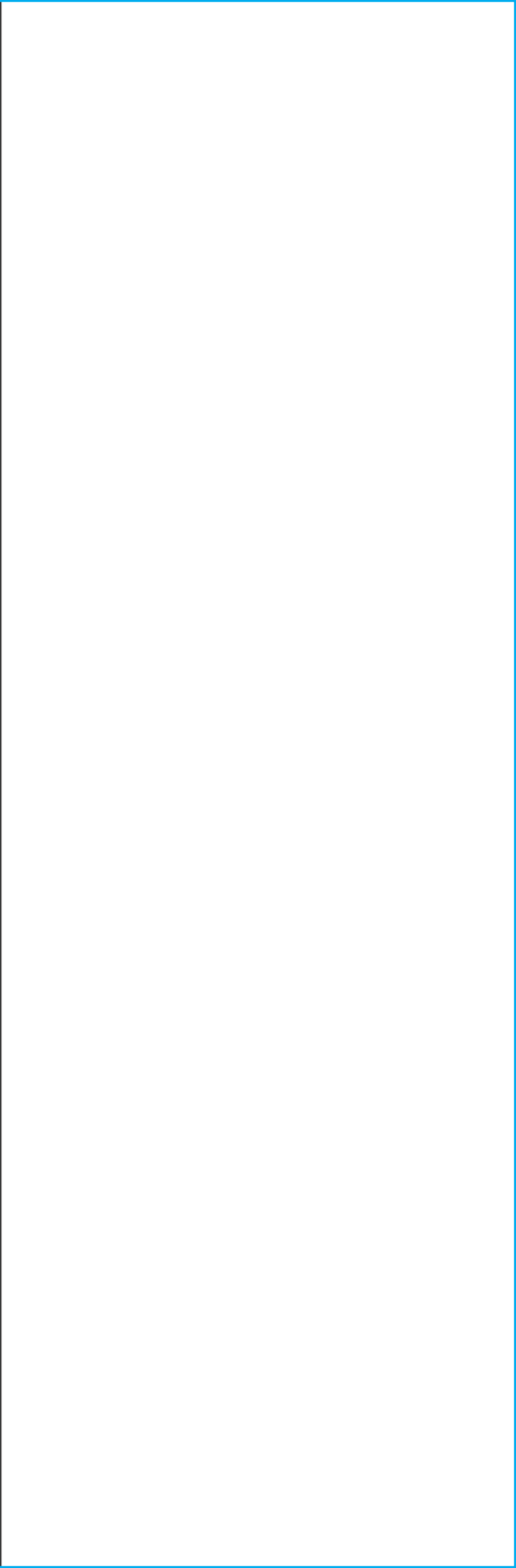
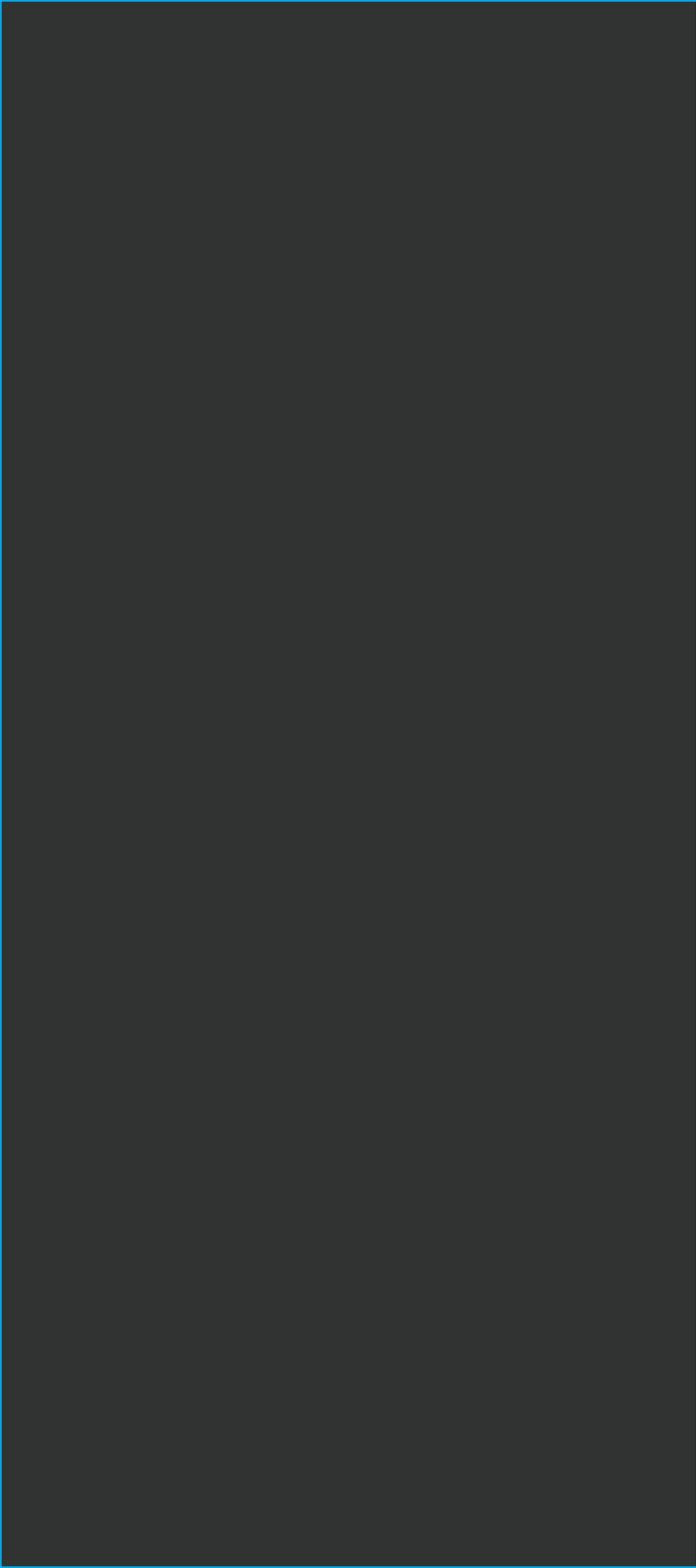




