volunteering Today. With the vast number of nonprofits competing for volunteers, it is critical to improve and enhance recruitment and retention methods to attract and retain an individual's commitment to an organization. Unfortunately, the traditional methods of enlisting volunteers will continue to dwindle unless action is taken to align volunteer work with the organization's mission. The top motivator for a volunteer is making a positive impact in the community. So, it is crucial to highlight volunteer impact to help others recognize the influence volunteers demonstrate in the lives of those served, as well as the benefits earned by the organization (Ellis, 1999, xii-xiii).

As nonprofits come out from behind a two-year pandemic, the time is now to rethink the practices of volunteer engagement; especially regarding recruitment and retention, as needs have shifted, programs restructured and the utilization of a virtual platform for onboarding and training have become more popular. According to a 2021 Industry Insights survey examining perspectives of 1,350 nonprofit representatives and 2,577 volunteers, more than half (57%) of nonprofit respondents were able to maintain recruitment efforts amid the pandemic with only 20% stopping volunteer services all together. However, 79% of nonprofits anticipate that volunteer commitment for calendar year 2022 will remain relatively the same or increase slightly; while 76% of volunteer respondents predict to volunteer the same amount or more (Sterling, 2021, p. 1- 5). Hence, the crisis of COVID has not affected the reasons volunteers choose to serve, but the competition for volunteers will be sizable amongst nonprofits. Thus, measuring and sharing how volunteer impact influences organizational outcomes and the role volunteers serve in strengthening the mission could aid in retention and recruitment efforts.

Rationale for Topic Selection

Personal reasons for selection. I have been employed by two healthcare nonprofit organizations over the last twenty years. In my experience, I have witnessed how essential a strong volunteer program is to healthcare organizations and how volunteer contributions are key to serving the needs of the community. Therefore, it is my belief that an organization has a responsibility to boldly share with both internal and external stakeholders, how volunteer impact influences outcomes. Accordingly, a volunteer program can have a major impact on an organization through cost effective measures, implementation of new programs, advocacy, as well as strengthening member/client/patient relationships, and even attracting new donors. Clearly, volunteers are a significant resource to an organization; it is especially important to effectively communicate volunteer impact. As a nonprofit professional, I strongly encourage that an organization's volunteer philosophy should be highlighted and celebrated. The collection and measurement of data should occur in order to highlight and inspire the commitment of an individual's time along with the appreciation of volunteer work. Then the impact data findings should be published and shared with all stakeholders. Thus, this process will help to acknowledge and celebrate volunteer work and the commitment of time gifted to the organization. Accordingly, I aim to conduct a study that will explore how measuring volunteer impact influences organizational outcomes; the study will also examine how impact data is measured, tracked and communicated.

Significance of study. According to a comprehensive report produced by AmeriCorps with collected data from the past 15 years, specifically highlighting the Richmond area, it approximates that 275,201 volunteers or 25.8% of residents have contributed 21.1 million hours of service to a variety of local organizations, which equates to a worth of an estimated \$511.4

million (Americorps, n.d., p. 14). Many of these local nonprofits with volunteer involvement offer essential services that would not be available without volunteer help. Likewise, those same nonprofits spend valuable resources, such as time and money, managing a volunteer program. Thus, a good practice is to evaluate the program to validate that the resources being utilized are worth the expenditure. It also becomes an opportunity to assess volunteer accomplishments and the effectiveness to the organization. By comparison, many volunteers find the evaluation worthwhile and beneficial to themselves, since the goal of giving time is to, above all, bring impact (Ellis, 1996, p. 151). Furthermore, this project relates to the nonprofit sector because it identifies an additional marketing, recognition, and resource tool for organizations to use. Volunteer impact reporting demonstrates to leadership the impact volunteers bring to the organization; it shows gratitude to the volunteer program and presents the need for community support (Volunteer Management Report, 2021a, para. 1).

The Problem Statement

How can a community, stakeholders and organizational leadership recognize the value of a volunteer program? Nonprofits can demonstrate the value of volunteers by measuring, reporting, and communicating impact. The practical issue this research will address involves the importance of collecting and sharing volunteer impact in nonprofit healthcare organizations. Research emphasizes volunteers are a vital resource for a nonprofit's stability and success (Goyal-Siraj, 2014, para. 1). Yet, it is an area that is sometimes overlooked as organizational priorities focus more on revenue, funding, investments, and operations. However, nonprofits may want to revisit the positive impact triggered by volunteers and how illustrating that impact produces impressive benefits. Collecting data is valuable to the quality, scope, and outcome of the program itself; plus, accessing impact will help to boost volunteer morale and lend to the

sustainability of an organization's legacy. It is important to determine the effectiveness of volunteers periodically and how volunteers are supporting the organizational culture (Ellis, 1996, p. 154). But most importantly, volunteer impact reporting demonstrates to key stakeholders, donors, and the community how the organization is saving money, using expertise skill sets and connecting the mission to others. It serves as another level of transparency. Furthermore, having an additional layer of transparency from a credible source, such as volunteers, offers reliable and pertinent information on behalf of the organization to inspire confidence, trust and integrity from key stakeholders and the community.

Overview of Paper

This paper presents both the historical standard and current trends regarding volunteer impact reporting. Next, the literature review will introduce best practices and challenges around volunteer impact reporting. Within the review, various opinions and reasons will be presented from nonprofit professionals as to the importance of impact data along with why some organizations do not even attempt to highlight volunteer impact. Different data collection methods and ways to measure impact will be suggested by research to present an effective and informative process to communicate volunteer impact. Notably, a few design visuals will be provided to the reader to help comprehend techniques.

Subsequently, chapter three discusses the implementation of a case study that seeks to learn how healthcare nonprofits measure, track, and report volunteer impact. The study will examine volunteer impact reporting as it relates to the organizational culture, the interpretation of measures, how leadership views and uses the impact data, and by what means impact data is communicated. A goal of this study is to learn how the collection of impact data influences

specific outcomes such as, patient satisfaction, cost benefits, and community relationships.

Then, those approaches are compared to best practices.

The efforts of this study will not be concentrated on ways to strengthen or improve a volunteer program but instead on the significance of demonstrating how collecting and reporting impact data will influence outcomes for an organization. The study will encourage nonprofits to strengthen current processes involving volunteer impact and to utilize the impact data to inform strategic decisions and increase philanthropy. In addition, measuring and tracking key data will provide greater potential to adjust and optimize volunteer programs for success. Overall, the hope is that the findings of this study demonstrate that by measuring the work performed by volunteers, nonprofits can recognize the accomplishments and achievements that volunteers bring to the organization which will further grow and strengthen the legacy.

Next, chapter four will restate the significance of this study and summarize the findings of how measuring volunteer impact directly influences organizational outcomes. The summary will connect the findings of the study to previous research in order to show the relevance and consequences of measuring, reporting and communicating volunteer impact. It will also highlight specific themes revealed within the analysis of the findings. Lastly, the final discussion will include thoughtful implications and suggested future research which surfaced during the analysis of collected responses.

Literature Review

Volunteer impact reporting provides more thorough and transparent accountability and will illustrate more accurately achievements and appreciation, strategic alignment with the mission and areas of program improvement (Tooley & Hooks, 2020, p. 94). Pidgeon (1998) shares, “Nonprofit professionals who work with volunteers need to understand the important role

that volunteers play in the success of an organization” (p. 48). Hence, volunteer impact reporting is a tool to account for how volunteers enhance performance outcomes within an organization.

This literature review explores how measuring volunteer impact will directly influence outcomes for a nonprofit organization by addressing four themes found in research: (1) areas of measure; (2) challenges to measuring impact; (3) value and benefits of impact data; and (4) reporting and communicating volunteer impact. Interestingly, research indicates that more than half of nonprofit organizations are implementing initiatives and collecting data to measure the value and impact of volunteer service (VolunteerMatch, 2014). Supporting this idea, Tooley and Hooks (2020) agree that by reporting volunteer contributions, “... it becomes visible to a broad audience and enhances the accountability and legitimacy of the organization positively influencing its image and gaining stakeholder support” (p. 106). Therefore, nonprofits that operate volunteer programs should consider volunteer impact reporting in order to highlight how volunteer impact makes a positive difference in organizational outcomes and adds value to the culture.

Defining and Measuring Volunteer Impact

Volunteer impact reporting involves measuring and quantifying how volunteer service generates economic and social change. Nonprofits create metrics, indicators and data collection methods to measure volunteers’ impact on goals and outcomes. To understand approaches to evaluating impact, a survey of approximately 2,700 nonprofit professionals was conducted. This study revealed that most respondents felt measuring volunteer impact is important, but only 55% actually have a formal process and from that fewer than 18% use the data to enhance or adjust the volunteer program itself. Surprisingly, 45% reported no process at all (VolunteerMatch, 2014).

