Outcomes Measurement for the
Points of Light Foundation
First Year Report
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AUTHORS

Laura Littlepage
Senior Research Associate
Center for Urban Policy and the Environment

James L. Perry
Associate Dean
Chancellor’s Professor
School of Public and Environmental Affairs
INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes first-year activities associated with a long-term Points of Light Foundation (Foundation) initiative to measure mission-related outcomes. The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (Center), Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, was engaged for a three-year term to assist the Foundation to develop outcomes measures and processes to determine how effectively it is accomplishing its mission. Key stakeholders were interviewed at the 2001 National Service Conference, at the beginning of the process. In addition, existing information (such as program descriptions, prior evaluations, and reports) was reviewed. A draft outcomes measurement plan was presented to the Foundation Board of Directors, several small groups of staff, and stakeholders in September 2001. Feedback from these groups was incorporated into the development of outcomes and indicators.

This report presents the progress that has been made on each of several steps that we recommended to implement an outcomes measurement process:

- Articulate, update, and communicate an organization-wide strategic plan, including targets for outcomes
- Form an Outcomes Measures Task Force
- Refine internal data collection procedures and coordinate survey administration
- Validate the Volunteer Center self-assessment
- Conduct impact evaluations of programs
- Explore potential partners for a national survey

Also discussed below are:

- Validation of the Corporate Principles of Excellence
- Dissemination of research to academic audiences
- New sources of funding for research and evaluation
- Plan for year two

We also recommended that the Foundation explore using either an existing national index or developing its own national index to monitor long-term outcomes. This process will begin in year three.
STRATEGIC PLAN

Although the Foundation has strategic plans for several markets (e.g. Volunteer Centers, Nonprofits, General Public, Business, Youth), it has not clearly articulated or broadly communicated an integrated strategic plan. Strategic planning, to be effective, must be done in the context of overall organizational goals. Individual departmental plans that are developed in the absence of an organization-wide strategy can lead to fragmentation of effort, “silos” within the organization, and what one stakeholder called “the flavor of the month.” The September 2002 Foundation Board meeting was focused on developing a strategic plan. The Board examined several scenarios for the Foundation’s future. Staff and board members are currently in the process of synthesizing the input from the board into a draft strategic plan.

FORM AN OUTCOMES MEASURES TASK FORCE

The first meeting of the Outcomes Measures Task Force was held on November 15, 2001. The members of the Task Force in year one were:

Advisory Council Representatives

Marie Bouvier, FAMILY MATTERS Task Force
Mike Gormalley (now Jacquelyn L. Lendsey), Connect America Partners Council
Janet Sharma, Volunteer Center National Network Council
Shirlene Anderson, National Council on Workplace Volunteering

Foundation Representative

Miriam Shark, Annie E. Casey Foundation

Points of Light Foundation Staff

John Schneider, Advocacy and Public Awareness
Diane Fabiyi-King, Family Matters
Miriam Parel, Infrastructure Development and Delivery Systems
Pam Warwick, Model Programs and Knowledge Development

Points of Light Foundation Board Representative

Terry Williams, Vice Chairman
One of the first steps the group undertook was to discuss its role. They agreed on five tasks:

1. Support the development of a strategic plan for the Foundation. (considered essential to the success of the outcomes measurement strategy)
2. Insure the integrity of the organization-wide evaluation.
3. Assist in creating a model evaluation plan that can be shared with the field.
4. Provide quality control for the development of an organization-wide evaluation.
5. Be responsible for providing feedback, advice and direction for Foundation evaluation activities.

At their first meeting the Task Force made several recommendations, including endorsing the development of a strategic plan and validation of the Volunteer Center self-assessment. Although the Foundation has strategic plans for several markets (e.g. Volunteer Centers, Nonprofits, General Public, Business, Youth), it has not clearly articulated or broadly communicated an integrated strategic plan. Strategic planning, to be effective, must be done in the context of overall organizational goals. Individual departmental plans that are developed in the absence of an organization-wide strategy can lead to fragmentation of effort, “silos” within the organization, and what one stakeholder called “the flavor of the month.” The September 2002 Foundation Board meeting was focused on developing a strategic plan. The Board examined several scenarios for the Foundation’s future. Staff and board members are currently in the process of synthesizing the input from the board into a draft strategic plan.

The OMTF also recommended that the Foundation’s Office of Planning and Evaluation (OPE) should coordinate all research and survey work conducted by the Foundation.

At their second meeting, February 7, 2002 the OMTF received updates on survey (e.g. Volunteer Center Survey, standard taxonomy and demographics for surveys) and evaluation work:

- A report on the proposed process of validating the Volunteer Center Self-Assessment was given followed by feedback and discussion
- The results of two evaluation reports were presented: An Evaluation of Family Matters for Points of Light Foundation and Foundation’s Grassroots Efforts: Leadership Training and Listserv

The Task Force also discussed proposed evaluation work at the 2002 National Conference (e.g. meet with Volunteer Centers to discuss the self-assessment, report on outcomes of Volunteer Center Survey, educate partners and constituents on evaluation) and decided to hold future meetings both electronically and in-person.
REFINE INTERNAL DATA COLLECTION AND COORDINATE SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

Between May and November Center and OPE staff reviewed draft outcomes and indicators, ongoing Foundation data collection activities, and made recommendations about consistency of data elements across the Foundation. At its first meeting (November 15, 2001), the Outcomes Measures Task Force reviewed and approved these recommendations.

A number of areas that needed closer coordination and consistency across Foundation units were identified. The first example is the demographics of volunteers and program participants. For example, the demographic parameters for youth were defined variously as under 18, under 21, and under 25, while seniors were classified as over 55, over 60 or over 65. These inconsistencies make it difficult to combine findings from different programs that served youth or seniors.

The second example was the existence of various taxonomies of social issues addressed by Foundation programs. Staff and constituencies categorized the issue areas addressed by Foundation programs in several different ways. There were also issues with some of these categorizations, in that they mixed activities such as recreation, sports, and mentoring with issue areas such as homelessness, all of which describe impacts of youth programs. In order to insure consistency within the overall Foundation data set, we recommended that the Foundation select a standard taxonomy of issues areas. Consultation was provided to staff and after studying several possibilities, a version of the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) was selected. The NTEE comprehensively encompasses the issue areas that the Foundation and its partners address. Moreover, using the NTEE allows the Foundation to compare its work to other national organizations, such as the Independent Sector, that use the NTEE.

Prior to the outcomes measures initiative, the Foundation’s departments were conducting multiple surveys of customers, but often not in coordination with each other. The Office of Planning and Evaluation has begun to coordinate surveys across the Foundation. This should help prevent duplication of effort, use resources more efficiently, and help avoid over-surveying customers. As part of the coordination effort, the Center has assisted in survey design of a number of surveys including:

- Seasons of Service participant survey
- USA Act participant and project coordinator surveys
- Foundation personnel survey
- Corporate membership survey
- Volunteer Center survey

In addition, we have consulted in the evaluation design for all evaluations conducted this year, including:

- National Conference evaluations, including redesign of the registration form, on-site evaluation, and follow-up evaluation
- Disabilities grant evaluation
- Research on a proposed brand strategy
- Evaluation of Foundation training programs
- Salvation Army evaluation.
As part of the 2002 National Conference on Community Volunteering and National Service, Center staff conducted a workshop on survey design which covered types of surveys, question construction, response sets, design suggestions and conducting the survey (Attachment A).
VALIDATE THE VOLUNTEER CENTER SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Foundation would like to use the results of the Volunteer Center self-assessment tool in developing outcomes measures to determine how its efforts are accomplishing its mission. The self-assessment was created as a first step in developing standards for Volunteer Centers so that, at some point, all member Volunteer Centers will be able to document that they are working at a certain level of proficiency. To be able to use it for that purpose, the self-assessment tool needs to be validated as an instrument to determine its validity and reliability. The Center went through an extensive validation process, which is detailed in a separate report Validation of the Volunteer Center National Network Assessment Tool. This report includes the results of several analyses as well as recommendations for action:

- findings from three focus groups held as part of the National Conference on Community Volunteering and National Service;
- a factor analysis conducted on the responses to the self-assessment;
- a comparison of the results of the self-assessment with the responses to the 2002 Volunteer Center Survey using a LISREL model; and
- a comparison of an outside measure of outcomes (Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey) with the self-assessment.

