

# The Status of Minnesota's Volunteer Programs In a Shifting Environment

Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration  
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[www.mavanetwork.org](http://www.mavanetwork.org)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Status of Volunteer Programs In a Shifting Environment

When the economy was sinking into recession in early 2009, the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) started receiving reports from members of dramatic and surprising changes in volunteer availability and of complex stresses for volunteer program managers.

In September 2009, MAVA decided to move beyond anecdotal information and survey organizations that involve volunteers to get a better picture of what was changing. With financial resources declining for many organizations, understanding how to maximize human capital is more important than ever. 280 people across the state responded, and **four themes emerged** in response to the survey:

### **Change**

- **86%** reported changes at least one aspect of their volunteer program.
- **44%** experienced increased numbers of inquiries from potential new volunteers. A drop in inquiries was reported by 14%.
- **52%** reported volunteers were more likely to have strong work skills and **54%** said they were more likely to be unemployed.

### **Increased reliance on volunteers**

- **Close to 60%** reported an increased reliance on volunteers compared to a year ago. Many commented their organization has become more open to accepting volunteers in new roles as a result of the economic pressure.
- **67%** expect to increase reliance on volunteers in the coming year.

### **Stress**

- **86%** of respondents reported organizational fiscal stress.

### **Resourcefulness**

- **Over 50%** reported an increase in volunteer hours of service, but **only 12%** had an increased budget for the volunteer program, pointing to resourcefulness in doing more with less. Leaders of volunteers were clearly being proactive, but many also reported feelings of stress.
- **60%** were able to place most of the potential volunteers, 3% needed to put most of the new volunteers on a waiting list or turned them away, and 39% reported a combination of placing new volunteers and putting them on a waiting list.
- **48%** reported increased collaboration with outside partners.
- Respondents suggested **hundreds of strategies** to respond to the changing times.

## Strategies

Respondents provided hundreds of strategies used to respond to these changes. Common themes:

- **Involve volunteers in new ways.** Use their skills and strengths. Keep lists of dreams and projects to be ready for opportunities volunteers may bring.
- Involve volunteers in **leadership** positions.
- Reinvigorate volunteer **recruitment** through social media, electronic communication, volunteer ambassadors, and partnerships with schools and employment agencies.
- Promote volunteer positions to job seekers offering letters of recommendation and designing positions to offer **work skill development**.
- **Streamline** and standardize practices for volunteer intake, screening, placement and training.

- Use **technology** in new ways to communicate with volunteers and track volunteers.
- Increase the **flexibility** of when volunteers can volunteer.
- Redesign volunteer **recognition** to focus more on personal connections and education and scale back on event costs.
- Increase involvement in **partnerships** and collaborations with schools, businesses and other nonprofits.
- Step up internal **advocacy** and attention to the volunteer program to garner continued support from other staff, administration and Board.

## Conclusions

### High stress warrants concern

The data in this report support findings from national nonprofit surveys reporting the high stress and fragility of many nonprofits. While many organizations are doing more with less in the short-term, this should not mask the financial stress, human resources stress, and eroding of infrastructure commonly reported.

### Smaller organizations are disproportionately affected

Overall, smaller organizations reported being less likely to benefit from the increase in inquiries about volunteering. Findings highlight that smaller organizations feel the financial and human capital pressures of the recession the most.

### Some organizations are thriving with new approaches

The data indicate that some volunteer programs are thriving and making breakthroughs in new ways to involve volunteers. Some organizations gave an upbeat report of the economic pressure that resulted in staff acceptance that volunteers can do more than stuff envelopes; volunteers can use their workplace skills and accomplish results to advance the organizational mission. Now, more than ever, organizations are benefiting from setting aside outdated models of volunteer involvement and moving to involve volunteers throughout the organization and in positions of significant responsibility.

### Creativity and support are key

The common elements cited by volunteer programs thriving under changing conditions were creativity in new approaches, staff trying new models of volunteer involvement, top management support for the volunteer program, and continued financial investment in volunteer resources.

### The national call to service needs to be accompanied by a call for resources

MAVA challenges the assumption that organizations have the capacity to leverage the federal government's and entertainment industry's call to service without additional resources. In the surge of volunteers that many organizations experienced in 2008-2009, 40% of organizations had to put some or all prospective volunteers on waiting lists or turned down their offer of help.

