

Rosterfy White Paper

Connecting communities through a centralized volunteer model.

Promoting community engagement and cohesion.



ROSTERFY White Paper

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are the backbone of society, providing significant economic and social value to the economy and more broadly, to the communities in which they serve.

Research shows that communities that have active volunteer programs have higher citizen engagement and community cohesion, with volunteerism promoting the development of skills and connections, while enhancing general wellbeing. It also creates pathways to employment through relevant industry experience and networking opportunities.

In a report conducted by the Independent Sector, volunteers contributed \$187.7 billion to the United States economy through their time, talent and expertise with volunteers valued at \$28.54 per hour.

With the demand for volunteers arguably stronger than ever, cities and local governments play a vital role in ensuring that their communities have access to volunteer opportunities that are accessible to all. The best way to do this? Through a centralized volunteer management solution.

"In challenging times, using volunteers gives communities the power to both increase meaningful engagement with residents and discover creative ways to meet expanding needs for local government services with limited resources."

Michelle Nunn (2010)

In this white paper, we will take a closer look at the reasons why cities and local government organizations should consider investing in a centralized volunteer management model. Through real life examples and case studies, this white paper outlines how a centralized model can provide a city wide volunteer management program that ensures a streamlined and engaging experience for administrators and volunteers alike.

If you're interested in learning more, please don't hesitate to get in touch [today](#).



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The Landscape

The volunteering landscape for cities and local government organizations is undergoing a change.

As we face an ageing population, the workforce is contracting, with people becoming more and more selective about how and where they want to spend their time. This extends to volunteering.

Like many industries, cities and local governments weren't exempt from mass redundancies and job losses as a result of COVID-19. With demand for not for profit and community services at an all time high, staff are being forced to embrace technology to help supplement the reduction in workforce in order to continue to service the communities needs.

On the flip side, students and graduates are now screaming out for experience. While volunteer roles have traditionally been filled by those aged 50+, cities and local governments need to ensure that their programs are attractive to the youth of their community who have more time and motivation to assist.

With connection, engagement and empowerment the key to uniting communities and developing a successful volunteer management program, City's sit in a unique position to make a real difference.

Current Trends

In today's fast paced world, we have identified the following emerging trends for volunteers:

- **More flexible roles.** In order to attract a younger generation of volunteers, organizations need to offer more flexibility and choices when it comes to their volunteer roles.
- **Culture and experience.** Volunteers desire an engaging experience. If your organization isn't providing one then they'll start looking elsewhere. From personalised communications through to reward and recognition programs, there's no shortage of ways in which to make your volunteer management program engaging from start to finish.
- **Upskilling, Education & Training.** Volunteering at its roots is about giving back but there are other reasons why individuals choose to volunteer including the development of new skills, education and training.
- **Technology.** Probably the biggest development across the 21st century is technology. Everything we do now involves an element of technology and in this fast paced world, when time is of the essence, technology helps to simplify things. In order to attract the full remit of volunteers, organizations need to embrace technology in order to better engage, manage and retain their workforce.

In this white paper, we will be addressing how to combat the changing landscape of volunteering, focusing on the strengths of embracing a centralized volunteer management model, which can be applied to Cities worldwide.

Consider your options...

There are two forms of management models when it comes to managing volunteers, both with their own pros and cons. These models can be defined as Centralized and Decentralized.

While this white paper will address both models, the foundation for this white paper will focus on the success of a Centralized Model.

Decentralized Model

Cities and local governments are as diverse as they are complex. More often than not, cities and local government organizations work to a decentralized model, with departments including Parks and Recreation, Public Libraries, Emergency Management and the Public Utilities each running their own silo volunteer management program to service their needs.

With a decentralized model there is little oversight from a central authority figure, leaving departments to recruit and manage volunteers in the best way they see fit to do so.

More often than not, a decentralized model will see current employees asked to take on the role of 'volunteer manager or coordinator' in addition to their current responsibilities.

The risk here is that there is no central volunteer system for the City as a whole, without which, recruitment, communication and training becomes totally unique from department to department.

Centralized Model

A centralized volunteer management model invests in a dedicated volunteer manager or coordinator to oversee the entire City's volunteer management program.

Working alongside each of the various departments, the volunteer manager works as a conduit between third party stakeholders (i.e. non profits and community services) and the volunteers themselves to ensure better oversight, more accountability, and reduction of duplication of services within the City.

While investing in a centralized volunteer management model means investing in an additional resource, the time gained by having one (as opposed to several) volunteer managers means that employees can concentrate on what they're good at, in the role that they're skilled to perform.

A dedicated City volunteer manager/ coordinator resource can assist with:

- City wide recruitment of volunteers
- Screening and scheduling of volunteers to ensure that their skills, abilities and experience match the available roles
- Communication with volunteers including briefings, reminders and updates.
- A conduit between the City and third party stakeholders including volunteers.
- Coordinate training and education programs in line with the broader City's policies and procedures.

1. Consistent Communication

One Policy for all departments.

Cities comprise of multiple departments, each with their own goals and objectives.