Generally, the two most popular cumulative figures identified by research that nonprofits use to track volunteer impact include: (1) number of volunteers serving the organization; and (2) total hours volunteers work (Burych et al., 2016, p. 2; Nonprofit World, 2021, pp. 30-31; VolunteerMatch, 2014). Then the hours tracked are multiplied by the Independent Sector's estimated value of a volunteer hour which in the United States is currently at \$28.54; this estimate is based on hourly earnings released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and uses data from AmeriCorps on volunteer hours (Independent Sector, 2021). Notably, there is extensive research discussion on the variety of cost-analysis models created and how the models are useful to measure the economic value of volunteering (Smith & Ellis, 2003, p. 49). However, research indicates that the wage replacement value model is well-liked although it is a controversial topic and notes difficulty in assigning a dollar value to volunteer service based on skill set levels. Ellis (1999) asserts that assessing volunteer impact in monetary value gets the attention of decision-makers but unintentionally diminishes the sincere work achieved by volunteers (para. 2).

In fact, during the 1990s, the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), issued new instructions (FASB Statement No. 116) which require nonprofits to report certain contributions received not only from philanthropy but also from volunteer services. This additional FASB rule necessitates that the value of certain volunteer services be reported in its external financial statements (Ellis, 1999, para. 4). Also, a study by Mook et al. (2007) surveyed 661 Canadian nonprofits to explore when and why organizations kept track of volunteer contributions and included calculated figures in financial statements. The results show that 47% tracked information when required to do so by funders, and 31% used the data in follow up reports to the funders (Mook et al., 2007, p. 14). Nevertheless, an extensive amount of research examines the

need for an accounting procedure that properly illustrates the value generated from volunteer contributions (Mook et al., 2005, p. 402).

Additionally, Ellis (1996) describes a best practice called the “Karn Method” for calculating “true dollar” value of volunteer contributions which was developed by G. Neil Karn, former director of the Virginia Department of Volunteerism. The main points associated with this method include: (1) define a comparable salaried job position for every volunteer task; (2) consider full compensation of an employee, like adding fringe benefits, to the total value; (3) bear in mind a salaried employee typically gets paid for a full forty hours even if all of the hours were not worked; although volunteers are only tracked for actual hours served; and (4) credit volunteers with the same hourly amount an employee would earn for hours worked, also base that amount on skill level used. In other words, the Karn Method assesses the value of each volunteer assignment in accordance with the cost to an organization compared to the same work found within the marketplace (pp. 163-165). See Table 1 for an example of comparison of volunteer assignments to job categories. Refer to Appendix A for an extended example of True Dollar Value of Volunteers Worksheet.

Table 1

Actual Equivalent Job Classification Examples in Virginia

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT	EQUIVALENT PAID CLASSIFICATION
Volunteer member of a planning committee	Human Resource Developer
Little League Coach	Playground Supervisor
Little League Official	Recreation Specialist
Big Brother/Sister Volunteer	Outreach Worker
Nonprofit Board Member	Executive Director

Note. Reprinted from *From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success* (p. 164), Ellis, S., 1996.

While the two cumulative figures – volunteer hourly rate and hours worked – provide minimal value of impact, research suggests other areas to measure volunteer involvement to help inform decisions around advocacy, strategic goals and philanthropy. With this intention, some nonprofits collect impact data about volunteers to demonstrate diversity in the areas of age, race, gender, profession, education level and other characteristics (Ellis, 2005, para. 4). In addition to the quantitative valuation, some studies recommend supplementary areas of impact data to collect, such as qualitative measures regarding merit of work performed by volunteers. For example, a volunteer’s influence on patient healing or providing social contact/companionship to isolated seniors defines qualitative while the number of meals delivered to seniors would be a quantitative measure. The qualitative data is likely obtained directly from both the volunteers and recipients along with stakeholders to verify perceptions of the value of the experience. As a result, adjustments to a volunteer program can occur or positive volunteer experiences can be shared publicly (Weiner, 2021).

Additionally, this type of measure reflects the personal development that results from volunteering. A few studies present a correlation between volunteering, skill building and an increase in personal confidence level for the volunteer (Smith & Ellis, 2003, p. 50). Similarly, Nenn (2021) agrees and reflects on comments from Sue Carter Kahl, President of Kahl Consulting, who shares, “Sometimes nonprofits get stuck on the numbers . . . we count volunteer hours and focus on the what, without talking about the why” (para. 1). Researchers indicate this type of one-way thinking results when funders are only asking for quantitative measures and not providing nonprofits an opportunity to share experiences. Thus, communicating purpose and the less tangible data, such as stories, will help to spotlight the quality of volunteer work.

Ultimately, each nonprofit must identify a meaningful evaluation tool with valid measures representing volunteer progress and outcomes (Burych et al., 2016, viii).

Currently trending research has introduced another possible method to measure volunteer impact. Burych et al. (2016) recommends moving beyond traditional metrics to demonstrate real accomplishments of volunteers by using a balance and strategic approach described as the Volunteer Resources Balanced Scorecard method. Originally, it was designed by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton in 1992 at Harvard Business School for use in the for-profit sector to detect if a business was making or losing money. Commonly, it is illustrated by a table and represents a framework to include goals, tasks and ways to measure progress. For a volunteer program, Burych et al. designed a sample scorecard, as shown in Table 2, utilizing four key perspectives that model measuring volunteer engagement for a hospital organization. Specifically, the scorecard displays how volunteer impact aligns with the vision, mission and strategic plan of the organization.

Table 2

Sample Volunteer Resources Balanced Scorecard for a Hospital



Note. Reprinted from *Measuring the Impact of Volunteers* (p. 27), Burych et al., 2016.

After linking the volunteer program perspectives to the organizational goals, Burych et al. explain how to further develop the scorecard. This can be done by determining meaningful goals worth attaining, then associating objectives that would help to reach those goals, and lastly, assigning activities, indicators and targets in order to measure progress towards goals. This type of logic model, as shown in Table 3, provides a process for measuring if goals and outcomes were successful or not achieved. Even though the scorecard is a lengthy and intense process, it is worth the time devoted to developing both a planning tool as well as a method to measure volunteer impact (p. 71). Refer to Appendices B and C to see scorecard vocabulary and an overview of the scorecard process.

Table 3

Sample Scorecard Perspective 1

Goal	Objectives	Activities	Indicators	Targets
Support organization's objectives through effective volunteer recruitment initiatives, with an emphasis on diversity	Recruit a volunteer corps that represent the community in which the organization works and serves	Identify organizations that reflect the community and recruiting priorities, and develop outreach materials and partnerships to support recruitment initiatives	# of new, approved and assigned volunteers who represent the community served and the recruiting priorities	50 new volunteers next fiscal year
Recognize and value the contribution of volunteers	Seek creative ways to acknowledge the impact of volunteers	Plan a recognition event to honor contribution of leadership volunteers	# of volunteers participating and satisfaction rates	Annual – 90% reporting they are “highly satisfied”

Note. Reprinted from *Measuring the Impact of Volunteers* (p. 37), Burych et al., 2016.

Challenges to Collecting Impact Data

Consequently, the “Volunteer Impact Report” also revealed that out of the 2,700 nonprofit professionals surveyed, 34% responded that it is difficult to measure volunteer impact due to lack of resources and tools. Moreover, the report also acknowledges that 45% do not measure volunteer impact at all (VolunteerMatch, 2014). Goyal-Siraj (2014) views one challenge to measuring volunteer impact is that nonprofit organizations “lack the knowledge to know where to begin and what to measure; it seems like a daunting task and too overwhelming to take on” (p. 4). To support Goyal-Siraj’s opinion, the report also indicates that 29% of respondents felt that they did not have the proper skills or knowledge which prevented measuring impact.

The report further conveys that 25% do not have the time to devote to reporting due to limited staff needed to structure and perform assessments, and 6% explained no need for measurement because the data is of no importance (VolunteerMatch, 2014). Another study by Mook et al. (2007) concur, especially for small nonprofits, collecting data and tracking information is expensive. It surveys 661 Canadian organizations, and about half did not maintain records of volunteer contributions because of lack of resources (p. 15).

Previously mentioned, a significant number of studies communicate a variety of cost-analysis models to assess volunteer worth. With the lack of a best practice model, this has led to a matter of contention in research generating confusion around the calculation of the dollar value of service provided by volunteers. Cordery and Narraway (2009) discuss a gap in research concerning the relevance-reliability debate amongst the nonprofit accounting professionals when it comes to reporting volunteer impact in financial statements. The study evaluates the current reporting practices of 506 nonprofits regarding the subjects of measurement and disclosure of

volunteer services. The results show only 8% of those surveyed valued volunteers' time in financial statements and 6% used the data for internal purposes only (p. 337).