The focus groups found that the standards for governance and funding are designed for independent Volunteer Centers and may not be as important to or even applicable to Volunteer Centers that are internal to another organization (such as United Way, local government, or university). They noted that the percentages cited in the funding categories might not be relevant to all communities, even if served by an independent Volunteer Center. They also noted that a relevant mission and vision are not specified as a standard, and that other important features that appear to be missing, include board involvement in fundraising, succession planning, and established policies and procedures (such as an employee manual). In addition, they said that the wording of some items as well as the measurements are unclear. Some items do not have an inherently progressive order that is needed for a scale—that is, a Volunteer Center can achieve a 3 (excellence) and yet not have achieved a 1 (developing).

During the factor analysis, which evaluates and selects items for inclusion in a scale or index, we found that all of the categories in the self-assessment held together as factors, except for two categories (build capacity for volunteering and promote volunteering). These two factors clustered together, indicating they measure the same concept. This is a critical finding, as it suggests that Volunteer Centers may display only three core competencies, rather than four. It could also suggest that items have not been identified which differentiate between build capacity and promote volunteering. One item, association partnership, was not included as part of any factor.

We developed a LISREL model to test the hypothesis that (organizational/program) excellence in a Volunteer Center is a multidimensional construct comprising at least four constructs: funding, planning and evaluation, connecting people with opportunities to serve, and building capacity for effective local volunteering.

The latent variables developed as a result of this model were then compared with the self-assessment scores of those Volunteer Centers participating in both the self-assessment and the survey. We also sought to draw conclusions about the relationship between Volunteer Center’s self-assessment and objective information gathered from the Volunteer Center survey as a way to validate the contents of the self-assessment.
When the self-assessment was compared with results from the Volunteer Center survey, it was discovered that several concepts from the self-assessment were not measured in the survey. These include governance, management, promote volunteering, and strategic initiatives. Of the concepts that could be measured (funding, planning and evaluation, connect people, and build capacity), there is a positive correlation between concepts in the self-assessment and measurements from the survey. The highest correlation, nearly 0.6, was between general understandings of excellence in the self-assessment, and in the survey. The concepts of connecting people and building capacity also appear to be understood similarly as measured by both instruments, with a correlation close to 0.5. There is a weak correlation between the concept of planning and evaluation as understood in the self-assessment and how that variable was measured in the survey. The same is true of the relationship between funding and how that variable was measured in the survey.

The self-assessment does not directly measure outcomes, so we tried to determine if there was an outside measure of outcomes, and if so, if there was any correlation between that measure and the self-assessment. The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey measured several different types of civic engagement in 40 communities across the country. Eighteen communities participated in Social Capital Community Benchmark survey and had a Volunteer Center that completed the self-assessment. There was no statistical relation between average scores on the self-assessment and the measures of civic engagement. Because the sample size was small (approximately 5 percent of Volunteer Centers) and because respondents were not randomly selected, it is not possible to determine if the findings of “no relationship” means that the Volunteer Centers do not affect civic engagement in their communities, or if self-assessment may be an inadequate way to measure their impact on civic engagement. It is possible that a larger sample size could produce different results.

The analyses lead to several recommendations to improve the self-assessment: To make the self-assessment more meaningful and relevant, internal and external Volunteer Centers, because of their structural differences, should have different rating criteria on the concepts of funding and governance.

Self-assessments should be completed by at least one representative of the staff and the board and at least one outside stakeholder. The value and reliability of self-assessment to the Volunteer Centers would be greater if there were triangulation across different stakeholders (board, staff, and customer). Reliability would be increased if variations in scores were discussed and negotiated during the self-assessment process.

Either reword or create new items to measure outcomes for both the Volunteer Center survey and the self-assessment. Outcomes are the events, occurrences, or changes in conditions, behaviors, or attitudes that indicate progress toward achievement of mission.

Identify ways to measure the concepts in the self-assessment through collection of objective data. An instrument (such as a modified Volunteer Center survey) with a good set of indicators for each construct would enable a comparison of objective indicators and the self-assessments.

The Volunteer Center Unified Network Taskforce should consider addressing several issues with the self-assessment instrument:

- The most serious issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that this analysis does not support the existence of four competencies. The three competencies can be accepted and the concepts of “promote volunteering” and “build capacity” be combined and renamed or new items can be generated to differentiate between promote volunteering and build capacity.
- Drop "association partnership" as an item on the self-assessment;

- Review the measurement scales used for items to ensure that they have an inherently progressive order. A self-assessed score of excellence should indicate that the Volunteer Center has met the criteria for developing as well as for excellence.

- Review the wording of items for clarity and consistency.

- Include some additional items, such as board involvement, mission, and vision.
VALIDATION OF THE CORPORATE PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE

The Principles of Excellence in Community Service: A Plan to A.C.T. was created by the Points of Light Foundation to help corporations develop successful employee volunteer programs and to serve as the basis for a prestigious national award. While the standards were valid at their inception ten years ago, the definition of excellence in corporate volunteering may have changed during the ensuing decade. The criteria for the principles were reviewed this year as well.

The process for validating the volunteer center self-assessment and the corporate standards began in a similar fashion, with focus groups of stakeholders. It is now continuing with statistical examination of data gathered from past assessments and suggestions for improvements from a group of reviewers, including the Center, convened by the Foundation.

CONDUCT IMPACT EVALUATIONS OF PROGRAMS—FAMILY VOLUNTEERING

Outcomes monitoring provides a means to track whether desired outcomes are achieved, but it does not prove that the activities of the organization caused the outcomes. To separate the influence of the organization’s activities from other factors, an evaluation must be conducted that compares the outcomes from those activities to either doing nothing, to the outcomes from other, similar activities, or both. Outcomes are not synonymous with impacts. Outcomes monitoring also is not explanatory and cannot replace impact evaluations. To measure the impact of the Foundation’s work, impact evaluations should be conducted on major areas of activity.

This year we have concentrated on measuring the impact of family volunteering on family and youth development. Possible effects could include sharing greater time together, transmission of values, modeling of compassion and civic engagement by parents, and improved communication. In addition, the study will assess benefits or costs to the participants. This is a first step towards measuring the impact of the Foundation’s work.

The Center presently is conducting exploratory research to inform the study’s conceptual framework. In June 2002, the Center conducted a focus group with three winners of the National Family Volunteer Award, given annually by the Foundation to families and organizations participating in notable family volunteering experiences. Findings suggest that youth have significantly different attitudes toward family volunteering than their adult counterparts, due in part to different costs for youth, such as social stigma among peers. The findings were used to design a structured telephone interview instrument with open-ended questions that can be used to survey other families who volunteer together. Contact information of a small sample of families recognized for outstanding volunteering has been collected from the Foundation’s records. Each family member was interviewed separately at this stage. Interviews were completed by October 2002. This effort has been funded internally by Points of Light Foundation as a first step in measuring the impact of family volunteering.
Focus Group Results

On June 10, 2002, as part of the National Conference Community Volunteering and National Service, Center staff facilitated a focus group with three winners of the National Family Volunteer Award. The following is a summary of the volunteers’ responses to opened-ended questions regarding their family volunteering experience.

When asked about the benefits of volunteering together as family, the participants identified several themes: (brings the family closer together; value system strengthened by volunteering; self-satisfaction; helps youth with job and college applications; children see how lucky they are; positive influence on the people they help; and gives children/youth something fun to do.

When asked about the costs of family volunteering, the participants identified financial costs (transportation, supplies, lost work time, etc.) and personal costs (doors to volunteering open slower for families; personal time: late nights and early mornings; the emotional cost of getting attached to the people you help; and extra stress from the responsibility of having children there while volunteering).

