

# EVALUATING THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM: CONTEXTS AND MODELS

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## EVALUATING THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The importance of volunteers and the effects of their donated services on the quality of lives of clients, organizations, society, and the volunteers themselves have become important matters of discussion and measurement. With resources in short supply and funders continually stressing organizational accountability for grants, contracts, and other financial support and the results achieved from these initiatives, the nature of evaluation of volunteer programs has changed over recent decades. Whereas, previously, counting the number of volunteers and the number of hours they contribute to an agency over a given period (such as a year) may have been considered sufficient “evaluation,” organizations have turned to more elaborate methods to assess and demonstrate the contributions of their volunteers. The implications for the field of volunteer administration are evident: Safrit (2010) shows that conducting evaluations has become an accepted (and expected) competency of volunteer resource managers (also known as volunteer administrators).

Volunteer administrators and their host organizations need to be concerned about evaluating volunteer programs to satisfy the information needs of various constituencies. These constituencies or so-called “stakeholders” are persons or groups who have a stake in, or a claim on, the program, whether perceived or actual. For example, one of the most prominent stakeholders, funders are no longer content merely with an organization having volunteers onboard but wish to know the results or “outcomes” or even the long-term “impact” of their involvement. Another important set of stakeholders, board members are interested in whether all organizational resources, including volunteers, have been put to good, if not “best,” use. Similarly, a third stakeholder group, organizational leadership, is eager to derive the most benefit from the volunteer program. At a more operational level, managers would like to make sure that

volunteers are helping their departments, and the organization, achieve programmatic goals. For their part, volunteers may derive motivation from learning about the value of their efforts and the results they help to bring about for organizations and their clients.

Satisfying all of these stakeholders through the same evaluation of the volunteer program is not easy, and perhaps not even feasible. Accordingly, in this chapter we present an evaluation framework for assisting the volunteer resource manager with understanding and conducting different types of evaluation based on stakeholder involvement. Based on the evaluation literature, we then describe how volunteering might be valued by host organizations, volunteers themselves, and agency clients. We then present a logic model framework to guide the evaluation of a volunteer program. We begin by considering the meaning and purpose of evaluation.

### **Defining Evaluation**

Evaluation entails an assessment or judgment of the value or worth of an endeavor or initiative (Carman and Fredericks, 2008; McDavid and Hawthorne, 2006; Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 2004). Fitzpatrick et al. (2004) argue that the purpose of evaluation is to “render judgments about the value of whatever is being evaluated.” These assessments or judgments of value can be put to different uses, but the central purpose is to determine “the significance, the merit or worth” of something of interest (Scriven, 1991). We adopt Scriven's (1991) definition for our goal of providing a framework for the evaluation of volunteer programs. By conducting an evaluation of volunteer participation and contribution, the evaluator attempts to assess the worth or value of volunteer efforts for various stakeholders.

Measuring volunteer value can be undertaken to meet the evaluation needs of various stakeholders. As other researchers have noted, clients, organizations, volunteers themselves, and

the community are the recognized beneficiaries of volunteer contribution (Brown, 1999; Handy and Srinivasan, 2004; Quarter, Mook and Richmond, 2003). We argue that the needs of stakeholders must dictate to evaluators the purpose(s) of evaluation, and the kinds of methods to be used for measuring volunteer value. Volunteer resource managers charged with conducting, or assisting, an evaluation of the volunteer program should be aware of the influence of these various constituencies in the evaluation.

### **The Role of Stakeholders in Evaluation**

Some evaluation scholars attribute great importance to stakeholders in defining the purpose of the evaluation and setting evaluation goals (Rutman, 1984; Rossi et al., 2004; Patton, 1997; Berk and Rossi, 1990; Fitzpatrick et al., 2004). Indeed, stakeholders may hold varying degrees of interest in knowing the value or effectiveness of volunteering for society, a particular organization, or a specific program. Therefore, before the evaluation begins, the volunteer resource manager (as evaluator) should determine the stakeholders most concerned about the evaluation and establish communication with them to identify their goals for this endeavor (Rossi et al. 2004). Of course, ready communication with stakeholders will almost certainly prove useful to the volunteer program for other purposes as well, such as promotion, support, outreach, etc. Involving interested stakeholders in the evaluation builds support for the evaluation process and commitment to the results. Patton (1997) contends that individuals, rather than organizations, use evaluation information. Thus, evaluation information should be targeted to specific persons or groups of identifiable persons or stakeholders, rather than to what was traditionally identified as the general “audience” for evaluation; “audiences are amorphous, anonymous entities” (Patton, 1997).

Rossi et al. (2004) provide a comprehensive listing of potential stakeholders in the evaluation process, including policymakers and decision makers, program sponsors, evaluation sponsors, target participants, program managers, program staff, program competitors, contextual stakeholders, and the evaluation and research community. They argue that these groups and individuals most often pay attention to evaluation (Rossi et al. 2004). We refine this listing of stakeholders for the volunteer resource manager in the evaluation framework we present below.

Patton (1997) is similarly concerned about the utility of evaluation for the stakeholders. His focus is on the practical use of evaluation results. In one study he found that among stakeholders, 78 percent of responding decision makers and 90 percent of responding evaluators felt that the evaluation had an impact on the program (Patton 1986). Through consultation prior to undertaking the evaluation, the volunteer resource manager can facilitate this positive practical effect by learning about the purpose of the evaluation from the primary intended user(s) of the findings (Patton, 1986; Bingham and Felbinger, 1989). Thus, identifying specific stakeholder groups, and understanding their goals for the evaluation, are important to the evaluator for increasing potential application of the findings.

Unfortunately, though, when evaluators attempt to serve too many audiences (stakeholders), they rarely manage to serve all of them well (Horst, 1974). Horst et al. (1974) encourage program evaluators to identify those officials or managers who have a direct influence on program decisions and to design the evaluation goals based on their points of view. This approach is supported by Patton's (1997) recommendations to identify the group of primary users and to focus on their intended use of the evaluation. Such an approach improves the prospects for the evaluation results to be utilized by program managers. When involved early in the process of designing the evaluation study, program managers feel ownership of the

evaluation process and findings and are more likely to use them for program improvement (Patton, 1997; Posavac and Carey, 1992). Even so, the evaluation might, alternately, be tailored to meet the information needs of other stakeholders of the volunteer program, such as funders, or organizational leadership, or the broader society. The model we propose below for volunteer resource managers calls for the involvement of primary stakeholders early in the evaluation process.

A further advantage of involving stakeholders in the evaluation is that their participation can help to determine whether a volunteer program has reached a stage of maturity where it is ready to be evaluated; such an effort is sometimes termed an “evaluability” assessment (McDavid and Hawthorne, 2006; Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 2004; Rutman, 1984). Undertaking a full-blown impact evaluation of a program that is too new, or unstable, or resource-poor to achieve results is a waste of precious organizational time and energy; effective implementation of the program must occur first. Patton (1997) argues that the evaluator can facilitate the program’s readiness for evaluation by involving intended users in generating meaningful evaluation questions. This initial scrutiny and discussion among stakeholders and the evaluator can be very useful in reinforcing the need to support implementation and ongoing administration of the volunteer program, so that it would then be more capable of achieving its end goals.

