

The State of Volunteering in North American Jewish Not-for-Profit Organizations



Summary

More than 200 Jewish not-for-profit organizations from across the country participated in a 40-minute survey designed to assess the state of volunteering in the Jewish not-for-profit community. The results establish important baselines for the field and also highlight opportunities for Jewish not-for-profits to make use of volunteering best practices. Four key findings to highlight include:

KEY FINDING #1: Increased use of best practices leads to greater organizational benefits from utilizing volunteers.

KEY FINDING #2: Volunteer participation numbers are more connected to having dedicated volunteer management than to an organization's size.

KEY FINDING #3: Having any kind of volunteer training program more than quadruples the perceived benefit of volunteers to increase an organization's capacity and impact.

KEY FINDING #4: Education and poverty alleviation are the most common issues areas Jewish organizations are addressing with their volunteer work by large margins.

Introduction

In Fall 2011, Repair the World (Repair) hosted a Capstone team—a group of New York University graduate students from the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service—tasked with designing and distributing the first major survey on volunteer engagement practices of North American Jewish not-for-profit organizations. Organizations were invited to participate in an online survey between April and October 2012, resulting in 200 complete and 55 partial responses.¹

The 40-minute, comprehensive survey was designed to serve several purposes, providing Repair and the field with data on volunteer demographics; how Jewish organizations use volunteers; perceived benefits, barriers and challenges around utilizing volunteers; and organizational needs and best practices. This brief report highlights findings regarding selected objectives of the research, specifically around deriving baseline measures on the state of volunteering, barriers organizations encounter and considerations for Repair and the North American Jewish not-for-profit field for expanding organizational capacity to efficiently utilize volunteers.

¹ Findings in this report are based on all responses to each question, whether from a respondent who completed or partially completed the survey.

Repair Commissioned this Survey to:

- Increase awareness and elevate the importance of service and volunteerism
- Derive baseline measures on the state of volunteering in Jewish not-for-profit organizations
- Identify exemplary Jewish Service Enterprises to extract best practices, connect them with Repair’s target demographic, benchmark their effectiveness and change over time, position them to serve as resources to evolving organizations, and, when possible, grow their number of volunteers
- Diagnose organizational needs, patterns and issue areas around service and volunteering
- Identify reinforcing findings about the value of volunteering for select types of organizations
- Obtain information about service and volunteering practices for targeted cohorts, such as synagogues or Jewish Family and Children’s Agencies

Organizations Participating in Survey

This report provides an overview of volunteering in the organizations that participated in the survey. Given the convenience sample² utilized to administer the survey, these findings are not necessarily representative of all North American Jewish not-for-profit organizations. However, the range of respondent organizations by location (Exhibit 1)³ and type (Exhibit 2) suggests diversity in the sample that provides a useful frame of reference for understanding the nature of volunteer issues in Jewish not-for-profit organizations in North America.

Exhibit 1

Location of Organization (n=251)

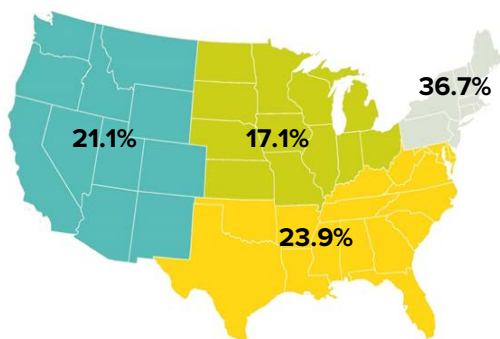
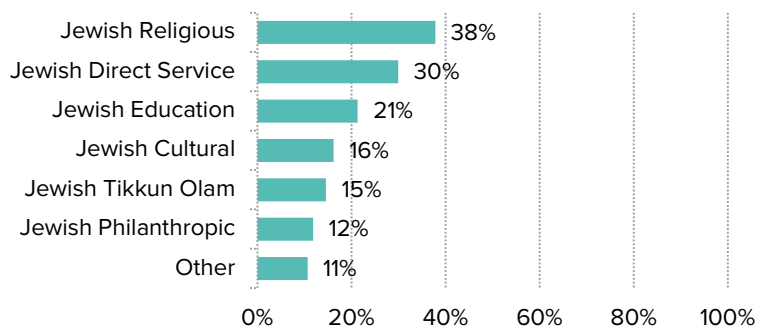


