



HOSTED BY MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION
FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

Report From The 2017 National Summit on Volunteer Engagement Leadership

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26 – FRIAY, JULY 28

Hamline University • Saint Paul, MN

*Hosted by Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration and led by
teams of individuals from Minnesota and across the country*



In July 2017, in St. Paul, MN, more than 500 professionals, from various walks of volunteer management life, joined together to map the future of the field. The National Summit was an opportunity for current and emerging leaders to discover together how to build a new national presence for leaders of volunteer engagement.

EVENT SUMMARY:

Huge thanks to the [Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration](http://www.mavanetwork.org) (MAVA) for hosting this ground-breaking event, and to Fidelity Charitable, the Leighty Foundation, and the Lodestar Foundation for their tremendous support. We couldn't have done it without you! And so many others volunteered on committees, presented, and participated as attendees. Whatever the capacity in which you took part, we are so glad to have had you along for the ride! Thank you, thank you, thank you.

<http://www.mavanetwork.org/summitreport>

The National Summit brought together 525 volunteer engagement leaders from four countries and 33 states for more than 100 breakout sessions on a variety of topics from professional development and leveraging the profession, to basic best practices like preventing burn-out and advocating for your team. You downloaded the Convene app to help you navigate the Summit program, to take polls during plenary sessions, and to download workshop materials along the way.

We kicked things off with [affinity group meetings](#) on Wednesday morning and then hosted a unique plenary session with the talented [Theater of Public Policy](#) (T2P2) (excerpts from the plenaries were shared via Facebook live and continue to be available on the [Summit Facebook page](#)). Workshops were underway by the afternoon and we capped the day off with a river cruise through St. Paul.



Thursday proved just as action-packed with an opening fringe session entitled "Beyond Volunteering: Why You Might Choose to Lead More Than Volunteers" and four blocks of workshop sessions to lead us through the remainder of the day. Thursday evening, we soaked in some sun at our community barbecue on the beautifully manicured lawn of the Summit's host, Hamline University.

Friday morning provided us with the opportunity to attend two more breakout sessions and then a final culminating plenary where we shared thoughts, laughs, and impressions from the Summit. For those who were able to stay, we concluded the event with our "Continuing the Conversation" discussion. And if you weren't, know that we've archived the final session, along with the plenary presentations, on our Facebook page, so you can watch the videos at your leisure. The plenaries and National Strategy sessions were also cleverly illustrated through the graphic recordings of Caryn Ginsberg with Priority Visuals.



While at the Summit, attendees also had the chance to learn more about volunteer support services from around the country in our Exhibit Hall, as well as gather resources at the Summit Bookstore. Whether connecting with some of our event sponsors, or learning about new technologies to help leverage your work, you discovered new ways to evolve your work and impact as a volunteer leader.

THEMES:

What did we learn? Oh so much! Here are some of the main themes that arose in our time together:

- **Positioning the Profession:** We discussed the nuances between volunteer engagement as a profession, skill-set, and both. We articulated the need for a professional association and also representation in academia. We talked about the need to work individually, and as a community, to advocate for the field.
- **Connecting and Networking:** It's all about networking, right?! We met new people from our sectors, and beyond, to form connections and develop support systems. Which ties right into...
- **Mentoring:** This came up in so many of our workshops. We identified the need to strength ties between generational lines so that those with more experience can coach, and leave their legacy, to the next generation of leaders. Peer-to-Peer mentoring was also a big theme!
- **Research:** We need more of it! Research on volunteer impact, best practices, evaluating engagement, following trends, and so much more. There also needs to be more collaboration between academics and practitioners.
- **Sharing:** We need to "toot, toot, toot" our horns to both our organizational leaders and each other. We need to share our resources and strategies online and also at the local level. We need to gather with other volunteer leaders regularly to prevent burn-out and to get a seat at the table. We need to expand the table and include funders and others in the discussions and movement. *But first, we need to find the table!* (Watch the [T2P2 plenary session](#) for this inside joke!)
- **Mapping the Future:** The greatest insight of all? There's still so much work to be done! *We* are the future of volunteer leadership--which is exactly why this is just the beginning. Read on to learn more about how you can continue to be a part of the conversation.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that we've gathered together to articulate the needs of our field we're ready to get moving on several action items, including planning another national meeting, identifying key areas of research potential, launching a virtual information hub, and a whole lot more. Based on the [polling conducted](#) throughout the plenary sessions, immediate next steps have been prioritized. Our partners, the [Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement](#), AL!VE, have stepped up to convene a task force of interested folks who will drive the conversation these next 3 months as we devise clear plans for the future. If you'd be interested in learning more, or potentially joining one of the project committees, be sure to sign up via the [general interest form](#). Also, be sure you're following the Summit's social media pages so you're in the loop.