*MAVA is using the survey results to hold symposiums and work sessions around Minnesota where leaders of volunteers can learn cutting edge solutions in the current climate. Learn more at [www.mavanetwork.org](http://www.mavanetwork.org).*

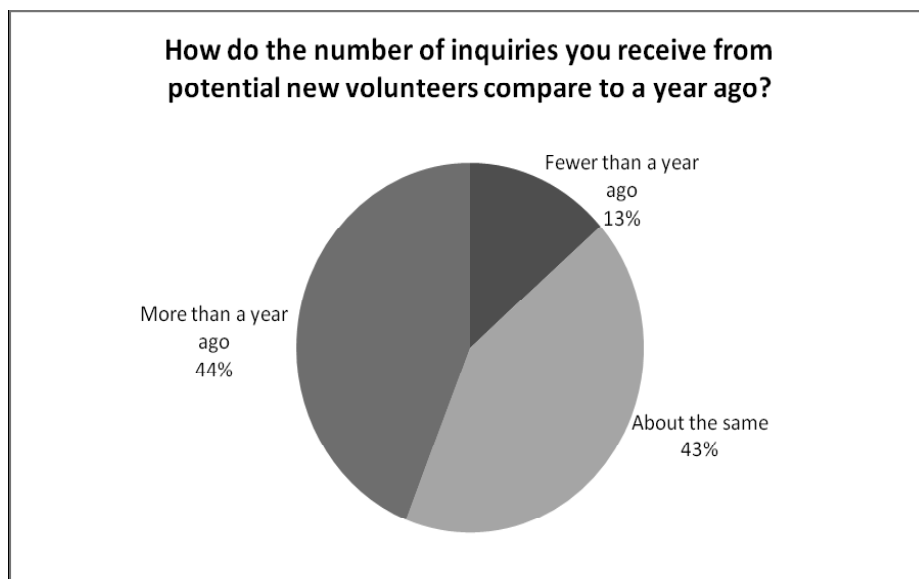
## INTRODUCTION

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The following report is based on responses to a survey conducted by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) between September 17 – 25, 2009. The survey asked organizational leaders about changes in volunteer involvement and how they are responding. The invitation to take the web-based survey was sent to about 2000 contacts of MAVA and 300 members of HandsOn Twin Cities. The MAVA contacts included 730 MAVA members, plus past MAVA members and people identified by MAVA as working for organizations that involve volunteers. 280 responses to the survey were received.

### Most organizations experienced change in volunteer availability

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*"With more emphasis on volunteering, even people who are very busy are more open to volunteering."*

Most organizations (58%) experienced a change in volunteer availability compared to a year ago. 44% reported an increase in inquiries, 13% reported a decrease, and 43% indicated that the number of inquiries has not changed.

#### Among those that experienced change in volunteer availability, most report an increase:

- The increase in inquiries seemed **concentrated in larger organizations** with budgets over \$1,000,000 and over 1,000 volunteers.
- The increase seems to be primarily **driven by unemployed people** who became interested in volunteering; 72% of respondents indicated that is a reason inquiries were up. 44% also saw increased awareness about volunteering as a factor. As one person explained, "With more emphasis on volunteering, even people who are very busy are more open to volunteering." Seventy-four percent of respondents also noted their organization has enhanced volunteer recruitment and 20% indicated there are more volunteer possibilities at the organization.
- Of new inquiries about volunteering, 52% said new volunteers were more likely to have **stronger workplace skills** and 54% said new volunteers are more likely to be unemployed.

- Regarding the size of the increase, 39% indicated the increase in inquiries was 11-20% higher, and 19% reported it was 21-30% higher.
- The change in who is volunteering was cited as both **a challenge and an opportunity**. The opportunity is volunteers with increased capabilities; the challenge is in designing new positions and shorter-term volunteer opportunities. One person commented, "The volunteers want less of a commitment because they are unsure how their life will be changing."
- 19% percent of respondents indicated inquiries from interested volunteers have been steady over the past 12 months, 25% reported the inquiries were highest in the first quarter of 2009, and 44% reported inquiries were strongest from June to August 2009, indicating that changes in **the number of volunteer inquiries is active and may continue to change**.
- More inquires does not always mean more volunteers, described by one person this way: "More people [are] calling [and] showing an interest but when it comes down to it, they don't have the time to fit it in their schedules."

