

HOW IS TRADITIONAL VOLUNTEERING BEING
REPRESENTED
ADVOCATED
PROTECTED
BY OTHER THAN NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS?

A Discussion Paper
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I. ON THE EVOLUTION OF QUESTIONS

It is hard to get a good answer when you're not sure what the question is. One Forum achievement has been posing progressively more useful questions on how to influence volunteerism in the 1980's. The evolving search distinguishes 1) traditional and non-traditional forms of volunteering; 2) ~~natural~~ ^{national} and non-~~natural~~ ^{national} organizations; and 3) three ways in which the two types of organization can positively influence the two varieties of volunteering.

One generalized query thus becomes four:

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Impact On</u>	<u>Type of Volunteering</u>
National	→	Non-Traditional
Other-Than-National	→	Non-Traditional
National	→	Traditional
Other-Than-National	→	Traditional

At the same time, impact articulates into representation, advocacy, and protection.

Other-Than-National impact on traditional volunteering is our sole responsibility here. This makes the assignment manageable, more or less. But no one really believes any one of the four subjects can be fully understood in isolation from the other three. Re-integration is a challenge for Panelists, though I have seen no way to resist a small part of the comparative challenge in this paper.

There is the story of the old Vermont farm lady who, when asked "How's your husband?" replied: "Compared to what?" I have found it impossible fully to answer the question "How's your other-than-nationals impact on traditional volunteering?" without comparing them to "what". The most relevant "what" is the impact of national organizations on traditional volunteering.

II. MEANINGS

To prevent the deterioration of dialogue into concurrent monologue, we begin by defining key terms in our question. But definitions are more than arbitrary exercises in the volunteer field; they are instead platforms which assert positions on real issues of inclusion-exclusion and inter-relation. Critical review of definitions is therefore not only legitimate; it is a substantive part of Forum dialogue.

A. "Volunteering" is "any relatively uncoerced work, intended to help, and done without primary or immediate thought of financial gain". This definition was one of several proposed in earlier Forum discussions.¹ It is further defended and analyzed in my recent book.²

B. Volunteering is "Traditional" (vs. Non-Traditional) insofar as:

- 1) its participants self-consciously identify themselves as "volunteers";
- 2) it is relatively organized and structured, and
- 3) vests responsibility for the volunteer "program" in a director/co-ordinator/administrator/supervisor of volunteers, or people in closely similar roles under different names. These different names can include Chief of Voluntary Services, or even social worker, probation officer, or club president, etc.
- 4) Traditional volunteering also tends to concentrate on service rather than advocacy;
- 5) be part of and often auxilliary to human service delivery systems such as hospitals, schools, welfare, mental institutions, youth service, disaster relief, etc.; and
- 6) tends to have a relatively long unchanging history in the above roles.³

Some volunteer efforts merit the "traditional" title on most or all of these six counts; e.g., hospital volunteer programs, Big Brothers and Sisters, school volunteer programs, and Red Cross. Such efforts are in fact usually labeled

traditional.

But what about the crucial involvement of volunteers in churches and synagogues? Many of us would call this traditional even though such volunteering frequently fails to meet criteria 1, 2, and 3, and may miss 5 as well. The PTA is a similar example, and there are others. Apparently, a more inclusive definition of traditional volunteering would rely more heavily on criteria 4 and 6, and perhaps 2 as well.

C. An organization is considered "Other Than National"⁴ insofar as it:

- 1) is responsible for a territory less than national in scope: city, county, state, region;
- 2) is assumed to have significant impact on traditional volunteering in this territory; and
- 3) is substantially independent of any national organization in setting policy, in choice of projects, and in operations generally. "Substantial independence" is substantially subjective. The closest approach to objectivity confers independence on an organization insofar as:
 - a) its funding is from sources not controlled nationally;
 - b) its governance and accountability is not by or to people representing national organizations; and
 - c) its operations cannot be predicted from nationally-originated model projects, guidelines, or recommendations. There is in this sense a "spontaneity" about projects as they are non-national. More subtly, even when the national puts out the project seed catalog, the local selects the seeds, maintains the garden, and produces new varieties of flower in local soils. Moreover, the national seed catalog might in the first place be largely borrowed from local green thumbs.

The decision to deposit an organization in a national vs. non-national category is still flagrantly subjective. What we really have are degrees of "non-nationalness", eminently discussable in every degree.