Furthermore, Tooley and Hooks (2020) administered an online questionnaire to volunteer coordinators to investigate perceptions and practice in the Australian nonprofit sector involving reporting volunteer impact. The study received 166 responses of the same opinion stating each volunteer program places high value on volunteer contributions; but, regrettably, impact is rarely reported. Moreover, the majority of volunteer coordinators thought it beneficial to add a statement of volunteer contributions to complement financial statements to give a more thorough representation of the organization (p. 93).

Some nonprofits resent comparing volunteer impact to dollars and argue against this type of measure saying it undervalues volunteer services (Ellis, 1999, para. 2). Burych et al. (2016) underscore Goyal-Siraj's earlier statement by asserting, "a challenge in volunteer administration is determining the best method of measurement." Kahl (2020a) explains the gap in volunteer impact reporting is between "what is meaningful and what is measured." Specifically, it is difficult to apply cost-analysis methods to volunteerism; nevertheless, an idea to consider is that one can attach the descriptors of "value and worth" to volunteers. To clarify, value equals numbers and dollars while worth relates to meaning, culture, and mission – using simplified language to describe impact might not seem so overwhelming (paras. 3-5). Ideally, the authors affirm, identifying valid measures that represent volunteer progress and outcomes will become the preferred measurement tool for the sole reason of being meaningful to the organization (p. 1).

Value and Benefits of Measuring Impact

Recruitment. Research reports various beneficial reasons to a nonprofit when the organization takes the time to measure volunteer impact – producing worthwhile and invaluable

outcomes. The *Volunteer Management Report* (2018), touches on the importance of tracking and sharing data to help to increase volunteer retention. The research stresses the importance of volunteers feeling valued. However, some nonprofit organizations will still underestimate a volunteer program categorizing it as an “optional extra,” although often nonprofits share that volunteer contributions are “priceless,” (Cordery & Narraway, 2010, p. 341). As a result, when data is collected and the meaningful role of volunteers is publicly shared, an increased sense of purpose and responsibility are sparked in a volunteer. In this way, volunteer impact reporting serves as a recognition tool that uses data to communicate how volunteers’ impact makes a difference not only in someone’s life but also with organizational perception and the volunteer themselves (p. 6). Furthermore, measuring volunteer impact gauges satisfaction which will guarantee a more profound relationship between the volunteer and the organization (Venzin, 2021, p. 5).

Retention. Equally important, an *Introduction to Volunteer Impact* (2018), reports that when contributions of volunteers are recognized, retention is increased within the program. In fact, the report shares, as cited in “Volunteer Canada’s 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study,” 80% of volunteers desired to be informed of the impact caused by their volunteer service. When nonprofits do not acknowledge volunteer impact, good volunteers feel “underappreciated or unnoticed” and likely will leave the organization (Volunteer Toronto, p. 3).

Philanthropy. Similarly, Fidelity Charitable (2020) assessed 1,842 adults in the United States to understand the role between volunteer impact and philanthropy. The study reveals that 89% of donors are passively involved with their most favored charity, in addition to supporting financially (p. 8). Yet, most donors – 53%, contribute to a charity with a monetary donation first before committing to volunteer service, while 39% are more likely to volunteer initially before

making a financial contribution (p. 3). Likewise, Pidgeon (1998) emphasizes that there is a deep correlation between individuals who volunteer to higher levels of financial commitment given to the organization; a very engaged volunteer is more compelled to support the mission with large gifts because of positive, meaningful volunteer experiences. In effect, nonprofits need to be cultivating volunteers as those are the individuals who have a vested interest and will be eager donors (pp. 116-117).

Most importantly, volunteer impact reporting gathers key data that can be useful in grant writing, gift proposals and even in today's popular social media posts that inspire and raise public awareness about the organization and its mission (Venzin, 2021, p. 5). To demonstrate, the "Volunteer Impact Report" (2014) recognizes 17% of respondents reported a key advantage of measuring impact increased both grant and donor funding because the impact report inspired giving (VolunteerMatch, 2014).

Communicating Volunteer Impact

Research suggests the most widespread method used to report volunteer impact usually can be found within a nonprofit organization's annual report. To be clear, annual reports serve as a vital means of communication to show accountability and transparency to stakeholders, donors and the community (Gordon et al., 2010, p. 209). Research identifies multiple ways to share impact including: (1) stories of volunteer impact in the lives of others; (2) mission moments at board meetings; and (3) simple infographics that highlight outcomes. These suggested communication methods extend both to an internal and external audience of an organization (Volunteer Management Report, 2019, p. 4). In general, generating a combination of quantitative and qualitative data will share the most meaningful and powerful impact.

Research further recommends creating an annual volunteer impact report separate from the traditional annual report to specifically promote the work of an organization's volunteers. This specialized report can be used as a marketing, recognition and resource tool as it proves to leadership the importance and impact of a volunteer program, assists with stewardship of volunteers and demonstrates to the community how the organization can be supported. Overall, it features the impact and value that volunteers bring to an organization. Today, annual reports can be printed as a publication or digitally allowing many individuals to have access to the information (Volunteer Management Report, 2021a, p. 7).

Conclusion and Next Steps

Generally speaking, volunteer impact reporting is a novel topic in the nonprofit sector. Even though research has demonstrated methods of how nonprofits measure, track and report volunteer impact, it is still not fully understood how impact data is being utilized in connection with organizational goals. Today, it is essential for an organization to be transparent to its stakeholders and supporters although volunteers' impact seems a minor part of the conversation (Goyal-Siraj, 2014, para. 6). Smith and Ellis (2003) claim, "It is no longer sufficient simply to assert that volunteering is a good thing" (p. 52). Many, like grantees, donors, and even other volunteers, are questioning volunteer impact and asking for accountability of volunteer contributions.

As research has shared, frequently, volunteer impact reporting is singularly focused on economic value or cost savings to an organization. However, this method paints only a portion of the real picture of volunteer contributions. Further research and conversation are necessary in order to educate nonprofit leaders that all forms of impact data from volunteer contributions should be reviewed and considered with the intention to support strategic objectives. Additional

research would underscore that collecting data and keeping good and consistent records will provide a general understanding of volunteer performance as it aligns with the mission and influence outcomes for an organization (Goyal-Siraj, 2014, paras. 6 & 10).

Interestingly, another topic that needs more exploration is how to articulate volunteer impact. Kahl (2020b) questions, “. . .if nonprofits could identify the “right” volunteer metrics, then nonprofit leaders could justify investing in volunteerism. . . someone shares a high-impact volunteer story it is hard to translate into numbers – the realization to contemplate is that it is more expansive to think about *capturing* volunteer impact than *measuring* it” (paras. 1-3). However, numbers get the attention of leaders and boards, and quantitative data provides the metrics of value. There is a need to study how qualitative measures of volunteer impact can also show value and become a best practice. Appropriately, for volunteer impact reporting to be accepted as a means to influence outcomes, it is imperative that research continues to identify further methods to associate qualitative data as impact. The topic of what information to measure that will identify volunteer impact seems significant. Thus, a recommendation to nonprofit professionals, especially nonprofit accountants, is to form consistent measures to value volunteer impact from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives with the intention for consistent use across the sector.

Research Study Expectations

I believe implementing both quantitative and qualitative measures to track volunteer impact will prove valuable to the excellence, scope and results of a volunteer program. I hope to bring attention and generate conversation as to the significance of measuring, tracking and reporting volunteer impact. In my study, I aim to show how measuring volunteer impact directly influences outcomes for nonprofits. Also, I seek to understand why some nonprofits do not

perceive volunteer impact reporting to be of importance or a priority to the nonprofit. Most importantly, I anticipate when volunteer impact is transparent, it will help to guide the strategic plan and goal setting by the organization. Hence, the value of volunteer contributions will be taken seriously by leadership and stakeholders across the organization. Overall, I want to demonstrate that investing in volunteer impact reporting can lead to enhancing community alignment, mission, philanthropy, and patient and volunteer experiences.

Materials and Methods

This study examines the question – How does measuring volunteer impact directly influence outcomes for an organization, specifically for healthcare nonprofits? My particular interest in healthcare nonprofits stems from the crucial role volunteers have in a healthcare setting. Volunteers add value to the delivery of quality patient care and can enhance patient satisfaction and experience. This study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how and why some nonprofits overlook volunteer impact reporting and fail to see the overall impact that volunteering brings to an organization. In addition, this study will introduce best practices of nonprofits who are reporting impact and how communicating impact makes a positive difference in organizational outcomes.