*"The volunteers  
want less of a  
commitment because  
they are unsure  
how their life  
will be changing."*

The change in inquires is reflected not only in numbers, but in what motivates people to volunteer. More than ever, recent or soon-to-be college grads are volunteering for experience, people mid-career are volunteering to check out other fields or to beef up their resume, and unemployed people are volunteering for job skills or networking.

### **Many strategies have been implemented to handle the increase in inquires:**

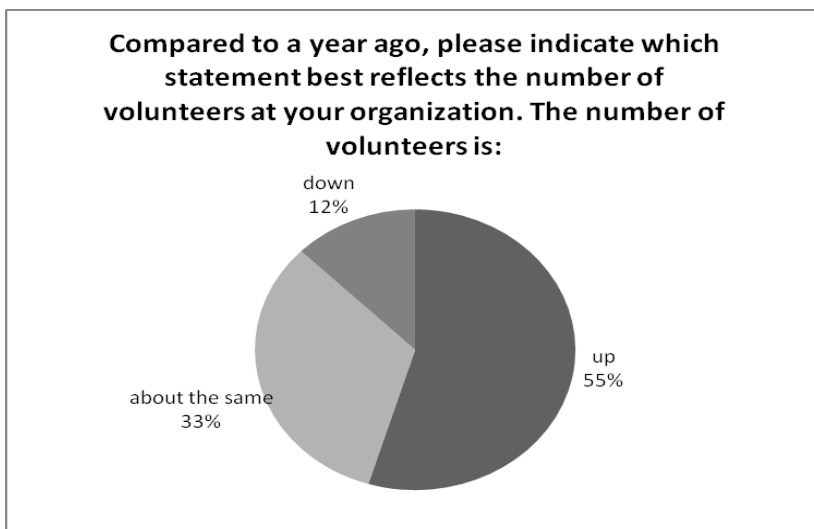
- *Streamlining and standardizing intake* – "By establishing an orientation/training schedule rather than responding to random demand we can better control staff time commitment."
- *Technology* – "On-line registration and then we follow-up with a phone call."
- *Other staff taking a larger share of responsibility* – "I have had to delegate some of my responsibilities to other staff in order to keep up with the increased volunteers."
- *Creating positions to respond to the volunteer's strengths* – "We look at the goals and skills of the volunteer and try to create a position that is a benefit to our agency and the volunteer" and, "We have created some new volunteer positions that were always a part of our 'dream' list to do."
- *Involving volunteers in leadership roles* – "Having trained volunteers help with the recruitment, orientation, training and placement."
- *Adding new programs* – "We are doing more projects for which we need volunteers."
- *Referring volunteers to other organizations* -- "We have a referral system so if they don't work in our organization, we pass them on to another organization based on their interests and skills."

Organizations with too many volunteers may also experience stress: "Having too many volunteers is as difficult as not having enough. It has been a very stressful year."

## Fifty-five percent report an increase in the number of volunteers who served the organization.

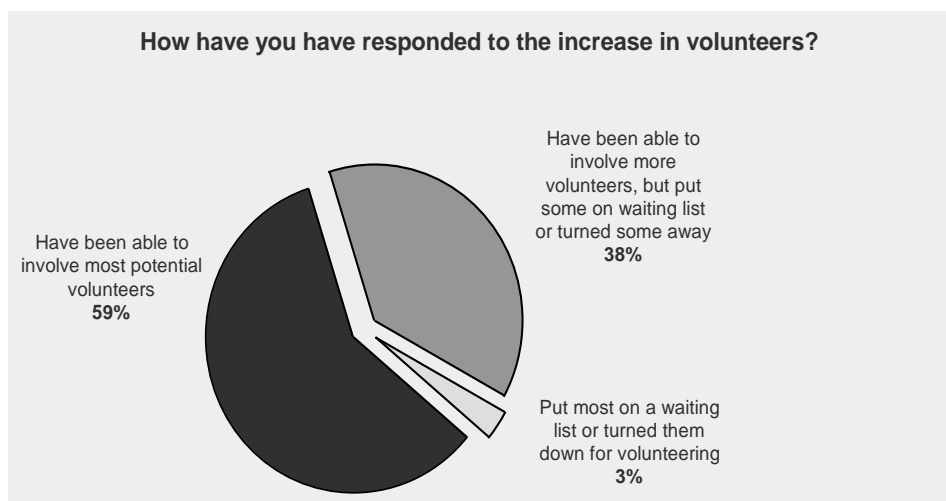
Organizations have experienced increases in both the number of volunteers and the number of volunteer hours served.

