

COMMON IMPACT

Making strong communities your business



Measuring the Results: The Business Case for Skills-Based Volunteerism



1/
Assessing
the problem

2/
Redefining
the solutions

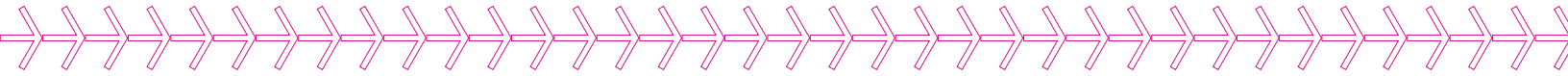
3/
Measuring
the results

The third in a series of three reports identifying common capacity constraints in the nonprofit sector, assessing trends in capacity investment, and exploring the relationship between nonprofit capacity building and greater effectiveness



“I hope you know that we absolutely could not have done this without each and every one of you.”

This sentiment, expressed by the director of a nonprofit program that benefitted from a skills-based volunteering engagement (SBV) managed by Common Impact in 2009, is a powerful testament to the findings in our three-part research study sponsored by Capital One. In Reports One and Two of our research, we explored the root causes of operational ineffectiveness of nonprofit organizations and focused on the capacity constraints that a majority of these organizations face.



Report Three, which represents the third and final stage in the study, now will focus on helping nonprofits make the business case for skills-based volunteering in order to address those capacity constraints. The culmination of this phase of research is a series of case studies, contained within this report, which illustrate how leading nonprofits have used SBV to address operational challenges and position for long-term growth that strengthens not just the organizations, but also the communities they serve.



Increasing the Uptake of Skills-Based Volunteering

From our previous phases of research, we know that nonprofits can benefit from engaging in skilled-volunteering. With SBV, nonprofits save the cost of hiring consultants to manage back-office projects; SBV also provides the functional expertise lacking within so many nonprofits – for example, corporate IT professionals who develop databases in their day jobs might work with nonprofits to build a donor database.

But we've also found that many nonprofits don't use SBV as a resource to build their internal capacity. A 2011 Deloitte IMPACT survey found that 24 percent of nonprofits have no plans to use SBVs even though 72 percent strongly agree they could increase social impact with SBV support and 90 percent say they need more SBV support.

Common Impact believes there are two reasons for this gap between SBV value and SBV uptake. First, nonprofits don't know if they are ready for skills-based volunteering. This factor was a key driver for the Common Impact Skilled-Volunteering 101 handbook.

The second reason for nonprofits being slow to engage in SBV is that they find it difficult to make the business case for SBV to internal/external stakeholders. Nonprofits tell us that SBV can be a tough sell to internal (staff and board) and external (funders) audiences. They struggle with how to make the case for allocating resources to non-program work.



→ **Overcoming the Obstacles to SBV Adoption**

Despite the challenges in “selling” SBV investments to nonprofit stakeholders, Common Impact believes that investing in the back-office now, using skilled-volunteers, is a cost-effective way to build immediate program capacity as well as a sustainable infrastructure for the future.

The evidence is strong for back-office investments as a foundation for on-going sustainability. For example, in “Delivering on the Promise of Nonprofits,” The Bridgespan Group notes, “Constraining overhead inhibits the very systems and staff the nonprofit needs to achieve its intended impact.”

→ **A Business Case for SBV**

To help nonprofits seize the opportunity presented by SBV, Common Impact has developed a framework for assessing readiness, designing successful SBV engagements and measuring the impact of those engagements for nonprofits, corporate partners and the wider communities that nonprofits serve. This framework is described below and illustrated by case studies within this report.

Having worked with more than 300 nonprofits since our inception, and having partnered with Capital One whose deep commitment to skills-based volunteering was critical to our ability to undertake this study, we believe this research makes a superb business case for the impact of skilled-volunteering.

Our sincere hope is that our research and the framework we’ve designed will allow nonprofits to make the case for investing in the back-office using skilled volunteers. Ideally, what follows will serve as both a toolkit and an inspiration to organizations seeking to address the chronic challenge of nonprofit capacity building in a way that is innovative, effective and, most of all, rewarding.

Framework: Understanding the Impact of Skilled-Volunteering Projects

Common Impact and Capital One have created what we believe is the first and only framework for guiding nonprofits toward successful skills-based volunteering projects. Based on a combined total of more than 500 SBV engagements with teams of corporate volunteer-employees across a variety of functional areas, the framework is designed to help nonprofits:

- **Map** the SBV opportunity to the organization's core mission
- **Design** an SBV program and assess readiness for implementation
- **Implement and measure** results from the engagement
- **Create** a feedback loop between engagement results and core mission, ensuring that SBV value both supports and drives the fulfillment of the NPO's mission

