



Automation vs. Humanity:

Solving the healthcare volunteer program paradox

North America



Scaling without compromise Increase impact without losing the human touch

At a glance

As public health funding contracts, community-powered volunteer networks are shifting from an administrative "nice-to-have" into healthcare's primary operational lifeline.

Managing thousands of volunteers across different locations comes with a unique challenge: **how do you grow and scale your program without losing the personal connections and human touch that make volunteering so meaningful?**

This white paper explores the key challenges facing health charities today, from disconnected systems and data silos to increasing compliance demands, and highlights how automation can help organisations scale their impact while maintaining the personal connections at the heart of volunteering.



CONTENTS SUMMARY:

- **The growth challenge:** Why scaling your volunteer program shouldn't mean losing connection.
- **Where volunteer programs get stuck:** Data, engagement, compliance and capacity.
- **Case study spotlights:** How the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon and End Overdose standardized their volunteer program without losing the human touch.
- **Global proof:** The same pattern, playing out across Europe and Asia-Pacific.
- **The Rosterfy approach:** Automation that puts people first.
- **Next steps:** A practical starting point for your organization.



Across North America and the global ecosystem, the economic and operational value of this contribution cannot be understated. **In 2026, the Independent Sector valued a single volunteer hour in the United States at an unprecedented \$34.00 USD.**

Community-powered networks are no longer merely a backup administrative option or a "nice-to-have" alternative—they have become core infrastructure and the primary service-delivery lifeline for modern health-related non-profits and voluntary health organizations.

Yet, for enterprise-scale organizations managing thousands of active participants across deeply complex regional chapters, clinics, or program sites, an operational conundrum has quietly emerged.

As funding pressures grow and regulatory requirements become more complex, healthcare and nonprofit leaders are facing a new challenge. The conversation is no longer just about recruiting more volunteers — it's about how to effectively support, engage and retain the volunteers already committed to their mission.

The question has become:

How do organisations manage growing compliance requirements, background checks and administrative demands without creating barriers that take away from the personal connections, trust and human experiences that make volunteering so powerful?

This paper explores this challenge. The balance between scaling operations and maintaining meaningful human connections and outlines the key operational shifts helping large healthcare nonprofits remain centralised, compliant and audit-ready without losing the personal relationships that sit at the heart of their mission.

Technology should never replace the connection between a coordinator and a volunteer. Its true purpose is to remove the burden of manual processes, spreadsheets, scheduling and compliance administration, giving teams back the time and capacity to focus on what matters most — supporting their volunteers and the communities they serve.

Executive summary

By Bennett Merriman
CEO & CO-FOUNDER - ROSTERFY

Volunteering remains one of the most powerful catalysts for positive change and localized social impact in our world.

Every day, I'm inspired by the incredible organisations using Rosterfy to power their volunteer programs around the world.

The scale of dedication, generosity and human connection behind these missions is extraordinary, and we're proud to provide the technology that helps make their impact possible.

We see it in organisations like the Alzheimer Society, mobilising volunteers across vast communities to raise awareness, provide support and improve the lives of people impacted by dementia.

We see it in organisations like the British Heart Foundation, coordinating thousands of volunteers across retail stores and fundraising initiatives to help fund life-saving cardiovascular research.

We see it in humanitarian organisations like WaterAid, bringing clean water, sanitation and hygiene to communities around the world, and in public health organisations like End Overdose, where volunteers deliver education, awareness and training to help save lives.

We see it in food relief organisations like Blessings of Hope, delivering tens of thousands of meals to families in need every day, and across children's hospitals, literacy programs and community organisations where volunteers provide comfort, connection and hope when it matters most.

The growth challenge: Scaling without losing human connection

The new volunteer reality: Competing for time, attention and commitment

Volunteers for organisations like Alzheimer's societies, heart and stroke foundations, and cancer support networks are often motivated by something much deeper than a well-known name or national cause.

They volunteer because of a personal connection — a loved one's diagnosis, someone they've lost, their own experience, or a desire to give back to a community that has supported them.

They expect a hyper-local, intimate, and empathetic experience from the very first interaction with the organization.

However, the organisations supporting these volunteers face a very different reality. Behind every personal connection is the need to manage complex operations at scale — including **centralised systems, compliance and screening requirements, consistent processes, fundraising and service delivery goals, and accurate reporting** across dozens or even hundreds of chapters, locations and communities.