Parents and children identified different costs and benefits. For parents, an identified benefit was leaving a legacy behind; and they did not identify any additional costs. In contrast, the youth identified the benefit of expanding their world and getting them ready for the real world as well as several costs. For youth volunteering with your parents can be a social stigma, especially for teenagers (“You’re doing work and not getting paid?; You think you’re better than us because you’re helping us; Geek”). Because of this stigma family volunteering can drop off during the teenage years. Also, teenagers can see volunteering as a penance if it is required by their school.

Results from Phone Interviews with Families

The results of the focus group, discussed above, were used to design two instruments (one adult, one youth included as Attachment B) that were used in 15 phone interviews with families that volunteer. When asked why they volunteer together, adults identified being a good role model and transmitting their values, having fun, quality time together, and religious reasons. In contrast, while the children identified religious reasons and fun, quality time together as well that giving back to the community, none of the children identified transmission of values or seeing a good role model as a reason to volunteer together. When asked about benefits of volunteering together, many of the same concepts came up but adults also identified a general benefit of volunteering: the children focusing on someone other than themselves. The children also identified a general benefit of volunteering: makes you feel good, the feeling of giving, cheer other people up, and its good to do for others.

The only negative that was raised from volunteering together as family by adults was the time and scheduling issue, while children raised issues related to being with the family — not as independent when volunteering with family, rather be with friends than family, may not want to see siblings if they just had a fight.

When asked if they feel any differently about their parents because of volunteering with them, children mentioned appreciating and respecting them more and seeing how much they care for the community. When asked about their siblings, a few mentioned seeing them as role models, and even the ones who indicated there wasn’t a change in their views had positive things to say about their siblings. When adults were asked if volunteering changed their relationship with their children, they mentioned that it has been a bonding
experience and they have become more of a team. Parents also noticed a change in their children’s attitudes towards each other; they get along better and see that they need each other for success.

**Literature review**
A review of the literature was conducted as part of the research needed to develop survey instruments and to clarify the concepts we identified during the focus groups and phone interviews,(Attachment C) It is separated into two general categories: family volunteering and family interaction. The literature review indicates that this study, if conducted as designed, would advance the study of the impact of family volunteering on the families.

**Next Steps**
Using the results of the focus groups and the interviews we developed an instrument that was administered on a one-time, anonymous basis to 2002 National Family Volunteer Day service activity participants. Surveying families that volunteer episodically will allow us to compare the impact of occasional volunteering to the impact on families that volunteer more intensively. It will also help to inform the design of the next stage of research.

The Center and the Foundation have applied for funding from the W.T. Grant foundation (see below) for the next stage of research. If we receive funding, we propose to incorporate the key constructs identified in these interviews into the design of several instruments. Pre- and post-test instruments will be designed and administered to a sample of families. We will work with a program (to be identified) that can provide a sample of families who volunteer on a regular basis. An instrument will be administered to these families when beginning a family volunteering commitment, such as family mentoring, and again at a reasonable interval, such as six months or one year.
EXPLORE POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR A NATIONAL SURVEY

Independent Sector (a coalition of leading nonprofits, foundations and corporations) periodically conducts a nationally recognized survey on giving and volunteering. The Foundation initiated discussions with Independent Sector to modify several questions on their national survey (for example, including Volunteer Center as a separate choice when asking how volunteers find out about opportunities). Independent Sector staff has been very receptive to Foundation input. Independent Sector has received the input from the Foundation and is currently in the process of designing their next survey, which will go into the field in 2003.

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH TO ACADEMIC AUDIENCES

An academic paper describing the process of the first year of the outcomes measurement process co-authored by Center and Foundation staff, titled Developing Outcome Measures for the Points of Light Foundation, was presented at the 2002 Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action Annual Meeting, in Montreal, Canada. (Attachment D) The authors plan to submit this article, slightly revised for publication in an academic journal.

NEW SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

In addition to the goals stated in the implementation plan, the Center has, in conjunction with Foundation staff, submitted two letters of intent and one full proposal to national foundations for funding research and evaluation of Foundation programs. The proposal, submitted upon request after an initial letter of inquiry, was submitted to the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, at Case Western University. It proposes a study of the motivations of deeply committed volunteers, with an emphasis on the impact of faith on these commitments. Using the Foundation’s contact information, the researchers will obtain data from the population of the Daily Points of Light recipients since 1998 using several methods, including e-mail, mail, and phone. For each individual, six different motivations that can be satisfied by volunteering will be measured (social, values, career, understanding, protective, and esteem). Three measures of public service motivation (commitment to public interest/civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice) also will be measured. In addition to faith background and levels of affiliation with and exposure to religious or spiritual programs and religious worldview, the survey will collect demographic data.

The two letters of inquiry are to the W.T. Grant Foundation and the Aspen Institute. The letter to W.T. Grant is asking for funding for a study on the impact of family volunteering on volunteers and their family systems, as described above. The letter to the Aspen Institute requested funding for a study of the sustainability of collaborations/networks formed by leveraged grant making, focusing on the Service as Strategy Initiative (SASI). During the first phase of SASI, over a two-year period, a total of 20 communities received grants. If funded, we will determine the status of collaborations in these communities by initial phone contact, then conduct phone interviews and visit five sites for in-depth observation. We plan to measure both sustainability and level of collaboration.
Implementation of the outcomes measurement process is a three-year process. Our plan for the second year includes:

- Assist in revision of the Volunteer Center self-assessment
- Revise/update and implement the outcomes measurement plan based on Year 1 accomplishments, in response to the strategic plan and to be consistent with the foundation’s outcomes reporting framework
- Conduct stage one outcomes data collection and analysis
- Initiate preliminary discussion of a national index to assist in measuring progress towards long-term outcomes of solving serious social problems and increasing civic values and participation
- Conduct staff training on outcomes measurement
- Report to the Foundation board when requested
- Report to the outcomes measure task force when requested
- Provide continued consultation re: new data collection and revision of ongoing data collection, including surveys and evaluations such as:
  - Evaluation of Yes Ambassador program
  - Salvation Army grant
  - Annie E. Casey grant
  - Lilly grant
ATTACHMENT A
OUTLINE OF “HOW TO DESIGN A SURVEY” PRESENTATION
HOW TO DESIGN A SURVEY

Laura Littlepage
Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis
School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Center for Urban Policy & the Environment

What Is a Survey?
• A method of gathering information from individuals and organizations
  □ If not the entire population, then sample should be random

Types of Surveys
• Interviews
  □ Face-to-face
  □ Phone

Self-administered
• Mail
• Fax
• Web, e-mail
• Handed out in person

Instrument Development
• How will you use the information?
• What information do you need?
  □ Attitudes and/or opinions
  □ Behaviors and/or characteristics
• Who do you need it from?

Survey Introduction
• Sponsor of survey
• Purpose of survey
• How data will be used
• Confidentiality
• Instructions for completion
• When, where, and how to return

Question Construction
• What do you want to measure?
• How are you going to measure it?
Guidelines for Good Questions

- Include instructions
- Make sure they have ability to answer
- Avoid:
  - Social desirability questions
  - Biased items and terms
  - Double-barreled questions
  - Negative questions

Responses

- Open-ended
- Close-ended
  - Scales
  - Exhaust the range of answers
  - Mutually exclusive
  - Clear differences between responses

Design Suggestions

- Keep it short
- Be aware of reading level
- Avoid jargon, acronyms
- Use easy to read color and font
- Use lines or boxes for responses
- Avoid too many skips

Implementation

- Pre-test your instrument
- Followup with non-respondents
- Clean the data
- Code the data
- Analyze the data

Websites

- National Service evaluation:
  - www.projectstar.org/star/index.htm
- Series on What Is a Survey?:
  - www.amstat.org/sections/srms/
- Best Practices for Survey Research:
  - www.aapor.org/ethics/best.html
ATTACHMENT B
INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS FOR FAMILY VOLUNTEERS
**Introduction:** Hello, my name is ______________ with Indiana University Center for Urban Policy and the Environment. Hopefully, you received a letter from the Points of Light Foundation saying we would be calling. Is this a good time for you to talk? (Ask about their children and if they would mind if we talked to at least one of them- again make an appointment if necessary) As you know, we have been asked by FAMILY MATTERS to talk to you about family volunteering. They want to find out why families volunteer, and the positives and negatives associated with family volunteering. You were selected because you have participated in National Family Volunteer Day and you have knowledge of family volunteering. Your comments are confidential and will not be attributed to you in any report.