The Future of Volunteering in **Los Angeles**

A 2013 community report on the promise and impact of service in LA

CONNECT
VOLUNTEER
TRANSFORM
WE SERVE **LA**



Message from the Mayor

In 2009 the City of Los Angeles became a founding member of the national Cities of Service movement. As such, I joined mayors across the country in promoting volunteerism and civic engagement as a solution to our communities' most critical needs. I tasked leaders and volunteers throughout the City to make the "We Serve LA" vision a reality.

Since the movement began, I am proud to say I have witnessed incredible stories of giving by local volunteers. Through the "We Serve LA" service initiative, 1,800 volunteers worked with Los Angeles Unified School District to re-engage 2,300 students in school. In partnership with Friends of the LA River, we hosted the first-ever LA River Day of Service to revitalize the waterway. We planted and spruced up dozens of community gardens across the City. As a result, our communities are seeing gains in education and the environment.

In eight years, my office has mobilized 215,000 Angelenos by organizing over 35 days of service throughout the City. It is staggering to consider what we accomplished when we combine these efforts with the "We Serve LA" initiatives.

I am pleased by the example that "We Serve LA" is setting and hopeful that future generations will build on this foundation of service. Volunteers, and the organizations they serve, represent our best hope for the future – citizens willing to give their time, heart, and expertise to create the community we all desire.

It has been my honor to advocate for and serve alongside the countless volunteers who work every day to make Los Angeles a model City of Service.

Very truly yours,



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor



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Executive Summary

The Future of Volunteering in Los Angeles is a follow-up report to the April 2012 community dialogues about service convened by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The findings in this report come from surveys administered to volunteers, nonprofits, government agencies, schools, faith-based groups, and businesses, and a review of studies on volunteer trends. It provides an expert yet accessible view of service that intends to inspire action for more effective volunteer engagement in LA.

Key Findings and Action Steps

Volunteers want to be engaged, not managed. More people want to lend professional or specialized skills through pro bono service and to be a partner in the process. Community organizations that are ready for this shift can build the capacity of their operations while creating meaningful relationships with today's volunteers, particularly from businesses. *Assess how to engage a broader range of volunteer skills and offer a variety of roles at all levels of the organization.*

The recession's overall effects will remain for five years, but the impact on nonprofits will remain for ten years. Nonprofits are still struggling to balance increased demands with less income and fewer staff. They are the last sector to reap the benefits of an improved economy. *Increase donations and volunteering to help nonprofits and other community organizations continue to meet elevated community needs.*

The opportunities volunteers are most interested in may not be what organizations most need. Many volunteers seek easy, one-time projects that require little training or commitment. Though these opportunities exist, many organizations labor to find enough qualified volunteers available at the right times. *Discuss clear expectations for both parties upfront to help find a good match.*

Volunteers who are engaged well offer many benefits to their host organizations. However, the prospect of these benefits does not often translate to greater investment in the support of volunteers. Volunteers are not in fact free. Just as paid employees need training, support and supervision to be successful, so do volunteers. *Dedicate staff and budget resources to volunteer engagement.*

Technology is part of the solution. Many prospective and current volunteers want to find, share, and sometimes complete their service using the latest in technology and social media. *Streamline volunteer opportunity access and coordination with technology and community-wide volunteer solutions.*

In the LA region, 2.19 million volunteers contribute 295.7 million hours of service valued at \$6.2 billion. If the volunteer rate increases beyond its current 22%, it will benefit the community even more. **The Future of Volunteering in Los Angeles** shares suggestions and conversation starters to help more organizations and volunteers realize the promise and impact of service at its best.

Volunteer Glossary

Volunteers serve in many contexts and roles. This glossary offers a glimpse at the breadth of service opportunities.

Board service – Board members act as trustees of a nonprofit organization’s assets and ensure it is well managed and fiscally sound. The board exercises oversight of operations and maintains legal and ethical accountability of its staff and volunteers.

Community organizations – In this report, community organization is used to represent civic groups, government agencies, Neighborhood Councils, nonprofits and any other organization engaging volunteers in its work.

Employee volunteering – an increasing trend as businesses encourage, enable, and mobilize their employees to serve.

Microvolunteering – volunteer projects that tend to be brief in nature and require specialized skills. Volunteers typically find and complete the project online and on their schedules.

National Service – often referred to as the domestic Peace Corps, AmeriCorps members serve a community organization full or part time for ten months to one year. Also known as AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

Senior Corps – a national service program for people 55 and older. It includes Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP.