Exhibit 2

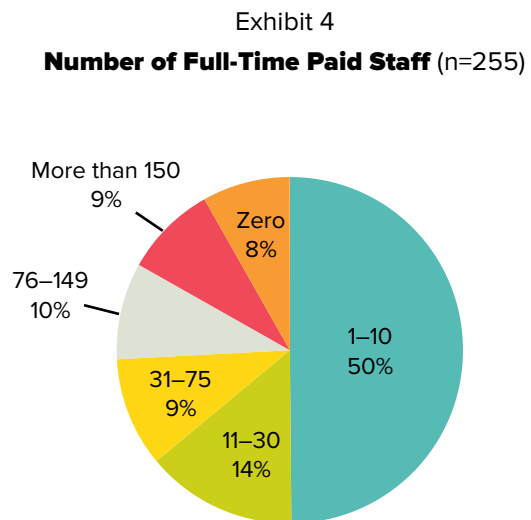
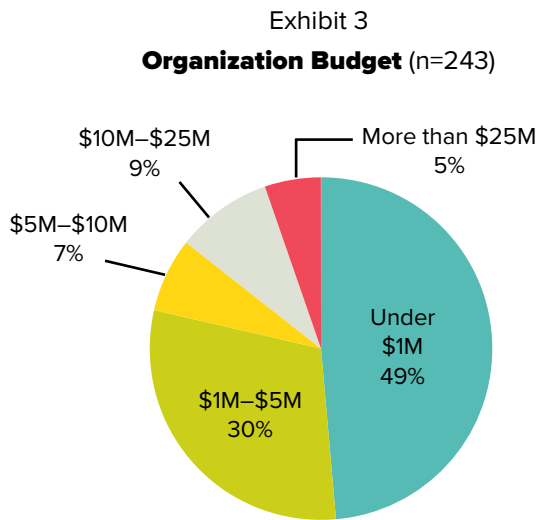
Organization Type (n=254)



² By convenience sample, we mean that the survey was sent to known Jewish not-for-profit organizations rather than a pre-determined random sample of a definitive list of all existing organizations.

³ In addition to the US responses, 0.8% of organizations report that they are located internationally and 0.4% that they have multiple locations.

Many organizations report that they are small in terms of budget and paid full-time staff (Exhibits 3 and 4, respectively). The study found that organizations with larger budgets and more staff are more likely to have a larger pool of volunteers, a volunteer department and more characteristics of an organization that successfully uses volunteers to deliver on its mission (i.e., a Service Enterprise).

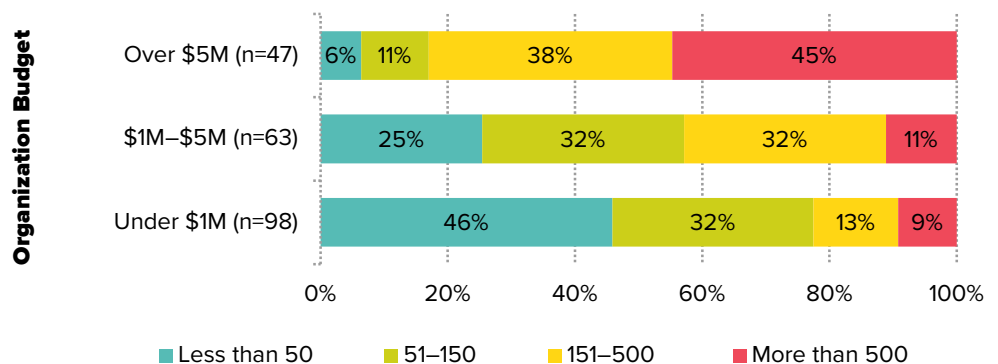


Number of Volunteers

There was a tremendous range in the number of volunteers utilized by organizations that completed the survey. Organizations report that they currently have between 7 and 15,000 volunteers (mean=447), with 58% having 150 or fewer volunteers. In general, organizations work with both male and female volunteers over the age of 18 who are Jewish. Slightly more than half work with both youth and adult volunteers (55%), while most of the remaining organizations work with adult volunteers only (43%).