- 54% reported that *volunteers hours* have increased compared to a year ago, 31% reported that the number of volunteer hours was about the same, and 14% reported fewer volunteer hours.
- 55% reported that the *number of volunteers* has increased compared to a year ago, 33% reported that the number of volunteers was about the same, and 12% reported fewer volunteers.



## Most organizations placed new volunteers, but some put volunteers on waiting lists or turned them away.

When asked how they have responded to the increase in volunteers, 58% were able to place most new volunteers, 3% put most new volunteers on a waiting list or turn them away, and 39% reported a combination of placing new volunteers and putting them on a waiting list.



*"It has been challenging because my paid staff time was cut and we have more people trying to volunteer."*

Several respondents indicated that **turning away or waitlisting volunteers** was unusual for their organization: “First time in years we have had to turn away volunteers.” The reasons cited for turning volunteers away included less organizational capacity, such as less staff, to manage volunteers. “It has been challenging because my paid staff time was cut and we have more people trying to volunteer.” Organizations have also cut activities that utilize volunteers.

We asked if the involvement of new volunteers was made possible by adding more volunteers to current positions or adding new positions? The most common response (48%) was *both* adding more volunteers to existing positions and creating new positions. Some organizations (31%) indicated they primarily added more volunteers to existing volunteer positions and 14% indicated they primarily created new volunteer positions.

*“Having too many volunteers is as difficult as not having enough. It has been a very stressful year.”*

### Organizations with declining volunteers face difficult times.

Of the 13% of respondents that reported a decrease in inquiries about volunteering, half believe the economy makes it harder for people to volunteer. When asked an open-ended question regarding why they believed they had fewer volunteers, comments indicated **volunteers have new constraints on their time or money**. Volunteers:

- Can't afford the mileage to drive to volunteer;
- Had to pick up more hours or get a second job to make up for a partner being laid off;
- Are worried about losing jobs so they make their current job more of a priority.

One respondent summed it up as, “People have to use their spare time to find a paying job.” Some organizations can't recruit the volunteers they need. One respondent reported, “We are really struggling to find enough mentors to befriend children in spite of increased recruitment efforts; we have almost 50% fewer people responding to our efforts.” The decrease in inquiries was also blamed on **budget cuts** that reduced programs and capacity for volunteers.

## Financial stress is widespread

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Eighty-six percent of respondents reported organizational fiscal stress (decrease in revenues and/or increase in expenses) in the past year.

Regarding **staffing** for the volunteer program:

- 25% reported that positions have been cut or hours of staff reduced
- 62% reported no change
- 16% reported an increase in positions or hours for positions

Regarding the **budget** for the volunteer program:

- 39% reported the budget was cut
- 48% reported the budget has not changed
- 12% reported the budget increased

Comments reflected the **severity** of some situations. One person reported, “No money, no staff. No staff, no steering the ship or accountability. No accountability = confusion and dropping the ball. Volunteers leave. Program dies.” Another person said, “I can't keep up. I feel like I'm neglecting people. It makes me feel real lousy and inefficient. This isn't just burnout, it often feels more like just plain failure. I've done this for years now and I feel I should be doing better but I can't keep up.”

Budget cuts were clearly affecting **organizations' ability to use and manage volunteers**. One person summarized the situation as, “We need more volunteers but the time to recruit and train has been cut.” An impact of the budget cuts cited by several people was a change in the position of the volunteer department within the organization. One person explained she had reported to three different places in the organization in the past year. Another person reported “New managers/directors over volunteer services do not have any background in volunteer services. Staff with many years of professional experience with volunteers have been eliminated.”

Many comments indicated concern regarding **how budget cuts affect volunteers**:

- “I am upset that we can no longer provide mileage reimbursement -- the volunteers are the backbone of our program! The message sent is that we don't value their efforts...”
- “Most staff are asked to do more...We are constantly trying to prioritize and hopefully we choose the right priorities. I do think customer service, especially to our volunteers is being compromised. Hopefully they understand.”