Service enterprise – an organization that fundamentally leverages volunteers and their skills to successfully deliver on the social mission of the organization.

Service learning - a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.

Skilled volunteering – applying skills or talents from professional or personal experience to a volunteer assignment. Projects vary from support for community organization infrastructure to program-related tasks. Also known as pro bono, professional, or skill-based volunteering.

Virtual volunteering – completing all or some volunteer tasks remotely from the host organization, typically over the Internet. Also known as online volunteering or cyber service.



Introduction – *The State of Volunteerism*

In 2009, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act into law. In 2010, Los Angeles became a founding member of the Cities of Service movement to engage more citizens in becoming solutions to the challenges they face locally. It was a high moment for the service movement – full of hope, passion, and “the urgency of now” as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said.

That urgency is reinforced by a recession felt by government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and thousands of Angelenos. Many are struggling and adequate community solutions are beyond the scope of any one sector. Survival requires the resolve and action of everyone.

Fortunately, Los Angeles is full of people of resolve and action. They band together in Neighborhood Councils and food banks. They meet in riverbeds and streets for community clean ups. They collaborate with mentoring programs to share their time with youth. They provide pro bono skills to nonprofits that struggle to meet increased needs.

In partnership with nonprofit, business, and civic groups, they strengthen the foundation of the LA community.

These expanded partnerships do not come a moment too soon. Even as the country begins to emerge from the recession, its impact will remain for five years, according to a study by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC). UCLA reports that nonprofits can expect to experience the effects of the recession for an additional five years. Those effects are profound: In a 2013 survey, LA nonprofits state that demand for services is up, income is down, and paid staff positions are down. Indeed, now still feels very urgent.

Now also feels full of opportunity. Volunteers can continue to be part of the solution for LA – if they are engaged well with thoughtful investing and support.

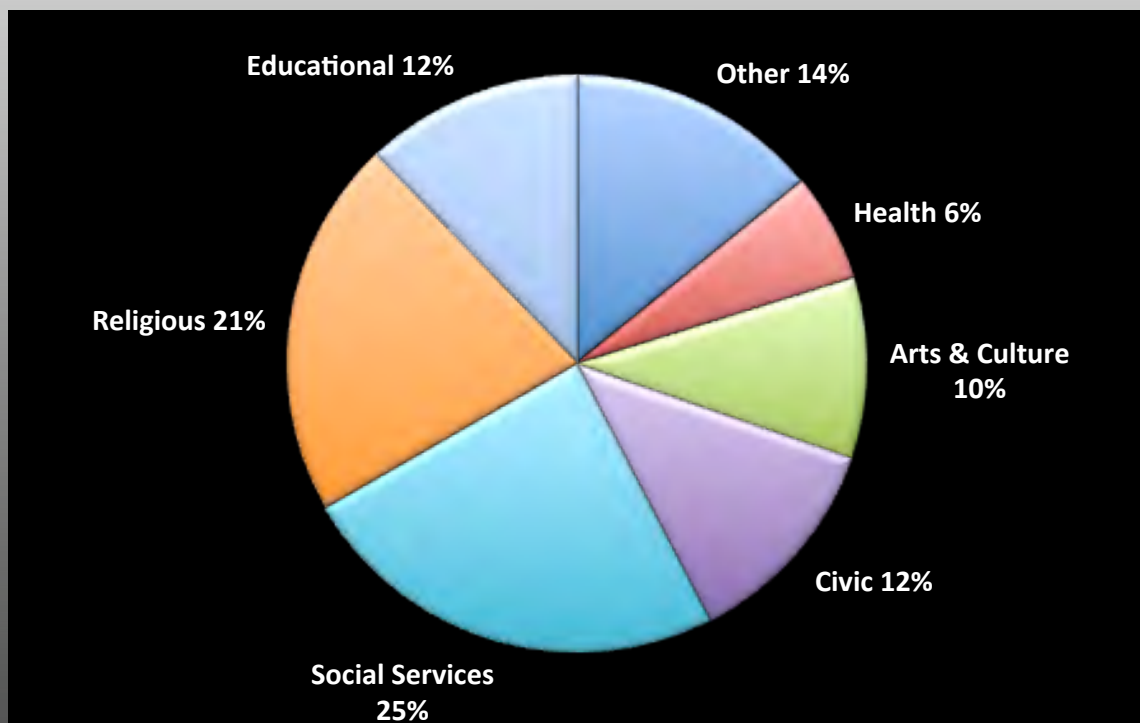
Volunteering brings diverse groups of people together and gives them a sense of ownership and accomplishment. It empowers the people to make their community better, stronger, cleaner.

