



How American nonprofit organizations work with volunteers: changes in the field from 2003 to 2019.

What is the focus of the publication?

This report investigates volunteer management capacity (VMC), which describes organizations' abilities to engage volunteers and make investments in both the people and practices that help volunteers feel satisfied and productive in their roles. A benchmark report released in 2003 by the authors first looked at VMC in nonprofits across the nation. This report describes a 2019 follow up where the authors returned to 353 nonprofits first studied in 2003 and 330 newer organizations to generate a representative picture of the U.S. nonprofit sector. The authors provide "then and now" comparative look across the 16 years.

What are the key findings?

What has changed from 2003 to 2019:

- **Volunteers are more interested in episodic, short-term assignments.** While episodic volunteer opportunities were less common in 2003, the distribution of volunteer hours in 2019 was nearly split between short-term assignments (48%) and long-term assignments (53%).
- **Electronic tools and social media** are reshaping how nonprofits interact with volunteers.

What has not changed much from 2003 to 2019:

- **On average, nonprofits have not increased their volunteer management capacity** in terms of staff time, training, or budget dedicated to organizing volunteers.
- **Investments in volunteer management capacity result in greater benefits** from volunteers, such as cost-savings, additional services, or program quality.

About this Publication

Citation: Hager, M.A., and Brudney, J.L. (2021). Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities: Benchmarking a Pre-Pandemic Field and Assessing Future Directions. Arizona State University

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About the Research Grantee Study

Grantee: [Arizona State University](#)

Study Name: Volunteer Management Capacity II: The State of the Art of Nonprofit Volunteer Administration

Grant Cohort: [2017](#)

How do these findings inform strengthening civic engagement, volunteering or national service?

Organizations can use volunteer management practices research in three keyways. One, they can see what works and make smart management decisions—like investing in their volunteer management capacity. Two, organizations can benchmark their investments against the investments of their peers. And three, organizations can appeal to funders to invest in better volunteer management infrastructure by presenting field-wide deficits.

Other publication(s) from this study:

Tania L. Hernandez Ortiz, Mark A. Hager and Jeffrey L. Brudney. 2022. "[What Do Nonprofits Value in their Volunteers?](#)" *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership, & Governance*, 46(1): 96-110.

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