MAVA recognized that people who had been cut would not receive or respond to the survey, so a question was asked regarding what respondents had heard about cuts at other organizations' programs. Thirty-six respondents mentioned hearing about cuts in volunteer programs, including entire departments being cut.

***“No money, no staff. No staff, no steering the ship or accountability. No accountability = confusion and dropping the ball. Volunteers leave. Program dies.”***

### **The economic downturn has wide-ranging effects on volunteer programs**

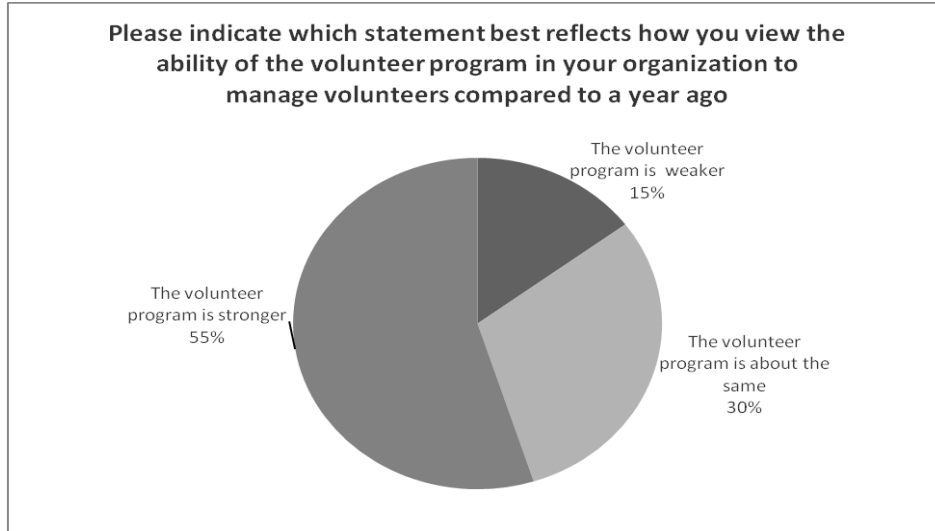
Over 85% reported the economic downturn has affected the volunteer program in one or more ways.

- 41% of respondents indicated staff in other areas of the organization have increased requests for volunteers.
- 39% of respondents indicated increased demand for services has created new volunteer opportunities.
- 30% indicated they have less time to work with volunteers, or job uncertainty reduces their ability to involve volunteers.
- 27% indicated cuts in staff have increased volunteer opportunities.

A recurring comment was that staff are both more and less open to taking on volunteers. One person noted, “stressed out staff is more reluctant to accept volunteers” while another person reported, “more program staff are using volunteers for their own work.”

## Volunteer programs are perceived as stronger by some, weaker by others

Fifty-five percent of respondents reported their volunteer program's ability to manage volunteers is stronger than a year ago. Thirty percent reported that it is the same and 15% reported it is weaker.



**Reasons for the program seeming stronger** included: adding more volunteers and volunteer positions, volunteers have stronger skills, attendance at MAVA programs, and adding staff or creative restructuring. For some organizations, the economic pressure has opened up staff willingness to accept volunteers. The factors that have **weakened** volunteer programs are complex. The primary reasons given are cuts to staff and lack of resources.

## Reliance on volunteers has increased for the majority of organizations

Fifty-nine percent of respondents reported increased reliance on volunteers, while 38% reported no change in reliance on volunteers, and only 2% reported decreased reliance on volunteers.

The increased reliance in volunteers was the highest in organizations with budgets over \$500,000. The organizations that reported having greatly increased their reliance on volunteers were also the ones that reported the highest increase in inquiries.

**For the upcoming year**, 67% expect to increase their reliance on volunteers, 26% do not expect a change, 1% expect to decrease their reliance, and 7% don't know if their reliance on volunteers will change.

## Collaborations are playing an increasing role for some programs

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***“We’ve had an increase in partnerships that have increased our volunteer capacity.”***

The importance of collaborations came up many times in survey responses.

- 48% of respondents reported increased collaborative activities with *outside partners*, 44% reported activities remained the same, 9% reported a decrease, and 9% do not engage in collaborative activities.
- 41% reported increased collaborative activities *within the organization* and 49% reported activities remained the same. 9% reported internal collaborative activities decreased and 9% do not engage in internal collaborative activities.

