

SkillsConnect

Frequently Asked Questions by Nonprofit Organizations

What is skills-based volunteering?

Most organizations tackling the many social problems and gaps in our communities don't have access to the strategic resources they need to succeed, such as, marketing, technology, business planning and design. Without this talent, few are able to fully implement their missions and make the critical impact they need to support social issues. The skills-based volunteer movement (also known as pro bono service) is linking professionals in these critical fields (and others) to nonprofits in need of their support to thrive.

We need strategic support. Are we ready to engage in a skills-based volunteer project? [Checklist]

- We have identified and defined a strategic need in one of the following areas:
 - Business Planning
 - Communications Planning
 - Financial Planning
 - Human Resources
 - IT/Database Functions (not web design)
 - Marketing/Branding
 - Market Research
 - Strategic Planning
 - Other Strategic Management Area
- We have buy-in from the board and staff to work on the project with a skills-based volunteer.
- We have set aside approximately 15-40 hours to dedicate to the project.
- We have determined the core working staff or board member/s. (The core working teams are typically key players from your organization who will be in regular communication with the consultant and have decision-making authority for the organization.)
- We have ensured that we have enough internal capacity to execute the completed plan.
- We have contacted Volunteer Connect to discuss and request a project proposal.

What can we expect?

- It takes 1-2 months to recruit a skilled consultant after you submit your project proposal.
- Project opportunities are sent to our pool of consultants and professional contacts.
- After a consultant is identified and matched, you will have a formal launch meeting where you should discuss project scope, the process, expectations, and roles/responsibilities.
- You will receive a sliding scale project fee invoice after the connection has been made.

- After the launch meeting, you should create a timeline and project outline based on your conception and then schedule future meetings.
- Your consultant considers this a professional engagement and provides considerable expertise and support towards rapid and successful completion of your project.
- The consultants are there to ask questions, facilitate a discussion, and help you think strategically. They are not there for implementation of the plan.
- At the completion of the project, you should have an exit meeting to discuss the project successes/challenges, lessons learned, recommendations for implementation, and next steps. The consultant should be actively thanked for their time.
- Volunteer Connect's role is to help facilitate the process, be a resource to both the nonprofit and skills-based volunteer, and to assist with any issues that may arise.

What is the average time commitment?

- Skills-Based Volunteer: 30-40 hours
- Nonprofit: Depends on the project but likely 15-40 hours
- Period: 1-3 months (depending on the scope of the project)

What should we consider prior to launching a project to ensure the best success?

- Have you recently reviewed your mission and vision statements?
- Who will be the point person for communication with the consultant team?
- What stakeholders do you want to include in this process? They can be inside or outside of the organization (ensemble members, volunteers, patrons, mentors, funders...).
- Do you have documents related to the project that might be helpful for the consultants (ex. general operating grant proposals, past strategic plans, retreat notes, etc.)?
- What are your expectations for this project? What do you hope to get out of this process?
- What concrete items/tasks do you want to accomplish?
- What format of deliverable would be most useful for you and your organization?
- What are the best days/times for your team to meet with the consultant? Do you have a space where you regularly meet?
- Do you have any upcoming events, or other major project initiatives that may delay the project timeline or that this project end date must not overlap?

To whom should we talk to at VolunteerConnect to discuss using a skilled volunteer for our strategic needs?

VolunteerConnect's executive director, Amy Klein, would be happy to answer any questions you may have or to help you scope your project. She can be reached by phone at 609-921-8893 or by email at amy@volunteerconnectnj.org.