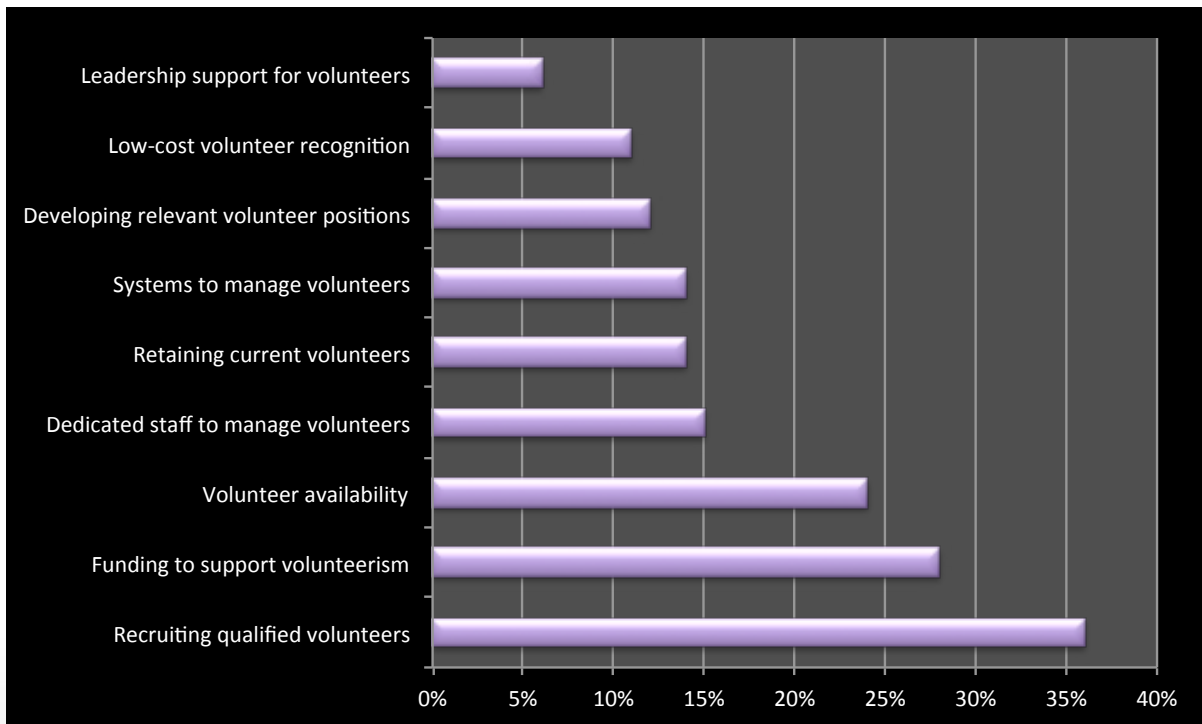
- Mary Gutierrez, Wilmington Lions



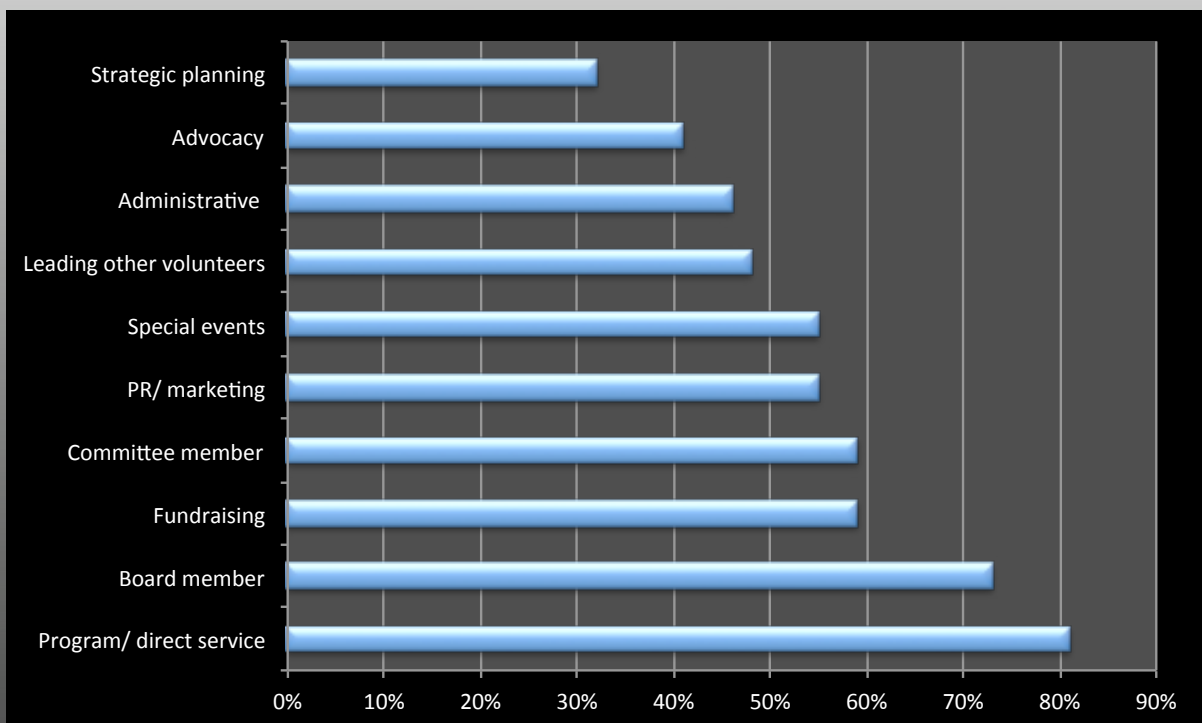
Los Angeles Nonprofits at a Glance

Los Angeles is home to 31,633 nonprofits, more than any other county in the nation. They represent 6.6% of the labor force. (Stressed and Stretched, 2012).





