

Tapping into Trust

As trust in large organizations and government is reportedly low, Virginians continue to invest in the institutions they trust the most: local nonprofits.^{1,2,3} More than 80% of people feel that a nonprofit must earn their trust before they will support them, financially or through volunteering.⁴ People engage most often with organizations they trust, where they can see the results of their actions.²

How can your organization cultivate trust as a way to support volunteer engagement?

Let's consider the evidence...

Virginians trust nonprofits more than local businesses, educational or healthcare organizations, media, government, or corporations, and increasingly expect nonprofits to fill the gaps left by these other institutions.^{3,4} This data highlights a tremendous opportunity to showcase how your organization meets community needs locally and is uniquely able to follow through on investments of time and money in your work and mission.



TELL YOUR STORY

Trust is built through personal engagement, emphasizing shared values through consistent and authentic organizational communications that focus on high-impact, ethical storytelling backed up by data.^{4,5} Consider how prioritizing operational transparency and authentic one-on-one interactions can help your organization build trust.^{4,5}





LEVERAGE TRUST INTO CIVIC ACTION

People who place their trust in nonprofits are also more likely to engage in civic action, from voting or signing petitions to attending public meetings or making donations.^{3,4} Though many Virginians believe that political action, policy change, and lawmaking would be some of the most effective actions to take to address community needs, most VCEI respondents said they do not trust the players responsible for setting policies, nor do they feel engaging with members of government to be an effective use of their time.^{1,2} Consider how you can leverage trust in your nonprofit to encourage volunteers to extend their civic engagement to include personal acts that influence policy or spread awareness of issues beyond voting.

Consider how your organization can leverage volunteer support in your advocacy and policy work and discuss expanded roles with volunteers who might be interested in these areas.

Volunteers have already invested their trust in your work and engaging them in a deeper way will continue to develop that trust.

This is part of the Volunteer Engagement Toolbox, a series intended to empower people with strategies and insights to mobilize volunteers. It is informed by the Virginia Community Engagement Index (VCEI), which provides data-driven answers to critical questions about how volunteers engage in communities across the Commonwealth.

Explore findings at [ServeVirginia.org/why-serve](https://servevirginia.org/why-serve)

ABOUT SERVE VIRGINIA

Serve Virginia aspires to build a culture of service and volunteerism in all corners of the Commonwealth by inspiring individuals and organizations to engage, connecting them with the resources they need to make a difference, and celebrating the tremendous impacts we make together.



Explore the most common types of civic action in your region by demographics.

REFERENCES

1. Serve Virginia. (2023). *Virginia Community Engagement Index: Building a culture of service, volunteerism, and civic action in the Commonwealth.* https://servevirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/VCEI_FinalReport.pdf
2. Serve Virginia. (n.d.). *Virginia Community Engagement Index findings: The current state of engagement.* <https://servevirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/VCEI-Findings-%E2%80%93-Part-2.pdf>
3. Serve Virginia. (n.d.). *Virginia Community Engagement Index findings: Insights for mobilization.* <https://servevirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/VCEI-Findings-%E2%80%93-Part-3.pdf>
4. Independent Sector. (2023, September 26). *Trust in civil society.* <https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Independent-Sector-Trust-Report-2023.pdf>
5. Council on Foundations. (2024, April). *Philanthropy's new voice: Building trust with deeper stories and clear language.* <https://cof.org/content/philanthropys-new-voice-building-trust-deeper-stories-and-clear-language>