This chapter will first discuss the characteristics of the organizations and the participants that were invited to participate in the research study. For example, types of information that will be introduced include organizational age and established representation in the community along with current position and work experience of the participant and features of each volunteer program. Next, the chapter will describe the protocol and analysis of the study as well as explain some elements of limitations. Lastly, themes, behaviors and challenges of the research study

will be presented and discussed to show how volunteer impact reporting is being utilized at local healthcare nonprofits.

Participants

Participants include five nonprofit healthcare organizations located in the Richmond, Virginia area or surrounding counties. All five nonprofits operate robust volunteer programs. All organizations are well known in the nonprofit sector and were established in the 1950s or earlier. Each participant interviewed either leads the volunteer program as a director or coordinator and/or serves in a multi-task role with volunteer management as one of his/her daily responsibilities. All of the programs in the study have volunteers ranging from 300 to 750 members annually (this range is pre-Covid). Participants were recruited by a direct email or by snowball sampling to take part in a research study that examines the components of measuring, tracking and communicating volunteer impact. All have been employed by their organizations for more than three years and represent over 35+ years of volunteer management experience. Due to their professional position at each organization along with the significant amount of volunteer experience, the participants provided valuable firsthand information as well as unique perspectives on the topic. In addition, most of the participants serve on other nonprofit boards and/or are members of professional nonprofit volunteer association.

Protocol

The study inquiry methods were submitted to the University of Richmond's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for compliance. Upon review of research procedures, recruitment process, consent form and interview questions, the IRB approved implementation of the study.

The research method used for this study was semi-structured interviews to collect mostly qualitative data. The participants were asked the same series of predetermined open-ended

questions to gather information. On the day before the interview, the participant received a subset of questions by email to familiarize themselves with topic expectations. See Table 4 for sample set of interview questions and Appendix D for full set of questions. The questions followed a particular sequence based on responses given. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 to 45 minutes virtually via the Zoom platform; the interviews were recorded.

Procedure

Prior to meeting, the participant gave consent by completing and returning a signed form. Then each consent form was assigned an identification number for anonymity and confidentiality purposes. The participants will be referred to within the study as respondent: AP, BP, CP, DP, EP and the organization as A, B, C, D, E to correspond with interviewee. Participants joined the interview using the virtual Zoom platform at their requested scheduled time. When joining the interview, the participant was welcomed and thanked for his/her involvement in the study. Next, the participant was made aware that the interview was being recorded. All interviewees provided thorough responses and were very engaged during the conversation. Four out of five participants sent further information to share to include the names of nonprofit volunteer coordinators to contact, along with a sample of the organization's impact report and/or data sheet. One interviewee asked for the results of the study so that the information could be presented at future professional volunteer conferences. Approximately 20 to 26 questions were answered with some questions being directly asked to the participant; other questions were addressed naturally as the participant was allowed to share openly and candidly.

Table 4*Sample Set of Case Study Interview Questions*

Question 1.	Please share a little about yourself and your organization.
Question 2.	How do you use the volunteers? Share some examples of the jobs performed by volunteers.
Question 3.	What is your perception of the value of volunteers to the organization's culture and mission?
Question 4.	What does measuring the impact of volunteering mean to you?
Question 5.	Have you heard of volunteer impact reporting?
Question 6.	Does your program collect and maintain records about volunteering?
Question 7.	Does your organization report volunteer impact?
Question 8.	What challenges do you face collecting impact data?
Question 9.	How does the organization benefit from measuring volunteer impact?
Question 10.	How does your organization communicate volunteer impact internally/externally?

Analysis

A content analysis categorized responses by question and analyzed the data based on themes, patterns and reactions provided by participants. Codes were developed to help make sense of the data and link elements together to identify certain behaviors, activities and meanings. See Appendix F for coding transcription exhibit. An extraordinary amount of qualitative data was recorded which gives a general understanding of volunteer impact reporting at each nonprofit along with valuable input of how volunteer engagement supports the organization resulting in more benefits than detriments. At the end of the interview meeting, each participant was informed that he/she would receive a copy of the final paper to share the results and findings of this research study.

Limitations

This study has some limitations, and the reader is cautioned that the findings reported in this study are qualitative and not quantitative in nature. The study was designed to explore how participants perceive and utilize volunteer impact data at their organization based on their interpretations rather than actual documented procedures and/or methods. Also, the participants represent a small sampling of relevant healthcare nonprofit organizations from a specific area and therefore are not statistically representative of the all-inclusive nonprofit sector. A further limitation includes the modest amount of time to conduct the study. Thus, a more detailed and comprehensive research study would have allowed for a greater number of participants as well as extended interview times for lengthier conversations to allow for more in-depth responses.

Findings

The primary objective of this research study was to identify how healthcare nonprofits implement volunteer impact reporting; specifically, how these nonprofits collect, measure and track impact, at what lengths the results were communicated, and finally in what ways results influenced outcomes. This section gives a detailed description of the data collected by the study and is organized by themes that surfaced during the analysis. See Conceptual Map 1 for recurring themes identified in analysis.

Volunteer Impact Reporting Overview

When asked if the organization reports volunteer impact, all organizations interviewed affirmed that each was collecting, measuring and reporting impact data. Largely, the collecting and recording of data is conducted by the respondents themselves and/or assisted by a volunteer(s). Some have a designated staff member to help track and record the data, but for the most part, volunteers help to collect, record and create reports. In addition, all respondents stated

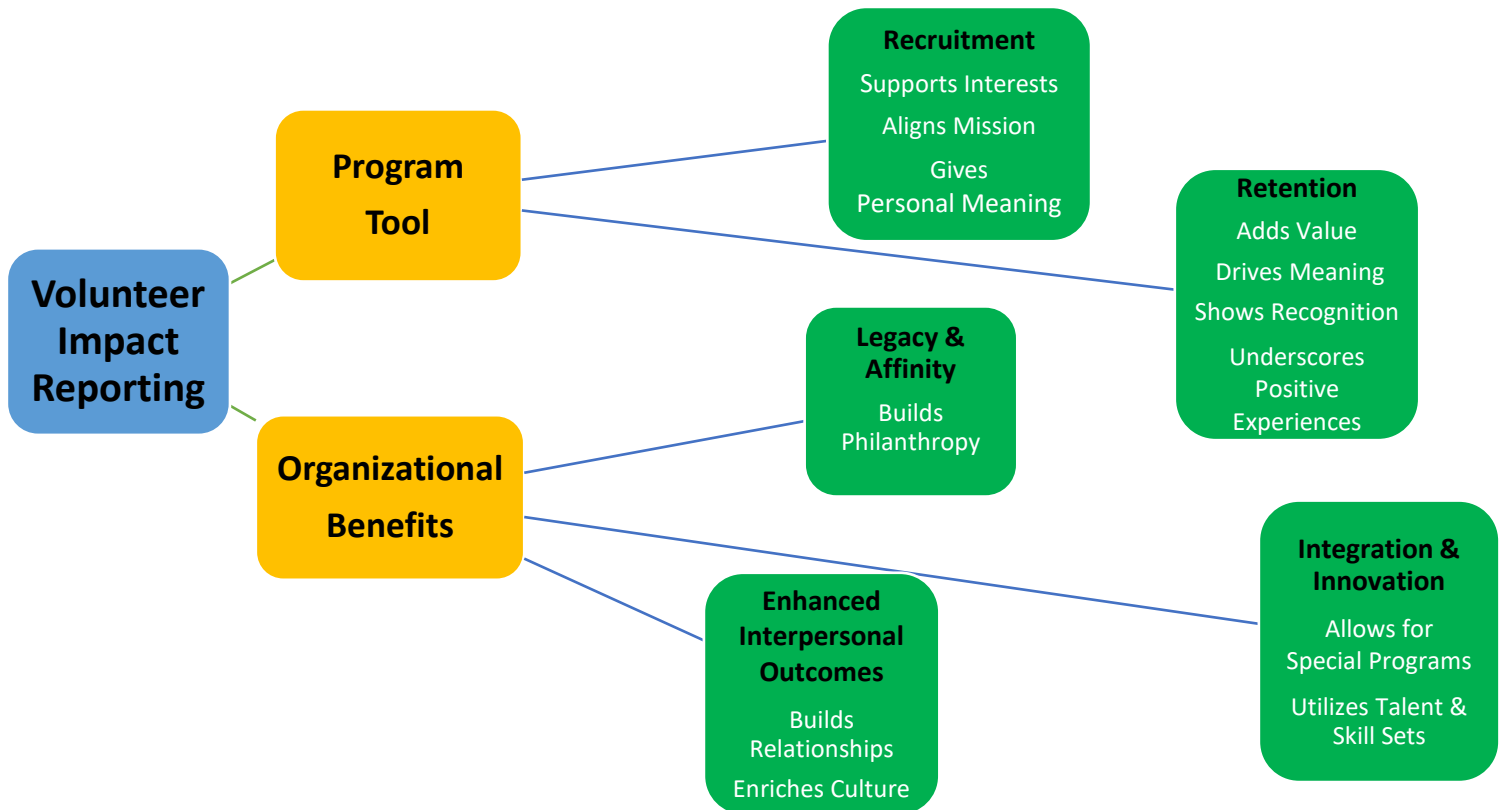
that data collected is recorded in a software system, such as Vologistics, E-Tapestry or Clinical Works to track hours and tasks; excel spreadsheets are also used to track specific projects and/or care visits by volunteers or volunteer teams. The respondents informed that measuring impact usually occurs either quarterly or annually depending on the reporting process. EP respondent underscored, “Being in direct services nonprofit, I do not know how you would determine success if you did not measure impact.”

