



A TOOL FOR ASSESSING GRANTEES' CAPACITY TO ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

The questions below can be used to assess an organization's overall capacity to recruit, engage, manage and sustain volunteer resources, and increase impact through strategic engagement. They can also spark dialogue with organizational leadership regarding:

- **Useful indications of an organization's capacity**
- **Readiness to engage volunteers and other community resources strategically**
- **General health and sustainability**

Asking the right questions can help in three ways:

- 1 Grant makers have specific information to use in deciding whether a request is viable and worthwhile.
- 2 Grant seekers respond by assessing how their organization or program measures up to a set of generally recognized standards for volunteer involvement.
- 3 Grant makers and grant seekers can initiate dialogue regarding strategies that build their capacity.

ASSESSMENT TOOL

Volunteer Involvement

- How does the organization determine the best way to involve volunteers in meeting its mission?
- In what specific roles does the agency involve volunteers and are those roles developed in response to real needs of the organization and community?
- To what extent does the volunteer pool reflect the diversity of the community it serves?
- Does the organization engage volunteers in roles that leverage their skills and treat them as equal members of work teams?

Organizational Commitment to Volunteer Engagement

- Is volunteer engagement a strategic resource in the organization's strategic plan?
- Do organizational leaders actively support and model strategic volunteer engagement?
- Is there a budget to support volunteer involvement (e.g., technology, training, coaching equipment, recognition)? What percentage of the agency budget does it represent?
- Is there a professional dedicated to volunteer engagement on staff? What is that person's experience or qualifications for the position? Where is that role within the organizational structure—does its position reflect the resources this individual manages?
- Are volunteer engagement policies and procedures comprehensive, clear and consistently applied?

Training and Professional Development

- How are volunteers trained or oriented about their work and the agency?
- Do additional staff members supervise volunteers in the agency? If so, what training do they receive to prepare them to manage their unpaid staff?
- How does the organization train and develop its volunteer board of directors?

Impact and Evaluation

- How does the organization measure and communicate the overall impact of volunteer involvement?
- What would the organization not be able to accomplish without volunteers?
- How many volunteers does the organization involve annually in various roles – from direct service to pro bono/ skills-based opportunities?
- What is the monetary value of the time given by volunteers annually? How does the organization determine this value?
- Is volunteer supervision a performance measure or accountability indicator for staff? Is volunteer engagement included in staff job descriptions?

Project Management in Relation to Grant Proposal

- How does the involvement of volunteers enhance or support the project goals and the organization's mission?
- How will other staff ensure that volunteers are engaged effectively and have positive experiences?
- Does the organization have a budget for volunteer resources management on this project?
- What additional training, supervision or evaluation strategies related to volunteer engagement will support this project?