VolunteerMatch

Virtual Volunteering
A Guide for Businesses

Introduction

Virtual volunteering has been in existence for the last 50 years, but due to state restrictions, and other health and safety precautions, the practice is growing as part of organizations' volunteering strategies. According to [VolunteerMatch research](#) conducted in October 2020, 38% of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) leaders said they are moving at least some volunteer engagement to virtual opportunities while finding ways to continue to engage in in-person opportunities. Simultaneously, 51% of nonprofits surveyed reported that they have begun creating more virtual volunteer opportunities.
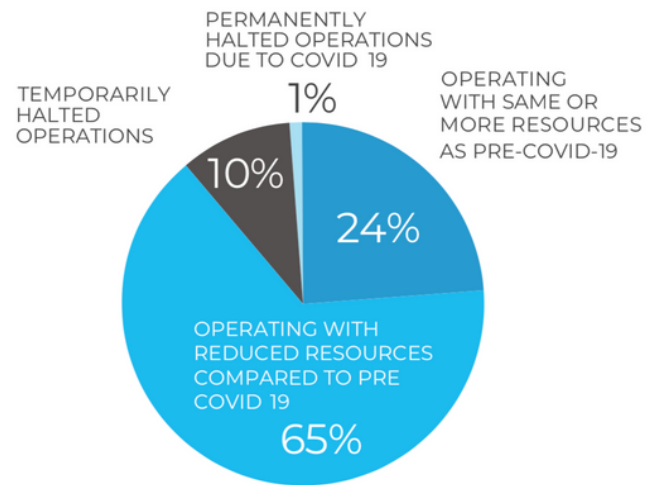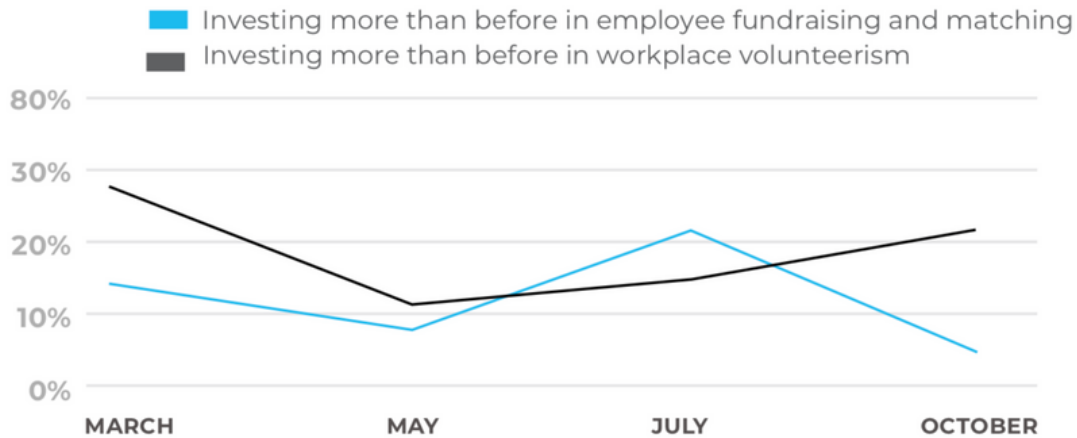

65% of nonprofit organizations feel more strained financially than before COVID-19
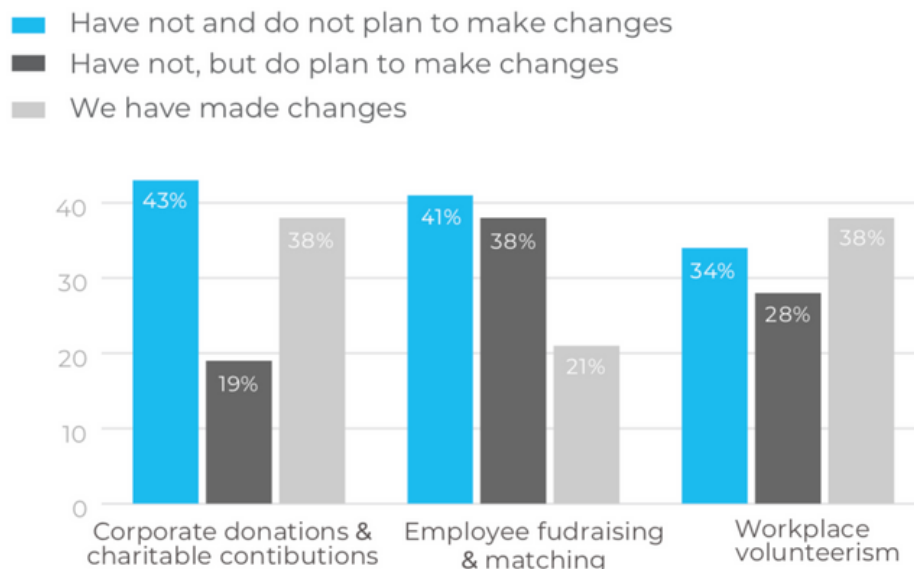
NONPROFITS NEED ROBUST SUPPORT

How are the current environmental, economic, and social conditions impacting how you make decisions around investments in workplace volunteerism or other CSR initiatives?