Notably, the data that is being collected and tracked consistently across all five organizations includes: number of volunteers, hours worked, areas/departments served along with number of patients/clients/members impacted, the volunteer retention rate, orientation onboarding days and a dollar value of volunteers. Regarding value, all respondents admitted to reporting volunteer return on investment using a best practice – the standard calculation formula instituted by the Independent Sector to value volunteer engagement per hour (number of volunteer hours times the estimated hourly rate which currently averages around \$28.00). With caution, all respondents inserted even though “we” track the value of volunteers in terms of financial impact, it is not a replacement value – meaning, that the dollar amount is not taken from the budget necessarily. It was explained that volunteers are viewed differently and are not labeled as fulltime employees. Specifically, AP respondent expressed that volunteer value is seen/felt when administration or higher ups and staff experience the benefit personally. If “they” get help personally from a volunteer, especially in a crucial moment, it impacts them directly.

By the same token, volunteers have impact that is not measurable, such as interactions with staff, patients, clients and members. These exchanges are collected and shared through stories. In particular, BP respondent replied, “I cannot get enough stories,” and EP respondent reacted, “We have a weekly summary snapshot like a newsletter sharing a volunteer, patient or

program story – we always try to highlight a volunteer to keep those relationships in front of staff.” In addition, sharing of stories allows for recognition to let the volunteer know the difference being made and the impact he/she has helped to demonstrate. DP respondent adds, “Sharing stories is an easy connection to sharing impact.”

Primarily, the collection of data happens throughout the year and results are presented at the year end to mainly internal stakeholders. Volunteer impact data is communicated in different ways at each of the organizations. A couple of the respondents explained that impact data results are used internally via power point presentations or dashboards to senior administration and/or boards of directors. Others concurred that results mostly are shared internally with only highlights shared externally, like on a website, during volunteer recruitment or in the organization’s annual report. Three of the organizations create a publication; two produce a one-pager showing impact data by using infographics while the other organization designs a specific volunteer publication. See Appendix E for a sample of a one-pager publication. The C organization did reveal that even though a one-pager is used, it feels more like a report of “outcomes” than “impact,” but, at least, a highlight for the program. The C organization is presently discussing an impact publication for the future. Likewise, CP respondent added volunteer impact data is also used in grant applications. Respondent BP also stated volunteer impact data helps to get funding from national foundations to support projects. In general, volunteer impact reports are shared externally and internally as well as for recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Conceptual Map 1 - Identified Themes Associated with Case Study Analysis**Volunteer Impact and the Volunteer Program.**

Recruitment and Retention. Without volunteers, the healthcare services that many communities rely upon could not be delivered by the organizations interviewed. Therefore, volunteer recruitment and retention enable organizations to fill this need for the community. All respondents emphasized the influence of volunteer impact reporting directly on the organization's volunteer program is seen largely through the strategies of recruitment and retention. Each respondent discussed how impact data shared with prospective volunteers provides a resource tool to highlight the significant difference volunteers make at the organization as well as the benefits to the volunteer. As respondent DP suggested, "Sharing

impact will help new volunteers understand your organization and grasp that the giving of time is worthwhile in a meaningful way.”

Likewise, volunteer impact data is used as a means for volunteer retention. Most respondents explained that volunteer impact is presented at volunteer recognition events and/or annual appreciation luncheons. Respondent EP said, “. . .the ability to see our volunteers helping our patients – I think is really important. Our volunteers have an opportunity to see it because our communications are tailored to highlight and thank our volunteers for what they do to serve our patients.” Plus, tracking certain outcomes specific to the volunteer program could expose a gap in service and allow for adjustment of the program. For instance, respondent CP described a recent situation or opportunity where the impact data identified a need to hire a second person to assist volunteer services; without the data collection and analysis that position might not have been made possible.

Additionally, four of the five respondents admit to collecting outcomes to measure the volunteer program by surveying the volunteers. Mainly, the data collected to measure impact reference to operations is not used to adjust the volunteer program per se. However, results from the volunteer surveys demonstrate impact, especially determining engagement along with volunteer experience. Following analysis of annual survey results, each volunteer program is reviewed for improvement or adjustments. CP respondent shared, “We also conduct surveys with volunteers to collect data of our program and really pay attention to staff feedback.” Respondents also shared that following a survey, a volunteer committee forms to discuss findings, positive and negative, and then will develop a plan to increase/improve the volunteer experience.

Volunteer Impact and the Organization

Legacy and Affinity. The five healthcare organizations interviewed concur that volunteers serve as a significant part of operations and provide added-value services that could not be offered without volunteers. Over the years, volunteer commitments have given viability to the participating organizations of this study which became very evident during the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, all of these organizations were left without their backbone of volunteers which decreased programming and shutdown some services. The main charge to volunteers at each organization is to assist staff with a variety of tasks and responsibilities by adding value to services provided as well as connecting the community to its mission. In some instances, these organizations have been able to expand and enhance services because of volunteer participation. As stated by respondent CP, “People want to give back and are looking for opportunities to do something to help others,” and from respondent AP, “volunteering provides purpose both to an individual, community and organization – it is taking care of each other.” All shared in general, that most volunteers commit for extended periods of time; the commitment to an organization could last decades.

Essentially, all respondents agreed that “. . . a lot of volunteers end up giving back both of time and financially.” One respondent highlighted that 60% to 75% of volunteers are donors and some of the time donors become volunteers. A nonprofit’s volunteers can be some of the most dedicated, lifelong donors to an organization if volunteer impact is acknowledged and appreciated. The more volunteers feel that their time and efforts are leading to real change, the more likely that a volunteer is willing to continue to give time and contribute financially.

Integration and Innovation. The duties and responsibilities performed by volunteers at each organization are described by two types: episodic and general. Episodic volunteers are

defined as individuals who volunteer to complete one project or event, like replanting flower beds or planning an annual fundraising event. General volunteers are those individuals who supplement staff by providing administrative support and are serving in a more traditional volunteer role, such as greeters at the main information desk, answering phones, delivering flowers, or assisting nursing staff with discharges. Additionally, volunteers also assist with program support; for example, leading an ESL program, a dental program or helping clients/members/patients sign up for Medicare when he/she ages out of the program. Obviously, volunteers bring impact to a nonprofit by performing duties that add value to a client/member/patient experience. AP respondent shares, “Volunteers are used to comfort patients, but also, they are there for the staff to make their jobs a little easier so they can spend more time doing quality things. Volunteers do not serve for a paycheck but to help. Most of the volunteers go above and beyond - it amazes me every day.”

Hence, when recruiting volunteers all respondents conveyed that they review skill sets to determine where the best fit in the organization might be for each volunteer to achieve greatest impact of his/her time commitment. In fact, a few unique positions that have been created as a result of strength in skills were shared in the interviews. For example, AP recently recruited a former administrative law judge who focused on social security disability; this recruit will be a perfect patient advocate for the A organization. Therefore, organizational leadership must recognize and recruit specialized skill sets and talents that they may not otherwise be able to afford, to help achieve impact and influence outcomes.

Furthermore, it was learned that all respondents report to a senior leader or are a part of the senior team; his/her input of the volunteer program is seen as important and significant. In fact, constant conversations between respondents and administrative leaders occur often

regarding how volunteers are utilized throughout the organization. For respondent EP, volunteers are a component of E organization's strategic plan; of the four pillars -- one pillar is volunteerism. There were only two organizations that aligned the volunteer program with strategic outcomes. EP continued, "Our board looks at our impact dashboard regularly, every other month and displayed on the dashboard is a section about volunteer impact; specifically, retention and targets involving top volunteer needs."