As we've already highlighted, a decentralized model enables each department to run autonomously without the need to report to one authoritative figure. The problem with this approach is that, each department makes its own rules, which often results in a disjointed approach when considering a City wide volunteer management program.

A centralized system allows the City as a whole to consider the following:

1. Definition of volunteers.

Sounds simple right? But when each department has their own definition of a volunteer, things quickly get confusing.

The goal of a centralized volunteer management model is to make volunteering accessible to all. When a City communicates a clear and consistent message regarding the types of volunteers required and the role at hand, volunteers know what they're getting into from the beginning.

Types of volunteers may include:

1. **Community ambassador volunteers.** May have little to no liability to a City
2. **Professional volunteers.** Require specific training and work side by side with the departments to deliver a particular outcome.
3. **Interns.** May require a contract and or resources to perform their role.

Having consistent definitions for volunteers is the first step towards developing your Volunteer Policy.

2. Volunteer Policy

With a centralised system in place, City's create a single source of truth for best practice volunteer management ensuring consistency across each department.

Not only does this provide consistency from a volunteer perspective but it also protects the City to ensure that their program is operating in accordance with broader policy requirements including:

- a. Minimum age requirements
- b. Liability coverage
- c. Policies around collection and storage of data -the positive of a central system means volunteers only have to register once.
- d. Screening and background check requirements
- e. Delivery of training programs

Keen to learn more?

Why not check out Rosterfy's 'Guide to writing the perfect volunteer job description'.

[Read now.](#)



2. Safe and secure data collection

Ensuring that your volunteers data is safe and secure sits high on the priority list for every City.

The benefit of a centralized model for volunteer management means that there is less margin for error with one representative dedicated to implementing a system that ensures data protection and privacy is inline with government regulations.

With multiple stakeholders involved when it comes to a City wide volunteer management program, the volunteer coordinator serves an essential role in ensuring that volunteer data remains within the City. Say for example, the City supports a not for profit organization who requires volunteers. A volunteer manager can ensure that opportunities to volunteer at the non profit are promoted and fulfilled without there ever being a need to transfer data.

The best way to facilitate safe and secure data protection is through a centralized online volunteer management system. This will be discussed further in this white paper.



Consider this...

Your City operates off a decentralized model with each department running their own silo volunteer management.

The Mayor's Office gets in touch with the Parks and Recreation Department in need or some volunteers. Happy to assist the Parks and Recreation department pulls a list of 500 volunteers and sends them via a spreadsheet to the Mayor's Office.

Sounds harmless right? While each US state has different legislation around data protection and privacy in place, breaches of privacy can earn fines of up to \$750 per breach! This can quickly add up when sending large volunteer lists.

Sending documentation through unprotected spreadsheets can also leave you open to being intercepted or hacked, with data then sold and used for criminal activity.

The solution? A centralized model + volunteer manager + volunteer management solution = safe data.

3. A system that is accessible to all

One of the biggest benefits of a centralized volunteer management model is the ability to implement volunteer management software utilized by the entire City.

Coordinated by the volunteer manager, volunteer management software allows Cities to automate processes for recruitment, screening, training and communication with the ability to manage all volunteers via one central system.

While there are countless benefits for investing in a volunteer management software solution the top five benefits include:

1. One central system for volunteer registrations

Signing up to volunteer shouldn't be hard!

The problem with decentralized models is that volunteers have to register multiple times and create multiple accounts in order to access volunteer opportunities.

A centralized volunteer management system enables a City to collect all relevant information about a volunteer once. For volunteers, this provides one central portal to update their personal information, access upcoming volunteer opportunities, view upcoming shifts and access important communications.

Example: Background Checks

Collecting important documentation to aid with background checks is an important part of the recruitment and screening process.

A central volunteer management system allows you to obtain and validate important information including background checks and working with children's checks to ensure that the volunteers that your City is placing in the community are there with good intentions.

Through a central volunteer management system, checks are conducted once, making the process streamlined for volunteers and administrators alike.



2. Automations

No one has time for repeat manual processes. A volunteer management system enables you to implement automations that will not only help management save time (and operate with less resources) but will also ensure a more seamless experience for volunteers.

As a result of automations, volunteers can receive prompt personalized communication with next step triggers including training, rewards to be redeemed and surveys to be completed.

Automations allows volunteer managers to focus their time on recruitment, engagement and retention, which contributes to a more robust volunteer management program.

3. Training

Volunteering is as much about gaining new skills and experience as it is about giving back.

In today's fast paced world, the best way to conduct training is online and a volunteer management system helps to facilitate this. While training offers volunteers with the ability to upskill it also benefits the community more broadly.

Upskilling your volunteers means a more informed and educated community positioning them as career ready and armed to assist when required.

Chicago Event Management

Training benefits the City as a whole.



Rosterfy caught up with COO of Chicago Event Management (CEM), Mike Nishi, on The Engaged Volunteer Podcast.

During the podcast, Mike outlined the importance of training not just from an event perspective but for the City as a whole.