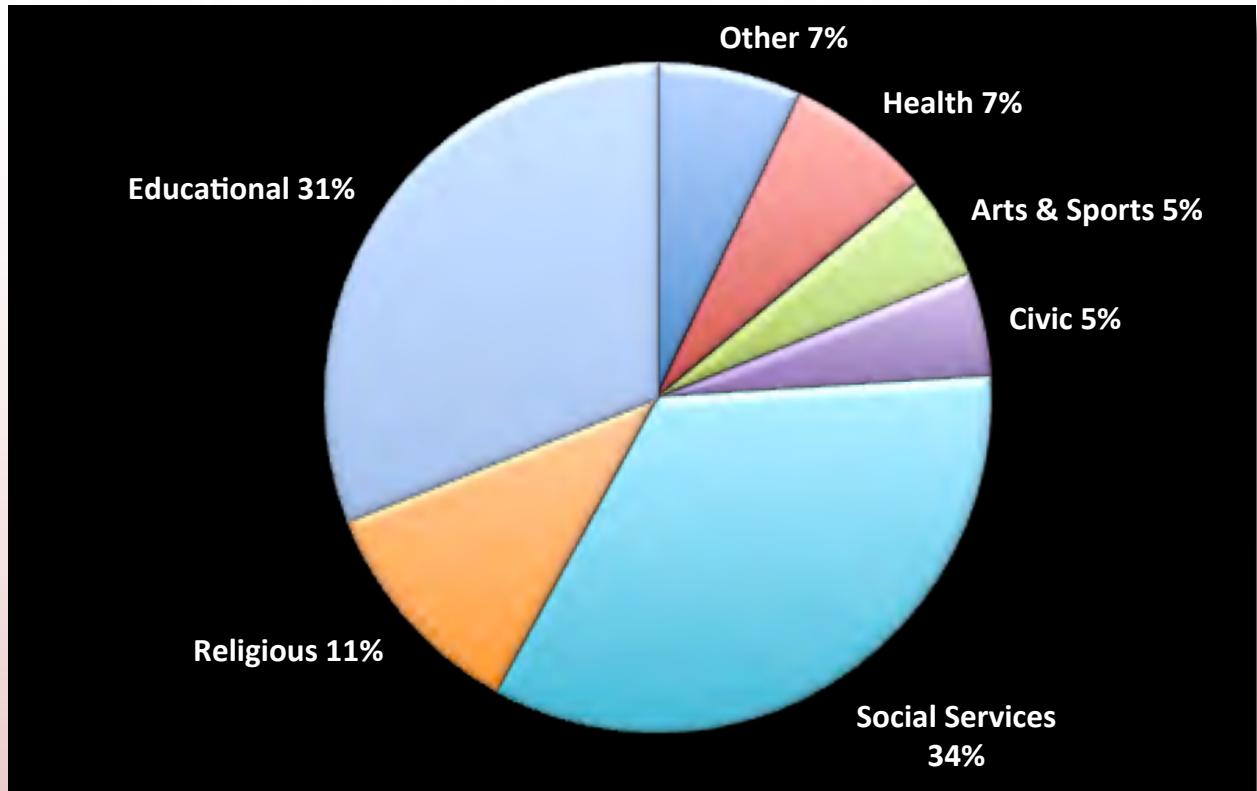
Challenges to Engaging Volunteers



Top Volunteer Roles at Host Organizations

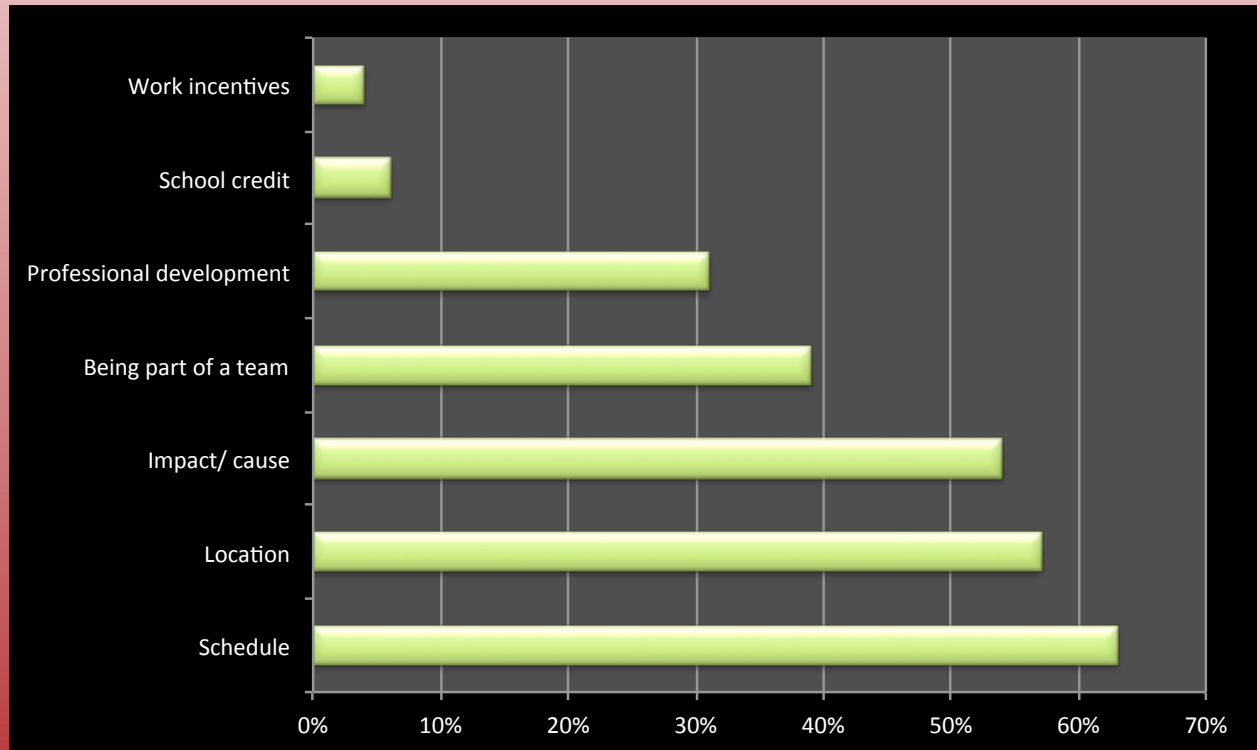
Where People

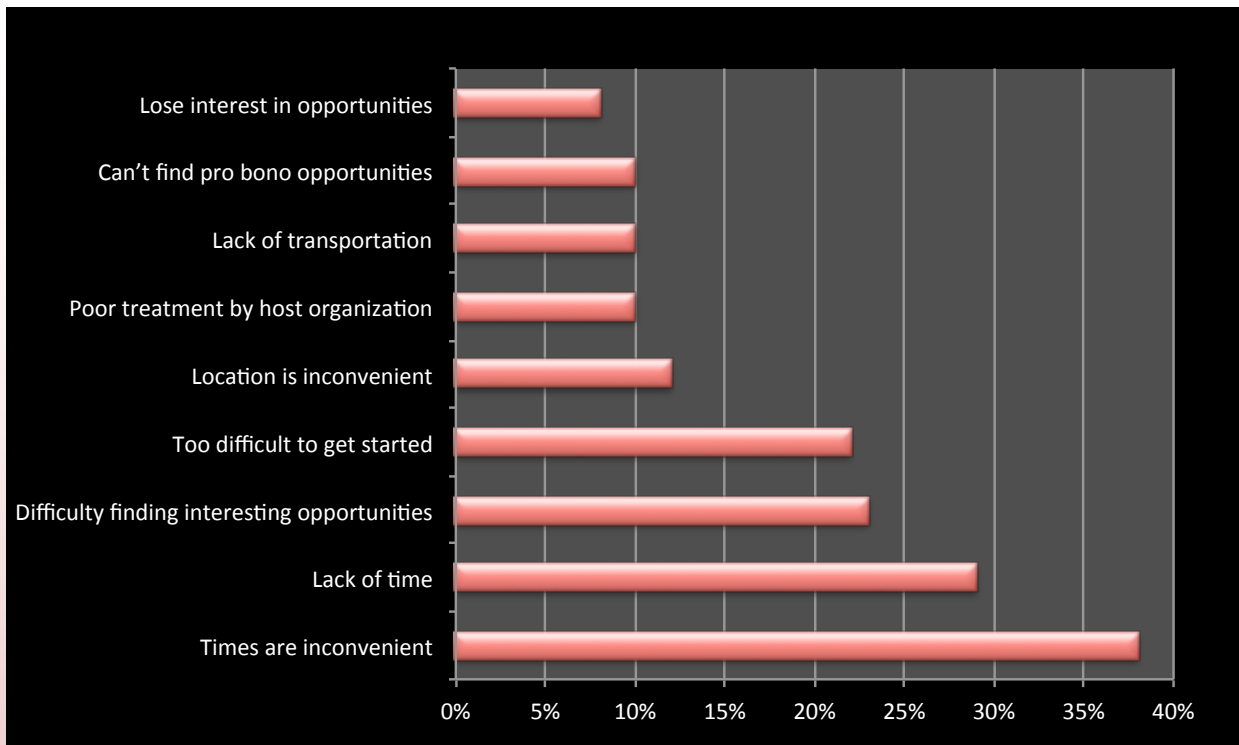
Volunteer



Key Volunteer Opportunity

Factor





Volunteerism by the Numbers

	Volunteer rate	Hours per resident	Total volunteers	Total volunteer hours	Value of volunteer time
US	26.80%	32.7	64.3 M	7.85 B	\$171 B
California	25.70%	34.1	7.37 M	977.9 M	\$21.3 B
Los Angeles Region	22.00%	29.6	2.19 M	295.7 M	\$6.2 B
New York City Region	18.10%	23.4	2.79 M	360.4 M	\$7.2 B
Chicago Region	24.70%	35.3	1.76 M	251.8 M	\$5.3 B
San Francisco/ Bay Area Region	31.80%	25.7	1.12 M	90.6 M	\$2.5 B

*Volunteering and Civic Life in America, 2012

What Influences Volunteering?

Several factors help explain the difference in volunteer rates between metro areas including:

- Percent of residents with a high school degree
- Home ownership rate
- Population density
- Multi-unit housing rate
- Long commutes to work
- Poverty

For these reasons, dense communities like LA tend to lag behind national averages for volunteering (*Volunteering in America: 2007 City Trends and Rankings*).