→ **Start at the core**

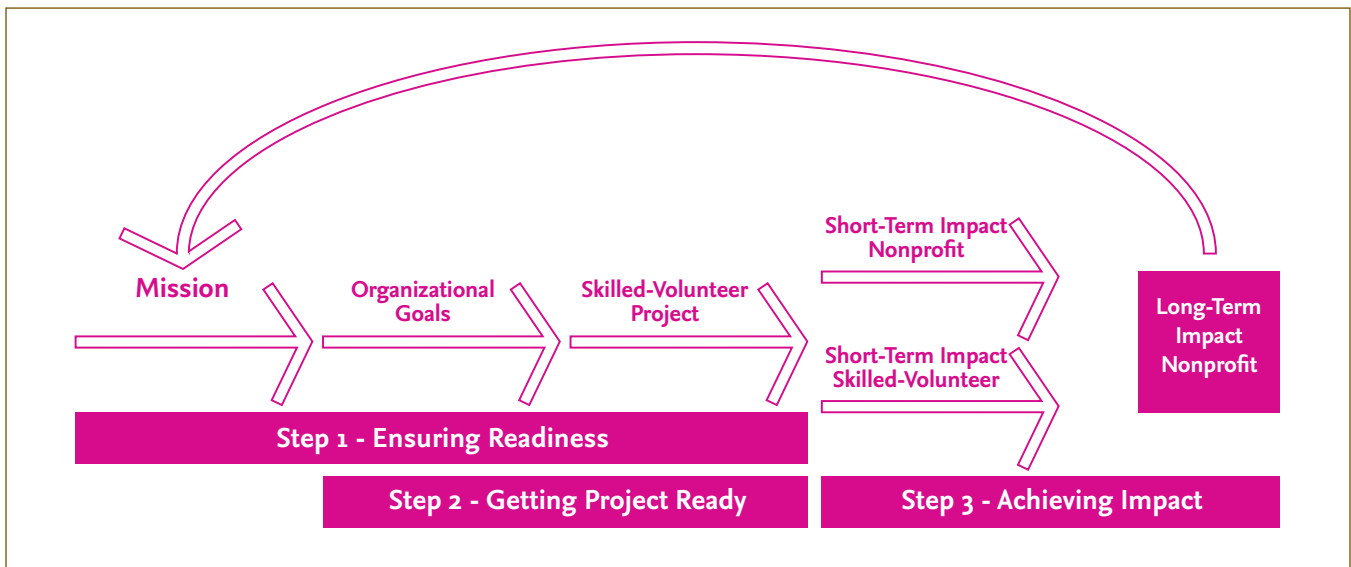
In our experience, the most successful skilled volunteering projects flow directly from an organization's core mission and organizational goals. When there is close alignment among the mission, organizational goals, and defined skilled volunteer project, the nonprofit and skilled volunteers have the best chances of achieving measurable impact.

And that impact reverberates beyond just the nonprofit itself: our research shows that only when both the nonprofit and the skilled volunteers experience benefits in the short term, does the nonprofit experience long-term gains from the engagement. In other words, the experience has to be meaningful for both the volunteers and the nonprofit organization in order to create lasting value.

→ **Measure Impact:**

The Common Impact Framework

In order to ensure project impact through close alignment between organizational mission and SBV goals, Common Impact takes three steps, illustrated below:



→ **Step 1:**

Ensuring Readiness – Mapping Skilled Volunteer Needs to Mission and Goals

Nonprofits need to be ready for skills-based volunteering projects in order for the engagements to generate long-term organizational impact. When assessing readiness for a skilled volunteering project, we look for a clear alignment between the organization’s mission, its goals and the need the organization has identified wanting to meet through SBV – in this way, we help ensure the proposed project will generate a measurable impact. Specifically, we assess the following factors:

- **Mission:** We ask questions such as: What is this organization trying to accomplish? Is there clarity at all levels of the organization about the mission? Are staff and board members on the same page about the mission?
- **Organizational Goals:** Our queries would include: What are your organizational goals over the next year? How will these goals, if achieved, help your organization better meet its mission?
- **Skilled volunteer project:** We might ask: What are the challenges your organization is facing? If you completed a project that addressed this challenge, what effect would it have on your organization?

→ **Step 2:**

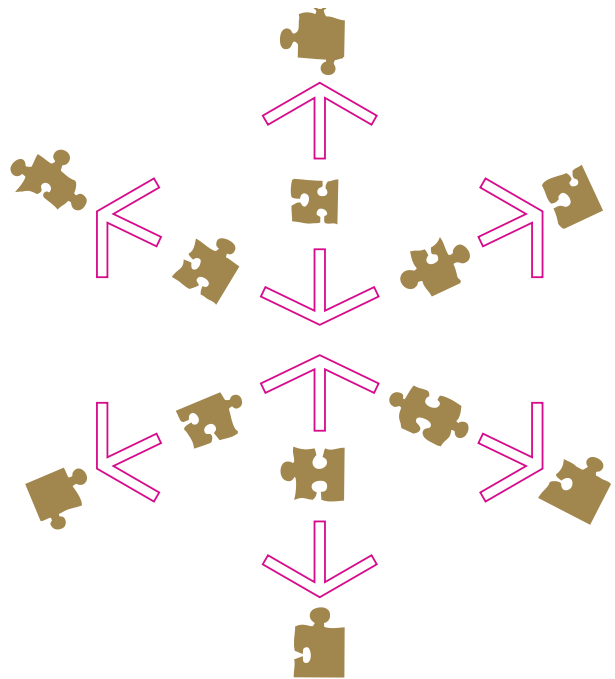
Getting the Project Ready: Scoping to Help Achieve an Organizational Goal

Once Common Impact knows an organization is ready for skills-based volunteering, we clearly define the project’s scope and goals to ensure successful outcomes for the nonprofit and the volunteers. We consider the following areas in particular:

Organizational Goals: We start by determining which specific organizational goal the nonprofit would like to focus on with their skilled volunteer project. To do this, we might ask questions such as: Of your organizational goals over the next year, which goal is the priority for this skilled volunteer project? How will this goal if achieved, help your organization better serve its clients?

It’s important to note that an organizational goal should be concrete. For example, for an organization with a mission of improving literacy rates among K-8 students, one organizational goal might be increasing engagement with program alumni.

Mapping goals to specific project types: Once the organizational goal is defined, we use this as a lens through which to help the nonprofit determine which



kind of skilled volunteer project would best help them achieve their organizational goal. For example, for the organization that wants to increase engagement with alumni, Common Impact might ask questions such as: What is your organization currently doing to engage alumni? In an ideal world, what would you be doing to engage alumni that you are not able to do now? Based on the organization’s answers to these questions (using the example above), the project might be designed to develop a program database to track current students and program alumni.

Defining the scope of the project. So, for the K-8 literacy program described here, once a database has been identified as the desired outcome for the SBV engagement, we would then ask a series of questions to better address the program’s scope. We might ask: What information are you currently collecting about students and alumni? Have you determined the type of database application your organization would like to use (e.g. Salesforce, Access etc.)?

Creating a feedback loop between project scope and project outcomes. For example, to define the project goals for the same organization as above, we might ask: At the end of the project, when you have a new database, what would you like to be different about how you manage student and program alumni information? How will you know if the database is helping you meet your organizational goal of increasing alumni engagement? Answers to questions like these help us – and the volunteer team – implement the most effective program for achieving impact.