1) Approximately, how many hours a month does your family volunteer together and who volunteers (get ages)?

2) Why do you volunteer together? (If they say quality time, ask them to define it)

3) What are the benefits to your family from volunteering together?

4) What are the costs (negatives) to your family from volunteering together?

5) Are there any differences in benefits (or positives) between adults and children from volunteering as a family?

6) Whose idea was it for you to volunteer together as a family? (if parents, were the children willing participants from the start?)

7) Are there any differences in costs (or negatives) between adults and children from volunteering as a family?

8) Are there any benefits to society from families volunteering together?

9) Are there any negatives to society from families volunteering together?

10) Has volunteering as a family inspired you to change something in your life or change your goals? (If yes, what?)

11) Has volunteering as a family changed your relationship with your children? (If yes, how so)

12) Has volunteering as a family changed your children’s relationship with each other? (If yes, how so?)

13) Is there anything I missed that’s important to know about family volunteering? Is there anything that you wanted to say that you didn’t get a chance to say?
Questions for children:

Introduction: Hello, my name is ______________ with Indiana University Center for Urban Policy and the Environment. Your parents said that we could talk to you about your family volunteering together. Do you mind talking to me for a few minutes? (If yes, proceed- if no, thank them and hang up)

We have been asked by FAMILY MATTERS to talk to you about family volunteering. They want to find out why families volunteer. You were selected because you volunteer with your family. Remember, there are no wrong or right answers and we won’t tell anyone what you said. I’m going to ask you 7 questions.

1) Why do you volunteer with your family?

2) Whose idea was it for you to volunteer together as a family? (if parents, did you want to do it when they first suggested it?) If they suggested it, why?

3) What would you say are the good things about volunteering with your family?

4) The bad things?

5) Do you feel any differently about your parents because of volunteering with them? (If yes, what?)

6) (If they have brothers or sisters) Do you feel any differently about your brothers or sisters by volunteering with them? (If yes, what?) (Are your brothers or sisters older or younger?)

7) Has volunteering given you any ideas about what you might want to study in college or do for a job? (If yes, what?)
Family Volunteering

Title: Family Volunteering: A discussion paper
Authors: Paddy Bowen, A.J. McKechnie
Organization: Volunteer Canada

Relevant Information (in quotes):

Page 2 — “Those that do volunteer indicate that the effective use of their time is an important element in their decision to contribute.”

Page 3 — “Any group of two or more people that consider themselves to be a family: parents, children, siblings, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and any others who consider themselves a family.”

Page 4 — “Parents are the role models in the family and their actions set the standard around civic stewardship and community responsibility. It is within our family units that we learn how to become citizens as well as individuals.”

Page 6 — “Volunteer work exposes children to real life examples of values-driven action. Through it, children learn how to interact and respond to people in the community who are in need of their help as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the scope of community need.”

Page 9 — “Approximately 40% of the 180,000 charities and non-profits in Canada have no paid staff at all and, at the other end of the spectrum, are perhaps 10,000 with relatively high ratios of paid staff to volunteers.”
Article Title: Community Service Participation as Enrichment: Rationale, Outcomes, and Best Practices
Authors: Elizabeth Caplan & Kathryn Schutte
Copyright: 2001 by Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Portland State University

Relevant Information (in quotes):

Page 1-2—“One avenue of positive youth development is through opportunities to participate meaningfully in the community. Perceiving oneself and being perceived by others as a valuable member of a group promotes social and emotional well-being (Bandura, 1977). The conception of youth as community servant not only represents a radical departure from focusing on the deficits of youth, but it also extends the philosophy of building on strengths. In this model of “enrichment reciprocity” youth are enriched through enriching others.”

Page 2—“Theories of individual and community resilience highlight how community service simultaneously develops, supports, and integrates individuals and community institutions (Benson, 1995)… Successfully participating in service ties young people to the community and to nurturing adults who are involved and efficacious… The positive outcomes for youth that stem from participation in service learning have been the focus of a fair amount of empirical investigation. Research has shown that participation in service can increase youth’s self-esteem, moral reasoning and identity development (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Hamilton & Fenzel, 1988; Root, 1997). Evidence also links youth participation in service with decreases in negative behaviors such as drug use, violence and teen sex (Giles & Eyler, 1994; O’Donnell, et al., 1999), or with lowered risk factors associated with such negative behaviors (McNamara, 2000).”

Page 4—“Another strategy for positive youth development is giving young people the opportunity to serve in leadership capacities in partnership with adults. For example, inviting youth to sit on community and organizational boards, with a voting voice, is a powerful way to teach these youth where their potentials lie. At the same time, the adults who work with the young people are provided with invaluable opportunities to learn from the youth perspective. For youth who are experiencing emotional and behavioral challenges, this sort of experience—contributing positively to their community and gaining the respect of adults—can be particularly empowering.”
Page xxvii—definition of family volunteering, Family Volunteering: A method of volunteering where the entire family unit volunteers to perform a project or activity together. This is one of the fastest growing developments in the current volunteer movement.

Page 36—"We need to provide stronger bridges to adult volunteering through more organized youth volunteering programs. The Independent Sector's 1995 Giving and Volunteering in America report notes that individuals who volunteered in their youth tend to volunteer almost twice as much as adults. Note exhibit 2.1."

Page 37—"When people are asked the number one reason that the volunteer, almost all individuals respond that it is the self-satisfaction of helping others. In the National College Graduate Study on Volunteering, conducted from 1990 to 1991, of the 1305 responses returned, 1094 or 83.82 percent noted that self-satisfaction/helping others was the primary reason why they volunteered. Exhibit 2.2 illustrates that no other response even came close. All other areas were less than one percent. The only area of any size was the non-responses. This is a wonderful showing of what individuals think about the volunteer process. It also shows that individuals not only take the role of volunteering seriously, they do so with eagerness and joy as well. Since the survey was administered, a number of changes have occurred. Our personal lives have become more complicated through increased stress, less job security, and a number of other factors. This has affected the levels of volunteering. Yet, it is volunteering that could provide what is now missing in many of our lives."

Page 38—"A partial list of personal benefits or skills that volunteering can provide include:
A better understanding of the art of group dynamics;
The ability to work efficiently in a team driven environment;
Increased written and verbal communications skills; and
An opportunity to increase your network of friends and business contacts.
The list can go on and on. The return value will depend on what you seek, how much you are willing to put into the experience, and the quality of the experience itself."

Page 41—"Exhibit 2.3 Characteristics of Volunteers
They volunteer. . .
Alone and with family but not with friends 8%
With friends and family but not alone 2%
Alone and with both family and friends 40%
Alone and with friends but not with family 33%
Only alone 17%

They volunteer. . .
Both informally and through an organization 17%
Only through an organization 53%
Only informally 30%"
Title: Family Volunteering: The Ties That Bind: An introduction to preparing your agency for family volunteers
Author: Kristen Porritt
Organization: Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area Voluntary Action Program Department of Canadian Heritage, Ottawa 1995
Website: http://www.pch.gc.ca/cp-pc/ComPartnE/Family.htm

Relevant information (in quotes):

Page 4—“To reach as many potential volunteers as possible, we should use a fairly liberal definition (of family): A family is any group of two or more people that considers itself to be a family: parents, children, siblings, foster parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and any others who consider themselves a family.”
Hodgkinson bases the bulk of her analysis on the 1992 Independent Sector Survey of Giving and Volunteering among adults and its 1992 survey of teenagers twelve to seventeen years of age. She finds a number of strong positive forces that encourage philanthropic behavior. For both teens and adults, events and experiences from their youth such as volunteer experience or having parents who volunteer positively influence philanthropic commitment. Participation in organizations such as schools and youth groups and especially attendance at religious services also positively influence levels of giving and volunteering. Moreover, there is strong evidence that participation by teens and adults in volunteer activity provides a variety of rewards that encourage further commitment. Importantly, the kinds of benefits reported by teens are not so much instrumental rewards (such as learning new skills) as communal ones (such as learning to respect others and deriving satisfaction from their involvement). In addition, feeling a moral duty to help others and being concerned about the welfare of others are highly associated for both teens and adults with philanthropic participation… teens and adults are far more likely to give money and volunteer time when they are linked to a social network in which they are explicitly asked or expected to contribute.”