The risk is that in scaling the infrastructure needed to capture data, coordinate logistics, and prove compliance, organizations can **accidentally build operational walls between headquarters and the very community driving the mission.**

Administrative scale and emotional closeness start to feel like a trade-off — and for many volunteer program leaders, that trade-off has quietly become the single biggest threat to retention.

Organizations that close the gap between enterprise infrastructure and local, human connection are proving that scale and empathy are not mutually exclusive; they simply require the right operational backbone.

BE PART OF THEIR WORLD

To capture the attention of today's volunteers, the experience needs to feel seamless, simple and accessible — not like another administrative process.

Modern volunteers expect greater flexibility and control over how they engage with a cause. They want to easily create a profile, discover opportunities, manage their availability, sign up for shifts and make changes when life gets busy.

This is where technology strengthens human connection. By automating the logistics behind volunteering, organisations can remove barriers, reduce administration and create more time for what technology can't replace — building genuine relationships with the people who support their mission.



Four key challenges facing volunteer leaders in Healthcare

Changing expectations are driving the need for more flexible volunteer experiences.

1 Data silos and fragmented volunteer identity

Large healthcare charities typically run on a patchwork of disconnected systems: peer-to-peer fundraising platforms capture walk and run participants, standalone event apps handle on-site logistics, and individual regional chapters keep their own spreadsheets.

Because these systems rarely sync cleanly with a central CRM, there is no single source of truth. A program director has no easy way to see that a top-tier peer-to-peer fundraiser in one city is the same person volunteering on a family support helpline three times a month in another program.

Solving this requires more than a shared database — it requires tiered access.

National or provincial headquarters needs global oversight for compliance purposes, while local chapter or resource-center coordinators need visibility limited to their own community.

Organizations are addressing this by **centralizing their volunteer database and pairing it with an export process into Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT** — eliminating the data silos that previously separated regional resource centers, while still giving each coordinator the localized view they actually need.

2 The “One-and-Done” attrition cycle

Flagship events — from major fundraising walks and community events to health campaigns and awareness initiatives — are powerful ways to inspire and attract thousands of volunteers.

The challenge is turning that moment of connection into ongoing engagement, converting one-time participants into long-term volunteers who continue supporting your mission beyond a single event.



SUPPORTERS NOT VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer program directors are increasingly reframing their databases around a single “supporter” identity — one person who might fundraise, volunteer on-site, and advocate publicly, rather than three disconnected records.

This shift mirrors what donor-development teams have known for years: the same person often shows up in more than one column of the spreadsheet.

Without a deliberate, automated nurture pathway, most of that goodwill evaporates the moment the event ends, forcing organizations back into an expensive, exhausting annual recruitment cycle.

End Overdose, a US-based nonprofit focused on overdose prevention has built its entire growth model around closing this exact gap. Volunteers often start by tabling a single event — and Rosterfy's automated onboarding pathways route willing participants toward deeper, ongoing roles as certified “rapid trainers” or long-form educators.

That **structured conversion path** is a significant reason the organization's volunteer base grew from roughly 900 to over 2,500 nationwide, a 150 percent increase, while **cutting administrative time in half**.

3 The compliance challenge: Protecting your organisation without slowing volunteers down

Healthcare volunteer roles often come with important compliance requirements, from background checks and screening through to role-specific training that ensures volunteers are prepared and confident before their first shift.

Whether supporting patients, facilitating community programs or representing an organisation through education and awareness initiatives, volunteers need the right onboarding to safely and effectively support the communities they serve.

These requirements are essential, but every additional step in the onboarding process creates another opportunity for volunteers to disengage. Compliance also doesn't stop once a volunteer is approved – certifications expire, training needs to be refreshed and credentials require ongoing management.

This was a key challenge for organisations like End Overdose, where volunteers must complete mandatory training before they can begin supporting the community. With Rosterfy, automated workflows help manage the entire process, from training submission through to review and approval, replacing manual administration with a streamlined onboarding journey that ensures volunteers are prepared, compliant and ready to make an impact.

4 Volunteer leader burnout from manual administrative overhead

When centralized tools are too rigid for the pace of local chapters, the burden of data entry, scheduling, and personal outreach falls squarely on local volunteer coordinators – the staff most likely to burn out and leave, often taking institutional knowledge and community relationships with them.

The Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon experienced this firsthand while coordinating volunteers across 19 regional communities.



