

# Innovations in Volunteerism

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As you consider how you engage volunteers beyond informal and formal service, it's important to consider how the experience can be enriching for them as a person, responding to their needs and interests across different phases of their own development.<sup>1,2</sup> By focusing on innovation in volunteer development, your organization can help individuals better understand their impact beyond direct service while also supporting their personal fulfillment through opportunities to learn and grow.<sup>3</sup>

## How can your volunteer opportunities meet people where they are while also meeting your organizational needs?

Let's consider the evidence...

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### MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Consider how your organization's mission can be furthered by a broad spectrum of informal to formal service activities. Though you may currently engage volunteers regularly in a specific type of service or activity, there are likely many other ways community members can contribute towards the mission and vision of your work. Assess how you can extend the invitation to others to join in your work, outside of what your organization may traditionally consider volunteer roles, keeping an open and inclusive perspective.

The Points of Light Civic Circle® can be useful for visualizing different types of action beyond direct service, showcasing that civic engagement comes in many forms, across a range of engagement styles that include purchase power, voting, voice, donating, listening and learning, and social entrepreneurship.<sup>4</sup>





## EMPOWER EXISTING VOLUNTEERS

You might also consider how you can broaden your existing volunteers' influence and empower them as ambassadors who can spread awareness of your work and invite others to get involved.<sup>2</sup> Many Virginians see a need for civic action beyond philanthropy and volunteerism, but volunteers may need your support in order to feel they can play a role in policy action or community outreach.<sup>1</sup> This type of support and empowerment can also be a way of overcoming burnout and reigniting the passion for service among existing volunteers who are sporadic or decreasing their engagement.<sup>2</sup>

The Active Citizen Continuum spotlights the evolutionary process from an unengaged person to a volunteer with good intentions, and finally to an active citizen who prioritizes community in their life choices and values.<sup>5</sup> Your organization can align your mission-based goals with tactics to engage people across this continuum.

## ENGAGE STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS

You may also want to encourage staff and board members to work with volunteers. By encouraging colleagues to consider how volunteers may fit into their work, volunteer roles can be expanded and your organizational culture will more fully showcase the impact of volunteers — through the leveraged time and talents of your volunteers but also through an expanded appreciation of the ways we each support our community.

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*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://www.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.

**Learn more at [ServeVirginia.org](https://www.servevirginia.org)**

## REFERENCES

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