



Volunteer IMPACT Fund 2008: *Capstone Project*

THE CONTEXT

The Urban Institute issued a challenge to the nonprofit sector when it conducted the landmark 2004 study: ***Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations*** - the first national study of its kind. The report affirmed the major role volunteers play in organizations and spotlighted the ***increasing significance of effective volunteer resource management*** to optimize their contribution. It also showed that ***many organizations are not reaching their volunteer engagement potential because they are ill-equipped to take advantage of effective volunteer resource management practices***. The study, underwritten by the Corporation for National and Community Service in collaboration with the UPS Foundation and the USA Freedom Corps, outlined the ***challenges*** organizations face ***in building the capacity to effectively mobilize volunteers*** in a time of shrinking resources and increasing demand for services.

THE FRAMEWORK

The National Human Services Assembly's report ***From Research to Action*** offered a response to the challenges and opportunities framed by the Urban Institute study. Funded by the UPS Foundation and drawn from the collaborative efforts of key leaders, stakeholders and experts, ***From Research to Action*** crafted a framework of recommendations which offer ***transformative strategies for systemic change, volunteer resource management capacity building, and meaningful impact***. The recommendations revolve around four themes, each with its own set of key strategies: ***Communication and Messaging; Connecting People to Opportunities; Organizing Readiness and Management; and Building Knowledge***.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Urban Institute study and ***From Research to Action*** identified the need for ***collaborative action between nonprofits and funders*** to change business as usual. ***IMPACT: A Fund for Change through Volunteerism*** established in late 2004 with a \$1 million three-year grant from the UPS Foundation and managed by the National Human Services Assembly, ignited action towards ***innovative volunteer management capacity building***. The Volunteer IMPACT Fund, joined by the AT&T Foundation, Capital One and Home Depot as funding partners, enabled 12 grantee organizations to advance volunteer resource management capacity building initiatives that potentially ***create systemic, sustainable change*** around each of the themes and strategies offered in ***From Research to Action***.

THE RESULTS

The National Assembly is gathering, synthesizing and soon disseminating the rich experiences, tools, and techniques of the Volunteer IMPACT Fund grantees and other diverse initiatives in the field – in essence, taking their valuable ***lessons learned and promising practices that work from the “margins into the mainstream.”***

Understanding that a lesson learned is no lesson at all if it is not accessible, the National Assembly is developing a series of practical briefs to contribute the national body of knowledge. These briefs will:

- Detail the successes and challenges of the Volunteer IMPACT Fund grant projects and other sources;
- Articulate tested learnings, innovations, and practices that address the key strategies laid out in *From Research to Action* and the challenges identified in *Volunteer Management Capacity in America’s Charities and Congregations*;
- Describe the practical application of key volunteer resource management capacity building insights;
- Support and encourage collaborative action across sectors, and;
- Offer a potential road map for replication and taking effective practices to scale for the purpose of positive community change and meaningful impact through volunteerism.

To share promising practices or learn more about the Capstone Project, please contact Assembly team member April Goldstein at agoldstein@nassembly.org.