→ **Step 3:**

Achieving Impact: Measuring Short- and Long-Term Effects of the Engagement

Measurement is essential for demonstrating the value of SBV to all audiences, as well as engaging in future SBV projects. We measure both short- and long-term impacts through a series of interviews and information-gathering sessions with both nonprofits and the skilled volunteer teams.

Short-term impact measurement

To ensure we measure results both quantitatively and qualitatively, at the conclusion of each project, Common Impact conducts phone interviews and online surveys with the nonprofit and skilled volunteer teams to gain a better understanding of the short-term impact on each side.

At a high level nonprofits tell us that skilled volunteers bring much-needed access to cost-effective expertise that helps them build their back-office infrastructure, allowing them to deliver stronger programs today. Specific examples of short-term impacts we have measured include:

- 81 percent of nonprofits say that “the expected impact of [the] skilled volunteer project will be high”
- 77 percent of nonprofits say they “learned new skills from skilled volunteers”

The volunteers themselves also experience tremendous benefits from their engagements with nonprofits, and it’s not just a “feel good” effect. Ultimately, skilled volunteers get the opportunity to give what they know to make a difference and help a nonprofit become stronger. Specifically, we know that:

- 87 percent of skilled volunteers say their project increased their interest in volunteering
- 91 percent of skilled volunteers say they see their project will “make a real difference to the nonprofit client”
- 92 percent had a relevant professional development experience
- 92 percent feel more inclined to recommend their company as a great place to work
- 97 percent rate quality of services provided by corporate team as good or excellent

Long-term impact measurement

In order to capture long-term impact, Common Impact also speaks with nonprofit clients one year after the conclusion of each project. Through these interviews, we find that, over the long term, nonprofits experience a variety of benefits from the work they do with skilled volunteers. Increased efficiency, improved organizational effectiveness or reduced operating costs are among the benefits that these organizations report a year after their engagements.

Over the long run, nonprofits tell us that skilled volunteers build back-office infrastructure that provides them with greater capacity, strengthening their organizational health. This greater organizational health feeds back into the mission by generating a stronger, more sustainable organization – one that will be around over the long-term to deliver its services.

“This project, once implemented, will completely change how [our nonprofit client] does business and it is something [our team] all feels very good about being a part of.”

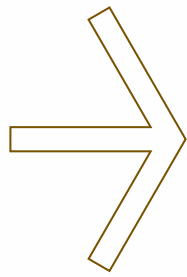
“I feel as if [our nonprofit client was] serious about restructuring their organization to better suit volunteer needs and internal organizational goals. The volunteer portal [our team] developed has the potential to be a useful tool in accomplishing both of those goals.”

(Long term impact #1): One organization that worked with skilled volunteers to create a standard set of messages about their organization, said “the overall impact of the project on [our] ability to meet [our] mission was outstanding.” Furthermore, the organization has experienced cost savings, time savings and has been more effectively able to raise money as a result of their skilled volunteer project.

(Long term impact #2): Another organization that worked with a team to conduct a market analysis for a proposed earned income venture said that they learned new skills from volunteers and so “have a better understanding of how to evaluate [our] organization’s priorities.” This organization also developed a long-term relationship with one of their skilled volunteers, this volunteer was involved with the organization one year after the project wrap up as an advisor to the organization, evaluating earned income opportunities.

	ENSURING READINESS	GETTING PROJECT READY	ACHIEVING IMPACT
DEFINITION	Ensuring skilled volunteering needs align with the organization's mission and goals	Selecting one specific organizational goal and using this as the lens through which to select, and scope, a skilled volunteering project that will help achieve that goal	Measuring benefits experienced by the nonprofit and skilled volunteers to assess long-term nonprofit impact
EXAMPLE	<p>The Mission: To support academic and social growth of youth in the New York Public Schools with the help of strong mentoring relationships</p> <p>Organizational Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase percent of students who participate for 2+ years • Increase number of mentors who engage for 1+ years • Increase engagement of families in school-year activities <p>Skilled Volunteer Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to collect data on students, families, and mentors • Materials that can be shared with students, families, and mentors • Development of mentor training curriculum 	<p>Organizational Goal: Increase number of mentors who engage for 1+ years in order to provide deeper, more consistent mentoring relationships to students</p> <p>Skilled Volunteer Project: Participant database that can track student and mentor data</p> <p>Project Scope & Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a new, web-based database that can be accessed by multiple staff members • Database should be able to track email communications to students and mentors • Database should be able to manage surveys to collect data about participants and monitor satisfaction 	<p>Short-Term Impact Nonprofit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less time required to build relationships with mentors – Staff can now see the number of communications sent to each mentor to ensure on-going communication takes place • Reduction in time required to gather mentor satisfaction data – mentors complete an online survey which is linked to the database <p>Short-Term Impact Skilled Volunteers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database developers get to use expertise in a new context – learn how to build a database for a school environment • Developers meet new people – both those on their team, and at the nonprofit and on their board <p>Long-Term Impact Nonprofit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average mentoring commitment increases to 2.5 years • Time once spent gathering student and mentor information is now reallocated to programs, improving quality of mentor training and allowing nonprofit to develop parent programs





Over the long run, nonprofits tell us that skilled volunteers build back-office infrastructure that provides them with greater capacity, strengthening their organizational health.



Case Studies: Our Framework In Action

Case Study One

The Greater Boston Food Bank: Leveraging IT Expertise To Feed More Hungry People



The Greater Boston Food Bank
Boston, Massachusetts
<http://www.gbfb.org/index.cfm>

The Need For The Greater Boston Food Bank's Services:

Hunger, and the need for food assistance, has grown in the U.S. and in Massachusetts. A nationwide study released in February 2010 shows the extent to which the economic downturn has increased the pressing need for food distribution.¹ In eastern Massachusetts alone, the area The Greater Boston Food Bank serves, the report finds that 23 percent more people sought food assistance in 2009 than did in 2005, 44 percent of those interviewed had to choose between spending money on food or heat, and nearly one-third said their children are not eating enough because they cannot afford to buy more food. While “food insecurity” and poverty are clearly linked (80 percent of The Greater Boston Food Bank’s clients are below the federal poverty line) the study also shows that hunger affects a diverse group of people across eastern Massachusetts: 73 percent of those seeking food in 2009 had a place to live, 44 percent were between 30-44 years old, and more than 66 percent were registered voters.