Not surprisingly, organizations with larger budgets engage more volunteers (Exhibit 5). It seems that organizations with larger budgets have more resources available to invest in recruiting, training, managing and retaining larger numbers of volunteers. They may also have more work available and a greater need for volunteers than a smaller organization.

Exhibit 5
Number of Volunteers by Budget Size

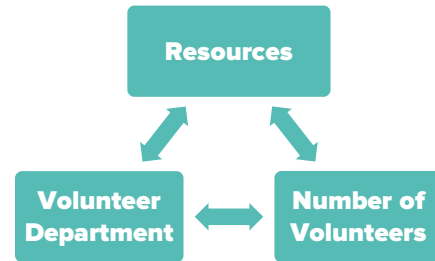


Capacity for Volunteers

Six in ten (61%) organizations do not have a volunteer department, but those that do are more likely to have larger budgets and more paid full-time staff. Organizations with budgets over \$1 million are almost four times more likely to have a volunteer department (52%) than organizations with budgets of \$1 million or less (23%). Organizations with more than 10 full-time staff are about three and a half times more likely to have a volunteer department (57%) than organizations with 10 or fewer staff (26%).

Having a volunteer department is a key element for engaging more volunteers, regardless of an organization's resources (i.e., budget, paid staff). Organizations with

volunteer departments have significantly more volunteers (mean=789) than those without one (mean=214). This relationship among resources, volunteer department and number of volunteers is interconnected but non-directional in that having more resources provides for having a volunteer department which combines with the resources to help recruit, train and manage more volunteers. But, having more volunteers also could push an organization to develop a department to serve their needs as well as help an organization increase its services, overall capacity and resources.



Role of Volunteers

Organizations are using volunteers in a variety of roles to meet their needs (Exhibit 6). By doing so, two-thirds (68%) of organizations report that their volunteers are helping increase their organization's capacity and impact in addressing societal concerns in multiple areas (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 6

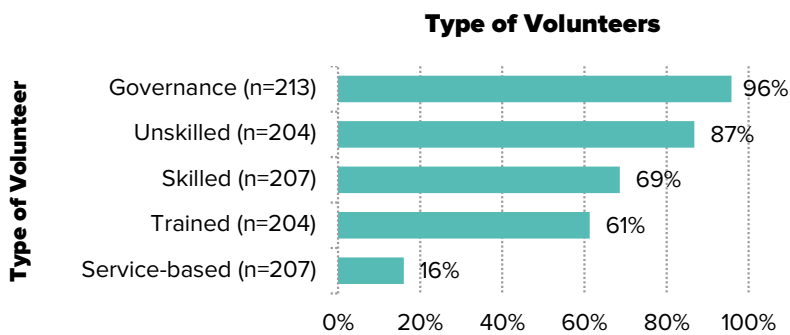
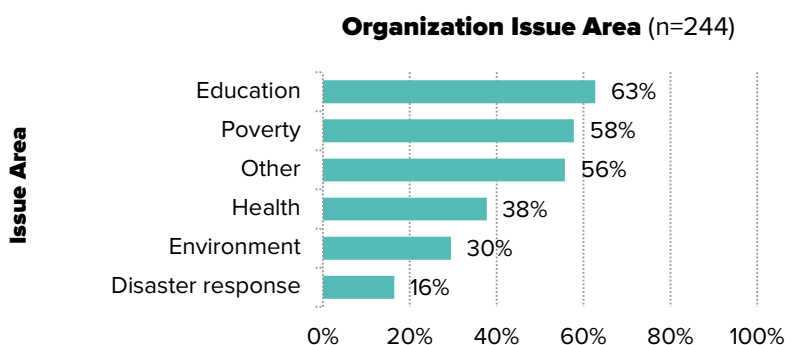


Exhibit 7



Governance volunteers are elected or appointed individuals who serve as members of the Board of Directors or a similar body charged with the oversight of the organization.

