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Present:

Value of Volunteering: A Backgrounder on Measuring Impact

In an age characterized by an increasing demand for information, transparency and evidence-based decision making, the public, private and non-profit sectors need tools to measure the social and economic value and impact of volunteering.

The benefits of volunteering are multifold¹: to the individuals receiving services from volunteers; to organizations that rely on volunteers; to businesses that support employee volunteering; to communities where volunteers live; and to the volunteers themselves.

The impact of volunteering is not just extensive, but also incredibly diverse²:

- Social inclusion
- Empowerment
- Increased civic participation
- Gains in social capital
- Community cohesion
- Individual confidence
- Skills development
- Newcomer integration
- Health and wellbeing

Quantifying the impact is important. It supports an organization's volunteer base and helps communicate its value to potential funders, policy-makers and allied professionals. In-kind contributions are required for many grant applications, auditors are attempting to calculate the non-financial assets within non-profit organizations and human resource managers are tracking volunteerism against performance objectives.

Yet, it is challenging to effectively capture the impact and value of volunteering beyond its labour market value.

Earlier tools tended to measure volunteer time rather than its outcomes and impact.³ In recent years, models have emerged that try to assess the value and broader benefits of volunteering,⁴ including both quantitative (such as wage replacement and social returns on investment) and qualitative (relying on testimonials and impact statements) methods.⁵ Still, most work in this area heavily relies on average hourly rates for services rendered⁶.

The **Measuring Volunteering Partnership** intends to take an integrated approach to capturing both the contributions made by volunteers and the impact of volunteer engagement on volunteers, organizations, neighbourhoods, businesses and society at large.

Volunteer Canada and the RBC Foundation, in collaboration with AVRBC and Volunteer BC, will be holding **Value of Volunteering: A National Dialogue on Measuring Impact**, on Monday, January 19th to explore the issues, challenges, inspiring practices and current models for measuring the social and economic value and impact of volunteering. Click here to learn more.

¹ Day & Devlin, 1998; Gyarmati, et al., 2008; Ashton et al., 2006; Stolle & Cruz, 2005; Bassett, M. 2013; Speevak Sladowski et. al., 2013

² CIVICUS, 2008; Kim, 2004; Mellor, et al., 2008; Berger, et al., 2006

³ e.g., Carter & Speevak-Sladowski, 2008

⁴ Mook, Quarter & Richmond, 2007

⁵ e.g., Foster et al., 2001; Brown, 1999

⁶ VolunteerCounter, 2013; Volunteer Value Calculator, 2005