Thus, about a dozen statewide offices of voluntary citizen participation depend heavily for funding on the national ACTION agency. But these offices are also directly accountable to their own Governor and to a state ACTION office which is far from entirely controlled by the national ACTION office.

Many local Volunteer Bureaus or Voluntary Action Centers receive much or all of their funding from a locally-governed United Way. To this extent they are independent of any national organization. On the other hand, local United Ways are subject to general guidelines laid down by United Way of America.

Many local volunteer centers also seek guidance from national organizations such as the Association of Volunteer Bureaus and ~~Volunteer~~ ^{VOLUNTEER}, via affiliation, credentialing, or requests for technical assistance. But their decision to do so is voluntary, and does not assure acceptance of national guidance. Indeed, there is sometimes actual conflict between non-nationals and nationals over preferred strategies for the advance of traditional volunteering. Such conflict is almost chronic enough to qualify as a defining characteristic of non-nationals.

III. WHO'S THERE? IDENTIFYING RELEVANT NON-NATIONALS

To my knowledge, the overall non-national support apparatus for traditional volunteering has never been seriously inventoried.⁵ When in doubt--almost always--I have tried to estimate conservatively. The Section III Appendix tables indicate how these approximations accumulated; they are in no real sense a documentation of the estimates, except for occasional allusion to imperfect sources.

One reason for the dearth of data is a previously noted difficulty in deciding what to count. When does an organization become non-national enough

to be no longer national?

On these two related concerns--clear classification and reliable counting--some non-nationals scan better than others. Mainly for this reason, I have considered non-nationals in three distinct types, ranging from moderately clear to deplorably vague.

Type A: Generic Non-Nationals

Generic organizations aim to represent, advocate for, and protect all volunteers or potential volunteers in their territory, in the widest possible range of traditional volunteer involvements.

Prime examples of generic non-nationals are Voluntary Action Centers, Volunteer Bureaus or other local Volunteer Centers; statewide offices of voluntary citizen participation; and regional University-based volunteer resource centers.⁶

An approximate count of generic non-nationals is given below, with estimates for a roughly comparable set of generic nationals following in parentheses.⁷

550 - 700 organizations (5-8)

700 - 800 full-time equivalent paid staff (40-60)

6,000-7,000 regularly-involved unpaid staff, advisors, or policy-makers (150-200)

Collectively, the generic non-national support apparatus for traditional volunteering is 1) large, and 2) twenty to forty times larger than the comparable national structure in paid and unpaid staff resources.

Type B: Special-Population Organizations Other Than National

Like generics, these organizations tend to be concerned about needs in their entire territory. The difference is that Special-Population organizations draw volunteers from and provide support to a defined sub-group of people within the community or territory.

Thus, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program works with people 60 years of age or more. Similarly, we have volunteer clearinghouses or placement centers in

and for a university, a corporation, a church or synagogue.

The estimates for Special-Population Non-Nationals are:

1,700-2,000 organizations

1,500 or more full-time equivalent paid staff

Many thousands of volunteer staff, advisors, and policy-makers.

Once again, this is collectively a large structure, any many times larger than the comparable national apparatus.

But are such organizations relevant to Forum discussion? Can organizations, each concerned with only one segment of the traditional volunteer population, collectively advance volunteerism as a whole? There is some evidence they can and have done so, though their stake in so doing is not as clear as for generic organizations. But ~~there~~^{this} is certainly an issue, and even more so for the next type of organization.

Type C: More Fully Specialized Non-Nationals

These organizations deal with special populations (Type B) but also specialize more in their output of volunteer involvements or projects. That is, they tend more to place their volunteers in a relatively restricted range of involvements chosen by the organization. Or the kind of involvement itself implies de facto that "not just anyone can do it", e.g., criminal justice volunteering, which on the record has drawn mainly from middle-class people, never in serious trouble with the law.

Examples in this complex category might include: statewide volunteer involvement offices in education, welfare, criminal justice, mental health, etc., statewide associations of hospital volunteer directors; independent or semi-independent local volunteer resource organizations formed for special purposes, such as aid to struggling businesses by retired executives; and any local unit/chapter of a national organization insofar as this unit or chapter is substantially independent of its national in policy formulation and choice

of projects.

