

SUMMARY OF HAMV STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING - JULY 15, 2024

Community Engagement Initiative Discussion

Cindy initiated a discussion about the community engagement initiative, focusing on the roles of the steering committee and the project approaches. Cindy, Marge, and Karen, who are all involved in the initiative, introduced themselves and their roles. The team also expressed their interest in the attendees' feedback and thoughts as they move forward with the two-year engagement. The conversation was set to continue with each topic area, inviting ongoing discussion and input.

Volunteerism and Non-Profit Collaboration

Cindy led a discussion with various representatives from non-profit organizations on the island, focusing on the concept of volunteerism. Each participant shared their perspective on what volunteerism means to them, emphasizing the importance of community, teamwork, and the dual benefits for both volunteers and the recipients of their time. The group also discussed the challenges of managing volunteers and the potential for further collaboration and support among the organizations. Some of the specific comments about volunteerism included: "hard to manage volunteers", "fill a critical need", emphasis on teamwork, focus on "relationships", "give back to the community", volunteerism helps individuals "find their purpose".

New Initiative Boosts Senior Volunteerism

Cindy introduced a new initiative to expand opportunities for community engagement, with a focus on older adults. The project, funded by Vineyard Vision for two years, aims to increase the impact of volunteerism on the island, reduce recruitment and management of volunteers, and create a volunteer model that any organization could use. Cindy and Marge, both involved in the project, highlighted the significant contribution older adults make to the island's volunteer efforts and expressed optimism about the potential for increased impact through better coordination and utilization of this resource.

Upside of this Project

Cindy talked about some of the possible positive outcomes of this project including increasing the number of volunteers, improving the recruitment and management of volunteers, and creating an infrastructure that better supports volunteerism on the Island

Vineyard Vision Fellowship and Volunteer Assessment

Marge, who is serving as Mentor on the Fellowship Project, explained what the Vineyard Vision Fellowship program was and how the Healthy Aging proposal was aligned with the mission of the Fellowship to support the "environmental and social sustainability of the Vineyard."

Project Approach 2024-2026

Karen then took over to share her initial thoughts on the project's direction over the next two years. She emphasized the importance of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment to understand the scope of volunteerism on the island, with a particular focus on individuals over 60. Karen also highlighted the diverse range of activities volunteers are involved in, from emotional support to physical labor and tech skills. She expressed her intention to interview volunteer coordinators and volunteers to gain insights into their systems, benefits, challenges, and potential areas of improvement.

Vineyard Vision Project Next Steps Discussed

Karen discussed the next steps for the Vineyard Vision project, which included exploring technology platforms to enhance volunteer experiences and introducing a volunteer incentive program. She mentioned a website platform operated by the United Way, Cape and Islands for Good.org, which might be a model for the Vineyard. Karen also expressed her intention to consult with Jackie Barber about the website's usage in the Vineyard. Additionally, she proposed the creation of a volunteer bank to incentivize volunteering, a concept already implemented in other communities. The project, which was initiated before Karen's hire, is expected to run for two years, with the bulk of the needs assessment to be completed in the next few months.

Volunteer Program Enhancement and Partnerships

Karen expressed her intention to learn from volunteers and organizations for the next two years. Kate suggested the possibility of partnering with community organizations to strengthen their volunteer programs and create a scalable model. Kate also offered her assistance in any way possible to help with this project. Karen agreed to follow up with Kate and set up a meeting. Cindy sought feedback on whether the initiative was clear and understood, and asked how the initiative could benefit their organization.

Centralized Volunteer Opportunities and Matching

Lisa proposed creating a centralized location for listing volunteer opportunities and qualifications, as well as a list of volunteers and their availability. Marge agreed, highlighting the need to understand the specific needs of the island before exploring available technology options. Lyndsay shared a recent experience of needing to quickly onboard a volunteer and expressed the potential benefits of having a streamlined process for volunteer matching. Phyllis suggested leveraging existing technology platforms to facilitate this process.

Volunteer Opportunities and Technology Platforms

Phyllis emphasized the importance of a good filtering system in technology platforms for volunteer opportunities, to ensure that positions are open to all suitable candidates, regardless of age. She also stressed the need for organizations to update their postings regularly to keep the system current and prevent disappointment for seekers. Jackie then shared her experience with a volunteer matching program, highlighting the challenges faced due to people's availability and organizations' lack of follow-up. The discussion also touched on the crucial issue of digital equity in accessing these platforms.

Addressing Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Challenges

The group discussed challenges and concerns around recruiting, training, managing, and retaining volunteers for nonprofit organizations. Jackie shared experiences with unreturned calls from organizations and frustrated volunteers. Lyndsay mentioned capacity issues leading to lack of follow-up, as well as challenges with older volunteers' abilities. Karen emphasized the need for training, manuals, and volunteer management processes. Phyllis suggested integrating volunteers into an organization's overall human capital management approach. Hilary cautioned against romanticizing volunteerism and the need to clearly set expectations. The group identified opportunities to provide guidance, structures, and resources to support the volunteer lifecycle.