### **Purposes of Evaluation**

Following Rutman (1984), we want to understand the role of purpose in designing an evaluation of a volunteer program. Evaluation purpose shapes the evaluation design and helps to focus the results. The purpose of the evaluation is defined in consultation with program stakeholders, such as funders, board members, organizational leadership, managers, program

evaluators, clients, and the volunteers themselves, each of whom may have different information needs. The volunteer resource manager as evaluator needs to work with relevant stakeholders to clarify the purpose, to design the evaluation process, and to help the stakeholders utilize the findings to their benefit (Rossi et al., 2004; Patton, 1997; Posavac and Carey, 1992; Patton and Patrizi, 2005). The evaluation literature suggests that evaluators need to pay attention to stakeholders' perceptions and beliefs about the program so that they understand the stakeholder's purpose and formulate a specific evaluation question(s) aimed toward the need of the consumer for certain information.

Identification of stakeholders, then, is the first step to elucidate goals and define the purpose of the evaluation. The determination of relevant stakeholders is often out of the hands of the volunteer resource manager, however: Funders may demand an evaluation of program impact as a condition of their financial allocation; board members may request an audit of volunteer activities; organizational leadership may solicit an analysis of the costs and benefits of volunteer involvement; operational managers may want to learn how to deploy volunteers more productively. More diffuse stakeholders may exert their preferences for the evaluation as well. For example, policy makers, the media, or "the public" (through individual citizen inquiries or through other stakeholders acting on their behalf) may inquire as to the benefit to the larger community of the activities of volunteers or the agency as a whole. In many nonprofit organizations, the volunteer administrator is charged with preparing a periodic evaluation (for example, annually) of the volunteer program, and this effort should take into account the information needs of the central stakeholders. Rehnborg et al. (2006) encourage organizations first to clarify their purpose(s) for placing a value on volunteer efforts, and then to choose the appropriate evaluation method.

Evaluation literature suggests that evaluation of volunteers, like evaluation of other phenomena, should be conducted for the purpose defined by users of evaluation findings, and with approaches and techniques shaped by this purpose. Talmage (1982) defines three major purposes of evaluation information: (1) meeting a political function, (2) assisting decision-makers responsible for a policy or a program, (3) and making judgments about the worth of the program. Her function-based approach shows considerable overlap among the functions. Rutman (1984) develops the purpose-based approach to program evaluation further. He also defines three purposes for evaluation: accountability, management, and knowledge. These three purposes are distinct and help to identify evaluation information users such as policy-makers and organizations, managers, and the research community. Drawing on Chelimsky's (1997) definition of evaluation purposes, which follows Rutman's classification with some variation,<sup>1</sup> Rossi et al. (2004) elaborate the list of users of the three types of evaluation. All of these approaches are very similar conceptually, suggesting political, knowledge, and organizational purposes for evaluation. We elaborate these purposes below.

### Political Purpose

Following the evaluation purposes described by Talmage (1982), Rutman (1984), Chelimsky (1997), and Rossi et al. (2004), the first purpose for undertaking an evaluation is political. From this perspective, the external audience for evaluation of volunteer effort is society at large and political decision-makers. These stakeholders want to know, for example, how to create and refine policies toward volunteering, how volunteer programs benefit society,

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<sup>1</sup> Chelimsky and Rossi et al. identify the same three major purposes for evaluation as Rutman, but they use different terminology to describe them. For example, Rutman defines one purpose for evaluation as managerial, and Chelimsky and Rossi et al. define the same purpose as program improvement. In Rutman the last purpose of evaluation that is not mentioned in our discussion is defined as the covert purpose. Rossi et al. also identify the same purpose as hidden agendas.



and whether such policy instruments as tax subsidy to the nonprofit sector are justified by the results of its activities.

Society at large evaluates volunteer involvement based on value judgments concerning volunteering as a social phenomenon. If volunteering is recognized as an inherent end-value in the society, the conclusion follows that “the more volunteers the better.” Yet, the value produced by volunteers for the benefit of the society is hard to measure in economic terms because it is neither bought nor sold in the marketplace (see below). To the contrary, it is given, which renders its price beyond economic or monetary value. Goods produced by volunteers surpass market price for comparable goods because these goods are infused with value added, such as good intentions; they are given wholeheartedly, which makes them “priceless.” They are in sharp contrast to goods and services sold in the market for the purpose of gaining profit. At the societal level, then, learning about the aggregate volume and value of volunteering for society, and how to stimulate them, are important evaluation purposes.

### Knowledge Purpose

According to Rutman (1984), a second purpose for conducting an evaluation of volunteers is the generation of basic knowledge about the value of volunteer contributions. This general use knowledge is produced by those who study the phenomenon and seek to understand, explain, and predict its future development. The knowledge produced may not be of immediate use, but it contributes to better understanding of volunteering and its role in personal life, the community, society at large, and the economy.

Economic approaches to valuing volunteers can be considered knowledge-related because they add to our knowledge of volunteering from a novel viewpoint. Yet, Graff (2005) and Smith and Ellis (2003) advise researchers to be cautious about relying exclusively on

economic measurement, such as dollar valuation, to assess volunteer contributions. Graff (2005) recommends the use of a more complex and complete approach that involves the identification of outcomes of volunteer work, calculation of the full costs of achieving those outcomes, and a consideration of whether the investment in volunteers is a productive use of resources. She maintains that when members of the community are informed about the true social value that volunteers create, they are more willing to support the mission of an organization (Graff, 2005).

### Organizational and Managerial Purpose

Talmage (1982) identifies assisting policy and program decision-makers, guiding changes and innovations in a program, and informing managers about the worth of a program as possible functions of evaluation. This purpose converges with the managerial purpose for evaluation defined by Rutman (1984) and Rossi et al. (2004), which serves those needs of the organization. For example, Hotchkiss et al. (2009) in a study of the value of volunteers in hospitals find that more hours of volunteering positively correlates with significant cost-savings and higher level of patients' satisfaction at the hospitals. This type of evaluation is helpful to agency insiders, including CEOs or directors, volunteer managers, program managers, and other staff, who may be interested in improving volunteer involvement and deployment, and the return on organizational investment in these important human resources. As Rutman (1984) puts it, "the management perspective on program evaluation sees it as a tool for making improved decisions about the design of programs and their delivery and about the type and amount of resources that should be devoted to the program."

From the organizational or management perspective, the measuring instruments for evaluating volunteer programs need to be adjusted or attuned to a set of managerial purposes. For example, it is not very useful for a manager to know the value of the aggregate hours

contributed by volunteers, or the full-time equivalent labor force that volunteers constitute to make informed decisions about how to manage the program. Instead, directors need to know about such matters as how many volunteers are available, how many are needed for achieving departmental or organizational goals, how they are deployed, and the results that the volunteers help the organization to achieve. This information helps them to plan strategically, and to set recruitment purposes and estimate expenses. Knowing the tasks performed by volunteers allows volunteer resource managers to develop their recruitment tactics based on information about the available and potential pool of volunteers; make decisions about deployment of volunteers to maximize their effectiveness; and balance involvement of paid staff with a volunteer workforce. Program managers are interested in identifying where and how volunteers can extend the capacity of paid staff and augment paid labor. Useful to this group is evaluation information pertaining to the effectiveness of volunteers in performing assigned tasks and in assisting departments and the organization toward goal achievement.

### **Purpose-Based Evaluation Framework for Valuing Volunteers**

The evaluation literature provided useful insights into the purposes for conducting an evaluation. Building on this foundation, we have developed a framework for analyzing the purposes of evaluation of volunteer programs which incorporates the information needs of important stakeholder groups.