The last-named must run into the hundreds of thousands, e.g., the 5,000-plus branches of AAL (plus all the local lodges of some 200 other fraternalists); the 2,000 local units of Church Women United; the 175 chapters of the Association of Junior Leagues, all the local chapters and clubs in AAUW, Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions, Zonta, the League of Women Voters, and on and on.⁸ While many of these local chapters or units might fail our independence test of non-nationalness, they ordinarily do exert significant influence on their national, financially or policy-wise; they are far more than tame appendages in healthy national organizations.

The Section III Appendix attempts a rather pathetic scan of the "More Fully Specialized" non-national sector. This sector's ability to overwhelm counting says only one thing clearly; it is extremely large.

Conclusion to this Section

Readers may differ on the point at which these comparisons got away from us in terms of unacceptable uncertainty. But even if tolerance of uncertainty forecloses serious considerations after Type A, or Type B, one general conclusion seems clear:

The Non-National Support Apparatus For Traditional Volunteerism is collectively large, and far larger than the comparable national support apparatus, in every sense of larger.

But sheer size doesn't guarantee effectiveness and that is the issue in the next section.

IV. THE IMPACT OF NON-NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ON TRADITIONAL VOLUNTEERING

All impact is divided in three parts here: representation, advocacy, and protection.

A. How well is traditional volunteering represented by non-nationals?

Representation by non-nationals is understood as the practical extent to which people have input into the goals, policy, and activities of an organization. Input means not only the chance to have your say; it also includes the probability that your say will be heard, considered, and sometimes accepted. Non-nationals have four major advantages in representing their membership, consumers of services, other constituents, or even passersby.

- 1) Non-nationals are more accessible geographically, and this will be increasingly important in our era of energy shortage and inflation.
- 2) Non-nationals tend to be smaller than nationals, with less hierarchy to block, ignore, or lose ideas.
- 3) Non-nationals can more easily give the poor a ^{vote} ~~note~~. Their fees for belonging tend to be low or zero; hence there is less temptation to ~~place priority on~~ listening hardest to those who contribute hard cash. National membership or other belonging fees range from about \$25 to \$200 yearly, averaging about \$50-75. But you can belong to a local association of volunteer directors for \$5-10 annually, and a priority hearing at your local volunteer center might cost you nothing more than a little work.
- 4) Non-national budgets typically range from meager to non-existent. Therefore, non-nationals have little choice but to depend heavily on volunteer participation in the organization's work. And today's volunteer is more insistent on having ideas accepted along with service. Thus, the persevering participant in a non-national is more likely to have a genuine sense of ownership.

In representation, the natural advantages seem to be all with the non-nationals. As a consequence, they are indeed closer to the pulse of traditional volunteering. But the picture is less clear on the fate of input, specifically the ability to implement it in action.

B. How well is traditional volunteering advocated for by organizations other than National?

"Advocated for" is defined as the attempt to implement input by influencing policy, regulation, legislation, and staff or public attitudes towards increased support of traditional volunteering.

Advocacy will be discussed in two sections:

1) Issues of local (non-national) concern, which are also decided locally, largely or entirely.

Examples of such issues are insurance (varying widely from state to state); persuading the local college to offer courses and/or academic credit for volunteers or leaders of volunteers; petitioning the local transportation system to schedule (more) stops where volunteers work; and persuading human service delivery organizations to hire, or not to fire, directors of volunteer services.

Non-nationals have the following advantages here because,

- a) Since they are responsive to their constituencies (Section A), they will choose advocacy issues more wisely, and have more support from their constituencies in working on these issues;
- b) They understand better "how things get done" in their town or state;
- c) They are likely to have more direct personal linkages to local decision-makers;
- d) Theoretically at least, non-nationals are more likely to have faster reaction times in responding to issues.

National organizations have the advantage of their prestige, clout, the national image, national credibility, and more resources. For this reason, non-nationals sometimes seek national endorsements on local petitions. But there is sometimes danger of backfire here, when the endorsement is uninvited or in any situation where interference by "foreigners" is resented.

2) Issues of national scope and concern

These are issues which concern local volunteer people, but cannot be resolved or fully resolved at the local level. Examples of such national advocacy issues would be increased State Department support for volunteers or volunteer leaders in international exchange programs, and a better break for volunteers from IRS (tax credits or tax deductions).