Comments indicated that partnerships have helped with recruiting volunteers and expanding program opportunities, such as “We’ve had an increase in partnerships that have increased our volunteer capacity.”

## Forty percent describe opportunities that developed in the past year

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When asked an open-ended question regarding opportunities that developed in the past year, the most common responses related to the following:

- More involvement with new types of volunteers: college students, people out of work, corporate volunteers, retirees, new Americans, people in the neighborhood, etc.
- Better volunteers and volunteers better fit to positions, for example, “There are more volunteers to choose from and it has really worked out to our advantage to get the best of the best in our organization.”
- Trying and having success with new recruitment methods – Facebook, volunteers recruiting other volunteers, partnerships, etc.
- Involving volunteers in leadership and supervisory roles.
- Involving volunteers in many new ways.
- Trying new schedules for volunteers in evenings and at events.
- Staff and the organization are more open to volunteers. For example, “administrative staff has become more open to using volunteers to assist with their responsibilities” and, “Greater interest by community leaders in seeing increased volunteerism as one of the tools for helping address community issues.”
- New task forces to oversee and advise volunteer programs.
- New uses of technology.

## Hundreds of strategies were suggested

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When asked open-ended questions regarding strategies that were developed in response to changes, respondents provided hundreds of strategies. The following is a summary of common themes.

### Involve volunteers in new ways and new programs

- We look at the goals and skills of the volunteer and try to create a position that is a benefit to our agency and the volunteer.
- We have been able to receive more volunteers by catering to their strengths. If a volunteer comes in and is gifted with photography, we create that into a program. Luckily, our environment allows for that flexibility and creativity. Not all organizations are conducive to that.
- We have created some new volunteer positions that were always a part of our "dream" to-do list.
- We keep a list of projects to be done. Volunteers have been generous in donating their time to accomplish more projects.
- We created cross-trained volunteer positions more than a year ago, and now can schedule the number of volunteers we need and coordinate who does what on-the-spot. This works better compared to training each volunteer for an individual role and trying to recruit/replace/coordinate volunteers for individual positions. Through internal leadership, we've prepared ourselves to involve volunteers in a greater variety of ways and create an expectation for more staff members to be managing volunteers day-to-day.
- More volunteers are involved with staff activities instead of just program activities, and we are reaching a different type of volunteer by offering positions that require more skilled volunteers.

### **Involve volunteers in leadership positions**

- Train the most talented volunteers for leadership positions before the leadership positions become available.
- We added a volunteer team leader to support program coordinators.
- We engaged a Volunteer Leadership Council to join in our strategic planning and take on new volunteer responsibilities.

### **Reinvigorate volunteer recruitment**

- People respond to urgency, and a sense of accomplishment in what they are asked to do. Don't be afraid to tell them the truth about what your organization needs at the present time.
- We created an ambassador program -- volunteers who are willing to speak for us in the community, make contacts for us for presentations about our organization, etc. They help us spread the word about our organization and bring in money and volunteers.
- We have added an e-newsletter.
- I joined MAVA and I have gleaned some ideas on tapping into volunteers in our local areas, such as working with the schools' hearing impaired to teach them work skills.
- We work with employment agencies, schools, colleges and social services to assist with creating a rewarding and job enhancing volunteer experience.
- We use Facebook invitations to volunteer orientations.

### **Involve job seekers as volunteers**

- We promoted work experience and letters of recommendation as an incentive to volunteer.
- We communicated to potential volunteers that volunteering is a great way to prevent gaps in resume and gain skills/network while unemployed/underemployed.
- We formalized more volunteer job descriptions and interview processes to give post-grad volunteers or those between employment the chance to do work that enhances their resumes.

### **Update volunteer intake, screening, placement and training**

- By establishing an orientation/training schedule rather than responding to random demand we can better control staff time commitment.
- We explain the increase in requests and give a timeline when their application, training, etc. will be completed and when they will be ready to begin.
- Don't neglect placement -- a volunteer who is using their skills where they want to be is a happy volunteer, one who will keep volunteering with your organization.
- Tour and review all programs with new prospects to help find "fit."

- Having peers teach the newbies is a win-win. I'm not saddled to the volunteer, plus it gives a "seasoned" volunteer a chance to show what they know and builds their self esteem.