See Page 24 & 25 for extensive table—Influence of Childhood experiences on Giving and Volunteering (Percentage of Respondents)

Certain events experienced during youth have an impact on adult behavior, both positively and negatively. Over 80% of adult respondents who reported that they were members of a youth group, did some volunteer work, went door to door to raise money for a cause, saw a family member help others, saw an adult they admired help others, or were active in student government reported household contributions, and over 60% of these groups reported volunteering.

These findings suggest that actual experience volunteering is the strongest predictor of later volunteering.”

The findings from the teen survey reveal that teens who had volunteered as children were more than three times more likely to volunteer as adolescents than those who had not volunteered as children. The same pattern was evident among adults: Adults who reported volunteering when they were young volunteered at nearly twice the rate of those who did not have the experience.”

Over time, role models are important. Six out of ten adults who reported that they saw members of their family help others when they were young currently volunteered, compared with slightly more than one-third among those who did not. Less than six out of ten adults remembered seeing a family member help others when they were young, yet among this group, two-thirds currently volunteered compared with four out of ten among those who did not have the experience. Less than half of adults reported that they had such an experience when they were young.”

See Table on Page 30
See Table on Page 38
See Table on Page 42
See Table on Page 44

When we examined people by level of household income, similar patterns occurred. Only 22 percent of respondents with average household incomes of $10,000 or less were asked to volunteer compared with 58% of those with household incomes of $50,000 or more. Seventy-five percent of respondents with low household incomes volunteered if they were asked. This was nearly four times the volunteer rate of those who were not asked.”
Page 47—“One of the most powerful findings of our research is that membership in religious institutions and other voluntary and membership organizations leads to exceptionally high participation rates in household contributions and volunteering. Its correlation is also revealing. Non-membership leads to low or exceptionally low participation.”

Page 49—“...volunteers are far more likely than non-volunteers to be concerned about others and about social causes, and the surveys also demonstrate that volunteers believe they can help to solve some of society’s problems and to improve the welfare of others.”

Page 53—“...the most important personal characteristic that leads to helping is a pro-social value orientation...three components: positive evaluation of human beings or human nature, a feeling of concern for others’ welfare, and a feeling of personal responsibility for the welfare of other people (Staub, 1978)."
Title: State of the State Survey: Helping Others: A profile of Michigan Volunteers
Authors: Mark I. Wilson, Ph.D., Marc E. Tomlinson
Organizations: Institute for Public Policy & Social Research, Michigan State University
Date: May 1997

Relevant information (in quotes):

Page 3—Method: “A telephone survey of 975 adult residents in the state of Michigan was conducted by Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research between February 18 and April 7, 1997. It was the tenth quarterly MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS). It focused on government performance, community needs and MSU Extension, charity and nonprofits, and assisted suicide. The overall sampling error is 3.1%. Approximately two in five Michiganders volunteer. Whites volunteer proportionately more than African Americans (44% compared to 20%); volunteerism increases with household income level and with educational attainment.”

See Page 4 for tables

Page 5—“Republicans (47%) and political independents (47%) volunteer more than Democrats (35%), who volunteer more than those with no political affiliation (30%). Catholics volunteer the most (49%) and those with no religious affiliation the least (23%). Over half of all East Central Michigan and Northern Michigan residents volunteer, while only a quarter of Detroit residents volunteer. Three out of five people say they do not volunteer for any charitable organization mainly because they do not have enough time.”

Family Interaction

Title: African American Fathers in Low Income, Urban Families: Development, Behavior, and Home Environment of Their Three-Year-Old Children
Authors: Maureen M. Black, Howard Dubowitz, and Raymond H. Starr, Jr.
Journal: Child Development, July/Aug. 1999, Volume 70, Number 4

Relevant Information (in quotes):

Page 2—“Support to the mothers may have direct benefits for children because mothers who feel supported are more sensitive to their children’s cues…Father involvement also may be influenced by the support that fathers feel and their perception of the quality of their relationship with the mother. For example, fathers who are more satisfied with their marital relationship and feel support in their paternal role are more involved with their children, less negative during interactions, and provide more guidance-oriented behavior management strategies. Thus, men who are satisfied with their marital relationship are likely to enjoy their role as a father and to demonstrate competent parenting behavior.”

Page 3—“Bradley and Caldwell (1984) have shown that children who are raised in homes where caregivers are responsive and nurturant, with opportunities for stimulation during their preschool years, have better intellectual and achievement performance as they approach school age.”

Page 4—“Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achebach, Edelbrock, & Howell, 1987)”

Page 5—“Parent Sense of Competence Scale (Gibaud-Wallston, & Wandersman, 1978; Johnson & Marsh, 1989)”
Relevant information (in quotes):

Page 147-148—“Evaluation of intergenerational programs is necessary for a variety of reasons. These reasons include:
To assess the program
To define areas of needed program change
To increase public knowledge about the program
To garner community support for the program
To determine the appropriateness of the program for replication
To secure funding for expansion and/or maintenance of program”
Title: Correlates of Loneliness Among Midwestern Adolescents
Authors: Diane Brage, William Meredith
Journal: Adolescence, Fall93, Vol 28, Issue 111

Relevant Information (in quotes):

Page 3-4—“Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). . . . The RSE is a 10 item, 5 point rating scale that measures adolescents’ attitudes toward the self. . . . Family Strengths Inventory. The Family Strengths Inventory is a 12 item, 5 point rating scale which measures the extent to which families are able to cope with the inevitable problems and conflicts that arise in family living.”

Page 5—“There was a significant negative relationship between loneliness and family strengths. Goswick and Jones (1981) reported similar findings among their sample of college students. In addition, loneliness was inversely related to mother-adolescent communication. However, loneliness was not associated with father-adolescent communication.”
Title: Family Communication and Delinquency
Authors: Richard D. Clark, Glenn Shields
Journal: Adolescence, Spring 97, Vol 32, Issue 125

Relevant Information (in quotes):

Page 2—“Communication has also been identified as important for understanding delinquency. Hirschi (1969), in a study of self-reported delinquency among boys, noted that as the intimacy of communication between the parent and the child increased, the likelihood that the child will commit delinquent acts decreased. . . . Similar findings regarding the type of communication and its relationship to the delinquency were noted by Cernkovich and Giordano (1987) who reported that instrumental communication (i.e., talking about problems, plans for the future) was significantly related to lower levels of delinquency, while intimate communication (i.e., sharing of private thoughts and feelings) was unrelated to delinquent behaviors. . . . These two studies agreed that “types of family communication are important for understanding delinquency.”

Page 2—“Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale”

Page 3—“The analysis revealed that having open communication with either of one’s parents is significantly associated with less serious forms of delinquency.”
High parenting self-efficacy seems to be strongly associated with the parental capacity to provide an adaptive, stimulating, and nurturing child-rearing environment.

A new domain-specific measure of parenting self-efficacy suitable for administration to parents of school-age children was constructed for this study. The resultant 36-item instrument assesses task-specific parenting self-efficacy beliefs within five discrete categories of parenting tasks: encouragement of achievement in school, facilitation of the child’s recreation and social development, provision of structure and discipline, nurturance of, and provision for, the child’s emotional development, and maintenance of the child’s physical health.