Legend:
- Investing more than before in employee fundraising and matching
- Investing more than before in workplace volunteerism

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, many nonprofit organizations chose not to offer, or were not equipped to offer, virtual volunteering opportunities. Adjusting to the needs of their volunteers and communities, nonprofits have found ways to incorporate virtual volunteering into their programs. For many, virtual volunteering can offer a safe and practical way to get help with much needed tasks. With a little creativity, nonprofit and CSR professionals can work together to continue to support their communities by taking a fresh look at volunteering.

How are the current environmental, economic, and social conditions impacting the focus and/or strategy of your CSR initiatives?

Legend:
- Have not and do not plan to make changes
- Have not, but do plan to make changes
- We have made changes

1 - Do a needs analysis with nonprofit partners to find out how you can best help partner organizations in a virtual capacity.

Questions to Ask Nonprofits:
- ☐ What are the biggest challenges you are facing?
- ☐ What gaps are you seeing in your organization?
- ☐ How could you better serve the community if you had more volunteers?
- ☐ Is there someone at your organization who manages volunteers?

2 - Evaluate the skills within your organization.

- ☐ **Determine skills sets:** Hone-in on the speciality skills and expertise that you have at your organization.

- ☐ **Create cross-functional teams:** Tackle some of the larger issues that nonprofits are facing more efficiently with team work.

- ☐ **Link to Professional Development:** Identify skill areas where employees can advance their knowledge, leadership, and experience.

- ☐ **Create a Review Process:** Develop a career volunteer advancement program that is tied to the review process.

- ☐ **Be Flexible:** Give your employees the opportunity to chose how they would like to use their talents.

Cross-Reference Opportunities for Skills:
- Social Media
- Graphic Design
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Program Management
- Finance
- Board / Consulting Opportunities

3 - Analyze any potential barriers.

☐ **Technology:** Determine what technology you have such as video meeting applications, project management programs, computer equipment, or specific design programs that could be used to support the nonprofit.

☐ **Time:** Identify the number of hours that your employees can volunteer each month. Give employees choice, where they have the ability to support organizations they are passionate about and flexibility to set aside time to do their service.

☐ **Initiating:** Some employees are energized by volunteering, but they get stuck and don't know where to begin. Provide them with ideas, volunteering opportunities, and cause areas to inspire them into action.

☐ **Engagement:** Celebrate and recognize your teams with virtual get-togethers, social media, employee reviews, and at meetings. Partner with nonprofits organizations in how you engage your volunteers.

☐ **Retention:** Build a plan around what happens once the volunteering service is complete. Follow-up with the employees and tell them about other volunteering opportunities that they can be involved in.

4 - Build and execute a project plan. The best way to support the nonprofit's short-term and long-term goals is to build a project plan.

Project Plan Steps:

☐ Identify the organization's needs
☐ Establish objectives
☐ Determine outcomes
☐ Outline the scope of work
☐ Map out milestones
☐ Create a timeline with deliverables
☐ Define the roles of the individuals involved
☐ Provide the plan to the nonprofit organization
☐ Continually provide them updates as well

BONUS TIP
Give your employees more incentive by offering grants or donations to organizations they serve.

AT-A-GLANCE: DEVELOPING A VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING PROGRAM

- ☐ **Identify** the key 1-3 behaviors you hope to see volunteers do. Examples include attending online events, advocating for change, and board service.
- ☐ **Develop** 3-5 goals that will help you know when your program is successful.
- ☐ **Use** a simple tool, like a spreadsheet, to track progress against goals.
- ☐ **Build** a program based on your organization's values. It can help to time your volunteering around a year-round calendar or accessible themes.
- ☐ **Empower** employees with a wide range of choices on VolunteerMatch.
- ☐ **Create** a set of basic guidelines for your virtual volunteering program.
- ☐ **Get** leadership support.
- ☐ **Consider** supporting one cause or action at a launch.
- ☐ **Adapt** your program based on urgent community needs, such as natural disasters like hurricanes, wildfires, flooding, or other unplanned events.
- ☐ **Evaluate** your program to see what worked and what didn't. Apply this knowledge to the current program or as you build a new one.

VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING AND THE GROWTH OF THE REMOTE WORKFORCE

COVID-19 has caused more organizations to expand their remote workforce. According to Gallup, "nine in 10 remote workers want to maintain remote work to some degree" and "the same number anticipate keeping remote hours for the rest of the year and beyond."

With the increase in remote work, virtual volunteering will continue to be a key part of any volunteering program. Even though it doesn't always create the same social bonds from in-person volunteering, it is flexible and can be done anywhere, so it's a natural fit for remote teams.

MAKING IT EASIER TO ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

VolunteerMatch is committed to the resiliency and recovery of our nonprofits and the constituents we serve. We connect passionate people with meaningful volunteer opportunities in their communities. In fact, we have ways to get involved in every city, state, and zip code across the U.S.

As a company, you can connect with us to help you:

- Implement an employee volunteering program in your workplace
- Use technology to provide more volunteering opportunities for employees
- Provide your network or community with a technology solution to help them get involved with causes that are meaningful to them