



HOSTED BY MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION
FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

The 2017 National Summit on Volunteer Engagement Leadership

Mapping our Future, Strengthening our Voice

The Need Being Addressed

The need for effective, innovative and increased citizen involvement in solving today's growing social, educational, environmental and community problems has never been greater. Statistical reports from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2014 reported a decrease in the number of citizens performing volunteer work, despite national campaigns promoting service. In 2015, Volunteer and Civic Service Engagement in the US reported that only a quarter of residents volunteer, a percentage that has not increased over the past decade. Furthermore, many nonprofit organizations struggle to attract and involve today's volunteers as strategic partners in addressing significant community and organizational needs. This is of great concern as research from TCC Group discovered in 2014 that when an organization leverages volunteers effectively, they are significantly more adaptable, sustainable and better resourced to do their work.

Individuals charged with directing volunteer efforts are critical to maximizing human capital, and the future of these leaders is at stake.

Recent decades have brought increased publications and training options aimed at skill development in volunteer management. But many leaders of volunteers still operate in isolation within their organizations and within the larger field. Their effectiveness is frequently hampered by minimal internal support from executives, resistance from staff colleagues and general lack of understanding about how to tap the vast potential of volunteer resources. Also of grave concern is that emergent leaders in the field have no clear path to become thought leaders to take this profession to new levels of performance and impact in the future.

To enhance the enormous potential of volunteer engagement leadership, those holding these positions must stay current with changes in technology and demographics, practice new methods for engaging citizens and be included at organizational, local, state and national tables where discussions occur that deal with plans to adapt and improve the capacity of organizations to carry out their missions. They need opportunities to strengthen their connection with peers and related professions in order to enhance their own skills and build a more unified presence and voice. For over 10 years there has been no *national* convening of leaders in the field to share best practices and plan for collective action. Many local and regional networks have weakened. Former mentors, authors and trainers are aging out of the field, and there is a general lack of national visibility and voice for those who are mobilizing, supporting and retaining volunteers on the front lines of our communities.

Who is Impacted?

Those impacted by these challenges include:

- Nonprofit and government organizations which utilize volunteers but are unable to garner their potential to truly impact the mission.
- Clients and customers of these organizations who could benefit from additional resources or services made possible by enhanced volunteer engagement.
- Coordinators, directors, and managers of volunteer resources who see the power and potential but are frequently unable to empower organizations to strategically leverage this human asset.
- Volunteers who may feel underutilized or discouraged by the barriers and attitudes they encounter when attempting to contribute their passion and skills.
- Staff members who are overwhelmed by demands of the job, but need the fresh energy and creativity that volunteers bring, yet do not fully embrace the potential rewards of sharing their workload with volunteers.

The impact of this problem is truly staggering.

Our Proposal to Address this Need

Concern about this situation has been simmering for a number of years. Urged by current national leaders in the field of volunteer engagement, MAVA (Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration) responded proactively to convene a two day session in January 2016. Its purpose was to explore the idea of holding a national gathering of current and emergent leaders in the field of volunteer engagement as a first step to address the need for leaders of volunteer engagement to build connections and enhance their position organizationally and nationally.

Our proposed solution is to host a national summit which will act as a catalyst to inspire and secure the future of volunteer engagement.

The January 2016 meeting resulted in enthusiastic support from professionals within Minnesota, the MAVA Board of Directors, and leaders from other parts of the country to work collaboratively to sponsor the 2017 National Summit on Volunteer Engagement Leadership, to be held July 26-28 at Hamline University in Saint Paul, Minnesota.



Vision for the Summit:

An opportunity for current and emerging leaders to discover together how to build a new national presence, tackle the issues they face and maximize their skills as volunteer engagement experts to improve our nation's communities.

Anticipated Outcomes of the Summit:

- A roadmap is developed to guide future collective action at the national level.
- Specific strategies are identified for strengthening leadership of volunteer engagement, with concrete actions which can be taken by individuals, local network, and larger national stakeholders.
- Greater clarity about how various national stakeholders might collaborate more effectively.
- New and emerging leaders are identified, and feel supported and empowered.
- Practitioners feel a greater sense of connection with their peers, and commit to specific ways they will contribute to strengthening the larger field.

Planning is now actively underway, led by teams of individuals from Minnesota and across the country. Input has been gathered from a variety of practitioners, authors, trainers and consultants throughout the United States, and a request for proposals will be widely disseminated before the end of 2016.

Summit content will focus on two general goals which are distinct, yet highly interrelated: **Advancing the national visibility and impact of the leaders of volunteer engagement, and developing the knowledge and skills of practitioners.**

This approach will allow a diversity of attendees to select whatever mix of sessions they want and need, while still maintaining a cohesive approach to the Summit's overarching goals.



Focus 1: Advancing the national visibility and impact of leaders.

- Opening plenary session: inspiring and positive; connects the past, present and future of this field and explains the Summit goals and content rationale; brief keynote speaker, perhaps on the theme of “empowerment”.
- A series of strategy sessions in which participants focus on how to solve a specific issue, what needs to happen next, and leave with a plan.
- A series of sessions focused on the role of funders in strengthening communities through enhanced volunteer engagement. Sessions may include: educating and partnering with funders; tools for enhanced funder-nonprofit partnerships, the role of community foundations and other topics.
- Opportunities for affinity groups from like settings to network together and contribute to the national conversation
- Closing plenary session: summary of strategy session highlights and action steps; invitation for participants to share their individual commitments (“How will you contribute to the future of our field?); what to expect after the Summit.

Focus 2: Developing the knowledge and skills of practitioners.

- A mix of competency-building workshops, research and evaluation sessions linking theory to practice, facilitated roundtable discussions focused on peer-to-peer learning, and tools-of-the-trade demonstrations.
- Multi-disciplinary presenters.
- Foundational, intermediate and advanced levels of learning.
- Leadership development topics such as trainer training, facilitation skills, maximizing data collection and analysis, transitioning into consulting, options for career advancement, etc.

Why MAVA was selected as Summit Host

National leaders see MAVA as the strongest state association in the nation. with the best statewide conference focused on equipping individuals who manage volunteer resources. Looking at trends and issues in the field has guided its extensive research and initiatives. Working in collaboration with many national leaders and many of its own volunteers, efforts are underway to present this unique, cutting-edge and long awaited gathering of leaders to greatly enhance their work and collective impact going forward.