The distinction isn't always that clearcut. Better insurance coverage, or more favorable gas mileage allotments for volunteers, are at least partly winnable issues, state by state. The resulting improvement in the national picture would then be a mosaic of local victories; and this momentum might further encourage additional positive decisions actually made nationally.

Even for truly and solely national issues, non-nationals have a great deal to contribute:

- a) Their ability to represent and be responsive to local people (Section A), and
- b) Collectively, ^{or} for larger numbers of people more directly involved in their organizations;⁹ that is, they can "deliver the votes" at the grass roots.

But, on the record thus far, it is very difficult for non-nationals to advocate in a nationally coordinated fashion without the effective and responsive good offices of nationals. While collaboration among national organizations leaves something to be desired today, horizontal collaboration among non-nationals leaves virtually everything to be desired.¹⁰

Therefore on national advocacy issues, an individual who succeeds in having her/his views well-represented by a non-national, can have these views advocated for only indirectly: individual-to-non-national to national. But even here, it may be effective for an individual to be

represented nationally as part of a local block, much as our system of government operates via elected representatives.

C. How well is traditional volunteering protected by organizations other than national?

"Protected by" is defined here as the ability to prevent or repair harm to the traditional volunteer sector. Examples of such damage might be a TV show which caricatures volunteers or a decision by a large service organization to terminate volunteer coordinator positions. Injury can also be done to the traditional volunteer sector through failure of national or non-national organizations adequately to represent this sector's needs, concerns, purposes, even acting at cross-purposes to them. In such cases, the designated protectors may need to be protected against.

Thus, good representation is one facet of good protection. The other facet is advocacy, a kind of defensive, reactive advocacy, to prevent, alleviate, or recoup setbacks in policy, regulations, etc. This differs from a more proactive advocacy which moves forward to gain new ground for traditional volunteering.

But generally, I see "protected by" as a combination of the two previous aspects of impact: "represented by" and advocated for. The conclusions there also apply here for non-nationals.

V. MAIN THEMES

We have been probing the role of organizations other than national in establishing a power base for positive change in traditional volunteering. Our principal conclusions have been that this non-national support apparatus:

- 1) is large, and many times larger than the comparable national support structure;
- 2) has many natural advantages in representing traditional volunteering;
- 3) has impressive positive potential in advocating on issues which can be resolved non-nationally;

- 4) in its advocacy on nationally-decided issues, is seriously hampered by imperfect linkages with national organizations; and
- 5) in protection of traditional volunteering, has positive features deriving from its ability to represent and advocate for this sector.

These conclusions suggest at least two key questions for Panel consideration.

Is it realistic to pose Forum follow-through challenges as if any national or combination of nationals could go it alone?

If it is not realistic, what are the prospects and strategies for securing closer linkage and cooperation between nationals and non-nationals, so they can go it better together?

Such national/non-national relationships have been worked at over the years between local Volunteer Centers and AVB or ~~Volunteer~~ ^{VOLUNTEER}; State offices of Volunteerism and the ACTION Agency; and most recently between local associations of volunteer directors and the ^{Ar.} National Association for Volunteer Administration.

Thus, panelists have precedent in considering how best to form a more perfect union between nationals and non-nationals, in support of traditional volunteering.