“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”
– **Marjorie Moore**



The Power of Partnership

– *Neighborhood Empowerment*

Angelenos vote every day about their communities by working with the City to offer programs that directly improve quality of life. Library and park volunteers are the most recognized partners. However, the City also engages volunteers in unique ways such as the Mayor’s Crisis Response Team which trains volunteers to work with first responders and victims during a crisis ranging from drive-by shootings to suicides and fires.

In addition, LA’s Neighborhood Councils are an innovative experiment in local governance created by City Charter 10 years ago. More than 1,700 board members and volunteers bring participatory democracy to life by connecting Angelenos with City Hall and the departments that deliver city services. Neighborhood Councils also partner with local community groups on improvement campaigns. Their efforts have resulted in beautification projects, school partnerships, cultural events, historical celebrations, and all of the little things that have a big impact on the quality of life in Los Angeles.

This blend of traditional and innovative approaches is a catalyst for community-developed and community-driven solutions that ultimately create the longest-lasting neighborhood impact. That ownership creates the kind of communities everyone wants to live in.

The Future of Volunteering in Los Angeles

- Trends

There are countless examples of incredible volunteer partnerships underway throughout LA, yet there is more work necessary to meet Los Angeles' critical needs.

Hearts, hands – and know how

The faces of volunteerism are changing as are the expectations that volunteers bring with them.

The next waves of volunteers include:

- Skilled volunteers
- Corporate volunteers
- Youth and millennials
- Boomers

At a glance, these groups seem to be very diverse, but most share a common goal: they want to be engaged, not managed. It is a lesson that applies to volunteers from many backgrounds and generations. Nonprofit, government, and community organizations offer an in-the-trenches experience with LA's most pressing issues. Today's volunteers are less interested in watching from the sidelines; they want to pitch in at every level, from strategy to implementation.

Ready or not – here they come

Organizations that define volunteers as those who stuff envelopes or take on low-skill tasks will miss an opportunity to engage a willing and able volunteer force.

Community organization training and readiness are critical to engaging volunteers in new ways. The good news is that the foundation of effective volunteer engagement is the same. The challenge is in applying those practices across all levels of an organization in ways that tap into diverse volunteer talents. The new CaliforniaVolunteers Service Enterprise Initiative that two local organizations are piloting provides the training and consulting to support organizations in implementing this approach. The organizations that move from a model emphasizing management and control into Service Enterprises that embrace engagement and partnership have the most to gain.

It takes a village

One of the outcomes of volunteering is a more strongly connected community. But it needs a strong community working on behalf of volunteers too.

Volunteer organizations and advocates need continued collaboration and networking to enhance:

- Funding for volunteer engagement
- Advocacy about what constitutes effective volunteer engagement
- Training and technical assistance on effective volunteer engagement
- Technology to access quality volunteer opportunities throughout LA

The Value of a Volunteer

Volunteers offer a diverse range of services, which can make it difficult to articulate their value. The standard for valuing volunteer time has been the annual rate published by Independent Sector (\$21.79/hour nationally and \$24.18/hour in California).

This rate is a useful starting point, and yet, does not tell the full story of how Angelenos influence and advance the work of an organization. Volunteers help:

- Offer new services
- Expand existing services
- Grow the number of clients or communities served
- Provide outreach
- Advocate for clients or the organization
- Support staff needs
- Give money or in-kind items
- Fundraise
- Lead other volunteers

When considered this way, volunteers cease to be a nice-to-have program and instead are a strategic way to accomplish an organization's mission. Local organizations like MEND (Meet Each Need with Dignity) and WriteGirl know this from first-hand experience and were honored with the Governor's Medal of Service as a result.

In fact, many Los Angeles organizations realize a significant return on investment (ROI) for their volunteer involvement. These organizations have maximized their investments by:

- Dedicating a staff member to volunteer engagement.
- Assessing current volunteer engagement practices. They expand areas of success and enhance areas that need improvement.
- Identifying how volunteers help deliver expanded impact and tracking these outcomes.
- Tailoring and sharing the story of impact with funders, community members, board members, staff, and current and prospective volunteers.

By acknowledging the full range of volunteers' impact, organizations achieve higher levels of service and organization success.

Volunteers expand the reach and enable organizations to help more communities, deliver more resources, and improve more lives.

- Nicolla Ross, American Heart Association



Measuring Return on Volunteer Investment

It is hard to invest in a return that is vague or not known. Strategic planning offers an ideal opportunity to determine the returns on volunteer engagement an organization needs. It then becomes much easier to articulate volunteer value and to justify investing more resources in their engagement and support.

What to measure:

- Number of services or programs offered with volunteer support
- Number of additional clients, neighbors or sites served with volunteer support
- Number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees volunteers represent
- Number of partnerships or policies advanced by volunteers
- Dollars and/or items donated by volunteers
- Dollars and/or items raised by volunteers
- Number of volunteers engaged by volunteer leaders



Corporate Service as a Community Solution

The Cities of Service movement has helped convene and expand cross-sector relationships between nonprofit, civic, and business groups drawing on the unique resources of each. The timing is perfect to capitalize on business trends that include employee volunteering as part of philanthropic giving (Trends and Strategies to Engage Employees in Greater Giving, 2013).

Businesses are poised to advance higher-impact community involvement through practices that include:

- Matching employee volunteer time with company grants
- Making grants to support volunteer engagement strategies and projects at local community organizations
- Encouraging staff to receive training before joining a nonprofit board
- Working in partnership with community organizations to determine a good fit for employee volunteers

Many local companies lead the way when it comes to corporate service. Deloitte, Disney VoluntEARS, and others have been recognized nationally and regionally for their innovative approaches to employee volunteerism.