Unskilled volunteers refers to those whose work with an organization does not require specialized training beyond a basic orientation.

Skilled volunteers refers to those who possess specialized skills that are utilized in the volunteer experience.

Trained volunteers receive specialized training by the organization in skills essential to the volunteer function.

Service-based volunteers are placed within the organization on a part- or full-time basis, most likely receiving a stipend, for a term-of-service of several months or more.

Organizations with a volunteer department and organizations with more volunteers (Exhibit 8) more often report that their volunteers are helping increase their capacity and impact. In addition, organizations with volunteer training programs are more than four times as likely to report this benefit of volunteers than organizations without training programs (Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 8
Volunteers' Ability to Play Critical Roles by Number of Volunteers

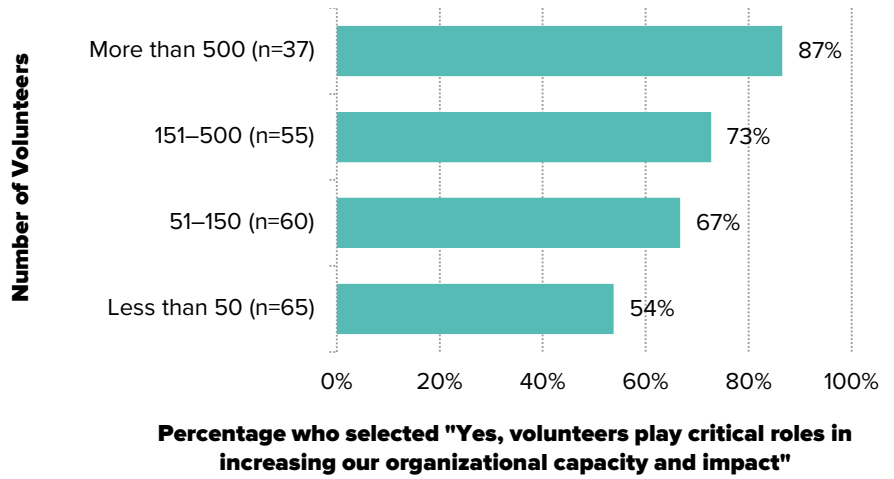
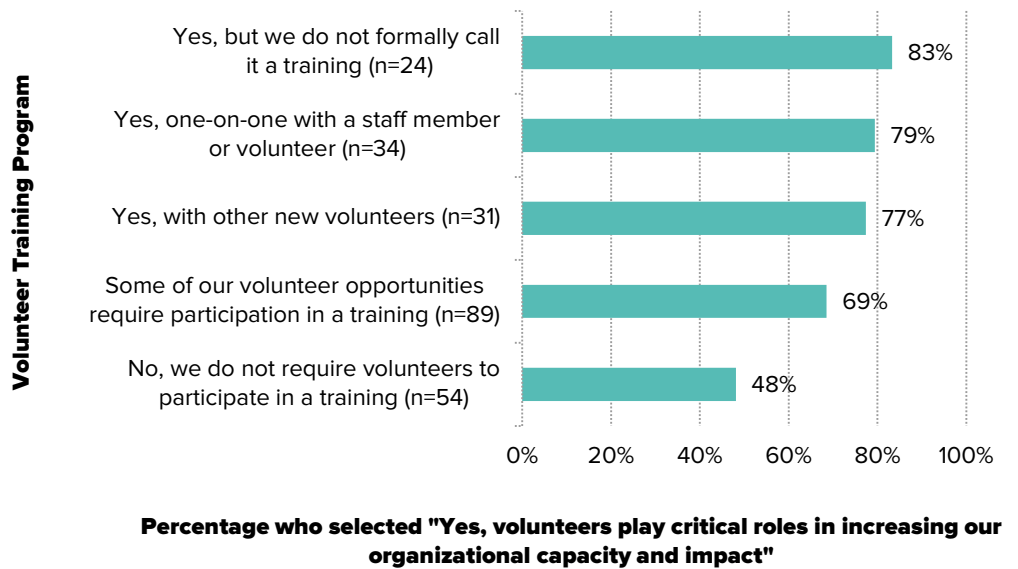