The purpose approach that we suggest helps to clarify evaluation needs by grouping multiple stakeholders into three major categories: society, organizations, and managers. At the societal level we define the following interests – society at large, policy makers, and researchers. At the general organizational level we define as stakeholders the following groups – the local

community, agency board of directors, organizational decision-makers, and funders. Finally, the third, managerial level is represented by program managers, volunteer coordinators, paid staff, and volunteers. We derived these categories of stakeholders by modifying earlier approaches of Talmage (1982), Rutman (1984), Chelimsky (1997), and Rossi et al. (2004) to defining the major evaluation purposes for various groups of stakeholders.

Figure 1 presents the continuum of evaluation purposes captured in the new framework from the most general and abstract, to the more applicable, and finally to the most practical. The figure suggests questions to guide the evaluation of volunteer value at the different levels. At the most general societal level, the relevant questions pertain to the value of volunteering for society and the attendant methodologies. At the organizational level, the questions are similar but more circumscribed. They concern, for example, the relative costs and benefits of volunteering to the organization. Finally, at the managerial level, the questions address the actual deployment of volunteers, their interactions with paid staff and clients, and issues of operational effectiveness. At this level, the interests of stakeholders guide evaluators to gather program-specific, detailed information for the practical use of organizational managers.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

Table 1 elaborates the purpose-based evaluation framework. It depicts the different levels of evaluation, primary stakeholders, focus of analysis, and major value or purpose of the evaluation. At the societal level, the focus is on the nonprofit/voluntary sector or field, and the central purpose is an assessment of aggregate worth or the contribution to general knowledge. At the organizational level, the focus is centered on the host agency, with the purpose of

accountability and stewardship for the volunteer program. Finally, at the managerial level, the focus is the volunteer program, and the purpose encompasses operational effectiveness. Below we describe the different levels more fully.

Insert Table 1 about here.

### Societal Interests

The first level of evaluation includes important general interests. We define this level as societal and knowledge-based. At this level such stakeholders as society at large, legislators, political decision-makers, and researchers need evaluation information to assess public and economic usefulness of volunteering, and to understand the aggregate worth of volunteering as a social phenomenon. Researchers endeavor to produce knowledge about volunteering and its value, and to propose various methodologies and measures to advance this inquiry. Policy-makers can potentially use such general information about volunteering to guide public policy. Answers to these questions help to assess the aggregate worth of volunteering and to improve our understanding of this phenomenon and the nonprofit sector more generally.

### Organizational Interests

The second level of evaluation is more specific. At this level we find organizations and boards of directors as primary stakeholders, as well as funders. Their interests include the assessment of the value of volunteering to an organization, the cost of agency investment in volunteers, and the contribution to the organizational mission yielded through volunteer labor. Volunteer value evaluation at this level is focused on the organization and its volunteers. Major

concerns of primary stakeholders at this level are securing accountability, providing governance, controlling finances, and pursuing the organizational mission.

### Managerial Interests

The third level of evaluation is tailored to the practical interests of program managers, volunteer coordinators, paid staff, and volunteers. Their ultimate purpose is to improve program implementation through the involvement of volunteers and the experience of these participants. Information about the current use of volunteers can assist these stakeholders in making decisions about deployment and effective involvement of lay citizens, the types of skills and knowledge required of volunteers to perform their tasks, the number of volunteers needed, the recruitment and retention rates of volunteers, etc.

The framework shown in Table 1 is useful to define the evaluation purpose with regard to the various stakeholders. Although program goals tend to be vague and conflicting (Wholey, 1983), Poister (2003) argues that every program can be evaluated. When the purpose of the evaluation and the end-user have been defined, the evaluator can select and design the kind of measures to be used, the level of detail required, and the frequency of measuring and reporting to enhance the decision-making process (Poister, 2003). The proposed framework assists volunteer resource managers as evaluators in making these determinations.

### **Valuing Volunteering for Organizations, Volunteers, and Clients**

As we have showed, the evaluation literature presents a persuasive case for the importance of identifying the purpose and goals for conducting an evaluation. Given these different purposes, the volunteer resource manager as evaluator may need to assess the value of volunteering for the organization, volunteers, and clients. We summarize relevant studies and methods below.

## Value of Volunteering to the Host Organization

Measuring volunteer value is important to organizations for managerial, financial, and fundraising purposes. The most common method for valuing volunteer contributions is economic -- an assessment of the dollar value of volunteer hours given to an organization. The Independent Sector (IS) organization suggested attributing the average hourly wage for civilian, nonagricultural, nonsupervisory workers to account for volunteer hours, increased by 12 percent to account for benefits. The IS average hourly volunteer compensation was calculated at \$20.85 (in 2009). The total dollar value of volunteer time for 2009 is estimated at \$169 billion to organizations, excluding informal volunteering (Independent Sector, 2011). The advantage of the IS approach is that it uses a widely cited and available statistic (the average hourly wage for civilian, nonagricultural, nonsupervisory workers in the U.S.). The disadvantage is that it does not distinguish among volunteers' variable tasks and their monetary value.

Several knowledgeable observers make a compelling argument for correcting the IS valuation method to take into account the variety of tasks performed by volunteers in the attribution of hourly dollar values to their labor (for example, Andersen and Zimmerer, 2003; Gaskin, 2003; Ellis, 1996; Brudney, 1990). Brown (1999) suggested devoting attention to the nature of the tasks performed by volunteers and the equivalent compensation for the same (paid) work; she proposed basing these economic measures on the average compensation in the service sector, because volunteers were assumed to be mostly engaged in producing services rather than goods. By fixing the hourly dollar value at the level of social workers' wages, this approach lowered the average volunteer contribution value dramatically (from the IS estimation) to \$9.87 per hour.

Handy and Srinivasan (2004) describe four approaches to valuing hours contributed by volunteers to the organization based on the opportunity cost and the replacement cost of volunteer time. The opportunity cost approach looks at the value of a volunteer hour from the perspective of a volunteer and what that hour is worth to this person. The replacement cost method evaluates the value of volunteers from the perspective of the organization, as if the agency had to pay market wage rates when purchasing such a service. Handy and Srinivasan describe the opportunity cost evaluation method based on the average wages foregone for volunteers who are employed (\$16.42) and hypothetical wages for those who are unemployed (\$12.58) donating their time in hospitals, the organizations investigated in their study. This approach, however, does not consider the fact that volunteers often perform very different tasks from those on their regular jobs.

The second opportunity cost approach is based on the perceived value of leisure time as assessed by the volunteers themselves. Handy and Srinivasan call this approach the L opportunity cost. The L opportunity cost produces a lower estimation of hourly value contributed to the hospitals by volunteers, in line with the volunteers' own assessment of their leisure time. The inconsistency of the L opportunity cost method lies in its reliance on the subjective evaluation of leisure time by volunteers.

The replacement cost approach assumes that the value of a volunteer hour is equal to that of a staff hour when volunteers perform the same tasks that paid staff would have conducted. In the hospital volunteering study Handy and Srinivasan describe this approach as unrealistic because of the hospitals' fiscal constraints. They contend that the staff would not have provided services delivered by volunteers in the absence of volunteers under conditions of fiscal stringency. Another variation of the replacement cost method is proposed by Ross (1994), who



suggests the industry wage application method, which takes the hourly wage in the economy (for example, the average hospital wage as equal to \$19.69) and adjusts it for benefits. Following his approach, the adjusted hourly value of volunteering for the hospital is calculated at \$23.23.