### **Try new ways to supervise volunteers**

- We gave more direct supervision responsibilities to the staff in departments where volunteers are placed, increasing the volunteer's sense of belonging to that department.

### **Increase use of technology**

- We held our first WebEx meeting for coordinators across the state so that they would not have to travel to a meeting. This was effective.
- We developed scheduling capacity with Volgistics software and teaching supervisors within other departments of our organization how to utilize the software system.

### **Expand times volunteers can volunteer**

- We have developed more monthly project nights and events to engage individuals without time to commit during the day - they've been very successful.
- We created a low-cost, weekly event for weeding to address volunteer interest in summer opportunities. Previously, we were limited to spring and fall events because those are the best times to plant trees. We've been able to engage a lot of new people this way.

### **Systematize the volunteer program**

- We updated our policy and procedures just over a year ago to standardize practices across branches; we updated and expanded our task list.
- We are more structured with consistent steps in place prior to someone volunteering.

### **Redesigning volunteer recognition**

- We will be hosting an event, but not serving a full meal; we are looking for sponsors to underwrite the event particularly because we will be celebrating our centennial year in 2010.
- Because our operating budget has been cut, we are looking at an educational vs. social approach to our recognition event. We cannot afford a meal for the volunteers this year.
- Trainings for volunteers--they have requested it!
- We cut our banquets, trinkets and other expensive/time-consuming recognition activities before the downturn and haven't seen a negative impact. It's all about personal connections.

### **Increase involvement in partnerships and collaborations**

- We expanded internship opportunities and increased their visibility with area colleges and universities.
- I am working with public and private schools for opportunities to teach children service in their local communities. Also working with the local technical college to let them know we offer positions for students to meet their required volunteer hours for certain classes. I am currently thinking of a way to have local businesses work as a group at our store to benefit their business through free advertising at our store as well as connecting within their community with other local businesses.

### **Advocate for the volunteer program and pay attention to the positioning of the volunteer program in the organization**

- Increased attention on the volunteer program needs to be stepped up during times of economic downturn to get continued support from organization administration and board of directors. Constant and consistent tracking of volunteer hours is necessary for maximum impact.
- Really getting out to the staff to represent the team, and create an understanding of the volunteer role and how staff can support volunteers in the organization's mission.

# CONCLUSIONS

## High stress warrants concern

The data in this report support findings from national nonprofit surveys reporting the high stress and fragility of many nonprofits.<sup>1</sup> While many organizations are doing more with less in the short-term, this should not mask the financial stress, human resources stress, and eroding of infrastructure commonly reported. Many respondents in the Minnesota survey reported feeling like their organization is reaching a breaking point. Solutions are needed as all signs indicate a prolonged period of time before resources for nonprofits and governmental organizations will rise.

Analysis of the data reveals the quick decline that happens when investment in volunteer resources was cut. A comment that summarized this decline: “No money, no staff. No staff, no steering the ship or accountability. No accountability = confusion and dropping the ball. Volunteers leave. Program dies.” While many organizations continue to invest in volunteer resources during the financial stress, those that have not report they cannot support volunteers or effectively use volunteers.

## Smaller organizations are disproportionately affected

Overall, smaller organizations reported being less likely to benefit from the increase in inquiries about volunteering. The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits has also reported that smaller organizations are feeling the pinch of declining revenues the most and have a harder time coming up with financial solutions.<sup>2</sup> These findings highlight that smaller organizations feel the financial and human capital pressures of the recession the most.

## Some organizations are thriving with new approaches

The data indicate that some volunteer programs are thriving and making breakthroughs in new ways to involve volunteers. Some organizations gave an upbeat report of the economic pressure that resulted in staff acceptance that volunteers can do more than stuff envelopes; volunteers can use their workplace skills and accomplish results to advance the organizational mission.

Why are some organizations making breakthroughs in involvement while others' volunteer programs are in a precarious position? In the complexity of the current situation, several themes stood out regarding **organizational decisions that negatively affect volunteer programs.**

- Staff are not willing to accept volunteers in new roles.
- Cuts in the volunteer program budget are disproportionate compared to other departments.
- Top management does not recognize the importance of the volunteer program, creating instability for the volunteer program.