Engaging Skilled Volunteers to Achieve Impact

Ensuring Readiness: Mission, Organizational Goals, and Need for Skilled Volunteers

The Greater Boston Food Bank distributes more than 36 million pounds of food to approximately 550 hunger-relief agencies, including small, medium, and large food pantries, after-school programs, homeless shelters, youth programs and senior feeding programs in 190 communities across 9 counties in eastern Massachusetts. All told, The Greater Boston Food Bank feeds as many as 545,000 people each year.

In 2009, The Greater Boston Food Bank faced a difficult reality: the economic downturn had severely increased the need for its services, while making funding even more challenging. As a result, the organization needed to put existing resources to work even more creatively. Specifically, The Greater Boston Food Bank sought to fulfill the goal of distributing a significantly larger amount of food in 2010.

The Greater Boston Food Bank’s member agencies order food through an online ordering system that relied on three separate technologies, none of which integrated seamlessly with one another. As a result, the system was complex and

difficult to use: at times, staff members had to manually transfer data among the different technologies before an online order was ready to be picked up by a member agency, slowing the time between when food donations arrived at the Greater Boston Food Bank warehouse and when it could be made available for ordering by member agencies.

Common Impact recognized the opportunity to engage a corporate partner in delivering skilled expertise that would help the Food Bank literally do more with less.

Getting Project-Ready: Project Goals, Definition & Scoping

Based on its initial meetings with The Greater Boston Food Bank’s Chief Financial Officer (CFO), David Noymer, who also served as project manager for this engagement, Common Impact identified three project goals:

- **Keeping the online ordering system easy to use.** The Greater Boston Food Bank knew that despite its own challenges with the three systems, member agencies found the online system easy to use. Keeping the system “user-friendly” was a top priority because member agencies distributed food from The Food Bank’s warehouse to hungry people. Therefore, the Food Bank wanted to be sure the online system continued to be easy for member agencies to use.

1. Hunger In America, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. February, 2010



- **Reducing time required to fill orders.** By making the three systems “talk to one another” more effectively, The Food Bank wanted to reduce manual intervention, thereby decreasing staff time required to fill member-agency orders, and improving the speed with which orders could be filled and picked up by member agencies. The Food Bank found it took about twenty-four hours between the time food arrived at the warehouse and when it was available to be ordered.
- **Determining if they could reduce the number of systems involved in online ordering.** The Greater Boston Food Bank wanted to leverage skilled-volunteer expertise to understand if they could achieve their other stated goals while also reducing the number of systems involved in online ordering from three to two.

At this stage in the project, buy-in, both from the top down and the bottom up, was essential. First, because The Food Bank would need to allocate time and resources to the project, Noymer wanted to be sure the leadership team felt this was a good use of resources. He then brought in The Greater Boston Food Bank’s technology staffers; who would need to provide their knowledge to a skilled volunteer team and therefore needed to understand the project’s goals and potential benefits.

Once The Food Bank’s leadership team and IT staff agreed on the value to the organization, Common Impact and Noymer began to define the project by conducting an IT system evaluation to determine how to streamline the number of technologies while keeping the online ordering system easy to use and reducing manual data entry time by Food Bank staff.

Common Impact generated a set of milestones to define the scope, these were:

1. Conduct research on what technologies are available for each of the three systems that support online ordering;
2. Conduct user focus groups at The Greater Boston Food Bank to determine strengths and weaknesses of three existing systems;
3. Document system evaluation research and focus group information;
4. Make recommendations on which systems can be replaced, if possible, and what technologies should replace them; and
5. Present the analysis to The Greater Boston Food Bank and gather feedback; make edits as needed.

With the project scope defined, Noymer ensured Food Bank resources were available to support the project work with skilled volunteers. For example, he had the two members of the Food Bank’s IT team work directly with skilled volunteers, both to bring them up to speed on how each of the three systems worked, and to answer questions they had during the project. Noymer also continued to build buy-in and awareness of the project internally by engaging Chief Operating Officer Carol Tienken, and the IT team in the project definition process.

As The Food Bank aligned its internal resources, Common Impact identified specific skill-sets needed to complete the scoped project:

- **Project Management/Client Management** – to lead the project team, make final presentation (1 person)
- **Business Analysis/Operations Support** – to define timeline and steps of project, document system evaluation, and capture team recommendations (1 person)
- **Technology Vendor Analysis/Vendor Management** – to conduct research on technologies and conduct focus groups (2 people)
- **Risk Management/Information Security** – to ensure data transfers between systems are accurate and secure (2 people)

Ultimately, Common Impact engaged a corporate team of six skilled volunteers, each of whom committed to spending between two and four hours a week over a six-month period to complete the IT system evaluation. The team met with The Greater Boston Food Bank frequently to collect information,

share findings, and gather feedback on their strategies for how The Food Bank could adapt the technology that supported the online ordering system.

At the project's conclusion, the team delivered a presentation that assessed different options for meeting The Food Bank's project goals and proposed a recommended approach. By the end of the project, the six-person team contributed 245 hours of skilled-volunteer expertise to The Greater Boston Food Bank.

Achieving Impact: Short and Long-Term Impact

Short-Term Impact on Food Bank's Ability to Distribute More Pounds of Food: After the project's conclusion, Common Impact measured benefits that will lay the foundation for meeting the organizational goal of distributing more pounds of food.

- **Cost Savings:** By engaging with a skilled-volunteer team, Common Impact estimates that The Greater Boston Food Bank easily saved over \$40,000 in costs they would have incurred to hire a consultant for the work their team completed.
- **Affordable Access to Expertise:** According to The Food Bank, the "amount of value [we] received from the project was excellent" and in post-project surveys The Food Bank "strongly agreed" that the team delivered exceptionally high-quality knowledge and services to the project.

According to CFO and project lead Noymer, "This was a very valuable project. The team brought a focused, technically deep, and unbiased perspective. They asked thoughtful questions that produced a great analysis and roadmap for The Greater Boston Food Bank."