As part of volunteers training for Bank of America Chicago Marathon, CEM runs first aid training that includes a CPR course. While this is beneficial from an event perspective, with volunteers equipped to handle an emergency during their shift they can also take this information back into their homes and into their communities, which can help save lives.

Investing in training is a huge asset to any City's volunteer management program as it creates a more educated and skilled workforce that benefits the community as a whole.



To listen to The Engaged Volunteer Podcast featuring Mike Nishi, click here.

4. Reward & Recognition

Engagement is the key to any successful volunteer management program. A major benefit of a centralized model and system is the ability to implement reward and recognition programs.

Through their volunteer portal, volunteers can redeem merchandise, event tickets and vouchers in exchange for hours spent volunteering. This works as a great incentive for volunteers to continue to volunteer regularly with a nice little reward for giving up their time.

Miami Dolphins 'Special Teams'

The Miami Dolphins have pioneered the way for professional teams when it comes to community engagement through their 'Special Teams' program, which has provided \$8,533,875 value in volunteer time since its inception 10 years ago.

We caught up with Leslie Nixon and Callie Newbanks to hear more about how the Special Teams utilize their reward and recognize program to engage and retain their volunteers.

Callie and Leslie also discuss how their program has enabled them to support the community from an Emergency Relief perspective.



To listen to The Miami Dolphins Special Teams Podcast, click here.

5. Emergency Management

In times of crisis, the goodness in communities shines through.

With a centralized volunteer management system in place, the City has an immediate database to turn to to assist with the recovery efforts, allowing them to be timely and reactive in their response. It also allows the City to recruit new volunteers, without forgoing the necessary safety protocols including appropriate screening measures.

Real Life Example: Mayor's Office in Houston Reacts to Hurricane Harvey

In 2017 Rosterfy received a call from the Mayor's office in Houston following Hurricane Harvey to see whether or not Rosterfy could be utilised to help manage the recovery efforts powered by volunteers.

In the aftermath of the Hurricane, the Mayor of Houston put out a call to the town to encourage all those who were in a position to help to meet at The George R. Brown Center to volunteer their time to start the process of rebuilding. Incredibly, thousands responded to the call but when they arrived, there was no centralised platform for managing volunteers and with no way of delegating they were turned away.

Through the process Rosterfy ended up working with a local Houston charity to help connect the community with opportunities to volunteer across the next 12 months assisting with everything from the removal of debris to creating care packages, which allowed us to play a small role in the recovery efforts.

Case Study: Greater London Authority

Team London

Team London is a great example of a centralized model in action. Established by Mayor Sadiq Khan off the back of the success of the 2012 London Olympic Games, Team London is essentially the entire City's volunteer programme.

"I will work with communities and civil society groups across London to encourage active participation in community and civic life. That means supporting Londoners of all ages to volunteer and to take action to improve our city."

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London)

The goal of the Team London is to encourage active citizen engagement through volunteer opportunities with objectives including:

- Developing an understanding of how to inspire and retain volunteers
- A programme that is appealing to a broad range of audiences in London
- Removing barriers to volunteers by providing easy, online access to volunteer opportunities.

Rosterfy are fortunate to work with Greater London Authority as the volunteer management solution for Team London.

Simplifying the end to end experience for volunteers and administrators alike, Rosterfy has enabled Team London to connect volunteers with hundreds of opportunities, in one central location.

After creating an account, volunteers have access to their own volunteer portal where they can access volunteer opportunities, upcoming shifts, training, communications including briefings as well as track and redeem rewards.

Team London not only serves as a great resource for volunteers but for non for profits and community groups also. Third party organizations can post opportunities to Team London's database, opening up the door a greater pool of volunteers.

The result? A cohesive community that has countless opportunities to connect in meaningful ways.



Conclusion

Volunteers remain as critical as ever to Cities, providing valuable economic and social contributions that ensure community engagement and cohesion.

As a result of the changing landscape for volunteering, Cities worldwide are being forced to consider new ways of operation to counter reduced headcounts and an increased demand for non profit and community services, largely run by volunteers. With today's youth set to transform the next generation of volunteers, the demand for engaging experiences driven by technology are now critical to executing successful volunteer management programs.

The need for a Centralized Model to facilitate a City wide volunteer program has never been greater. With volunteers crying out for opportunities and non profits and community groups requiring volunteers in the thousands, Cities sit in a unique position to create a lasting legacy in the communities by uniting the two.

This white paper has aimed to highlight the reasons why your City should consider investing in a Centralized Model when it comes to volunteer management with benefits including:

- One central volunteer manager/ coordinator. Investing in a skilled resource who has the time and energy to engage with volunteers and stakeholders.
- Clear and consistent guidelines when it comes to volunteers including messaging, minimum age requirements, onboarding and training.
- A dedicated resource to manage the safe collection and storage of volunteer data.
- The ability to implement a volunteer management software solution to assist with recruitment, screening, training, automations and reward and recognition programs.
- The ability to be reactive when it comes to Emergency Management with a City wide resource available to assist.

If you'd like to learn more about how a Centralized Model could help you implement a volunteer management solution for your City, please don't hesitate to **get in touch** with one of our sales representatives.

Thank you.



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