By automating the back-end compliance and administrative logistics that previously consumed coordinator time, the organization freed its team to focus on the personal phone calls and virtual orientations that make volunteers feel genuinely valued – a shift that contributed directly to the organization's attrition rate dropping below the sector's historical 33 percent norm.



TIP: CULTURE OVER COMPLIANCE

In the cause and care sector, volunteers are often driven by deep personal connections and a desire to make a difference. Creating clear boundaries and encouraging balance helps protect their wellbeing, ensuring volunteers can continue contributing in a meaningful and sustainable way over the long term.

Scaling programs is not just a challenge in North America

The challenges faced by volunteer programs are consistent across the globe.

The tension between enterprise scale and emotional closeness is not unique to the United States and Canada — it is structural to healthcare volunteering everywhere large organizations operate. Rosterfy supports volunteer programs across 77 countries, and the same pattern shows up wherever a healthcare non-profit tries to professionalize its operations without losing its community feel.

The specifics differ by region and by disease area, but the underlying operational shift is identical: centralize the compliance and administrative burden, and give coordinators — wherever they are in the world — their time back to build the relationships that keep volunteers coming back.



EUROPE: BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION

The UK's British Heart Foundation coordinates over 12,000 volunteers weekly across nearly 700 retail outlets and national fundraising events.

After centralizing its volunteer data and integrating it with Salesforce and Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT, the organization **reduced the time it took a new volunteer to start from 42 days to 21.**

British Heart Foundation have grown the number of volunteers active in multiple roles from 4,107 to 18,247 in a single year — a 125 percent increase — generating an estimated \$250,000 in annual operational savings.



ASIA-PACIFIC: CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

Australia's Children's Hospital Foundation supports volunteer programs across the Queensland Children's Hospital and Ellen Barron Family Centre. Prior to automating onboarding, compliance documentation — including background and working-with-children checks — was tracked manually across spreadsheets, obscuring engagement data.

Since automating the journey from registration through credential collection, **the People & Culture team can now clearly identify its most engaged volunteers**, in direct support of a 75 percent attendance target across the program.

Alzheimer Society of British Columbia and Yukon

Scaling a program without losing the human element of volunteering.

Alzheimer Society

CASE STUDY: Alzheimer's Society

Industry: Non Profit

- 650 total volunteers managed
- 19 different locations

Rosterfy features used:

- Onboarding Automation
- Attendance Tracking
- Advanced Scheduling

Outcome: Rosterfy has enabled the organization to scale operations to support rural, and remote communities across 19 Walk locations.

[Explore their case study.](#)

The Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon delivers support programs, education, advocacy, and research access to people affected by dementia through 19 regional communities across a vast and geographically dispersed province. Before standardizing on Rosterfy, the organization faced the defining paradox of enterprise healthcare non-profits: **how to scale provincial administration without turning a deeply empathetic, cause-driven mission into a sterile, corporate process.**

Rather than forcing the Society to compromise its screening and onboarding standards to fit rigid software, the platform allowed the team to design the ideal process for their volunteer experience from the ground up.

By automating back-end compliance and administrative logistics, the platform freed local coordinators to focus on the personal phone calls and virtual orientations that make volunteers feel genuinely valued – and the results followed.

Active ongoing volunteer counts expanded from 180 active volunteers to 196, a post-event survey captured 44 volunteer responses within 48 hours - **the highest engagement recorded in seven years**, and the organization's attrition rate dropped below the sector's historical 33 percent norm.

“

Rosterfy offered the highest amount of customization during our vetting process... It has allowed us to have more conversations about the ideal process for volunteer experience because Rosterfy provides the freedom to create a process that aligns with what we want.

”

Matt Brookes, Provincial Configuration Lead, Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon

End Overdose

How this rapidly growing program is able to scale volunteer training remotely.

END OVERDOSE.

CASE STUDY: END OVERDOSE

Industry: Non Profit

- 2500 volunteers managed

Rosterfy features used:

- Recruitment & Onboarding
- Online Training Modules
- Attendance Tracking

Outcome: End Overdose has scaled its chapters to 75 active chapters while standardizing their mandatory training programs.

[Explore their case study.](#)

End Overdose is a nonprofit based in Los Angeles, working to end drug-related overdose deaths nationwide through medical intervention, education, and public awareness. Its volunteer base is driven almost entirely by Gen Z supporters with deeply personal ties to the cause — many have lost someone to an overdose, or been saved by naloxone themselves.