Enhanced Interpersonal Outcomes. Throughout all interviews the most popular theme was how volunteer impact enhanced interpersonal outcomes. All respondents shared the same opinion that volunteers increase the quality of services or programs that an organization provides. For example, AP respondent spoke about two newly created volunteer initiatives that have enhanced patient outcomes. The first is a safety program where volunteers educate and collect data on fall prevention with patients. AP specified that comparing the number of patient falls prior to the execution of the safety program reflected a reduce in falls by 10% in one year. The second program implemented was a patient response initiative where volunteers assist nurses in answering call bells. AP reminds, "We have people coming with these incredible skills and we should take advantage of the skill set to influence outcomes and patient experience." Thus, all respondents explained that without a volunteer impact report tool, administrative leaders and boards would not understand the valuable resource of volunteers and it would just be considered another "good" program.

Next, important to respondent BP are the meaningful stories shared by volunteers to the members of B organization. BP feels the compassion and empathy volunteers show members is simply phenomenal. The connections and relationships inspired solely from storytelling is impactful to member experience. CP respondent, agreed, "We are paying particular attention to

make sure volunteers know how meaningful their commitment is to the organization – sharing stories with volunteers to our members and what their service meant is impactful itself.”

However, AP noted, “I think impact reporting is good, but I think it needs to be interspersed with some subjective material.” So, one can conclude that both quantitative and qualitative data are both significant in volunteer impact reporting.

Another example of enhanced interpersonal outcomes is highlighted by EP respondent, “Leadership would agree, we could not do what we do without volunteers. Volunteers are part of the culture, and we make sure our staff recognizes the importance of volunteers.” As a result, volunteer impact reporting connects many stakeholders to the bigger picture. An organization’s culture is influenced by many different factors, including people, leadership and transparent communications. Many of the respondents underscored how volunteers build relationships amongst the staff and their clients/members/patients. Consequently, this type of impact really cannot be measured.

Challenges

Some of the frustrations faced by the respondents include the distribution of volunteer impact data internally. Respondent AP explains, “Not all of our staff get to see or read about volunteer impact. It takes time to convince staff the importance of it [volunteer impact], some are convinced it is really not added value.” Other challenges include complications and transitions of software systems; it becomes time consuming especially when the respondents are the ones entering and managing the data. Similarly, utilizing the volunteer database to full potential is also a struggle. For example, one respondent is managing two systems, tracking donors and volunteers. Since, as mentioned previously, volunteers usually become donors or vice versa, having the ability to have one individual record will serve as a more consistent and

reliable method. Also, as discussed by respondent EP, having a constant and defined system of how data is exported and tracked within the database is important. EP shared, “Some reports are run quarterly and if it is a different person pulling the results – unfortunately, the report may be processed differently – nothing is documented.” Thus, consistency in measuring and tracking data is essential to volunteer impact reporting.

Conclusion

In summary, this study identifies two main themes that directly influence outcomes when volunteer impact reporting occurs. The first theme influences outcomes for the volunteer program itself by acknowledging the two strategic areas of retention and recruitment. Purposefully, volunteer impact is used as a resource tool during recruitment to share the personal experiences encountered by volunteers as well as how volunteers support the mission of the organization; this is done mostly by way of storytelling but also includes quantitative measures illustrated in the form of an infographic one-pager showcasing the work done by volunteers. See Appendix E for the infographic one-pager example. For retention, volunteer impact data is applied to adjust or improve the program by exposing gaps or opportunities in services. Thus, impact data helps to develop the annual strategic plan of a volunteer program.

Next, the second theme involves benefits to an organization, particularly emphasizing three ways that directly affect outcomes through the ideas of: (1) legacy and affinity; (2) integration and innovation; and (3) enhanced interpersonal outcomes. These themes demonstrate the added value volunteers bring to an organization via financial support, use of special talent and skill sets, and the ability to build and inspire relationship with all stakeholders of a nonprofit. Thus, this study, without question, supports that by measuring, reporting and communicating

volunteer impact, organizational outcomes are directly influenced in a variety of significant ways.

The final chapter of this study will share personal thoughts and opinions as to how the findings contributes to the broader knowledge and understanding of volunteer impact reporting. Specifically, useful implications to the nonprofit sector, leadership and to the volunteer program on the importance of implementing a method that measures, reports and communicates volunteer impact. It will also inform of suggested future research initiatives for tracking and recognizing volunteer impact.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how measuring volunteer impact at healthcare nonprofits directly influences organizational outcomes. Volunteer contributions significantly impact an organization directly through strategic areas, such as: cost effectiveness, innovative programs, advocacy, relationships, as well as attracting new donors and increasing donations. The study identified tangible ways the organizations determined impact, collected data, and then how findings with key stakeholders were shared to verify the power and appreciation of volunteer impact. Thus, the findings of this study support the assumption that when an organization measures, tracks and communicates volunteer impact, it can be beneficial and valuable by enhancing patient, volunteer and organizational outcomes, along with producing mutual positive experiences for all.

Summary of Discoveries

The findings of this study emphasized that all interviewed healthcare nonprofits measure, track and communicate volunteer impact within their organization. The results confirmed use of some type of methods and systems to collect and organize the data. In addition, there were

consistencies in the types of impact data collected. However, each organization does track and gather a variety of different measures based on program offerings and services. It is not surprising to share that all organizations concur that reporting both quantitative and qualitative data is necessary to communicate volunteer impact. The results of this study provide supporting evidence that volunteer impact reporting does have direct influence on outcomes involving two key areas: (1) as a program tool to recruit and retain volunteers; and (2) as organizational benefits regarding enhanced interpersonal outcomes, legacy and affinity, integration and innovation.

The most compelling finding was the discussion of the unmeasurable or qualitative data of volunteer impact. Specifically, the interactions and relationship building that occurs between the volunteers and patients/members/clients along with staff. The interviews presented countless accounts of volunteers' compassion and dedication across various levels of the organization and the positive effects exhibited. In particular, the instances disclosed emphasized the significance and the power of story telling. Recounting these volunteer impact stories underscored the emotional aspect of why an organization implements a volunteer program and proved how volunteers assist to enrich the culture.

Consequently, if volunteer impact reporting were not happening within nonprofits, then many, to include both internal and external stakeholders, would not understand how volunteers support the staff and boost patient healing directly; by limiting the reporting to only numerical data, it is difficult to touch someone personally. Furthermore, the findings also recognized the creative and innovative ways that volunteer skill sets are utilized throughout the organization; these results demonstrated how having innovative and unique tasks performed by volunteers influence and/or enhance outcomes.

Relating the Findings to Previous Research

The patterns of findings are consistent with the previous literature introduced in this study which concluded that several nonprofits are collecting data to measure the value and impact of volunteer service (VolunteerMatch, 2014). Additionally, the data contributes to the idea that reporting volunteer contributions to a wide-ranging audience will allow for visibility, accountability and legitimacy of the organization displaying its positive impact and expanding stakeholder support (Tooley & Hooks, 2020, p. 106). The results also correspond with research indicating that all interviewed organizations are using the two most popular cumulative figures to track volunteer impact to include: (1) number of volunteers serving the organization; and (2) total hours volunteers work to calculate a cost value (Burych et al., 2016, p.2; Nonprofit World, 2021, p. 30-31; VolunteerMatch, 2014). As previously stated and research concedes, the findings also warned that drawing attention to a measure of economic value might indicate “wage replacement” which research signifies is a controversial topic in the nonprofit sector as this type of measurement can undervalue volunteer services (Ellis, 1999, para. 2). All interviewed participants, report tracking some type of financial figure to represent overall volunteer service, but the method is inconsistent as each nonprofit presents the cost-value representation differently.

Moreover, the strongest findings referred that when volunteer impact is recognized and communicated, it contributes to the recruitment and retention of the program itself. Research states publicly sharing volunteer impact increases a sense of purpose, shows recognition and provides a meaningful tool to help the organization align the program with overall strategic initiatives (Venzin, 2021, p. 5). These findings build on the existing evidence to support the importance of volunteer impact reporting because it drives the perceptions of both the

organization and the volunteer; without reporting volunteer impact, positive outcomes would not be recognized.

Implications of the Study

For the Nonprofit Sector. The findings underscore the significance of demonstrating how measuring, reporting and communicating volunteer impact will influence outcomes for an organization. The study encourages other nonprofits to strengthen current practices or even establish processes to measure and collect impact data that will help to inform strategic decisions, and potentially, increase philanthropy. From the study, it was concluded that unless volunteers receive visibility, leadership's attention and a comprehensive understanding that their commitment of time is creating impact, the eventual result may be a meaningless experience leading to volunteer resignation; volunteers need to be part of the culture. Thus, integrate volunteers in the work done by the organization, include volunteers in organizational meetings, show gratitude of volunteer contributions and celebrate the impact that transpires because of one's gift of time.