Several studies discuss whether organizations would choose to pay employees to provide the same services if volunteers were not available and/or treat the general topic of the possible interchangeability of paid staff and volunteers (Bowman, 2009; Handy and Mook, 2010; Handy, Mook, and Quarter, 2008; Simmons and Emanuele, 2009). Examining volunteers as fair substitutes for paid labor in Canadian organizations, Handy, Mook, and Quarter (2008) find that the organizations are more likely to use volunteers and staff interchangeably under conditions that both volunteers and employees have comparable skills and knowledge, and when volunteers are numerous due to such factors as fewer jobs in the (paid) labor market. This study suggests that organizations may improve their efficiency by relying on volunteer labor.

Quarter et al. (2003) choose to use the replacement cost method in their estimation of volunteering value. They argue that this approach is appropriate because the replacement-cost framework allows calculating volunteer services at the value of similar services in the market. However, they admit, the debate continues whether volunteers substitute for paid labor or supplement paid labor (Brudney 1990, Ferris 1984). The replacement-cost approach also fits well with the labor division among volunteers and staff that is typical for some organizations (Handy and Srinivasan, 2004).

Gaskin (1999) also uses a replacement cost method to construct the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA). VIVA takes into account the variety of tasks that volunteers perform by analyzing and measuring actual activities and matching them to paid work in the market, an approach introduced by Karn (1983, 1982-83) in the early 1980s. Simultaneously, VIVA

addresses the issues of benefit-cost and cost-effectiveness by examining the organizational inputs, defined as resources used to support volunteers, in relation to the outputs, defined as the pound (monetary) value of volunteer time. Dividing the output by the input allows calculation of the VIVA ratio, which states that for every pound invested in support of volunteers, X pounds in the value of their services are returned to the organization (Gaskin, 1999). The VIVA method also bases its assessment of volunteers' value to the organization by imputing the value of contributed hours.

Anderson and Zimmerer (2003) discuss five methods for valuing the hours contributed by volunteers using the average wage, comparable worth (similar to replacement-cost method), the Independent Sector approach (described above), the living wage, and the minimum wage. Most of these methods can be classified either as opportunity-cost approaches or as replacement-cost approaches. Anderson and Zimmerer (2003) criticize the replacement-cost method for the implicit assumption that volunteers and paid employees are perfect substitutes. In addition, this method does not take into account the level of compensation for "volunteer substitutes:" it can be either on the entry level or the advanced level of compensation (Hopkins, 2000). The minimum wage method is easy to use, but it does not value volunteer activity respectfully (i.e., according to the work performed). Ellis (1999, 1996) contends that most volunteer assignments are above the minimum wage level, perhaps even higher than the median wage. In her view, this method does not reflect the value of volunteer expertise.

The living wage method is based on dollars required to subsist; it is closer to the cost of living approach (Anderson and Zimmerer, 2003). Much like the minimum wage approach, the cost of living method lacks any relationship to the nature of the particular tasks performed by volunteers. It inherently places a low value on volunteer service, as if the service is performed

by an unskilled worker. Having recognized these many disadvantages of the minimum wage and the living wage methods, most practitioners prefer the average wage or similar methods adjusted to include benefits. For more specific assessments, local average wages can be used, a procedure that allows contextualizing the value of volunteering (Anderson and Zimmerer, 2003).

Ross (1994) proposes the computation of “person-years” to account for volunteer hours, a method that differs conceptually from the dollar-based approaches. This method suggests valuing volunteer time in terms of full-time, year-round positions or person-years, equivalent to dividing the total hours contributed by volunteers by the average annual hours worked by a full-time employee (Ross, 1994). This approach is well-known as the “full-time-equivalent” (FTE) method (The maximum number of hours for an FTE might be set at 52 weeks X 40 hours = 2,080 hours per year). This method makes no effort to differentiate the type of work performed by volunteers, or to estimate the dollar value of the volunteer time. It implies that volunteers provide for the extension of paid staff in an organization.

Goulbourne and Embuldeniya (2002) have developed several measures of volunteer contributions that can be used for presenting the effect of volunteers on enhanced organizational revenues and decreased expenses. They propose looking at the ratio of volunteers to paid staff; the ratio can inform funders, managers, the general public, and other stakeholders regarding how much of the organizational success can be attributed to volunteers’ effort. Goulbourne and Embuldeniya (2002) also consider community involvement in the activities of a nonprofit organization as an important measure of success. This approach treats participation of volunteers as an inherently valued goal in itself. They measure the “community investment ratio” (CIR) by assessing the volunteer contribution, expressed as the dollar value of donated time, relative to the total dollar amount a particular funder has contributed or may contribute to the volunteer

program or a specific event. This ratio allows comparing community involvement in various localities. Another economic measure they present is community support, calculated as “volunteer capital contribution” (VCC), which considers the amount of resources brought by volunteers -- donations added to non-reimbursed out-of-pocket expenses of volunteers (Goulbourne and Embuldeniya, 2002).

In their study of hospitals, for example, Hotchkiss et al. (2009) present empirical evidence that regardless of the cost of training and management, volunteers provided financial benefits exceeding costs. Irrespective of hospital size, many of the programs “reported that they had savings of more than a million dollars when they used volunteer service.” With respect to generalization of results, the researchers acknowledge that hospitals often use medical students as volunteers, whose skills allow the administration to save on paid labor for particular services (Hotchkiss et al., 2009).

Handy and Srinivasan (2004) present a calculation of volunteer contribution based on the benefit-cost approach. All benefits accruing to hospitals (the unit of analysis in their study) and to volunteers are summed, and the costs of volunteering to the hospital and to volunteers themselves are subtracted. Thus, the authors arrive at an estimate of the net benefits of volunteering to the hospital, which they find to be very significant; and to net benefits to volunteers themselves, which they find to be negative. In their study the volunteer contributions are estimated on the basis of the hourly value of volunteer work.

Another study by Handy and Mook (2010) evaluates direct and indirect benefits and costs of volunteers to an organization. With respect to benefits, they argue that in times of crisis many organizations undergoing budget cuts would rely on volunteers more heavily. In addition, volunteers may help organizations connect with communities and receive recognition for the

services they provide. Involving volunteers may also pose problems, however, such as conflict with labor unions, liability issues, or tension with the paid staff (Handy and Mook, 2010). Thus, from the organizational perspective, valuing volunteers entails an assessment of benefits and costs.

Using a non-economic methodology, Hager and Brudney (2005) introduce a summary measure of “net benefits” of a volunteer program to an organization. This approach combines benefits and challenges realized by a volunteer program into a single barometer of (net) benefits to the organization. The method asks volunteer program managers to rate the benefits received by an organization from volunteer participation and the challenges encountered. “Net benefits” are calculated as the difference between the benefits and the challenges. This approach has certain advantages: It allows identifying the benefits and problems emanating from volunteer participation, balancing the benefits against the problems in a single measure, and calculating and comparing results across volunteer programs and host organizations.

In many studies volunteers are viewed as producers of outputs and outcomes as well as beneficiaries. Multiple studies suggest that volunteers consider participation in nonprofit organization activity as personally beneficial to them (Brudney, 1990; Ellis, 1999; Handy and Srinivasan, 2004; Handy and Mook, 2010; Quarter et al., 2003). In the following section we consider suggested methods for calculating the benefits that accrue to volunteers as a result of participation.