Exhibit 9
Volunteers' Ability to Play Critical Roles by Having a Volunteer Training Program



Service Enterprises

One of Repair’s goals for the survey was to identify exemplary Service Enterprise organizations: not-for-profit or for-profit organizations that fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills to successfully deliver on their social missions. These organizations tend to derive more impact from their volunteers and score higher on overall measures of organizational effectiveness.⁴ Repair wanted to examine to what extent Jewish not-for-profit organizations demonstrate the 10 key characteristics of Service Enterprises and which organizational elements relate to their scores (Exhibit 10).⁵

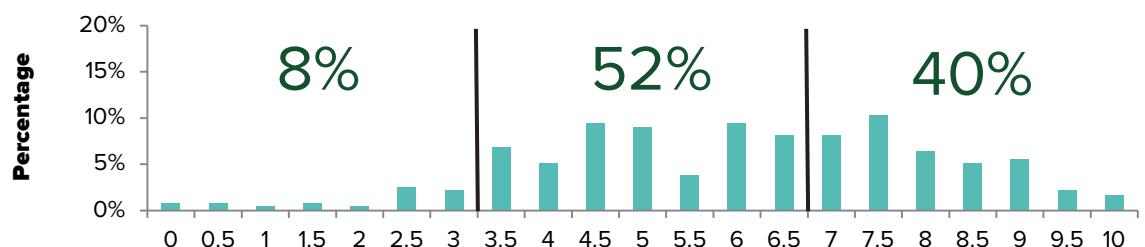
Exhibit 10

Service Enterprise Framework Characteristics (n=232)

| Characteristics | Yes | Somewhat | No |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| Organization engages more than 50 volunteers a year | 80% | -- | 20% |
| Organization’s leadership generally views volunteer engagement as a key strategy to meet organizational goals | 74% | 22% | 4% |
| Organization engages volunteers in ways that increase the organization’s capacity and impact | 68% | 25% | 7% |
| Seek volunteers based on organizational priorities | 57% | 33% | 10% |
| Volunteer opportunities are well-defined and exist in roles across all organizational functions | 38% | 58% | 4% |
| Organization routinely solicits feedback to improve volunteer management and engagement strategies and practices | 36% | 38% | 26% |
| Organization has a volunteer involvement budget line item | 28% | 20% | 52% |
| Organization uses technology and online communications tools to engage and manage volunteers | 27% | 53% | 20% |
| Organization invests time and money in managing volunteers to the same degree as with paid staff | 17% | 49% | 34% |
| Organization provides training for paid staff in how to effectively work with volunteers | 16% | 28% | 57% |

Nationally, only 10% of not-for-profit organizations show all 10 characteristics of a Service Enterprise. Of this survey’s respondents, 2% exhibit all 10 characteristics, which is on par with other not-for-profits; 40% scored a 7 or higher (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11
Service Enterprise Framework Scores



⁴ This is based on research from Reimagining Service, whose definition and measurement of Service Enterprises informed Repair’s work. More information can be found at: reimagining-service.org

⁵ For each of the 10 items, respondents received a “1” for selecting the “yes” response, a “0.5” for the “somewhat” response and a “0” for the “no” response. Scores are self-reported.