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The Food Bank also reported that their skilled-volunteer team's "comprehensive analysis provides a solid basis for making a good decision about how to move forward." Given that The Food Bank projects the costs of moving forward to be in the range of \$200,000, the value of making a data-based decision is considerable.

Short-Term Impact on Skilled-Volunteers: After the project's conclusion, Common Impact also followed up with the skilled-volunteer team and found the following benefits to the volunteer team:

- **Increased Awareness of the Need for The Food Bank's Services:** Post-project surveys revealed that before the project

started, skilled-volunteers considered their knowledge of hunger issues to be "fair" while after the project, participants rated their knowledge as "excellent"

- **Saw They Made a Difference:** Participants on The Greater Boston Food Bank project agree that "my work on this project made a real difference to the nonprofit client." A desire to "give what they know" is a common motivator for skilled-volunteers, and that factor made this a fulfilling experience for team members
- **Sharpened Professional Skills:** All participants on the Greater Boston Food Bank project considered it a "good professional development opportunity" and, based on post-project survey data, honed skills such as "creative thinking, client communications, executive presentations, and teamwork"

Expected Long-Term Impact on Distributing More Pounds of Food:

According to the Greater Boston Food Bank, "The mission impact of this project will be outstanding." Specifically, the organization expects the project to support progress toward their goal of distributing more pounds of food in three key ways:

- **More Efficient Food Distribution:** Once the online ordering system has been streamlined, The Greater Boston Food Bank will be able to "dramatically shrink the time between when food arrives at our warehouse, and when it's available for ordering online." The Food Bank anticipates this turn-around time will fall from twenty-four hours + to two hours or less.
- **Reallocation of Staff Time to Mission-Critical Work:** According to Noymer, "Our staff will be far more efficient and productive in the new environment. The manual effort surrounding agencies orders will drop dramatically. With a more streamlined system, we'll be able to reallocate that time to more productive efforts around distributing more food to the communities we serve."
- **Long-Term Relationship Building with Skilled-Volunteers:** Given the value of the experience to the Food Bank's skilled-volunteers, over the long-term The Food Bank may find that its volunteers are interested in staying engaged; more than 33 percent of Common Impact skilled-volunteers stay involved with their nonprofit partner after project completion.

Case Study Two

Leveraging Financial Expertise to Generate Leaders among Boston's Youth



Youth Enrichment Services
Boston, Massachusetts
<http://www.yeskids.org/>

The Need For Youth Enrichment Services Programs:

Boston's youth lacks access to regular physical education and enriching after-school programs. According to *The Boston Globe*, 25 percent of Boston public school students in 15 schools had no access to physical education or in-school sports during the 2007-2008 school year.¹ After school hours, access to programming continues to be limited: according to one survey, 40 percent of Massachusetts' youth are on their own or in the care of a sibling after school hours.² According to Mass 2020's Keeping Kids on Track initiative, youth that are home alone two or more days per week were four times more likely to abuse alcohol compared to peers with regular adult supervision. Boston's urban youth face the largest opportunity gaps; specifically, teens living in West Roxbury, Roslindale, Mattapan, and Hyde Park have the fewest opportunities available to them after-school.^{3,4}

Engaging Skilled-Volunteers to Achieve Impact

Ensuring Readiness: Mission, Organizational Goals, and Need for Skilled-Volunteers

Youth Enrichment Services (YES) is a 43-year old organization serving Boston's inner city youth, and has provided year-round outdoor programming to more than 100,000 young people over the past four decades. Historically, youth from Boston neighborhoods including Dorchester, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain have been the majority of those served by YES services and programs; the organization also is increasing its reach into additional neighborhoods such as West Roxbury, Roslindale, Mattapan and Hyde Park.

In April 2010, YES had been under the leadership of Executive Director Bryan Van Dorpe for about 18 months. During this time, Van Dorpe had seen a substantial increase in the demand for YES' services – for example, 2010 saw a 23 percent increase in inner city youths signed up for YES' winter program, Operation Snowsports. Recognizing this need, Van Dorpe focused on providing more opportunities to Boston's youth by expanding the number of programs and activities YES offered.

Van Dorpe also was focused on developing YES' board of directors, and formalizing systems the organization used to support programming. Specifically, Van Dorpe wanted to formalize YES' finance data and information because he needed an accurate system to identify how much each program cost in order to create greater accountability for meeting the organizational budget.

During initial meetings with Van Dorpe, Common Impact learned that YES' mission is to inspire and challenge youth with physical and mental activities that foster life-long respect for themselves, others, and the environment. Most youth got acquainted with YES through their outdoor adventure programs Operation Snowsports, a ski program, or Outdoor Adventure hiking, biking, and kayak tours. The YES Academy, youth leadership training and internships also are a key part of YES' organizational mission.

In order to boost repeat involvement, Van Dorpe wanted to increase the number of spots for teens in high demand programs such as Operation Snowsports. With a fixed budget Van Dorpe also knew that he would need to increase revenues, but he lacked clarity into how many more spots he could open in Operation Snowsports by drawing resources from other sources because of the existing budget management system.

YES engages over 150 adult volunteers to supervise trips and mentor youth; one volunteer has worked with YES for 40 years. Furthermore, despite the fact that national statistics point to a 33 percent attrition rate for volunteers nationally, YES' volunteer opportunities were "sticky."⁵

Van Dorpe attributes this stickiness, in part, to matching each volunteers' interests and passions to a volunteer role that matches their motivations. One person on the nonprofit's board, for example, had a finance background, so Van Dorpe engaged him in internal YES finance and budgeting activities and appointed him as treasurer. Van Dorpe suggested that if YES and Common Impact worked together on a

1. Boston Indicators Project <http://bostonindicators.org/Indicators2008/Education/Content.aspx?id=10874>
2. After-school Alliance Survey of Massachusetts, 2008
3. Boston Indicators Project <http://bostonindicators.org/Indicators2008/Education/Content.aspx?id=10874>

4. Boston Indicators Project <http://bostonindicators.org/indicators2006/education/indicator.aspx?id=3244>
5. Corporation for National and Community Service "Volunteering in America" 2010 http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/about/research_faqs.cfm

skilled volunteer project, that he would engage this Board member in the project to provide financial expertise and organizational knowledge to skilled volunteers, which Common Impact recognized as a key element in readiness to engage in skilled volunteering.

