The CEO Guide to Volunteer Engagement
Building Relationships, Generating Revenue, Driving Impact
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“Our volunteer programs provide many outstanding opportunities to engage with United Way—resulting in deeper connections, increased dollars to campaign, diversification of revenue sources and year-over-year growth in the number of new businesses that partner with us.”

Milton J. Little, Jr., President and CEO, United Way of Greater Atlanta
This guide will help you better understand the value of strategic volunteer engagement and key engagement practices. It includes examples of United Ways growing revenue, meeting corporate demands and improving lives through volunteer engagement. To help CEOs build a strong successful function, the guide also lays out essential and best practices for organizing and operating Volunteer Engagement in your United Way.

“Executed well, strategic volunteer engagement will build relationships, drive education, income, and health outcomes, and generate revenue, becoming a key success factor for your United Way.”

Jim Cawley, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

“Our volunteers are as essential to our United Way and community as oxygen is to human life. At every level of our organization, our volunteers are not only helping people in need, but also developing a greater desire within ourselves to improve our community.”

Bill Hulterstrom, President and CEO, United Way of Utah County
Relationship development is key to retaining, growing and reinvigorating our donor base, and achieving impact. Volunteering is a key way to engage people to deliver critical services, better understand the issues, and be connected and part of a movement that creates lasting change in our communities.

Research shows that volunteers donate 10 times more money to nonprofits than non-volunteers; 67% of them are most likely to donate where they volunteer.\(^1\) Through fee-for-service, sponsorships, grants and volunteer initiatives like Day of Action, United Ways can demonstrate relevance, diversify funding sources and grow workforce giving.

"Above and beyond their annual corporate campaign contribution, Johnson Controls, Inc. invested in a new Volunteer Engagement Center, which allows us to expand efforts that engage corporations, individuals and families through volunteering."

Mary Lou Young, CEO, United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County

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\(^1\) Fidelity® Charitable Gift Fund, Volunteerism and Charitable Giving in 2009
VOLUNTEERING DRIVES IMPACT

Money alone will not solve the problems we are trying to address. Volunteers are needed to make lasting change on a larger scale. Volunteers are high return-on-investment human capital and represent a significant resource to build capacity and drive impact.

VOLUNTEERING MEETS CORPORATE DEMAND

Research shows volunteerism is now the core around which companies are building employee engagement strategies and programs. In response to corporate demand, United Ways provide employees with opportunities to make an impact in the communities where they live and work through hands-on and skill-based services.

“As corporate partners look to have their employees engaged in impactful volunteer opportunities, it is exciting to be able to tell the 250 corporate volunteers in our Power Lunch Program that their time reading one-on-one with second and third graders weekly has resulted in 90% of these children’s teachers reporting that their students’ have improved fluency, vocabulary and confidence. Now that is corporate volunteering at its best.”

Christine Benero, President and CEO, Mile High United Way

VOLUNTEERS PROMOTES INNOVATION

The skills necessary to generate new program ideas and fundraising solutions are not exclusive to paid staff and consultants. Volunteers are often at the forefront of analyzing and responding to challenges in ways that help United Way reach its short- and long-term goals. Volunteers can address a variety of competencies too, complementing the work of staff.

VOLUNTEERING ENHANCES THE UNITED WAY BRAND

Providing quality volunteer experiences strengthens our credibility and enhances our corporate image. People who volunteer with United Way show much stronger trust (89% for volunteers vs. 68% for non-volunteers) and belief in United Way’s effectiveness in advancing the common good (90% for volunteers vs. 76% for non-volunteers) than people who did not volunteer at all.3

“Nielsen’s pro-bono analysis of our donors improved our understanding of the relationship between volunteers and donors and ultimately, helped us increase donations, recruit more volunteers and improve volunteer retention.” Robert C. Reifsnyder, President, United Way of Greater Cincinnati

3 2014 National Brand Tracker, United Way Worldwide Research
MAKING IT HAPPEN

A well designed, resourced, and integrated strategic volunteer engagement function is increasingly important to a United Way’s success.

What follows is a review of ten practices that CEOs and staff should follow to create a volunteer function that helps achieve your community goals.

ESSENTIAL PRACTICES

1. Create a discrete function that reports to the CEO or C-Suite Executive

United Ways that successfully use volunteer engagement to achieve social impact goals place the volunteer management function prominently on the organization chart as a dedicated function. Community improvement is a core CEO level concern, so it is appropriate that volunteering report to the CEO or elsewhere in the C-Suite.

2. Establish a board-level volunteer engagement committee

A volunteer engagement committee serves as an important mechanism to oversee development and implementation of volunteerism across functions and throughout the organization. United Ways have found that that board leadership keeps volunteer issues on the table.

3. Connect volunteerism to long-term goals

Volunteering, along with giving and advocating, is a core lever in United Way’s overall community improvement strategy. United Ways are better meeting long-term goals when volunteer engagement is integrated into strategic planning and execution from the outset.