Self-efficacy addresses the extent to which parents believe they are capable of performing well and satisfaction focuses on the personal value, investment, and interest parents attach to their performance.

“Self Efficacy for Parenting Tasks Index (SEPTI) . . . Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC)”
Page 5— “Generally we refer to family as networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship.”

Page 30— “In their attempt to integrate the numerous concepts related to marital and family interaction, researchers Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell have developed what is known as the CIRCUMPLEX MODEL OF MARITAL AND FAMILY SYSTEMS (Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell, 1979; Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle, 1983; Lavee and Olson, 1991). This model bridges family theory, research, and practice. Two central dimensions of family behavior are at the core of the model: FAMILY COHESION AND FAMILY ADAPTABILITY. Each of these dimensions are divided into four levels matched on a grid to create 16 possible combinations. The four types in the center of the grid are called balance; the four extremes are seen as dysfunctional. The theorists suggest moderate scores represent reasonable functioning, whereas the extreme scores represent family dysfunction.”

“Over the past decade, the model has evolved to include three dimensions: (1) COHESION, (2) ADAPTABILITY, and (3) COMMUNICATION. The two central dimensions remain family cohesion and family adaptability, which are perceived as the intersecting lines of an axis. The third dimension is family communication, a facilitating dimension that enables couples and families to move along the cohesion and adaptability dimension (Olson, McCubbin, & Associates, 1983).”
Relevant information (in quotes):

Page 100—“Important social institutions can be retooled in a number of ways. Family. The family has served as the broker between individuals and other social institutions, the “linchpin of social order” (Hareven, 1994). Kin have always provided support for individuals over the life cycle; reciprocity across generations has been part of the fabric of our society.”

Page 101—“Intergenerational programs are one way to meet the needs of the changing family. Though some intergenerational family mentoring and respite programs currently exist, the need for such supports far outweighs the supply.”
Reducing alcohol and other drug use by strengthening community, family, and youth resiliency: An evaluation of the creating lasting connections program

Knowlton Johnson, Ted Strader

Journal of Adolescent Research Jan 96 vol. 11 Issue 1

Page 16—“It is important to define community in terms of viable social relationships rather than geographical or jurisdictional boundaries.”
Page 7—“As Brody and Flor (1996) argued, processes involving the relationships among all family members—such as cohesiveness, engagement and harmony—are essential for optimal child development. The whole-family environment creates an arena of comfort for children and parents alike that fosters a sense of security and serves as a buffer against stressful life events. For children, this emotional comfort provides a springboard from which they can explore and shape their environment.”
According to structural family theory, the collapse of this hierarchy typically is manifested in three interaction patterns that reflect a lack of clarity in parent-child boundaries: peer level communication (i.e. child is elevated to role of confidante or peer to parents), coalition formation (i.e. child is pressured by parents to form alliances with one parent against the other), and maturity promotion (i.e. child is given responsibilities beyond those of his/her peers).”

As such, there may be some benefits to young adolescents’ peer relationship skills when they are treated in a more adult and peer-like manner by parents.”
Page 2—“Olson, Russell, and Sprenkle (1979, 1983) articulated a theory of family functioning called the circumplex model which was based, in part, upon concepts drawn from Bertalanffy’s (1968) definition of a system as well as a conceptual framework drawn from developmental theories of the family life cycle. In this model, the family’s developmental stage affects family system functioning. Thus, for example, an “adolescent family” (i.e., a family with at least one adolescent at home) will experience changes as a result of the adolescent’s demands for greater independence and power. An adolescent who is succeeding at the developmental tasks related to emancipation from home, such as those in the academic and social domains, can expect to influence the family in positive ways. This adolescent also will be influenced by the family in positive ways. Conversely, an adolescent who is failing to achieve in school and progress socially will adversely influence and be influenced by the family system. The circumplex model proposes a system of classifying healthy and dysfunctional families on dimensions of cohesion, adaptability, and communication. Cohesion refers to the emotional bonding that family members feel toward one another and is measured along a four-level continuum: disengaged, separated, connected, and enmeshed. The second major dimension is adaptability, defined as the ability of a family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress. The four levels of adaptability are: rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic. Extreme levels of cohesion and adaptability are indicative of dysfunctional family interaction, while moderate (balanced) levels indicate healthy family functioning. The third dimension, communication, facilitates movement toward end maintenance of balanced levels of family cohesion and adaptability. Open and unproblematic communication between family members is conducive to healthy family functioning.”

Page 4—“Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales…Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale.”

Page 6—“Research from the counseling literature indicates that there is reason to suspect a closer relationship between communication and cohesion.”
In 1977 a group of concerned Christians, meeting in Detroit, issued a challenge: We recommend that all programs dealing with family life, at all levels, in the church, address in a special way the specific education of families in making them aware of the needs of others in their neighborhood, their local communities, or in the world community. These family life efforts will work with other social justice agencies to create environments and develop programs which encourage families to get involved in an action and reflection process in the service of others and the attainment of justice (The Call to Action, “Family”: II, 1).

First, we want (and the world needs) young people, including our elementary school-age children, to be hopeful—and with hope actually rooted in reality. We want them to know through experience that, difficult as it is, change is possible, and that they can help bring about that change…Second, we want our children to experience social action as a regular part of family life, not as something their class does once a year at Christmas or one semester in high school as part of a community-service course. If social action is experienced by children as a “special extra,” tacked on if there is time, then it may well remain that way for them as adults. This probably means that it will not be included in their life agenda. But if social action is integrated into the routine of family living, if it is experienced as an integral part of life…"

Six Basic Principles (for including children in social action)…
We regularly invite the children to join us in social action
Broad exposure to advocates, victims, situations, is crucial
We try to invite the children to actions that are within their capabilities
We try to integrate fun whenever possible
Social action involvement means ‘doing with’ rather than “doing for”
Social action involves the works of justice as well as the works of mercy
Title: Resilient Families: Qualities of Families Who Survive and Thrive
Author: Ben Silliman
Organization: University of Wyoming, June 1995

Relevant information (in quotes):

Page 2—“Traits that build family strengths: Commitment, Connectedness, Coherence, Cohesion, Adaptability, Communication, Spirituality, Time together, Individual Assets, Community Support.”
Page 100—"Important social institutions can be retooled in a number of ways. Family. The family has served as the broker between individuals and other social institutions, the “linchpin of social order” (Hareven, 1994). Kin have always provided support for individuals over the life cycle; reciprocity across generations has been part of the fabric of our society."

Page 101—"Intergenerational programs are one way to meet the needs of the changing family. Though some intergenerational family mentoring and respite programs currently exist, the need for such supports far outweighs the supply."
Title: Reducing alcohol and other drug use by strengthening community, family, and youth resiliency: An evaluation of the creating lasting connections program

Authors: Knowlton Johnson, Ted Strader

Journal: Journal of Adolescent Research Jan 96 vol. 11 Issue 1

Relevant information (in quotes):

Page 16—“It is important to define community in terms of viable social relationships rather than geographical or jurisdictional boundaries.”
Page 7—“Applying the life-span perspective to intergenerational communication suggests that communication between people who are of very different ages may be special and interesting to discuss in its own right. Communication between people who are developing quite differently in terms of their physical, cognitive, or psychosocial selves, and who have experienced quite different life events in unique historical contexts presents a rather large interactive challenge. In some senses, perhaps, we could even go as far as to suggest that many individuals belong to different developmental cultures and that some features of intergenerational communication can be likened to intercultural communication.”