Based on our initial discussions, Common Impact and Van Dorpe articulated two key goals:

1. Increase staff awareness and accountability for meeting the organization's budget
2. Provide YES with data on how much each program cost YES to run

Getting Project-Ready: Project Goals, Definition & Scoping

Common Impact proposed that the organization needed a financial model which would organize expenses by each program, allowing YES to determine the true cost of each program and each youth served. This would include not only the expenses generated by each program, but also staff time spent running each program and the portion of overall organizational costs (overhead) that gets spread across all of the programs.

Common Impact began by focusing on YES' three main programs: Operation Snowsports (ski and snowboarding program), Outdoor Adventure (daily hiking, biking and kayaking trips) and Yes Academy (youth development through job training, leadership training, community service etc.).

Following this step, Common Impact and YES developed a "map" for each program—the steps YES took to set up and run each program from start to finish. Through this exercise Common Impact was able to determine gaps in information about program costs. For example, recruiting first-time attendees was something YES did regularly, but didn't know how much it cost the organization.

Common Impact also worked with Van Dorpe to determine the executive staff that would be involved in the project. In addition to Van Dorpe and the Board member/Treasurer, YES' director of programs was tapped provide deep programmatic expertise and help skilled volunteers acquire the programmatic knowledge necessary to build an effective financial model.

Next, Common Impact generated a project scope for YES and its skilled volunteer team, including project objectives:

1. To provide program-to-program comparison of costs
2. To identify cost per youth served by program
3. To provide a tool that facilitates staff and board discussion about programmatic investments

As Van Dorpe aligned internal YES resources, Common Impact formed a skilled-volunteer team:

- **Project Management** – to lead the project team, make final presentation to YES' board of directors (1 person)
- **Financial Modeling** – to build an excel model using financial data (1-2 people)
- **Cost Accounting** – to determine how to spread overhead and other shared expenses across programs (1 person)
- **Market Research/Analytical Skills** – to interview YES staff and analyze cost data (1-2 people)

Based on the project scope and skill-sets needed, Common Impact engaged a team of six skilled volunteers, each of whom committed to spending between two and four hours a week over a five-month period to complete the financial model. The team met with YES weekly to gather cost information, discuss their assumptions as they built the model, and gather feedback on their draft model.

At the project's conclusion, the team delivered a presentation to YES' board of directors to share data on the cost of each program and of each youth served, and to train the board on how to adapt the model; the team wanted to be sure the board knew how to adjust the financial model if programs changed. At the wrap up of the project, the team has contributed over 400 hours of expertise to YES.

Achieving Impact: Short and Long-Term Impact

Short-Term Impact on YES' Developing Youth Leaders in Boston

After the project's conclusion, Common Impact found immediate impact on the organization, including:

- **Access to Deep Financial Expertise:** According to Van Dorpe, YES' skilled volunteers, "provided excellent services and were incredibly knowledgeable about finance." Van Dorpe also reported that he and his staff learned new skills from the volunteer team, resulting in a greater understanding of program costs, a tool YES can use now and in the future to make decisions about program investments. Ultimately, said Van Dorpe, the engagement "...enabled our organization to make wiser decisions about where to invest our organizational resources."
- **Significant Value for YES' Investment:** Van Dorpe, YES' staff, and their Treasurer all invested considerable time into their project, and Van Dorpe says "the amount of time we were expected to contribute was reasonable given what we got from the project." Van Dorpe also noted that the value the organization will receive from the project is outstanding. Finally, Van Dorpe shared that he expects the value of the project on YES' mission will be high because it will enable even better decision making about program budget allocation in the short term.

- **Improved Financial Decision-Making:** One of Van Dorpe's goals for the project was to get the data YES needed to be able to make smart decisions about how to ensure program costs were covered as YES developed new programming and leadership development among Boston's youth. According to post-project surveys, Van Dorpe says his skilled volunteer team "provided a model and training to my organization and we will be able to use these tools to plan program spending and make key decisions about program investments."

Short-Term Impact on Skilled Volunteers:

After the project's wrap-up, volunteer team members reported a number of immediate benefits, including:

- **Increased Interest in Volunteering:** YES' skilled volunteers gained a deep understanding of the challenges nonprofits face when trying to build capacity. According to one volunteer, "I got insight into the key barriers and resource limitations, [which] helped me appreciate the difficulties nonprofits face." Post project surveys showed this experience increased skilled volunteers' interest in volunteering in the future.

Considering that one source found that 40 percent of nonprofits planned to spend between \$50,000 and \$250,000 or more from tight budgets on outside consultants, the increase in the number of skilled volunteers has the potential to have a significant two way impact; impact on skilled volunteers that continue to see the value of giving what they know and on nonprofits who get access to their expertise.⁶

- **Made Connections That Will Stick:** Participants said they met colleagues in different departments and that these connections could "help solve a future business problem" and that they are "likely to maintain the relationships made with new colleagues while working on this project". Since meeting new people is one of the top reasons why people participate as skilled volunteers, the fact that YES' team members felt they made strong connections with their colleagues will amplify the impact for YES' skilled volunteers.
- **Built Management Capacity:** Surveys showed that YES' skilled volunteers gained management skills such as

"clarifying roles and objective," "supporting and motivating other," "team building" and "managing client relationship." Common Impact has found that many skilled volunteers participate in projects like YES' to hone their leadership capabilities for future advancement.