Employee engagement is not just for major corporations though. Smaller businesses have an opportunity to contribute by considering what they are uniquely and realistically able to share. Examples include staff expertise, in-kind auction donations, funds toward an employee-led fundraiser, or flex time to accommodate volunteering. Many businesses experiment with various programs to discover the best fit.

When businesses collaborate with community organization and civic groups, it leverages LA's best expertise, community relationships, funding, and human capital. Flexing Los Angeles' cross-sector muscles is one of its most powerful tools for addressing critical issues that affect everyone.

With the economic downturn, companies are becoming more strategic. Organized volunteerism will become increasingly important in a company's community outreach/philanthropic programming.

-Kathy Mota, Toyota

The Magic of Matching

Many conversations about volunteerism focus on only the volunteers or the volunteer opportunity. As a result, there is rarely discussion about the reality that what volunteers desire may not be what organizations need.

For example, an organization serving at-risk youth needs long-term volunteers who build a relationship with a child over time. Prospective volunteers often want to read to kids for a couple of hours. Many community organizations struggle with how to find a balance between their existing needs and a volunteer's interest.

The key is to discuss clear, honest expectations of both parties upfront while remaining open to new possibilities.

When a volunteer calls, it is an opportunity to discuss what a community organization does and how volunteers typically engage in that work. It is a chance to ask what the volunteer hopes to get out of the experience: issue education, client interaction, team building, or leadership development. An organization can share its wish list or project prospects. Having a dialogue that includes candid expectations increases the likelihood that both sides can discover common ground.

Sometimes, the best decision is to decline to work together for now. Having had an honest conversation, there is room to discuss future projects and to know that everyone is committed to finding mutual success.

That conversation and subsequent volunteer placement help an organization get the right jobs completed by the right people. Ultimately, this improves retention of the right people. It sets a standard for open communication about evolving opportunities and provides the best chance to meet the needs of the beneficiaries an organization serves.

Does it take time? Yes. Is it time well spent? Absolutely. The better the initial discussion, the higher the likelihood that a good match occurs with positive results for the host organization, its beneficiaries, the volunteers, and the community. It is the best of a win-win solution.



Engaging More of Our Communities

Picture a volunteer. What do they look like? What are they doing?

If your picture is consistent with national statistics, the volunteer you pictured was most likely female and well educated or the parent of a school-age child. She or he is likely to be involved in direct service rather than in a governance role.

A deeper look reveals a different reality and need. It shows organizations today tapping into the energy and enthusiasm of youth and the time and skills of retirees. It highlights a need to engage more men of various ethnic backgrounds as youth mentors and role models. It includes groups thinking creatively about how to engage busy professionals with limited time but plenty of passion and know how.

At its best, service connects people from diverse backgrounds and introduces them to their common ground. Yet it takes effort to discover the gifts individuals can contribute to the collective good and to weave these gifts into a better community. Many of the answers lie in asking the right questions:

- How do we expand the definition of resources to include expertise, time, connections, and cultural competency along with skills in administration, organization, storytelling, and inspiration?
- How do volunteers help define the ways they can contribute?
- Do volunteers represent the Angelenos we serve? Have we invited community members and past participants to be a part of our cause?
- Who else in Los Angeles cares about our cause? How can we partner with them?
- How can we challenge and expand our assumptions about who our typical volunteer is?

Research shows that volunteering is an empowering act that builds self-esteem and strengthens connections among community members – powerful outcomes in and of themselves. When activated to strengthen the common good in partnership with diverse members of the community, volunteer power increases exponentially.

Only together can we have a livable city for all. *-Brenda Lynch, Rogers Finn Partners*



The Future of Volunteering in LA - *Next Steps*

Resources and Infrastructure

- Invest funding in volunteer connector organizations and volunteer engagement strategies at community organizations.
- Encourage community organizations to dedicate staff time to volunteer engagement and encourage philanthropy to fund it.
- Streamline ways to steer prospective volunteers to online volunteer portals and opportunities.
- Increase community organization and business expertise in volunteer engagement.
 - o Provide a broad spectrum of support: workshops, consulting, coaching, peer exchanges.
 - o Offer a range of training topics and levels to support new and experienced practitioners.

Leadership and Partnership

- Continue leadership for service by the Mayor's office to help create and implement cross-sector solutions to community issues.
- Maintain engagement of the "We Serve LA" cabinet to ensure coordination and collaboration between leaders in volunteer engagement.
- Strengthen communication and partnerships between organizations supporting volunteerism.
- Engage community volunteers in collaboration efforts.

Advocacy and Education

- Develop, share, and promote resources that demonstrate return on volunteer investment.
- Use sector meetings such as public agency gatherings and Nonprofit Days to discuss effective volunteer engagement.
- Develop cross-sector dialogues that foster greater understanding of volunteer issues.
- Create and share coordinated messaging about volunteering by lead service organizations.

What embodies the soul of the service movement is the love that people have for Los Angeles and a common belief in civic and neighborhood empowerment. Increased investment in service, especially much-needed infrastructure, means that even more Angelenos can join the movement. Los Angeles is a better city because of it!

-Rafael Gonzalez, Los Angeles Dodgers

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