Organizations with larger budgets,⁶ more staff⁷ and a volunteer department⁸ exhibit more Service Enterprise characteristics. They likely have more resource capacity to meet some of the requirements of a Service Enterprise than smaller organizations. Organizations with more volunteers tend to have higher Service Enterprise scores.⁹

Having higher Service Enterprise scores is important because it not only means an organization is exhibiting more best practices, but it is also related to organizations reporting greater benefits from their volunteers in supporting their work and mission. The higher their Service Enterprise score, the more strongly organizations agree that they could not maintain their current level of services or programs without their volunteers. Further, organizations with a score of six or higher are three times more likely to agree or strongly agree with this than organizations scoring less than six. The higher their Social Enterprise score, the more strongly organizations also agree that their volunteers have become ambassadors for their mission by raising awareness about their work, with organizations scoring a six or higher being nearly twice as likely to agree or strongly agree with this than organizations scoring less than six.



The majority of organizations indicate that they exhibit four characteristics related to internal support for volunteering and intentionally using volunteers to achieve organizational priorities. The characteristics that fewer organizations indicated they currently have match the areas organizations identified in the survey as the most common barriers they encounter to improving or expanding their volunteer management, engagement and/or programs (Exhibit 12). They tend to be due to resource constraints rather than organizational values and priorities.

Exhibit 12
Barriers to Improving or Expanding Volunteer Management, Engagement and/or Programs (n=218)

| Barriers | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Lack of financial resources to improve or expand our volunteer programs | 57% |
| Lack of staff time to recruit, train, or supervise more volunteers | 56% |
| Not enough potential volunteers in community | 22% |
| Staff do not have skills/competencies to effectively engage more volunteers | 17% |
| Liability concerns about volunteers taking on new roles | 16% |
| Lack of tools or resources to connect with potential volunteers | 15% |
| No roles for additional volunteers | 15% |
| Staff resistance to working with volunteers in new ways | 14% |
| Volunteers not a major organizational priority | 6% |
| In our experience, engaging volunteers is generally more trouble than it is worth | 3% |
| Staff concerns about losing their jobs if volunteer work is expanded | 2% |
| Other | 15% |

⁶ Organizations with budgets greater than \$5 million scored significantly higher on the Service Enterprise framework (6.8) than organizations with budgets between \$1 and \$5 million and organizations with budgets less than \$1 million (each scored 5.7), $F(2, 220) = 6.181, p = .002$.

⁷ $r = .269, p = .000$

⁸ Organizations with a volunteer department scored significantly higher on the Service Enterprise framework (7.1) than organizations without a department (6.3), $t(230) = 7.088, p = .000$.

⁹ $r = .247, p = .000$

Reflections

The results of this investigation into the state of volunteering in North American Jewish not-for-profit organizations provide useful baseline data for the field and also raise several key reflections:

- The more resources an organization has, the more likely it is to have a volunteer department, more volunteers, report that its volunteers are helping increase organizational capacity and impact, and exhibit more characteristics of a Service Enterprise. However, many organizations have budgets under \$1 million and only 1–10 staff. How can the field help these smaller organizations overcome the limitations of fewer resources?
- Most organizations exhibit some (or even many) Service Enterprise characteristics, but not all of them. How can the field identify concrete ways to work with organizations to develop more of the Service Enterprise characteristics, possibly focusing on the five lower rated areas?
- Very few organizations involve only youth volunteers under the age of 18 in their work, and nearly half work only with adults. Is there room in the Jewish not-for-profit field for more organizations to engage youth volunteers?
- Organizations that require all volunteers to participate in an orientation or training are significantly more likely to report that their volunteers are helping them increase their organization's capacity and impact. However, only 38% of organizations have this requirement. How can the field work to encourage more organizations to establish volunteer training/orientation programs?

About This Report

A graduate student Capstone team from New York University's Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service designed the data collection tool and, along with Repair the World, administered it to North American Jewish not-for-profits. Informing Change then analyzed data and designed and produced this final report. For more information about this research please contact Repair the World staff at: mordy@wrepair.org.

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