That emotional investment made the organization's rapid growth possible, but it also made operational rigor essential: every volunteer trains and represents the organization's medical messaging in public, often at large-scale events.

Prior to Rosterfy, End Overdose relied on a system with limited automation and inconsistent follow-through, leading to volunteers registering interest but never completing the training required before attending an event.

Since implementing Rosterfy, the organization has scaled its chapter-based model to 75 active chapters across 29 states — coordinated by a small, centralized team based in Los Angeles — while volunteer numbers grew from roughly 900 to over 2,500 nationwide.

Program Impact	Key improvement metrics
Volunteer Base Growth	150% growth in volunteer base, from roughly 900 to over 2,500 nationwide.
Admin Reduction	50% reduction in administrative time required to run the program.
People Trained	150,000+ people trained in overdose response and naloxone use.
Centralizing Operations	75 chapters across 29 states, coordinated by a small, centralized staff team.

Automation: not at the cost of the 'human touch'

Why rapid growth risks distancing supporters

For expanding healthcare non-profits, growth creates problems. Scaling an operation to serve more people is the ultimate goal, yet it triggers a high-stakes balancing act: **the more you lean into operational expansion, the more challenging it becomes to maintain emotional closeness.**

Healthcare-focused organizations experience this tension more acutely than most because their missions are inherently **built on deeply personal, 1:1 care and profound emotional ties to a cause.** When an organization expands and begins to feel more like a rigid corporate entity, that vital human connection can easily slip away. This loss of intimacy has a direct, chilling effect on both volunteer engagement and donor activity, as supporters naturally pull back when they no longer feel the heartbeat of the cause they fell in love with.

How tech protects your human connection at scale

Modern technology allows healthcare non-profits to intentionally design the volunteer lifecycle, seamlessly blending meaningful day-to-day engagement with rigid compliance requirements.

Rather than imposing a rigid, sterile framework, advanced management platforms offer the flexibility to customize individual touchpoints - ensuring supporters feel deeply valued while safeguarding organizational integrity.

By automating essential background checks, credentialing, and training milestones, technology strips the traditional friction from the onboarding journey.

This tailored approach ensures that as operations expand, the volunteer experience remains smooth, secure, and tightly anchored to the core mission.

Typical features include:

Software Solution	Impact on your program
Admin Permissions	Centralized "supporter" identity with tiered, chapter-level access — so national headquarters gets full compliance visibility while local coordinators see only what's relevant to their community.
Custom Workflows	Automated nurture pathways that convert episodic event volunteers into year-round programmatic contributors, without requiring manual follow-up from an already-stretched team.
Automated Workflows	Compliance infrastructure built for healthcare's rigor — automated screening workflows, credential tracking, and expiry alerts that pause shift eligibility automatically until renewed documentation is submitted.
Advanced Communication	Administrative time reduction that gives chapter staff and coordinators their capacity back — the time to make a phone call, run an orientation, or simply thank someone in person.

Recommended next steps

If your organization is managing enterprise-scale volunteer operations — across multiple chapters, resource centers, or regions — and feeling the tension between compliance rigor and community intimacy, you are not managing an isolated problem.

This is the defining operational challenge of healthcare non-profits at scale.

1.	Map your current volunteer journey Identify where data lives today — CRM, spreadsheets, event apps — and where it breaks down between headquarters and local chapters.
2	Audit your compliance pipeline Confirm whether credential expiry (background checks, certifications) is tracked automatically or manually.
3	Speak with our team We'll walk through how organizations like the Alzheimer Society of BC and Yukon and End Overdose used Rosterfy to close this gap — and what it could look like for your program.

Conclusion

High tech enables high touch

The challenge facing modern healthcare volunteer programs is finding the right balance between maintaining strong processes and preserving the human connections at the heart of their mission.

Operational excellence isn't about choosing between compliance and connection. It's about creating an environment where technology manages the administration, giving people more time to focus on relationships, support and impact.

When health charities centralise their data, automate onboarding and replace manual processes with seamless digital experiences, they aren't just improving efficiency — they're creating stronger, more sustainable volunteer programs.

By reducing the administrative burden of background checks, scheduling, compliance and credential management, organisations can give their teams more time and capacity to do what matters most: building meaningful connections with volunteers and the communities they serve.







Visit www.rosterfy.com book a demo today.