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<sup>1</sup> “Report 8 - A Respectful Warning Call to Our Partners in Government,” National Council of Nonprofits' Special Report on Economic Stimulus and Recovery <http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/specialreports>, downloaded November 13, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> “Nonprofit Current conditions Report: Analysis of a Minnesota Council of Nonprofits member survey”, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, June 2009

Now, more than ever, organizations are benefiting from setting aside outdated models of volunteer involvement and moving to involve volunteers throughout the organization and in positions of significant responsibility.

## Comparing Minnesota data to national data

How does Minnesota compare to what is happening in the rest of the country? It is not possible to make an exact comparison between this survey and national data due to differences in sampling method, timeframe, and methodology, but some general points of reference include:

### **The level of fiscal stress seems similar.**

- A national study released by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) found 80% of surveyed nonprofits reported fiscal stress.<sup>3</sup>
- The MAVA/Minnesota survey found 86% of respondents reporting organizational fiscal stress.

### **The Minnesota survey found a higher increase in reliance on volunteers.**

- The study released by CNCS had a 33% national increase in reliance on volunteers.<sup>4</sup>
- 59% of respondents in the Minnesota survey indicated an increased reliance on volunteers in the past year. This trend may relate to the recently released Minnesota Civic Health Index that found 41% of Minnesotans said they had increased volunteering compared to 28% for the nation as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

## National Call to Service – resources are needed to handle more volunteers

This report raises an important policy question. The national call to service and entertainment industry call to service presume that organizations have the capacity to take on more volunteers. Several critical questions have not been asked:

- What is the capacity of organizations to take on large numbers of volunteers?
- What resources are needed to support more volunteers and where will they come from?

While most of the respondents in the Minnesota survey were able to turn this first surge of volunteer interest into increased service, 40% of respondents indicated their organization had to put at least part of their inquiries on a waiting list or turn them away. Further, comments from the survey indicate that although many organizations may have been able to put the first surge of volunteers to work, they may not be able to continue to do this. Volunteers are only successfully involved if there are resources for their assignment, training, supervision and recognition. It is not clear there are sufficient resources to support existing volunteers, much the less a surge in volunteers during a time of diminishing resources for most organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> Lester M. Salamon and Kasey L. Spence, "Research Brief: Volunteers and the Economic Downturn", John Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies and the Corporation for National and Community Service, July 2009

<sup>4</sup> Lester M. Salamon and Kasey L. Spence, July 2009

<sup>5</sup> "Minnesota Civic Health Index, Integrating Civic Engagement Into Community Life," National Conference on Citizenship, 2009

## Share this data and use it to create change

Conclusions found in this report are of vital interest to organizations. Members of MAVA and users of this report are encouraged to share the results with executive team leaders within their organization and to cite this information as important data to support continued investment in volunteer leadership resources. This data can also be used in public communications to indicate the challenges and opportunities facing the field today.

## NEXT STEPS

MAVA is holding symposia and discussion groups in St. Cloud, the Twin Cities, Mankato and Willmar to explore the shifting times and share strategies. Results of the discussion will be posted on the MAVA website at <http://www.mavanetwork.org/shiftingenv>. For more information contact [mquirk@mavanetwork.org](mailto:mquirk@mavanetwork.org).

## SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents identified themselves primarily as volunteer coordinators (64%), program staff (14%) or executives (10%). Regarding geographic distribution: 46% of the respondents were from organizations that serve the Twin Cities Metro area, 18% serve Central Minnesota, 16% serve Southern Minnesota, 12% serve Northern Minnesota, 8% serve Western Minnesota, 9% serve statewide, 5% serve nationally and 18% indicated "other." Respondents represented a wide range of activity areas, budget sizes and sizes of volunteer program.

## THANK YOU

### MAVA Task Force

Bonnie Esposito, Community Volunteer  
Zeeda Magnuson, HandsOn Twin Cities  
Jean Nierenhausen, Minnesota Historical Society  
Janene Reideman, St. Cloud Hospital  
Gail Peterson, Courage Center  
Polly Roach, Mentoring Partnership of Minnesota

### MAVA Strategic Directions Committee

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**Research consultant:** Erin Bowley

**Foundation support:** Otto Bremer Foundation and St. Paul Foundation

**Thank you, survey respondents,** for taking your time to share your struggles and strategies.

*Report released by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration, November 30, 2009.*