



November 2009

## Dear Jennifer,

Welcome to **eVOLve: technical assistance for leveraging volunteers**. In this electronic technical assistance (eTA) brief, you will find tips and tools to help you leverage volunteers in your community. It is sponsored by HandsOn Network, a training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

## This Month's Quote

"By matching the professional skills of volunteers with nonprofits that can most benefit from their unique talents, we are able to not only realize important social outcomes, but to help volunteers better understand the power they have to make a difference. This understanding is a key motivator in driving people to take action."

- Michelle Nunn, CEO and President, Points of Light Institute

## Quick Links

- The Resource Center
- CNCS
- HandsOn Network
- Points of Light Institute

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## Ask Us

Do you have a question about working with volunteers or a suggestion for a future issue of eVOLve? Send it to HandsOn Network:

[training@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:training@handsonnetwork.org)

## Dear HandsOn,

What is Skills-based Volunteerism (SBV) and how does it benefit non-profit organizations?

## The Answer Corner

**Definition:**  
Skills-based volunteerism is the strategic alignment of personal talents, core business skills, experience, and/or education with the needs of local non-profit agencies to meet community needs. Skills-based volunteer opportunities may include: marketing, human resources, information technology, public affairs, accounting/finance, legal, and web design, but also other professional or personal talents such as designing spaces, medical knowledge or theater on stage production.

**The What:**

As non profit organizations, we are very familiar with coordinating and managing volunteer efforts. It is in our blood and it is what we do. We know that when we lack resources we must capitalize on the human resources we have available in order to meet our bottom lines and untimely the needs in our community.

Yet why is it that more than one-third of those who volunteer one year do not return the next, adding up to an estimated \$38 billion in lost labor? (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn)

Well, according to a 2004 study on volunteer management practices there are many reasons ranging from lack of recognition, to providing volunteer training opportunities to strategic alignment of volunteer skills and roles. This study showed that only 45% of non profits regularly match skill with appropriate volunteer assignments

### **The So What:**

This lack of forethought and planning is simply bad business and in today's economic climate, continuing with business as usual is simply not an option. Our communities cannot afford organizational deficits because those deficits lead to unmet community needs. Now more than ever our communities need us to stand up and lead. This means planning, developing a strategy, and not being afraid to try new ways of doing things.

### **The Now What:**

First, start thinking about how you can begin to embed skills-based volunteerism into your current programming and how you can prepare your organization to be ready to engage skill based volunteers. "Skills-based volunteerism represents a strategic approach to community involvement, not a once-a-year program." (Deloitte) This transition will not happen overnight. It is a process and you need others in your organization to support this approach.

Here are a few questions to get you started:

1. What are your organizational and community needs?
2. How can these needs be met by skilled volunteers?
3. Do you have resources and infrastructure to successfully execute a skilled-volunteerism project?
4. Do you have organizational buy in?
5. Have you trained your staff to effectively engage skill based volunteers?
6. Have you built the infrastructure to support skill based volunteers?
7. Are volunteer assignments high-impact engagement and mission critical?
8. What are the quantitative and qualitative impacts of the assignments? and
9. How will you communicate the process, work, and outcomes to stimulate and engage others?

Second, begin thinking about how you can get your organization ready to engage skill based volunteers? To help take the online non profit readiness assessment. Go to <http://learning.nationalserviceresources.org/login/index.php> . Create an account (free) and search the "Nonprofit Readiness Toolkit".

Lastly, recognize your volunteers and celebrate success with your colleagues. Before you know it, they will be beating down your door asking if you can find them a skills-based volunteer.

I challenge you to learn more about skill based volunteering and attend the upcoming webinar on **Skills-Based Volunteerism and Non-Profit Readiness**. Details are listed in our HandsOn Network Training Opportunities section. This webinar will provide you with some creative ways to use skills-based volunteering to build your organizational capacity to effectively engage and retain skills- based volunteers.

Written by Tricia Thompson, Manager, Grantee and Affiliate Training and Veronica Parages, Director, Skills-Based Volunteering with HandsOn Network.

volunteer initiative.

This dialogue will help participants:

- Articulate the benefits of skills-based volunteering;
- Describe the challenges that a non-profit organization can face when on-boarding skill-based volunteers;
- Assess their readiness to engage skill-based volunteers; and
- Describe the steps towards building a successful skill-based volunteer experience.

### **Martin Luther King Day of Service Webinar Series**

Please join us for our MLK Day of Service Webinar Series. The Corporation for National and Community Service will offer social media trainings. For more training information, go to <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/mlk2010/training>.

Click [here](#) to register for the free webinars. You will enter the Points of Light Web Ex website. Click on the upcoming tab. Then, click on the session title to register for the webinar session. You do not need a password to register. After registering, you will receive an e-mail with log-in information for the session. Registration is required for both sessions.

If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).



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