



Volunteer Engagement:

Strengthening our Community's Capacity
Executive Summary



The power of many. Working for all.

The Issue

Volunteering has numerous intrinsic benefits ranging from developing friendships, personal independence, skill-building, and creating community cohesion to an overall enriched sense of purpose and satisfaction in life both inside and outside of one's workplace. Substantial research and testimonials confirm that volunteerism is on the rise in companies thanks to a growing emphasis on mission-based collaboration. Based on trends, it is expected that requests for volunteer opportunities by companies and employees are only going to increase.

We also know that there are approximately 64,000 Dane County residents living in poverty, 15,000 of whom are children. United Way of Dane County currently reaches just one third of these individuals, and we know that we can do more. Despite increased interest and requests to get engaged, there is a disconnect between these requests and the true need of the community. This is where opportunity lies.



Good for you, good for employers

About a quarter of the people who have volunteered in the past 12 months say that volunteering has helped them to manage a chronic illness.

Nationally, over half of employees have volunteered.

76%
of people who volunteered in the last 12 months say that volunteering has made them **feel healthier**.



94%
of people who volunteered in the last 12 months say that volunteering **improves their mood**.



Professional Job Skills
49% of people new to volunteering said that volunteering has helped with their career in the paid job market.



56% of new volunteers felt that volunteering would help their career.



95% say they are helping to make their **community a better place**.

96%
say that volunteering enriches their **sense of purpose** in life.



Stronger Colleague Relationships

64% of employees who currently volunteer said that volunteering with work colleagues has strengthened their relationships.
81% of employed volunteers who volunteered through their workplace agreed that volunteering together strengthens relationships among colleagues.



80% of the people who have volunteered in the past 12 months say that they feel they have **control over their health**.



78% of people who volunteered in the last 12 months say that volunteering **lowers their stress** levels.

People and Teamwork Skills
87%

of people who said that volunteering helped their career responded that volunteering has developed their people skills and teamwork skills.



Time Management Skills
More than three-quarters of people who told us that volunteering helped their careers said that volunteering has taught them about time management.

UnitedHealth Group, Social Responsibility, <https://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/sr>



"Throughout the years I've grown mentally; I've gained skills that only life can teach you. By volunteering, not only is the person impacted, but so am I."

— Kimberly Leon Teran, Community Volunteer



Volunteer Engagement: Strengthening our Community's Capacity

In 2018, United Way of Dane County embarked on a strategic visioning process with the goal of representing both the corporate and nonprofit sectors to assess our current volunteer strategies, measurement methods, the need in our community, and best practices.

Key learnings from this year-long process affirmed the importance and benefits of civic engagement. Volunteerism is a strategy in uniting the community and a fundamental building block toward changing lives and achieving our vision of a Dane County where everyone can succeed in school, work and life.

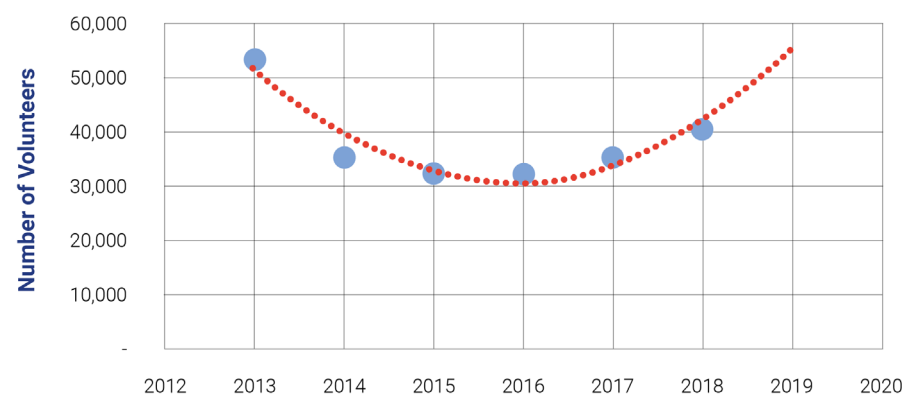
Volunteers help agencies provide the wide range of services that are available in our community; nonprofit agencies and community organizations would not be able to provide the breadth and depth of services they offer if they didn't involve volunteers.