Page 21—“Acton is constrained by the differential distribution of knowledge and resources, and may feed back into the system and eventuate in unintended consequences, which were not anticipated or intended by the original action... The social properties of social systems are said to be both enabling and constraining. The social structure provides both constraints for behavior and resources for social action. Because social norms may be used creatively in microinteractions, they may be transformed by actors. This relates to the intricate connection between structure and systems, and emphasizes that it is people who create and structure social systems by their social actions.”
ATTACHMENT D
DEVELOPING OUTCOMES MEASURES FOR THE POINTS OF LIGHT FOUNDATION

Prepared for the 2002 ARNOVA Conference
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Laura Littlepage
Center for Urban Policy and the Environment
Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis

Rennie Dutton
Points of Light Foundation

James L. Perry
School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis
Developing Outcomes Measures for the Points of Light Foundation

Over the last three decades there has been a push towards measuring outcomes in nonprofits. While many nonprofits conduct ad hoc evaluations, consistent data collection tied to systematic outcomes measurement happens less frequently. This paper presents an overview of the beginning of a process to measure outcomes in a national nonprofit, the Points of Light Foundation (Foundation). The implementation process as well as the effects on the organization and lessons learned are discussed below.

The current popular use of the phrase “points of light” and the national organization that carries this name share their origins in the administration of former President George H. W. Bush. Beginning with his acceptance speech in 1988, and from his first day in office, President Bush devoted considerable attention to the role of volunteer community service as a means of helping to solve the nation’s social problems. He characterized the people and organizations volunteering to address pressing social issues as “points of light.”

The Points of Light Foundation is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, created in 1990 to carry out a three-part strategy to make community service a high-priority national policy. This included: 1) calling every American individual and group to address society’s problems through service; 2) recognizing and replicating successful community service activities across the nation; and 3) developing service leaders who could lead others to become “points of light.”

On his 1989 Inauguration Day, the Wall Street Journal remarked that President Bush believes that “all the established institutions of a society bear as much moral legitimacy and responsibility for civil progress as the state.” The Points of Light Foundation was charged with the responsibility of helping to build a more civil society by making community service central to the life and work of every individual, group, and organization in America. Today, the Foundation serves as an advocate for volunteering focused on addressing social problems, and a knowledge leader in the practice of volunteering through work with over 400 local Volunteer Centers, and thousands of business partners and nonprofit organizations around the world.

Since its inception, the Foundation has reported annual accomplishments in the form of program outputs and administrative measures. Program evaluations were conducted as funding became available, primarily as the result of program grants.

In May 2001, the Board of Directors of the Points of Light Foundation requested that staff plan to identify and operationalize a cluster of outcomes measures for monitoring the Foundation’s activities to more effectively report accomplishments to constituents, funders, and the general public. In addition to the proposed measures, the Board also asked for recommendations regarding implementation of a process to collect data, and a schedule for that process. Funding was authorized by the Board to engage the assistance of the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (Center), part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University—Purdue University, as an external evaluation consultant.

The Foundation’s decision to develop outcomes measures occurs in a context of growing accountability expectations. The Points of Light Foundation’s $10 million federal line item situates it amid accountability expectations common to government and nonprofit organizations. Beginning in 1993 with the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act, federal agencies have been required to create strategic plans, develop outcomes measures to assess performance, and report to Congress about performance (Kravchuk and Schack 1996). Like their federal agency counterparts, national and community nonprofits are subject to increasing accountability
expectations (Smith and Lipsky 1993). In response, United Way of America has pioneered development of community planning and outcomes measurement systems since the mid-1990s. Recent controversy surrounding Red Cross of America’s September 11th related fundraising exemplifies the pressures from donors, regulators, and the general public for fidelity to expectations.

**Outcomes Measurement Strategy**

*Stakeholder Involvement*

Staff and stakeholder involvement is important at all stages of developing outcomes measurement systems. Prior to the design phase, Center staff convened key stakeholder groups (staff, representatives of Volunteer Centers, national nonprofit partners, business volunteer programs, business sponsors, and youth) at the 2001 National and Community Service Conference to provide input. Foundation staffs at all levels were included in stakeholder discussions. Existing information (such as program descriptions, prior evaluations, and reports) was reviewed. A draft version of an outcomes measurement plan was presented separately to the Foundation Board of Directors, staff, and stakeholders, and feedback from these groups was incorporated into the development of a three-year outcomes measurement process.

**Model Development**

Several strategies can be used to determine and measure outcomes. We have chosen to frame the development of outcomes measures for the Foundation in terms of the widely accepted model developed in the 1970s by the Urban Institute (Hatry 1977, 1979), combined with a mission accomplishment model (Sheehan, 1994).

**Outcomes Measurement Model**

The outcomes model, which has been refined and updated (Hatry 1999), currently is used by local, state, and federal government agencies as well as nonprofits such as the United Way (Greenway and Hatry 1996) (see Figure 1). This model provides a framework to discuss how the resources dedicated to the organization (inputs) support the activities that result in the outputs (products of activities) that hopefully lead to outcomes (benefits for participants). Once outcomes have been identified, outcomes indicators are the specific items of information that track an organization’s success, while outcomes targets are numerical objectives for the level of achievement on outcomes.

**Figure 1: Outcomes Development Process**

```
| Inputs ➔ Activities ➔ Outputs ➔ Outcomes ➔ Outcomes Indicators ➔ Outcomes Targets |
```
### DEFINITIONS

**Inputs:** resources used by the organization to produce outputs and outcomes (i.e., money, staff time, facilities, equipment, supplies, etc.).

**Activities:** what the organization does with the inputs to fulfill its mission.

**Outputs:** the direct products and services of the activities; usually measured in terms of the volume of work accomplished, e.g., number of trainings conducted, number of participants in a national conference, etc. Outputs are things that the organization’s personnel have done.

**Outcomes:** the events, occurrences, or changes in conditions, behaviors, or attitudes that indicate progress toward achievement of the organization’s mission. Outcomes are not what the organization itself did, but the consequences of what it did.

**Immediate and Short-term Outcomes:** an outcome that is expected to lead to a desired end but is not an end in itself. These are often new knowledge, attitudes, or skills.

**Long-term Outcomes:** the end result that is sought. This is a meaningful change often in condition or status.

**Outcomes Indicators:** specific items of data that are tracked to measure how well an organization is achieving an outcome.

**Outcomes Targets:** objectives for an organization’s level of achievement.


This model is consistent with alternative ways to develop and measure outcomes. For example, logic models (McLaughlin and Jordan 1999) focus on accountability, managing for results and quality, and the use of evaluation results for improvement. Program logic models focus on background factors, program activities, and outcomes. The outcomes model also is consistent with the work described by Sawhill and Williamson (2001) in developing an evaluation plan for the Nature Conservancy. Their discussion of capacity is similar to inputs, activity is similar to activities and outputs, and their discussion of impact measures is similar to our discussion of outcomes. It is also consistent with the general theory of change model developed by Abt Associates to evaluate AmeriCorps, the logic models discussed by W.K. Kellogg the Foundation in their Evaluation Handbook (W.K. Kellogg the Foundation 1998), and the logic models the Center developed for the evaluation of Join Hands Day.

The first year has been spent identifying and refining the elements of the model portrayed in Figure 1 and beginning data collection. During the second year, the data collected will be examined to determine if the outcomes identified are measured by the data,
and to determine additional data that needs to be collected. The data then will be analyzed and the preliminary findings reported. In the third year the system will be improved and the findings will be used.

**Mission-Based Measurement**

The resulting outcomes measurement process is mission-based. The mission of an organization “answers the simple questions: ‘What is this organization for; and, how will the world be different as a result of our being in business?’” (Carver, 1990, p.65). The mission-accomplishment model as defined by Sheehan (1996) holds that an organization is effective to the extent that it accomplishes its mission. In discussing effective nonprofit management, Drucker proposes that “non-profits fail to perform unless they start out with their mission. For the mission defines what results are in this particular non-profit institution.” (1990, p.109) The Foundation’s mission is to “engage more people more effectively in volunteer community service to help solve serious social problems.” Thus, it was determined that the evaluation of all of the Foundation’s programs should relate to one of three intermediate or long-term outcomes: engaging more people in volunteer community service; fostering more effective volunteer community service; or, helping to solve serious social problems. If a program or project does not result in one or more of these outcomes, then it is not relevant to the mission of the organization. It should be noted that while it is obvious that the Foundation alone cannot solve serious social problems at a national level, this does not mean that outcomes related to this goal should not be monitored.