FOOTNOTES

1. See especially my December, 1979 paper in A Look at the Eighties: Crucial Environmental Factors Affecting Volunteerism. © 1980, Aid Association for Lutherans.
2. EXPLORING VOLUNTEER SPACE: THE RECRUITING OF A NATION. Volunteer Readership, Boulder, Colorado, 1980.
3. But see also page 3 of Volunteering, 1979-1980. A Status Report on America's Volunteer Community. The point is well made there, that what we now call non-traditional volunteering, (self-help groups, citizen action movements) is in fact more the tradition in our nation.
4. The term "non-national" frequently substitutes for "other than national" in the text, because this term seems less awkward in sentence flow. But I recognize that "non-national" may be somewhat misleading in oversharpening the distinction between what is national and what is not.
5. By contrast, the national arena has been quite thoroughly inventoried. A recently-issued desk encyclopedia of volunteerism describes hundreds of resources which are mainly or entirely national in scope. Virtually no non-national resources are catalogued in Community Resource Tie-Line: Information System, Four-One-One, Annandale, Virginia, 1980, 332 pages plus attachments.
6. If more evidence of classification problems were needed, university-based volunteer resource centers would provide it. Some of these centers see themselves as local or regional while actually having some national-level impact. Other such centers see themselves as national but actually seem to have distinctly more impact on their surrounding region.
7. The count in Gordon Manser's concurrent paper will be the authoritative one, but it may be interesting to compare the two estimates. There is a sense in which there are far more national organizations impacting traditional volunteering than appear here, though the vast majority of them are not generic. See footnote 5 on this and, for generic national resources, add approximately 25 for-profit organizations or independent consultants who operate regionally or nationally to provide support, training, and technical assistance to the traditional volunteer sector.
8. My apologies for not having checked this more thoroughly in the timeframe available, but I recall studies by David Horton Smith and others indicating up to six million voluntary organizations in the United States. Many of these would be non-national and depend heavily on volunteers, though their status as resources to traditional volunteering is problematical.
9. For example, the national Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) has only about 10% as many direct members as do all comparable local associations of volunteer directors. I believe that evidence could be adduced to show that all generic nationals are in a similar situation.
10. There have been some partially successful attempts, however, i.e., the national association of RSVP directors, ~~and~~ statewide associations of Volunteer Bureaus, inside and outside the national framework of the Association of Volunteer Bureaus, the Assembly of State Offices and local volunteer coalitions.

APPENDIX TO SECTION III

TENTATIVE TABULATIONS OF NON-NATIONALS

GENERIC

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Estimated Number of Organizations</u>
(a) Volunteer Bureaus, Voluntary Action Centers, or other community-wide volunteer centers	300-350
(b) Statewide or regional associations of Volunteer Bureaus or Voluntary Action Centers	3-5
(c) Local associations of volunteer directors across all areas of human service	150-200
(d) Statewide associations of volunteer directors in all areas of human service	10-15
(e) Statewide offices of voluntary citizen participation	25
(f) Local colleges and universities offering courses in volunteerism to volunteers or volunteer directors	50-75
(g) University-based volunteer resource centers with local and regional concentration	<u>5-7</u>
Approximate Total	550-700

NotesA. Number of Organizations

1. Estimates for most categories were based on directories, mailing lists, information summaries, or phone calls to authoritative sources.
2. The approximations for categories (c) and (d) were ^{converging} ~~emerging~~ estimates from scans done independently by Mary Ann Lawson and me in summer, 1978.
3. There is occasional overlap between categories. The main instance of this is that about one-third of local associations of volunteer directors are quite closely associated with their local Volunteer Bureau.

B. Number of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

The total estimate of 700-800 assumed that categories (a), (e), and (g), totaling about 350 organizations, were likely to have 1½ or more paid staff per organization, while other organizations would average distinctly less than one paid staff per organization.

f

C. Number of Regularly-Involved Unpaid Staff, Advisors, Policy-Makers

The simplistic assumption was about ten regular volunteer staff or advisors per organization.

SPECIAL-POPULATION NON-NATIONALS

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Number of Organizations</u>
(a) Local Retired Senior Volunteer Programs	717
(b) Employee Volunteer Coordinating Programs in Corporations	300-350
(c) Volunteer clearinghouses in colleges and universities	400-450
(d) Local volunteer community placement programs in churches and synagogues	300-400
(e) Local high schools offering courses in volunteerism to their students	<u>50-75</u>
Approximate Total	1700-2000

Notes

The sources are similar at a ^{generally} ~~generically~~ higher level of uncertainty. The considerations, such as some overlap (e.g. between RSVP's and Volunteer Bureaus) are also similar.

The estimate of paid staff assumed this kind of organization, particularly (c) and (d), would tend to have fewer paid staff per organization.

MORE FULLY SPECIALIZED NON-NATIONALS

<u>Type of Organization</u>	<u>Number of Organizations</u>
1. Statewide offices for support of traditional volunteering in specific service areas such as criminal justice, education, welfare, mental health, etc.	50-75
2. Local or state associations of directors of volunteers in specific service areas such as hospitals, probation, etc.	50-75
3. Local or state specialized volunteer support organizations	Many hundreds ^{hundreds} or thousands ^{thousands}
4. Local or state chapters/units/branches of national organizations	Hundreds of thousands or millions