Expected Long-Term Impact on Developing Youth Leaders in Boston:

Speaking with Youth Enrichment Services, Common Impact heard that the quality of services provided by our skilled volunteers was outstanding. YES also expects to see the following impact in the next one to two years, impact that will enable YES to meet its goal of increasing repeat involvement of youth, and strengthening the organization's planning process and program development:

- **Diversification of Funding Base:** One of Van Dorpe's goals for the project was to use the financial model's data on costs to engage more corporate and individual donors. Using this data, YES now can define and communicate about real costs so that potential donors understand that, for example, \$1000 sponsors a youth for full summer employment through YES Career and that \$250 supports a weekend of camping, hiking and canoeing for five youths. Furthermore, YES' continued goal is to increase sustainability by reducing the proportion of foundation funding and increasing the amount of revenue from corporations and individual donors. According to Van Dorpe, "We know that donors want a clear picture of what they are supporting, and with our financial model, we can now give every donor a very clear idea of how they are supporting Boston's youth."
- **Investing in Mission-Driven Programs:** With a financial model in place, YES now has data to invest in those programs that align most closely with its organizational mission and goals. As Van Dorpe said, "Looking at the numbers, we often have to make difficult decisions on the level of investment for each program, but decisions that made us a stronger more focused organization. We evaluate each program's success based on alignment with our mission as well as outcomes and results towards youth development goals."

Case Study Three

Providing Strategic Thinking to Reposition an Education Nonprofit for Independence and Growth



Henrico Education Foundation
Henrico, Virginia
<http://henricofoundation.org/index.htm>

The Need For Henrico Education Foundation:

Established in 1997, the Henrico Education Foundation (HEF) initially started as a conduit for awarding instructional grants to teachers seeking to enrich the classroom experience and expand their skills. Since then, HEF has grown to fund several program areas, from teacher grants and student scholarships to leadership development (mentoring and job preparedness) programs.

The need for HEF programs has increased significantly in recent years as public school budgets in Virginia have been reduced, families have been impacted by long-lasting economic challenges and the mandates of No Child Left Behind, a federal law that sanctions schools that fail to raise scores and reduce learning gaps between minority and white students and low-income kids and wealthier ones.

As HEF Executive Director Susan Stanley puts it in her letter from the president on the HEF website, “No matter how hard the school board and the superintendent work to stretch the available dollars – and believe me, they never stop working at this – public financing can only go so far.”

Engaging Skilled-Volunteers to Achieve Impact

Ensuring Readiness: Mission, Organizational Goals, and Need for Skilled-Volunteers

Henrico Education Foundation supports the students, teachers and staff of Henrico County Public Schools by promoting innovative educational opportunities, recognizing outstanding achievements and developing community partnerships.

In recent years, the organization recognized a need to become more independent from the school system itself. In order to gain this independence, the organization expanded its relationships with individual donors.

HEF turned to long-term donor and pro bono partner, financial services company Capital One, which is headquartered in Virginia. Capital One’s pro bono skilled volunteering program is both extensive and mature. Since 2008, Capital One has invested nearly 12,000 hours and donated \$4.4 million worth of professional services. (The company also is a major funder of this report.)

In 2005, HEF began engaging with Capital One on pro bono projects in addition to receiving continued philanthropic support. In particular, through a relationship with HEF Board member and Capital One Senior Vice President Marc Mentry, HEF recognized that Capital One’s expertise in brand marketing could help the organization clarify and define its brand identity.

This capability was crucial to HEF. Executive Director Stanley said, “In many cases other than students or parents who have been touched by HEF’s programs, we don’t have a lot of brand awareness.”

Anne Schaffer serves as lead of the Brand Marketing pro bono team for Capital One, oversees the onboarding process for new projects and helps assess and ensure nonprofit readiness for an engagement before assigning a team of volunteers. Both the relationship between Capital One’s Mentry and the onboarding strategy of Schaffer’s team have been significant components of the relationship’s success.

With HEF, Schaffer’s team quickly realized that the organization has many audiences, from students to parents, teachers, funders, education officials and others. As a result, the Capital One team recommended the development of a positioning statement -- the “elevator pitch.” Schaffer engaged Stephen Spiers, a brand manager at Capital One who has led multiple projects for HEF since 2009, to provide guidance and project management.

While the Capital One team is adept at identifying needs and matching teams to them, Capital One’s Marc Mentry acknowledges that HEF’s leadership team is particularly good at recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses – and asking for help in those areas where they lack expertise.

“I think one of the ways for nonprofits and companies like Capital One to be really great [together] is a bit of selflessness,”

said Mentry. “[Henrico Education Foundation Executive Director] Susan Stanley has been so great to say, ‘I’m not an expert in branding. I just recognize that we need to become more independent from our school system. The way to do that is to have deeper financial pockets, to do that I need to stand out in the marketplace.’”

HEF’s other strength, observed Mentry, is “Long-term thinking versus short-term thinking.”

Mentry explained, “When you’re short staffed and face tight budgets, it’s easy to become very short-term focused.”

But Henrico Education Foundation engaged a local venture capitalist and a local university on a long-term strategic plan that outlines goals and strategies for the next five years. Mentry noted, “This happens in business and in nonprofits, but hitting that pause button was key for the organization, and it also enabled us [Capital One] to identify where we could help.”

The Capital One team represents more than a set of hands willing to jump in and help – to Stanley and her team, it is an important relationship with another member of the community. Noted Stanley, “We feel very strongly that every time we have a collaboration with a group in the community, they come away feeling like they will engage with us again.”

Achieving Impact: Short and Long-Term Impact

According to both Susan Stanley and HEF Program Manager Paula Roop, a redesigned annual report has been a major output of the skilled volunteering engagement with Capital One. This has had a significant impact on the organization.

Noted Roop, “Being able to work professionally with the brand marketing department resulted in product that is more professional looking, more polished and reflective of who we are as an organization. Every time I go to a meeting and we’re able to leave copies, it’s a product that we are exceedingly proud of.”

As a result of the brand marketing engagements with Capital One, HEF has been able to create a distinctive look to all of its publications, and to include in those publications all the data that potential partners would need before investing in the organization’s programming.

This speaks directly to HEF’s goal to increase individual donors. In fact, in order to support that goal, Capital One encouraged HEF to do its first-ever direct mail campaign using success stories from students who have benefited from the foundation. This campaign helped to serve as a test of whether the Foundation’s brand was strong enough for people to open the envelope and write a check, and it

uncovered interesting information about potential donors, said Stanley.