As the intersection where the community meets, people call on United Way of Dane County to provide opportunities to volunteer directly through our signature initiatives, connect individuals to opportunities through partner agencies, and provide more tailored corporate engagements.

According to a 2018 survey, *Volunteering in America*, by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)¹, the rate of volunteering had been declining slightly over the last 10 years but is on an upward swing again in terms of number of volunteers. Similarly, volunteering reported by United Way partner agencies is beginning to depict the same upward trend.

With this expected increase in community volunteerism and a concerted effort by corporations to further engage employees, United Way of Dane County needs to implement a new approach to volunteer engagement in order to help shape the future of volunteerism in Dane County.

Number of Agency Volunteers by Year



Though it is easy to assume that volunteering benefits both the community it serves and the volunteers themselves, minimal data currently exists to inform and validate our approach to volunteer engagement. As one of the premiere volunteer resources in the community, we have a responsibility to play a leadership role. We aim to work with our community to find a consistent, relevant, reliable measure while telling the story of volunteerism, recognizing the tremendous impact volunteers make and inspiring others to get involved. The *Volunteer Engagement Mobilization Plan* aims to do just that.

¹ Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), *Volunteering in America*, <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla>.

Our goal: To establish baseline volunteer data and grow quality volunteerism by providing engagements that meet the needs of the requestor as well as the community.

To accomplish this goal, we recommend the following strategies:

Strategy 1: Increase collaboration with agency partners to leverage United Way of Dane County's ability to effectively convene volunteers.

Tactics:

- Align with partner agencies on needs and resources to maximize community impact
- Serve as a resource and the thought leader in volunteerism

Strategy 2: Cultivate relationships with corporate partners to capitalize on employee volunteerism demands and utilize existing platforms/activities to educate partners on the ways to increase the impact.

Tactic:

- Create and execute a *Corporate Volunteer Engagement Plan* to target companies and drive activities

Strategy 3: Increase awareness of the impact of volunteerism to multiple audiences to match volunteer experience and desire to community need.

Tactics:

- Develop a recruitment strategy based on community needs
- Create and execute a content and media plan to show the impact of volunteerism

Strategy 4: Consistently measure and track volunteerism to demonstrate the impact (on both United Way of Dane County and the greater community) in order to further increase volunteerism and the overall impact work of the Agenda for Change.

Tactics:

- Identify mechanisms for reporting volunteer activities
- Measure the impact of these activities on volunteers, partner organizations, and the communities that they serve



"Providing paid time to volunteer in the community helps UW Credit Union stay connected in important ways and is valued by our employees as an important benefit and confirmation of our company values."

-Paul Kundert, President and CEO of UW Credit Union



"I would love to be able to offer businesses ongoing opportunities that fill an actual need and allow employees who are involved to engage in team building around a shared experience."

-Ellen Carlson, Executive Director of Middleton Outreach Ministry (MOM)





Why it matters

We know that volunteers are doing a lot of great things in Dane County, but we also know that individual volunteers and corporate partners want to do more with their time to truly make an impact. Additionally, the more that volunteers relate to the work, the more likely they will find their experience to be rewarding and satisfying². It is imperative that we gauge what is important to various stakeholders while also determining how we can shift from reactive to purposeful volunteering. The end result will lead to more efficient coordination and alignment of needs in the community with appropriate volunteer engagements.

²Stukas, A. A., Worth, K. A., Clary, E.G., and Snyder, M. "The Matching of Motivations to Affordances in the Colunteer Environment," Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.856.7747&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

If you want to volunteer, please call 608-246-4380 or visit www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/get-involved/volunteer

Full mobilization plan is available at www.unitedwaydanecounty.org/mobilization-plans



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Continue the conversation with us