#### Value of Volunteering to the Volunteers

Many researchers and practitioners conceive of volunteers as providers of services as well as beneficiaries of participation. To measure the value accruing to volunteers themselves, Brown (1999) suggests two alternative methods. One method proposes calculating benefits in

terms of opportunity cost. This approach assumes that volunteers benefited by gaining satisfaction measured in monetary terms in the amount of wages that they agree to forego minus taxes (25%) and fringe benefits, i.e., the material gains that volunteers willingly give up to volunteer. The second way is to measure out-of-work volunteer time according to valuation given to this time by volunteers themselves. Based on other research, the value of free time is measured at the rate of half the employment wage. In addition, Brown argues that volunteers' hourly value depends on the motivation to volunteer. When volunteers agree to endure as much stress while producing donated services as they would experience on their jobs, the level of motivation is higher. Hence, the volunteer hour must be measured closer to the amount of the hourly wage (6/7 of a regular hourly wage). In such cases, the portion of the wage, properly adjusted for fringe benefits and taxes, is the measure of the volunteers' cost of volunteering. Pro bono volunteering is an example of such services. When the volunteering environment is less stressful and more pleasant, the level of motivation is lower. In this instance, the economic value (or cost to the volunteer) can be measured at half the rate of the regular hourly wage.

Handy and Srinivasan (2004) measure benefits to volunteers by means of a survey. Survey questions include attitude scales asking for ratings from 1 to 5 for specific benefits gained through volunteering, such as new skills, social contacts, references for employment, and job and career opportunities. Most volunteers rated these benefits as "high," 4 or 5 on the respective scales. Handy and Srinivasan use willingness to pay to acquire such benefits as a measure of the monetary value of the volunteering experience in the hospital: In their study, the average volunteer professed a willingness to pay \$179.24 (2004) to attain these benefits. As Handy and Srinivasan (2004) recognize, this measurement requests a very subjective assessment and, hence, has limited reliability and generalizability. Handy and Mook (2010) discuss other

non-economic benefits to volunteers, such as increasing social status and knowledge (especially from service on agency boards of directors) and the “warm glow” emanating from volunteering.

In order to evaluate the benefits that volunteers receive from participation, Quarter et al. (2003) use a different approach based on identifying and pricing a “surrogate” (i.e., proxy or comparison) in the private marketplace. For example, gains to volunteers include such non-material benefits as the development of personal leadership skills. Quarter et al. propose as a surrogate measure the cost for a student to learn these same skills in a university course (They estimated the cost of an appropriate course at \$500 based on college courses that taught similar skills). The surrogate methodology allows approximating the value of the benefit received by volunteers from their participation. Total benefits to volunteers are assessed by multiplying the percentage of volunteers who report receiving the benefit by the economic value of the benefit calculated according to the surrogate method. Quarter et al. suggest that the surrogate methodology can be extended to other benefits that might be gained by volunteers; depending on the program, volunteers might obtain skills in counseling, first aid, etc. To arrive at net benefit estimation for volunteers, the cost of any training provided by the organization would be subtracted from the total amount of benefits received by these participants (Quarter et al. 2003).

Although these methods are useful, the organization and the volunteers are not usually considered the main beneficiaries of volunteer activity by those who donate funds, and by those who assess the effectiveness of volunteer programs and nonprofit organizations. The primary beneficiaries are most often considered the clients of the organization. The next section discusses the issue of measuring benefits to clients.

### Value of Volunteering to Clients

Because clients typically receive services provided by volunteers at no cost to them, it can be especially difficult to evaluate benefits to this group. Instead of asking how much money clients would be willing to pay for the service that they receive for free, Murray (1994) asked how needy clients would trade off the in-kind services provided to them against a hypothetical gift of “cold hard cash” (equivalent valuation method). Murray (1994) used this approach to measure the in-kind goods value to recipients of social security services such as Food Stamps and TANF benefits against the offered cash. Murray argued that welfare recipients were ready to trade such in-kind benefits for a smaller amount of cash, which equaled the value of in-kind transfer to 73 percent of the cash value. Economists call the difference between in-kind goods value and the amount of cash preferred by the recipients “deadweight loss,” because this difference produces no utility and satisfies no preferences. Economists maintain that this loss accounts for the desire of policy makers to change recipients’ behavior. Following Murray’s findings, Brown (1999) suggests that the value of services to clients should be approximated through wage-based estimates of the market value of volunteer-produced services adjusted for the inefficiency of the in-kind resource transfer, i.e., at approximately 73 percent of the in-kind service market value.

In their model, Quarter et al. (2003) define direct client benefits as a primary output. They maintain that since recipients of the services do not pay for them, the market lacks a signal to help identify the value of the output. Therefore, they advise attributing a surrogate value to the output by finding and pricing a comparable service in the market; the method is analogous to the procedure described above to estimate the value of benefits received by volunteers. Quarter et al. conclude that the value of a volunteer service to a client is defined by the price for the



comparable service or good in the market. For example, if the intended outcome for clients is independent living for the elderly, a surrogate measure is the cost of a nursing home.

In their study, Handy and Srinivasan (2004) define the value of volunteer services to enhance the quality care to hospital patients (clients) as non-material. They argue that volunteers are able to provide many “soft” or intangible services that are essential to the comfort of patients. Volunteers also reduce the workload of paid staff by taking on certain tasks and leaving staff members more free to concentrate on other tasks (Brudney, 1990). By providing help to patients and supporting paid staff, volunteers enhance the quality of care, which is an important component of health care, although difficult to measure in monetary terms (Handy and Srinivasan, 2004). Handy and Srinivasan offer a non-monetary measurement of quality care by volunteers, which we refer to as impact rather than output. We discuss this innovative measurement below.

Other benefits that clients of health care organizations receive from volunteer services have been documented by Hotchkiss et al. (2009) in their study of Florida hospitals. They find that higher volunteer hours in patient care areas strongly correlate with patient satisfaction, indicating that “hospitals with a significant volunteer component are likely to provide positive patient experiences.”

As we have seen, economic evaluation of volunteer contributions continues to be a major interest of researchers. The various economic approaches yield great insight into the value of volunteer effort, yet they do not capture the gamut of volunteers’ contributions and the value they generate, or the ultimate impacts of their activity. Graff (2005) calls on researchers to be cautious about relying solely on economic measurement to assess volunteer value. She

maintains that the dollar valuation method underestimates the actual value of volunteer work (Graff, 2005).

A panel discussion on the *e-Volunteerism* website (Fryar, Mook, Brummel, and Jalandoni, 2003) demonstrates a range of views on the value of economic measurement of volunteer contributions. Fryar begins by stating that “the most enduring and controversial question within the field of volunteerism is the one that relates to the ‘value’ of volunteers and the hours they contribute.” Brummel suggests that focusing on the monetary value of volunteering is harmful in the long run because, in his view, a narrow “economic focus” distracts from social valuation of volunteering and trivializes volunteer impact. Other participants in this discussion find it useful to conduct and present an economic valuation in combination with alternative indicators of volunteer value (Mook, Jalandoni). Jalandoni takes a middle position that “Both the quantitative as well as qualitative, anecdotal, societal value of volunteering are important depending on what you need to use them for.” As Graff (2005) advises, a more complex and complete approach would involve the identification of outcomes or results of volunteer work, calculation of the full costs of achieving those outcomes, and finally evaluation of whether it is a worthwhile investment of resources.