“Most, if not all, of our volunteer efforts are tied to our focus areas, which allows us to further advance our mission and make an even deeper impact.”
Robert H. Brown, President and CEO, Heart of Florida United Way

“Volunteer engagement is a key component to driving our organization’s strategy forward. Increased and meaningful engagement requires integration with all departments at the leadership level. Therefore, it is important that this department is represented by one of my direct reports so that we can consistently keep the focus on how we engage with donors, partners and volunteers.”
Michelle Braun, President and CEO, United Way of Northeast Florida
### BEST PRACTICES

Once the volunteer engagement function is in place, these best practices will ensure your efforts thrive.

1. **Create a volunteer engagement culture**

   A volunteering culture means that board, senior leadership and staff understand and value the contribution volunteers make to building relationships, generating revenue and driving impact. A culture that recognizes its volunteers will attract more volunteer resources and talent.

2. **Collaborate across functions**

   Enabling collaboration across all functions, including resource development, community impact, and marketing and communications, helps focus the organization on the big picture, and promotes valuable problem solving and innovation.

3. **Offer programs that generate revenue**

   Developing volunteer experiences takes time, effort and money. Experience shows many companies will pay United Way to provide customized, high-quality volunteer services that strengthen employee engagement and align with CSR goals. Some United Ways use fee-for-service arrangements, while others secure program grants or sponsorship.

4. **Invest in staff, including training**

   A successful volunteer engagement staff cultivates and creates a variety of important relationships. It is critical that United Way recruit and develop staff with strong skills in relationship building, event planning, logistics management, and communication who collaborate and work across the organization and with external partners.

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“Our literacy kit projects have engaged volunteers from dozens of workplaces; volunteers have learned about the importance of early grade reading, and have learned about United Way’s role in addressing the issue. The projects have generated revenue beyond the cost of materials, which allows us to invest more into the community.”

**Paula S. Gilberto, President and CEO, United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut**

“Strategic volunteer engagement is most effective when it is managed as a distinct function that partners with other core United Way functions, such as Resource Development, Community Impact, and Marketing.”

**Michael K. Durkin, President and CEO, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley**
5 Invest in technology

Integrating volunteer engagement strategy and activity into relationship management tools -- and making sure they are mobile ready – improves efficiency and effectiveness. Using technology to register, check-in, follow-up and communicate with volunteers regularly will enhance engagement.

6 Leverage corporate relationships

United Ways that succeed in expanding ad hoc corporate volunteering into strong corporate partnering relationships design their employee volunteer programs to address shared social impact goals and deliver business value. Engaging corporate volunteers in community improvement strengthens employee morale, reinvigorates existing corporate relationships and recaptures lapsed ones – repositioning United Way as a valued partner.

7 Measure results

Understanding data and using metrics to make data-driven decisions are key to driving impact and generating revenue. In addition to tracking the number and type of volunteers engaged and hours served, United Ways should also show how volunteers help advance impact goals and any correlation between volunteers and donors.

“Providing opportunities for Eli Lilly employees to volunteer was a key component of our strategic partnership that focused on fundraising and measurable community impact in Central Indiana. We hope more of our corporate partners will follow their lead.”
Ann Murtlow, President and CEO, United Way of Central Indiana

“Volunteers have always been a necessary and critical resource for us and will continue to accelerate our progress toward goals for 2020.”
Mary Sellers, President, United Way of Central Iowa
CEO SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

“Our Macquarie Park Business Community Partnership is the first of its kind in Australia. Its innovative approach goes beyond traditional corporate philanthropy to include opportunities for employees to volunteer in support of children starting school ready to learn, and high school students transitioning successfully to work. 100% of our volunteers report that their experience has enhanced their view of the company who supported their participation in the program.”

Kevin Robbie, CEO, United Way Australia

“Our commitment to provide enrichment opportunities and meals for children during the summer created new opportunities for companies to engage in our work. One business decided to give of their product (breakfast meals) AND time off for their employees to volunteer at the summer meals site.”

Jean Kresse, President and CEO, United Way of Story County

“Our Volunteer Center is a great year-round engagement tool for developing new partners and deepening relationships with our current donors. Driven by our mission to improve lives through giving, advocacy, and volunteerism, we mobilized community members to tackle over 160 hands-on projects last year, bringing an additional $1 million impact beyond our campaign.”

Amanda Burt, President, United Way of Northwest Georgia

“Donations come in many forms. Time, talent and treasures are all valued, but volunteers are an especially great resource. Developing volunteers provides an opportunity to not only fulfill the volunteer, but also to fulfill a need.”

Kim Olesker, President & CEO, United Way of Porter County

“More than ever, companies seek to engage their employees and build teams as recruitment, development and retention strategies. In response, we provide high-quality, high-impact and time-efficient community impact volunteer opportunities for employers and their employees throughout the year. One of our core strategies is to host and manage Days of Action that align with our priorities in education, financial stability and health.”

Eric Dewey, President and CEO, United Way of Metropolitan Nashville

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