**Partner Outcomes**

The Foundation facilitates the work of local organizations through networks such as the National Network of Volunteer Centers, as well as several partnerships, such as the Connect America national partnership of 111 national nonprofit and business partners. When developing outcomes measures for a national organization that is not usually involved in direct service but whose mission is the effective engagement of volunteers to address social problems, defining outcomes can be a challenge. It must be made clear if “more people volunteering” is considered to be a longer-term outcome, that this is not a direct result of the Foundation’s efforts, but is rather a long-term outcome resulting from intermediate outcomes that Foundation activities have influenced. For example, increasing the capacity of Volunteer Centers with training, sharing best practices, and assisting in developing new Volunteer Centers should ultimately lead to more people volunteering, but the Foundation is not directly responsible for this outcome, and must not give its partners the impression that it is taking credit for their work. On the other hand, only looking at the increased capacity of Volunteer Centers would not be a measure of mission accomplishment.

**Identifying Outcomes and Indicators**

Our first step was to list activities identified by the Foundation as tactics to accomplish its mission, such as recognizing volunteers, building partnerships, and re-granting. Based on the review of materials and interviews with Foundation staff and stakeholders, these are comprehensive and consistent with the current organizational structure and alignment of programs. While inputs (staff time, dollars, etc.) and outputs (awards given, training sessions, etc.) are important and will be monitored in relation to outcomes, we chose to focus instead on each activity and its related outcomes. We then identified the outcomes that are generated by the activities identified, such as public awareness and interest surrounding volunteering, infrastructure development, and leveraged resources, and indicators for these specific outcomes, such as levels of participation in episodic service projects, and number and stability of partners.
Figure 2 illustrates the immediate outcomes identified for one of the Foundation’s activities, promotion of episodic volunteering as well as selected indicators for each outcome.

**Figure 2: Example of outcomes measurement for Points of Light Foundation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes indicators</th>
<th>Immediate outcomes</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calls to 800 #s, # Hits on Web sites</td>
<td>Population aware of Volunteer Centers</td>
<td>Promotion of episodic volunteering (National Days of Service like Make a Difference Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of organizations and individuals engaged in projects</td>
<td>Interest expressed in volunteering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of service projects completed</td>
<td>Conduct service projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of volunteers engaged by social issues addressed</td>
<td>Mobilize volunteers to meet local needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># and stability of various POLF partnerships</td>
<td>Partnerships formed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Volunteers indicate satisfaction with the experience</td>
<td>Personal fulfillment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These indicators are being refined during the second year of the process, when data collection will begin.

**Consistent Data Collection**

As part of the implementation process, the Foundation established an outcomes measures task force that includes Board members, senior staff, and other stakeholders. This taskforce first met to review the outcomes and indicators identified for the organization. An outgrowth of these reviews was the discovery of inconsistent data collection methods among different units in the Foundation. Two instances are differences in the taxonomies of social issues used to categorize the focus of Foundation programs, and non-comparable methods for collecting demographic information on volunteers and program participants. For example, “youth” was defined by various areas as under 18, under 21, and under 25, while “older adults” were classified as over 55, over 60 or over 65. Some of this variance is attributable to changing trends in national and community service management. The rise of AmeriCorps programming has expanded the upper limits that define youth, while the graying of the “baby boomer” generation has brought down the lower end of the older adult classification. This made it difficult to combine findings from different programs that served youth or seniors.
Different taxonomies also were being used by staff and constituent partners to categorize the issue areas addressed by Foundation programs. Additionally, some of the taxonomies mixed activities and issue areas. For example, under youth services it included activities such as recreation, sports, and mentoring with issue areas such as homelessness. In order to insure consistency within the overall Foundation data set, it was recommended that the Foundation select a standard taxonomy on issues areas. After researching several possibilities, a version of the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) was selected to encompass the issue areas that the Foundation and its partners address. Moreover, this will allow the Foundation to compare its work to that of other national organizations, such as the Independent Sector, that use an iteration of the NTEE.

Prior to beginning the outcomes measurement process, Foundation departments were conducting multiple surveys of customers, but often not in coordination with each other. Through this process, the Foundation has begun to work across departmental boundaries to develop consistent customer surveys and obtain comparable information about the value and appeal of trainings and other activities such as national conferences. This should help to prevent duplication of effort, use resources more efficiently, and avoid over-surveying customers.

**Validation of Assessment Processes**

As part of the outcomes measurement process, two existing methods of assessment within the Foundation are being examined to assess their current validity and relevance. The *Principles of Excellence in Community Service: A Plan to A.C.T.* was created by the Points of Light Foundation to help businesses develop successful employee volunteer programs, and to serve as the criteria for a prestigious national award. While the standards were valid at their inception ten years ago, the definition of excellence in corporate volunteering may have changed over the past decade. Consequently, the criteria are being revisited.

In addition, it would be advantageous for the Foundation to use the results of the existing Volunteer Center self-assessment instrument to develop outcomes measures that will help determine whether its strategies are accomplishing its mission. The self-assessment was created as a first step in developing national standards for Volunteer Centers so that all member Centers will be able to document that they are working at a certain level of proficiency. In order to use the assessment instrument for this purpose, its validity and reliability must be assessed. The process for both validations began with focus groups of stakeholders, and is continuing with statistical examinations of data previously gathered and suggestions for improvements.

**Effects on the Foundation**

An unanticipated result of this process has been the increased interest in evaluation and data collection exhibited by staff. It is generally accepted that practitioners are often reluctant if not resistant to engaging in program evaluations and related measurement activities. This can stem from lack of knowledge about or understanding of evaluation practice, as well as concern about the negative impact of critical evaluation results. Additionally, there is the concern that “outside” evaluators will identify measurable standards that conflict with program manager and stakeholder priorities, posing a real threat to program ownership and continuation (Mathews 1996, p.18).

The process of developing outcomes measures for the Points of Light Foundation has profited from a positive staff response, which may be attributed partially to the stakeholder-based approach to developing these measures. In the first year of these activities, there has been an increased demand for assistance with research and program evaluation activities, an improvement in the consistency of
evaluation and data collection processes, and overall responsiveness to the implementation of institutional guidelines for conducting research and evaluation activities, such as an institutional review process for research with human subjects. In the case of the Points of Light Foundation, staff is creating the momentum for the institutionalization of good practice, because the process of developing outcomes measures has created both will and demand. A positive side effect of developing an outcomes measurement process is the development of internal mechanisms that strengthen data collection and improve management processes.

Organizational culture
In the Foundation’s case, the organization prior to this process had several activity areas that were functioning (at least in the area of data collection) almost independently and not communicating well with each other as to either what the data was or how it was collected. The outcomes development and measurement process seems to have assisted in breaking down some of those internal barriers and increasing communication among departments, thereby increasing the quality of the data collected. This is similar to Hodges and Hernandez findings that implementation of an outcomes process is effected by and can affect the organizational culture of the organization in which it is being implemented (1999).
Conclusions

Nonprofit leadership is increasingly concerned with the need to assess the performance of their organizations, both for external accountability and internal management. Developing an outcomes measurement process for a national organization requires recognizing the unique strengths and weaknesses of that organization and tailoring the process to those strengths. This is accomplished by stakeholder participation from the beginning, as well as effective engagement of decision makers in the process. Such inclusionary practice leads to consensus building in the organization and a will to implement the process. Further, consensus building helps in the negotiation of potentially conflicting issues, the creation of shared intellectual capital, common definitions of the goal, and agreement on data to be targeted for collection. (Innes and Booher 1999)

Other keys factors to success include: neutral, external, evaluator involvement in the implementation, establishing credibility of the process, clear communication between the outside evaluators and the agency as well as between departments, and allocation of sufficient time and resources to implement the recommendations.
References