As in other areas of social life, evaluation of the impact of volunteering is a challenging task that is rarely measurable by using quantitative tools alone. Impact refers to the effects or results of an activity, program, or initiative in the larger community or society. As Safrit (2010, p. 321) writes, “Thus, impact may be considered the *ultimate effects and changes* that a volunteer-based program has brought about upon those involved with the program (*i.e.*, its stakeholders), including the program’s targeted clientele and their surrounding neighborhoods and communities, as well as the volunteer organization itself and its paid and volunteer staff”

(emphasis in original). The following section discusses attempts to measure the impact of volunteer activity.

### Impact Measurement

Here we return to an innovative non-economic approach that Handy and Srinivasan (2004) suggest for measuring the impact of volunteers in their study of the hospital services provided by volunteers. To do so, they identify the lack of overlap in roles between paid professionals and volunteers in the hospital setting, and document the division of labor between paid professionals and volunteers. Interviews with volunteer managers identified enhanced quality of patient care as the most important contribution of volunteers. In order to identify volunteers' impact on this dimension, Handy and Srinivasan asked the managers to rank 26 quality programs offered by hospitals that were described in the literature. To measure the quality of care, the survey asked managers, paid staff, and volunteers to rate the impact of volunteer services in each of these domains on a scale of 1 to 10. On average, managers rated volunteers' impact on quality of care as 9.0, staff members rated it as 8.43, and volunteers as 8.7. The converging values supported the validity of measurement. Because this evaluation method is based on stakeholders' assessment of the impact of volunteer services, it is often referred to as a "stakeholder approach." It allows measuring the impact of volunteer effort directed to achieve a specific inherently valued goal such as quality of patient care.

Quarter et al. (2003) present a new approach to impact measurement for volunteers and nonprofit organizations: social accounting. They suggest giving recognition to volunteers by measuring the social impact of volunteer services, and including this value in the accounting statement of an organization. Quarter et al. propose using the Expanded Value Added Statement (EVAS) to include the contribution of volunteers to the total value added produced by the

organization. Three types of outcomes identified by the Community Return on Investment model are incorporated in the EVAS. For the EVAS statement Quarter et al. include and measure three types of outputs:

1. primary outputs – the value of direct services of an organization to clients
2. secondary outputs – the value of indirect outputs that accrue to the organization’s members (staff and volunteers) and customers (for example, skills development)
3. tertiary outputs – the value of indirect outputs that accrue to those other than the organization’s members and clients (for example, consultations provided to other cooperatives)

Primary outputs to clients can be evaluated according to the surrogate valuation methods described above. Benefits that accrue to volunteers are classified as secondary outputs. Quarter et al. suggest including these outputs in the EVAS as hours contributed plus out-of-pocket expenses not reimbursed. In order to value the hours of volunteers, Quarter et al. again use the replacement-cost approach based on the price of equivalent paid labor. Tertiary benefits to third parties are calculated by attributing the market value to the services the third party received for free from the organization, again using the surrogate method. The summation of all three outputs yields the value added by volunteering to the organization.

An important part of the EVAS is the idea of distribution of the value added among stakeholders. Primary services go to clients, secondary benefits to participants (staff and volunteers), and tertiary to the community. Calculation of the value to the first two of these groups of stakeholders is more straightforward; estimation of volunteer value to the community requires greater ingenuity. Quarter et al. (2003) suggest using several approaches to measure the impact of volunteers:

1. Surrogate valuation: The comparable service can be found in the market, and the price for this service will be a surrogate value of the unpriced volunteer service.
2. Survey technique: Worth to clients is measured by compiling the list of either prices or consumer items and asking the respondents to situate the service in relation to others on the list.
3. Avoidance cost: Calculated as the cost of undoing the damage. For example, the loss of or damage to outdoor recreational facilities that are publicly available has been assessed by the fees needed to replace the facilities (Crutchfield, 1962).
4. Attribution: Assigning a weight to various factors that influence results. This is achieved by means of using comparison groups, and longitudinal studies that help to collect information about change. Often it is impossible to determine precisely the causal effects, but information increases understanding and knowledge.
5. Stakeholder input: Stakeholders are defined and systematically asked in open meetings, interviews, confidential focus groups, and surveys about their views on the desirability of the service and its impact on clients.

Cahn and Rowe (1992) offer a conceptually different view on valuing volunteer time for the larger community. They propose the time dollar value as an instrument for valuing volunteers' contribution, based on the idea of reciprocity. The time dollar method holds that when a person volunteers an hour of his or her time to help another person, his or her time-dollar bank is credited one hour. The time-dollar account may accumulate multiple hours, which indicates that the owner is entitled to receive an equivalent amount (in hours) of services or goods from other people, or to receive in-kind compensation, such as reduced tuition cost in

college. The value of a contributed hour is not differentiated by the type of services provided; all hours count the same regardless of the qualifications of the service providers and the content of the service itself. The philosophical foundation for this method is equality of good intentions, and not the differentiated effort or service value. Accumulated credit hours would pay for provision of reciprocal assistance, but will not allow measuring the impact, even though the impact may be socially and economically significant (for example, increased literacy). Cahn and Rowe's (1992) time-dollar method requires very accurate recording and crediting of volunteer hours contributed and a well-defined group of people or "members" who participate, such as residents in a community, neighborhood, co-op, or dormitory (or college). For these authors, the "impact" of volunteer activity is community participation fostered through reciprocity.

Poister (2003) offers practical tips for public and nonprofit organizations on how to conduct evaluations that measure outputs and outcomes. He elaborates the "logic model" approach, which helps to specify the resources, activities, and outputs of a program or organization, and the outcomes (initial, intermediate and long-term) it is meant to achieve. The logic model begins with a careful preliminary analysis of the goals of the organization or program and the conceptual framework for their attainment; in this approach, outcomes are the expected results conforming to the goals. When the goals are clear, and the expected results in the short-term and in the long-term periods are specified, the task of a manager is to define the performance measures. Performance measures typically include measures of output, efficiency, productivity, service quality, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and customer satisfaction. Application of this comprehensive approach would assist the volunteer resource manager as evaluator to capture the multidimensional nature of the outcomes and the long-term impact created with the active help of volunteers. We turn to that topic now.

## Logic Models

Logic models are often used as a framework for evaluation. A logic model depicts graphically a causal interpretation of how a program operates and is thought to achieve its intended results. The logic model is usually presented as a figure or diagram that shows connections between the important elements of a program. Organizational or program goals or objectives drive the logic model so that it is first necessary to agree on what the program is attempting to achieve -- a useful process that can require significant discussion and consultation among stakeholders and program and organizational staff. As discussed above, the views of important stakeholders must be taken into account in this determination. However, the more specific the goal(s) of a program or initiative, the more straightforward will be the ensuing evaluation task.

The first of the elements in the logic model is the inputs or “resources” invested in the program, including monetary, personnel, equipment, technological, etc. Program managers and leaders are charged with converting these resources into program “activities,” such as services provided by the organization to clients or outreach efforts. The first tangible, measurable results of program activities are labeled “outputs,” which indicate the work the program has performed. Depending on the goal(s) of the program, outputs may include the number of sessions conducted with clients, the number of visits to clients, the number of promotional activities carried out by the program, and so forth.