Mentry said the engagement has given Capital One associates the opportunity to do logo work, naming work and all levels of design in a system that goes across the web and all written materials. “Literally, brand architecture came out” of the project, said Mentry.

He added, “At Capital One, we have these same challenges in our jobs every day, but most people don’t have a chance to touch all of them. The chance to look at a brand holistically doesn’t come around a lot for marketers. The HEF project gave volunteers a palette to paint on that they wouldn’t have in their everyday jobs. That’s growth for them.”

Pro bono project lead Stephen Spiers agrees.

“It’s fun,” he said. “I get to work on all facets of marketing for a foundation, working directly with the decision maker. I’ve also been exposed to people outside of the Capital One family which is a great way to expand my business networks. And I’m working with new people at Capital One; it sharpens my own marketing skills. I think that’s why I’ve stuck with it.”

Stanley sees both an immediate return and long-term benefits from working with the Capital One team. “A strong educational system in the community is key to the success of the vibrant organizations in our community. So every chance we have to work with someone from Capital One or another organization is a chance to win another donor,” she said.

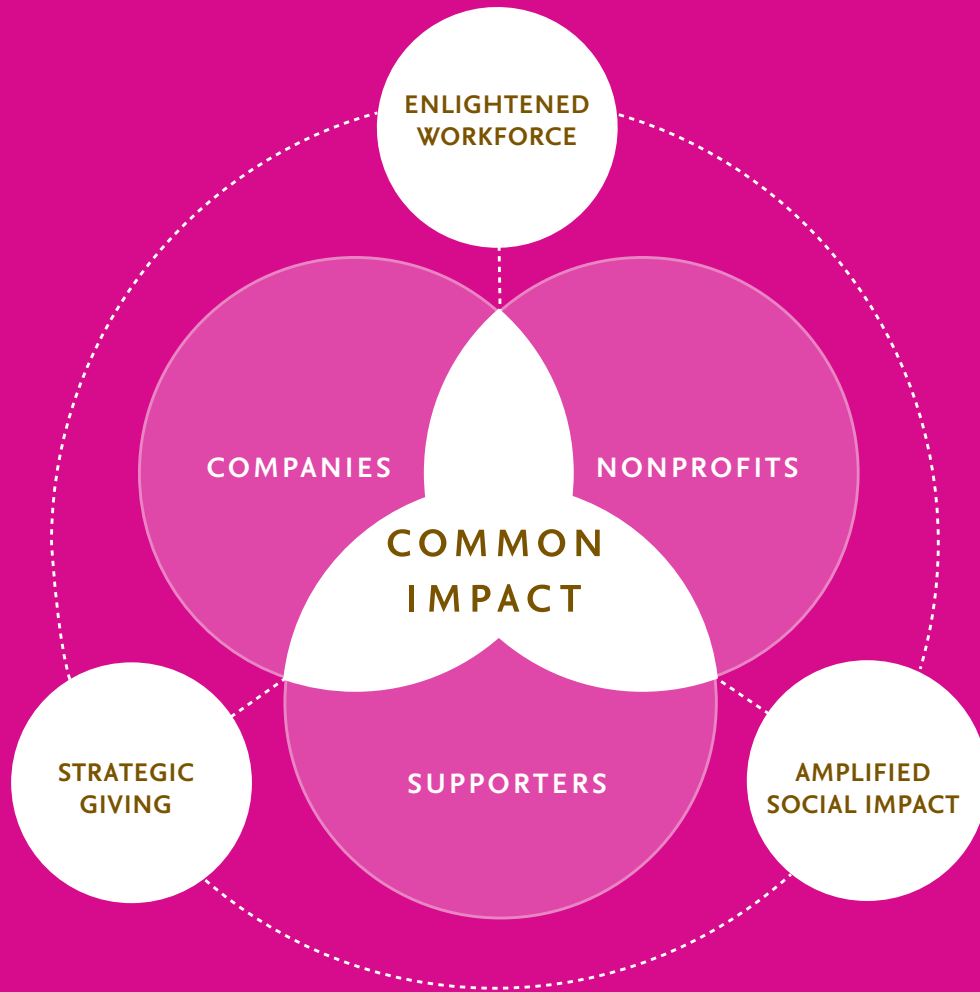
Mentry elaborated on tangible benefits to his organization, as well.

“I do get the sense that the people who have given their time as volunteers do better here,” he said. To support that statement, analysis by an outside agency revealed that the skill-building effect of work on pro bono projects is profound. Nearly 90 percent of Capital One employee managers surveyed observed improved leadership by their direct reports as a result of the pro bono experience.

“People who stretch and give of their time seem to achieve more and have higher job satisfaction long-term. The ability to give back to the community makes for a happier workforce, which is better for the company and better for the community. That is really the thing that we have watched over time. I have a goal for more than 50 percent of our department to engage in these deep engagements. And we have low turnover in our department,” said Mentry.

Spiers added, “My kids attend public schools in Henrico; when I see what the foundation does, I know it’s a worthy cause.”

How We Work



Common Impact's Vision

We envision a world where all of America's leading companies invest the talent of their employees in the high-potential nonprofits poised to solve social problems, generating compounding value for local communities and global companies alike.

Report Three

If you are interested to see additional data or learn more about Common Impact, please contact Jenne Griffin, COO and Director, Southeast, at jgriffin@commonimpact.org.

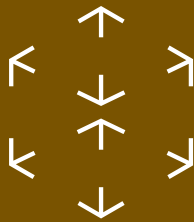
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About Common Impact

The mission of Common Impact is to strengthen high-potential nonprofit organizations by helping companies deploy their human capital more strategically in the social sector. Through Common Impact, employee teams from leading companies have provided IT, Marketing, HR, Finance and Operations solutions to more than 300 high-potential nonprofits in Boston, New York, Richmond, VA and Raleigh, NC. Common Impact's approach harnesses the power of skilled volunteers to execute capacity building projects with community-based nonprofits and create successful long-term partnerships that are of value to all. Common Impact has generated more than \$6 million in net new resources for the social sector and a 7:1 social return on investment.