For Leadership. As findings suggest, if volunteer impact is not shared consistently and appropriately it could negatively affect volunteer as well as the community perception of the organization, and in time the organization may begin to experience a decline in individual giving as well as grant funding. Hence, a nonprofit's leadership drives the priorities of the organization which sets the tone for volunteer involvement. Additionally, nonprofit professionals need to understand the important and significant role that volunteers play in the success of an organization. Today, there is much competition for volunteer commitments. Thus, the need to recruit and retain volunteers is associated with volunteer impact reporting and should be forefront in an organization's priorities. One way to act immediately is for leadership to extend

participation to the volunteer coordinator/manager or program director to be part of the executive team. This will allow for direct conversation as to how volunteer impact aligns with the mission and goals of the organization, and ultimately, provides representation of volunteers at the highest level.

For the Practice. The findings encourage and challenge professionals to continue to be trailblazers when leading volunteer programs. For this reason, finding creative and inspiring ways to measure volunteer impact, rather than just reporting on the number of volunteers and hours, helps to drive motivations, evaluation and accountability of the program. Specifically, look for ways to leverage volunteers in meaningful work in relation to the mission, use impact data to motivate and inspire others as well as make a case to internal stakeholders and funders to invest in volunteer engagement. Hence, consider using the balanced scorecard method to help inform decisions from a more balanced perspective. Finally, continue to recognize the incredible work provided by volunteers by communicating volunteer impact by partnering with other departments, such as marketing or development to get volunteer impact stories shared in publications as well as on social media platforms.

Future Research

Much education and awareness remain to be done before the extent of how volunteer impact reporting influences outcomes for an organization can be understood. There is a need to define volunteer impact consistently across the nonprofit sector to determine what measures and/or data categorizes “outputs” versus “impact.” The study findings reveal a grey area for some of the participants who defined impact very differently from the others; so, having a best practice of reporting and defining volunteer impact will acknowledge a more universal method.

Likewise, it is imperative to conduct more research on why the use of volunteer impact data is utilized and distributed more as an internal resource tool and, unfortunately, not really published or shared to the same degree externally. As noted, and discussed, volunteer impact data is used extensively in retention and recruitment, however that is only specific to the program's collateral material and beneficial to the program's success. The study indicated that only a couple of the organizations had an external publication dedicated solely to volunteer impact. It can be concluded that only sharing with internal stakeholders limits the big picture of volunteer impact to the community.

Additionally, further research is needed to determine if a designed approach is recommended to track volunteer accomplishments. For example, research presented the Volunteer Resources Balanced Scorecard method created by Kaplan and Norton. This specific approach displays outcomes and impact of volunteers and how those tracked measures align with the vision, mission and strategic plan of the organization. The findings considered the possibility of an essential best practice to report volunteer impact. It would be interesting to learn if a systematic way to track volunteer impact data existed (and identify as a best practice) how this might increase data collection and reporting efforts.

Conclusion

In summary, my research asserts that without volunteers nonprofits would not effectively conduct business, facilitate programs, raise philanthropic funds or serve patient/client/member population. The findings contribute to a growing body of evidence that supports the need to implement volunteer impact reporting. These findings correlate with what research shares about trending best practices and the challenges to reporting volunteer impact. Although the generality of the current findings must be further supported by future research, the present study has

provided strong support for volunteer impact reporting. Clearly, this study has shown how volunteers add much more to an organization than just an extra pair of hands. Evidence shows it takes both quantitative and qualitative data to confirm impact. Then, the end results should be publicly and proudly shared with internal and external audiences to showcase the positive impacts for the organization. To summarize, volunteers bring expertise, community networks, credibility and quality care to an organization's most critical initiatives. As a result, and to leverage community assets, it is time to start measuring, reporting and communicating volunteer impact.

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Appendix A

Example of True Dollar Value of Volunteers Worksheet

<i>FROM THE TOP DOWN/ELLIS</i>	<i>165</i>
TRUE DOLLAR VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS WORKSHEET	
Volunteer Job Title: _____	
I. Equivalent Salaried Job Classification <i>(Based on a comparison of the tasks and responsibilities described in the volunteer job description with those of an equivalent employee.)</i>	
Equivalent Salaried Job Title: _____	
II. Annual Salary for Equivalent Salaried Classification: \$ _____	
III. Value of Benefits Package:	
FICA	\$ _____
Health Insurance	_____
Life Insurance	_____
Workers Compensation Insurance	_____
Retirement	_____
Other Benefits:	_____
Total Value of Benefits:	\$ _____
IV. Annual Salary + Benefits Package = TOTAL ANNUAL COMPENSATION PACKAGE: \$ _____	
V. Established Annual Work Hours for Agency: _____ hours/week X 52 weeks = _____ hours	
VI. Hours Paid but Not Worked Annually:	
Annual Leave	_____ hours
Paid Holidays	_____
Paid Sick Leave	_____
Total Hours Paid/Not Worked:	_____
VII. Established Annual Hours - Hours Paid but Not Worked = ACTUAL WORK HOURS ANNUALLY: _____ hours	
VIII. TOTAL ANNUAL COMPENSATION PACKAGE ÷ ACTUAL WORK HOURS ANNUALLY =	
TRUE DOLLAR VALUE OF EACH HOUR OF VOLUNTEER TIME IN THIS JOB DESCRIPTION: \$ _____	

Note. Reprinted from *From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success* (p. 165), Ellis, S., 1996.

Appendix B

Scorecard Vocabulary

Terminology that is helpful to use as elements of a balanced scorecard.

TERM	DEFINITION
Vision Statement	The vision statement articulates what an organization wants to achieve in the long-term future.
Mission	The organization's mission defines its present purpose in working toward its vision: what it does, who it does it for and how it does what it does.
Strategic Plan	A detail road map for the organization to work toward its mission. It usually focuses on the next three years.
Perspectives	Key components of an organization's work, usually divided into 4 elements that must be balanced for organization to be successful in meeting mission.
Goals	Broad statements that clearly articulate desired accomplishments.
Objectives	Break down a goal into actionable and measurable steps, usually within a concrete time frame. More than one objective may be developed to support a specific goal.
Activities	Specific tasks or actions that need to be done to reach identified objectives.
Indicators	Allow monitoring of results or progress in working toward a goal; clearly defined, measurable and comparable over time.
Targets	An aimed-for output from a process or result from a measurement; are attainable and used to gauge whether or not you are on track toward accomplishing the stated objective or goal.
Logic Model	A systematic and visual way to create effective indicators using concepts such as inputs, outputs and outcomes.
Inputs	Any resources deployed to achieve a desired result.
Outputs	The measurable results of what is produced by activities, effort or process. Show what was produced but does not reveal impact.
Outcomes	Outcomes demonstrate the impact of activities and outputs and answers the "so what" question. They demonstrate the difference being made.

Note. Reprinted from *Measuring the Impact of Volunteers* (p. 70), Burych et al., 2016.

Appendix C

Overview of the Scorecard Process

Summary of steps to implement and utilize a Volunteer Resource Balanced Scorecard.



Note. Reprinted from *Measuring the Impact of Volunteers* (p. 71), Burych et al., 2016.

Appendix D

Case Study Interview Questions

Interview Questions:

1. Please share a little bit about yourself and your organization.
2. Does your organization manage a volunteer program?
3. How many volunteers participate in your program?
4. How do you use the volunteers; share some examples of the jobs performed by volunteers.
5. Do you have a volunteer coordinator or is managing the volunteer program overseen by a person who also performs multiple duties?
6. What is your perception of the value of volunteers to the organization's culture and mission?
 - a. Why does your organization implement a volunteer program? Why is it important?
 - b. What benefits do you feel are obtained from your volunteer program to the organization? To the community? To the volunteer?
7. What does measuring the impact of volunteering mean to you?
8. Have you heard of (or are you familiar with) volunteer impact reporting?
9. Do you know if your volunteer program collects and maintains records about volunteering? What type of information is recorded? Who collects the information?
10. Does your organization report volunteer impact?
 - a. If so, what key performance indicators are used to measure?
 - i. How is the data recorded?
 - ii. How often do you measure?
 - iii. What type of tool is used to measure?
 - iv. Does your organization track and report return on investment of volunteer services?
 - v. Are there problems/challenges associated with collecting meaningful qualitative and quantitative data for measuring volunteer impact?
 - vi. Do you collect volunteer stories?
 - vii. Who manages story collecting?
 - viii. How are the stories shared?
 - ix. If the results help to enhance the volunteer program, what areas are strengthened? How about in the specific areas of?
 1. Recruitment and retention
 2. Volunteer Recognition
 - x. How about organizationally in the areas of?
 1. Fundraising
 2. Community alignment
 - xi. Do you feel measuring volunteer impact has improved your program or is measuring impact used more towards stewardship efforts/recognize volunteer contributions?
 - xii. Name some specific ways how volunteer impact data is used within the organization.