Some evaluations go no farther than examination of the interconnections between program resources, activities, and outputs. Because these elements are largely under the control of the organization, it is of considerable interest to some stakeholders (although not all) to fix the evaluation on them. As we described briefly above, an evaluability assessment concentrates on

the resources allocated to the program to determine whether they are sufficient to achieve the results intended. Such a perspective is critical not only to the organization -- so that decision-makers may understand any limitations of resources uncovered and hopefully address the situation -- but also to the type of evaluation that may ultimately be conducted. Unless resources are in place to make the achievement of program effects for clients conceivable, undertaking more ambitious forms of evaluation (for example, assessment of impact) makes little sense. Other forms of evaluation center on the conversion process of program inputs, to activities, to outputs. Because these forms look primarily on the operation of the program rather than its results, they are typically termed "process evaluations."

By way of example, consider a program that enlists volunteers and paid staff in mentoring middle school students, with the goal of improving school attendance and academic performance. The inputs or resources allocated to the program might consist of a single, full-time paid staff person and a large number of part-time volunteers, and some amount of budgetary resources. In addition to the key mentoring activities provided by volunteers, other activities undertaken by the program may consist of recruitment, orientation, placement, learning, supervision, and assessment of the volunteers. Outputs may encompass the number of matches of volunteer mentors and student mentees, the number of meetings between the mentors and mentees, the types of activities that they pursue in these relationships, and the amount of time devoted to them.

An evaluability assessment would concentrate on the question of whether the resources allocated to the program, paid, volunteer, budgetary, and otherwise, were sufficient to operate the program. It would consider the relationship between the inputs available to the program in light of the extent of interest in the program (as reflected, for example, the number of students seeking



a mentor) as well as the program features that must be in place to offer mentees a quality experience. Such an assessment would scrutinize the balance between program resources on the one hand and program demands on the other in terms of the volume of prospective mentees and the activities necessary for their welfare. A process evaluation would consider the inter-relationship among resources, activities, and outputs: It might ask, for example, whether: the resources allocated to the program were used most efficiently; the training offered to mentors was of high quality; the operations of the program were sufficient to generate, orient, and place qualified volunteers with mentors; and paid staff and volunteers were organized and coordinated in a way to achieve most outputs (for example, mentor-mentee matches). Although these elements do not pertain to program “outcomes” -- the changes or results realized by clients (here, middle school students) -- the questions (and answers) are of interest to certain stakeholders, particularly program managers, organizational decision-makers, and the volunteer mentors.

Outcomes can be understood as the effects of a program on its targeted clientele, especially changes anticipated and desired by the sponsoring organization. As opposed to the other elements of the logic model considered thus far, outcomes are not under the control of the program or organization: They represent changes or effects to be realized in the external environment or audience of clients and communities. They are more ambitious both to achieve and to measure. Outcomes are related to the overall, long-term impact of a program, but they have a more specific, short-term focus on immediate changes or results for clients (Safrit, 2010). Even so, as Poister (2003), McDavid and Hawthorne (2006), Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer (2004), and others point out, outcomes are normally categorized as initial, intermediate, and long-term. If the evaluator has done her or his job correctly, the outcomes will correspond to the

objectives of the program, i.e., they will measure the achievement of the goals that are sought for the program in the client population or community.

Returning to the example of a volunteer mentor program guided by goals of improving school attendance and performance of middle-school students, we might conceive of initial outcomes centering on the mentor-mentee relationship: For example, does the client (student) appreciate the mentor and attend to the suggestions of the mentor? With respect to intermediate range outcomes, we might look for more behavioral indicators (measures) of the positive effects of mentoring: Do the student mentees participate in school activities, such as recognized groups or associations? Do they devote more time to their studies? Finally, in the longer term, the outcome measures might comprise attendance and grades: Do the students show improvement in school attendance and grade reports? By contrast, the intended impact of the program might be a change in school culture to incorporate greater emphasis on student learning, participation, and achievement. Although the initial, intermediate, and longer-term program outcomes would contribute to this impact, the impact is much more broad, far-reaching, and difficult both to attain and measure.

### Summative Evaluations

Evaluations that attempt to link program resources and activities to outcomes (or impact) are usually termed “summative” evaluations, perhaps because they attempt to “sum up” the end results or achievements of a program or initiative. To prepare a summative evaluation, the volunteer resource manager as evaluator must obtain data from or about the intended client group regarding outcomes (as well as background factors concerning the clients). The data-collection effort should not be minimized: Developing the necessary measurement strategy and instruments can be quite time-consuming and require significant background in measurement.

Direct measurements from clients are frequently sought in evaluations, such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys; supplementing such information with other data sources is highly desirable. Access to organizational records, for example, can be very valuable.

In the example of the volunteer mentoring program, the relevant data might emanate from independent surveys of the middle school students and the volunteer mentors; it might also prove possible to conduct some in-depth interviews. In addition, official school records pertaining to student attendance and grades would be highly valuable additions to the store of data to evaluate the effects on the target population. Preparation of the data-collection instruments will be guided by the need to obtain outcome information.

Summative evaluations incorporate a “research design” component. The topic of research design is both vast and technical, and we shall provide only a brief introduction here. A research design specifies the methodology, or set of steps or procedures utilized, to test anticipated causal relationships or hypotheses so that the results can be accepted as valid (Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, 2011). In our now familiar example of the volunteer mentoring program, the hypotheses are that the program will improve student attendance and grade reports. The research design must detail how we can arrive at valid or credible conclusions concerning these hypotheses. To do so, in general, the research design will call for a comparison or benchmark to evaluate whether or not the program has succeeded in making an improvement in the outcome measures. Typically, the bases for comparison are either in reference to data collected at a point earlier in time for the same group of subjects, or with respect to information collected from a control or comparison group chosen to be as similar as possible to the program group.

Thus, in our example, the research design might call for collection of outcome data on student attendance and grade reports for those in the mentor program over time -- ideally, data

collected before the students were involved in the program and then again after their involvement. Comparison of these two sets of measures can be used to detect improvement (over time) in the outcome measures of attendance and grade reports. Alternatively, the research design might specify collecting and comparing data on the outcomes for the group of students in the mentor program (“experimental” or “treatment” group) versus a comparable group of students who do not have mentors but who are otherwise similar to the mentored students (“control” or “comparison” group). This comparison, too, would allow the evaluator to identify improvement, in this case between the two groups of students (i.e., mentor program versus control group). Either form of comparison, over-time measurement or access to a control group, allows test of the hypotheses that the mentor program led to improved student performance in the outcome variables of school attendance and grade reports. Testing these comparisons based on data will require some familiarity with basic statistics (Meier, Brudney, and Bohte, 2011).

Note that the logic model approach allows the volunteer resource manager as evaluator to assess the achievement of outcomes in a volunteer program or nonprofit organization without reference to their economic cost or valuation. This observation is important, especially in light of the differing opinions presented above in regard to the value of economic information for an evaluation of a program that includes a significant volunteer component. Based on the logic model framework, the volunteer resource manager can use the findings from the outcome evaluation to demonstrate that the program helps the organization to achieve worthwhile objectives. In addition to program managers, clients, and volunteers, other stakeholders, such as the public, funders, and organizational leaders and board members, would likely be interested in evaluation results that showed, for example, that a volunteer mentor program had achieved desirable outcomes, such as improvements in the attendance of middle school students and in

their grade reports. Accordingly, the volunteer resource manager can use this information to press for greater recognition and support of the volunteer program.

It is quite possible, moreover, to supplement the results of the outcome evaluation with economic valuation of the volunteer program and its results. Such an enhancement can prove even more persuasive for the volunteer resource manager in making the case for the program to relevant stakeholders. If some form of cost-benefit analysis of the volunteer program were necessary or desired, for example, the methods elaborated on economic valuation in the sections above can be put to good use. On the cost side, through maintaining records and files, organizations can usually estimate the expenses incurred by a department, program, or initiative. On the benefit side, although the positive effects of program or organizational activity are much more elusive to comprehend and measure, this chapter has presented methodologies for economic valuation of volunteer participation for organizations, clients, and the volunteers themselves, as well as some approaches to impact assessment. Based on these methods the volunteer resource manager as evaluator can venture considerably beyond the question of whether “improvements” have been achieved in the client population to incorporate a sophisticated analysis of the associated economic costs to the organization and benefits to various stakeholder groups.

### **Conclusion**

Effective evaluation combines the rigor of the best methodological techniques with the realities of organizational context. It represents a rich blend of science and politics. The volunteer resource manager as evaluator requires some fluency in both domains. The evaluator seeks to provide methodologically valid answers to the questions that she or he believes the relevant stakeholders have posed for the program or the organization.

The earlier portions of the chapter are devoted to the organizational context. They point out that no single evaluation is likely to meet the information needs of the myriad stakeholders to a volunteer program, including funders, agency leadership, board of directors, program managers and other staff, volunteers, clients, and even public decision-makers, citizens, and the media. Thus, choices will have to be made concerning evaluation purposes and stakeholders.

The volunteer resource manager as evaluator need not, and should not, “guess” or make assumptions about the stakeholders crucial to the evaluation process, their information needs, and overall purposes. Instead, she or should be much more proactive in inquiring about the purposes of the evaluation and the stakeholders most invested in it. The volunteer resource manager should involve these groups in formulating the purposes for the evaluation, the questions to be answered by it, and the corresponding evaluation methodologies. This consultation should continue to encompass issues of measurement. If as is frequently the case, the evaluation is to assess program results, the relevant stakeholders should participate in identifying the crucial measures of outcomes and impact to be used in the study. For the volunteer resource manager as evaluator, turning “their” (stakeholders’) measures into “our” measures for an evaluation team helps to secure buy-in to the study and its results.

The consultation process is useful, too, to ferret out hidden agendas, i.e., situations in which certain stakeholders hold pre-determined views of the worth of a program, initiative, or organization that they seek only to reinforce, and not disturb, through evaluation. Such ritualistic evaluations are enervating to organizational actors and resources and fail to advance knowledge. Bringing the relevant stakeholders on-board prior to the evaluation can be effectual in identifying such covert purposes and, hopefully, committing those involved to a genuine openness to the evaluation questions and confidence in the results. These efforts require sensitivity to the

organizational environment and central actors on the part of the volunteer resource manager as well as political savvy.

Also needed for conducting evaluations are skills in methodological techniques, and the later sections of the chapter have provided an introduction to them. Most of these procedures turn on the ability of the volunteer resource manager as evaluator to incorporate into the analysis economic valuation of volunteer-based services for the organization, clients, and the volunteers themselves. Not all approaches are oriented to economic valuation, though. The logic model framework depicts the volunteer program as a causal sequence linking inputs to the program, the activities it carries out, and the outputs it generates, with program outcomes and impact, i.e., measures of the goals sought by the program. The logic model need not use economic measures, but it does require some knowledge of research design and statistical analysis. Thus, the volunteer resource manager as evaluator requires some background in the relevant techniques.

This chapter has focused on the role of stakeholders in the evaluation process. Yet, meeting the needs and demands of stakeholders for information is only part of the evaluation task. We encourage volunteer resource managers to conceive of evaluation more generally for their own purposes as bringing data to bear on questions about volunteer involvement that can increase its value to the organization and grab the attention of key decision-makers. For example, where are the organizational opportunities to extend volunteer efforts? How can volunteers be used more productively? In what new initiatives might volunteers make a valuable contribution? Astute volunteer resource managers likely think about such questions. When they begin to use the tools of evaluation to address them more systematically, they will find that their answers gain more force and acceptance.

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Figure 1

Continuum of Evaluation Purposes

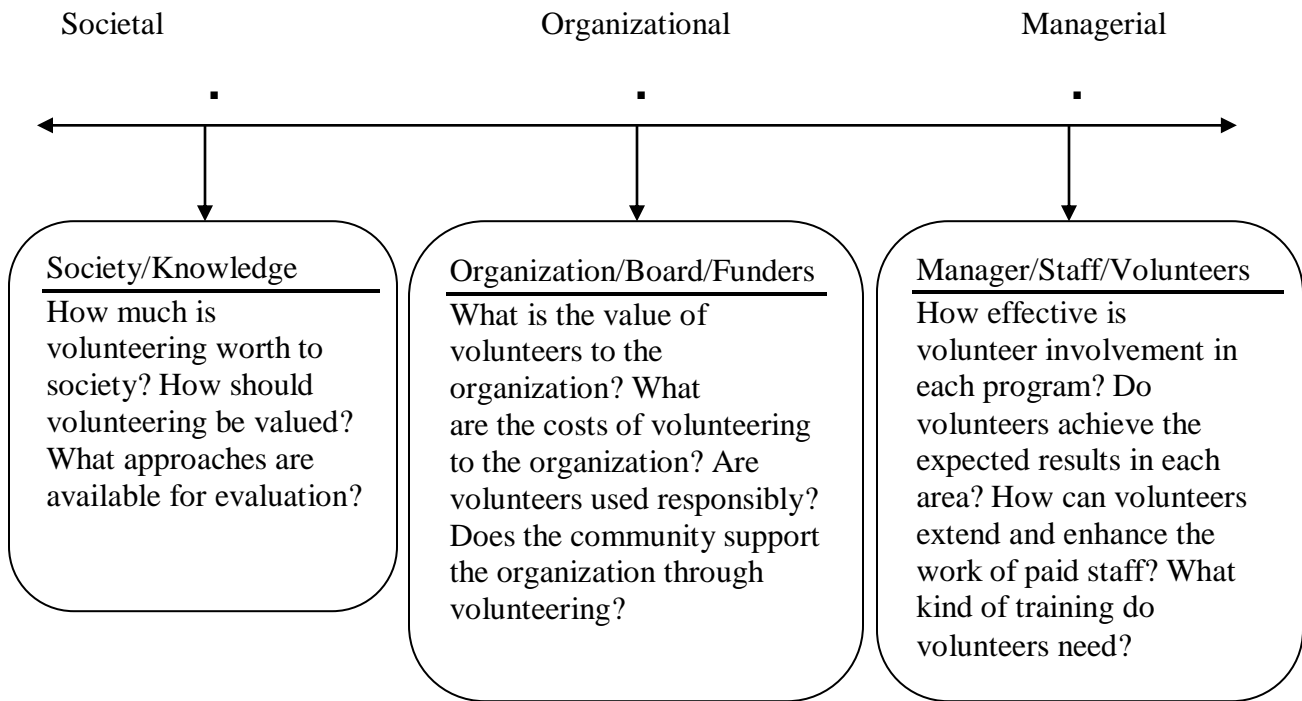


Table 1

<b>Evaluation Levels/ Approaches</b>	<b>Primary Stakeholders</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Value/ Purpose</b>
Societal/ Knowledge	Society Legislators Political decision-makers Researchers	Sector/Field	Worth (aggregate) Learning (knowledge)
Organizational/ Board of Directors	Organizational decision-makers Board of Directors	Organization	Accountability Stewardship
Managerial/Staff	Managers Volunteer resource managers Paid staff	Program	Deployment Effectiveness