1. Please provide specific examples of how outcomes/goals are influenced.
2. Do you feel that volunteers impact patient healing? How, provide a couple examples.
3. Do you feel that volunteers impact staff? How, provide a couple examples.
4. Do you feel that volunteers impact the organization's strategic plan? How, provide a couple examples.
- xiii. How does your organization communicate volunteer impact internally?
 1. Is a publication created and distributed?
 2. Do you share outcomes in performance reports to key stakeholders (leadership, board members, donors)?
 3. Do you report volunteer impact on financial statements?
 4. Do you share volunteer impact report results directly with the development office?
- xiv. Is volunteer impact data used to influence the organization's strategic plan or goals? If so, will you provide an example. If not, is this something you think should change?
- b. If not, why doesn't the organization report volunteer impact?
 - i. Do you manage or collect information about volunteering for internal records?
 1. If so, what is type of information is collected?
 2. Who oversees managing the data?
 3. How is it used?
 4. Do volunteers save the organization money? If so, in what areas or jobs performed provide a cost savings?
 5. Have you considered adding volunteer ROI to financial statements?
 - ii. What challenges might you be dealing with involving volunteer impact reporting?
 - iii. What might be barriers internally or externally preventing volunteer impact reporting?
 - iv. Would your organization consider implementing a volunteer impact report?
 - v. Do you think volunteer impact reporting, or the collection of impact data would be of value to your organization?
 - vi. How do you share volunteer success with the community?
 - vii. How does your organization celebrate volunteers?
11. Do you think it is important to separate the impact a volunteer has and the impact the paid staff has on members/clients/patients? And if so, why is it significant?
12. Do you mind sharing a copy of your volunteer impact report with me?

Appendix E

Example of a Volunteer Impact One-Pager Infographic

In 2021, 645 volunteers donated 11,386 hours of service to XXXXX, equivalent to \$324,956.

Event volunteers (122 volunteers/380 hours):

- Provide positive guest experience
- Allow staff to focus on guests
- Maximize fundraising dollars
- Serve as organizational ambassadors

Administrative support volunteers (35 volunteers/3368 hours):

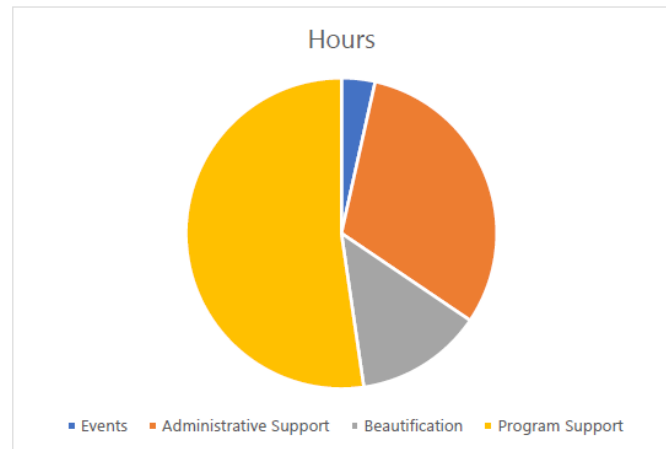
- Allow staff to build strategic capacity, enhance public presence
- Problem-solve day-to-day logistical needs in marketing, IT, event planning, workforce development, and other departments
- Allow staff to focus on big-picture projects
- Bring new ideas to strategic initiatives

Beautification volunteers (303 volunteers/1438 hours):

- Reduce contracting expenses
- Address deferred or low-priority landscaping & maintenance needs
- Create a comfortable and uplifting environment for program participants

Program support volunteers (185 volunteers/5688 hours):

- Improve staff-to-consumer ratios
- Enhance quality of life
- Expand variety & number of enrichment activities
- Allow staff to focus on high-need individuals



Examples of Valuable Volunteer Partnerships & Relationships in 2021:

- **Events:** HandsOn Greater Richmond, VolunteerMatch, South University OTA, Eta Phi Beta Sorority, Joyner Properties, Target, Truist, Second Baptist River Road, NGC
- **Administrative Support:** CNU, JTCC, ODU, Radford College, RMC, U of R (Bonner & Richmond Guarantee), VCU, Virginia Tech, SkillsConnect, HandsOn Greater Richmond, VolunteerMatch
- **Beautification:** Bill Poole/Project: Homes, Dominion Energy, Enterprise Holdings, Genworth, Keller Realty, Mason & Hanger, Southside Military Comptrollers, Sportsbackers, Truist, Second Baptist, Christ Church Epis, Trinity UMC, James River Rotary Club, Leaf Spring, RVA HandsOn Greater Richmond, VolunteerMatch, Tool Bank
- **Program Support:** EVCC OTA FWI & FWII, JTCC (Human Services), JMU Nursing, Shenandoah U (Music Therapy), South University OTA FWI, South University Physician's Assistant Master's Program, VCU OT & PT, HandsOn Greater Richmond, VolunteerMatch

Appendix F Coding Transcript Exhibit

Code	Transcript	Theme	Sub Theme
Q1	<p>LCR: Please share a little bit about yourself and your organization.</p> <p>Ap: Director of Volunteer Services; extensive experience in healthcare volunteer administration including the development of innovative placements designed to improve the patient experience which have been replicated in other sister facilities. Been with the organization for 16 years. A offers many opportunities for community members to volunteer in assisting the hospital in fulfilling its ministry of healing. It operates a handful of acute care hospitals in the local area with all having a volunteer program. Specifically, my answers will be around the hospital Ap is responsible for.</p> <p>Bp: I have been at B for three years. I started in military service and in 2012 began as a voluntary service specialist in Connecticut and then moved to Pittsburgh to become the voluntary services supervisory specialist. I served there for three years and then I went to Cleveland and took my first chief job - there for two years. I moved from there to here to be closer to my grandkids who live in Williamsburg -- this is my stop -- along with my children and my other daughter who lives in Delaware. So, I am close to my kids while my boys live out Midwest. Building on the services and working through some recent major changes.</p> <p>Cp: We are an organization that serves people with disabilities. We have been around for a really long time. I think coming up on seventy years. The organization was established in 1954. So, when we were originally established we were known as the Greater Richmond ARC Association for retarded citizens. We were very focus on development disabilities and intellectual disabilities. That changed about eight years ago when we remove developmental from our mission statement. Most of the reason for doing that is to expand our services and make them available to a greater number of people. One of our strategic goals currently is to double the amount of people served in the next three to five years. In 2019, we served 1,114 people with disabilities by 2025 increase to 3,000. One of the ways to do that was broadening our services. I have been with the C for five years.</p>	Legacy	<p>Foundation Opportunity Established Serve</p>
		Innovation	<p>Influence Relevant Profession</p>

Code	Transcript	Theme	Sub Theme
Q2	<p>LCR: Does your organization manage a volunteer program?</p> <p>Ap: Yes. Recently, A has eliminated some positions and combined programs partly because of a merger -- a lot of changes.</p> <p>Bp: Yes, B has a volunteer program but it is no longer called a volunteer program or volunteer services; we are now called Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE). Yes, we have expanded our roles quite a bit because voluntary really didn't fit everything that we handle.</p> <p>Cp: Yes</p> <p>Dp: Yes, we have a volunteer program - but it is not called a volunteer program but for semantics it is called Volunteer Resources - so we look at all of our resources -- volunteers are part of staffing and we have paid staff - that distinction is pretty clear...have you talk to Katie Campbell? One distinction she makes is not thinking of your volunteer program in a box but something separate and something integrated throughout your organization. I report to the Director of Development - there are very many models - somewhere HR manages the volunteers but I have a very different situation where I am part of senior team and I report to someone who is on senior team. I am part of Development team because this organization views volunteers as donors because of the generosity of time. Here, we know about 60 and 75% of volunteers are financial donors. Your research should say that people who volunteer become donors.</p> <p>Ep: Yes - of course, we could not operate without our volunteers - we could not serve the community like we do.</p>	Integrated	<p>Evolve Grow Collaborate Expanded Roles Traditional/NonTraditional Models</p>
		Philanthropy	<p>Giving Back Commitment of time Volunteers become Donors Donors become Volunteers</p>
		Legacy	<p>Serve</p>