

## An Open Letter to Decision-Makers in Volunteer-Supported Organizations and Entities

May 1, 2020

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented. Organizations of all types—non-profit, small and large businesses, and civic entities—have been challenged to deliver their core services. Few have escaped the wave of financial, operational and programmatic changes created by this crisis.

Despite the challenges, many organizations are also experiencing unprecedented support from volunteers who simply want to help. People who care about a cause and their community roll up their sleeves, put their heads together, and find ways to make a difference. Your volunteers are vital players in the ways your organization and your community will heal and move forward. Their ingenuity can also be central to creating new and innovative solutions yet to be considered by your team.

To fully leverage the volunteer talent of your organization, you must include the Leader of Volunteer Engagement at the decision-making table. They offer a perspective few others see. While including their leadership and voice, The Alliance implores you to make these bold commitments as you define your organization's sustainability strategy:

- **Invest in Your Volunteer Strategy** – It is easy to overlook the strategic impact your volunteer Board of Directors, committees, donors and helpers offer your organization and its mission. Now is the time to invest in your organization's volunteer engagement leadership and the teams they guide. Partner with funders to elevate their understanding and support of strategic investment in your organization's volunteer engagement strategy.
- **Communicate With Your Volunteers** – Keep those who serve through your organization close by sharing ongoing, strategic, mission-aligned communication. Doing so is essential to keeping your volunteers engaged. Nurture relationships in meaningful ways that resonate with your volunteers as community change agents.
- **Anticipate the Need for Flexibility** – Your organization and the way it serves may look different in the future. Amidst shifting expectations, call upon your volunteers for their agility. Help them remain nimble and ready to respond to the changes necessary to drive sustained outcomes.
- **Think in New Ways** – The economic impact of COVID-19 is already dire. New challenges will call for fresh solutions to address your community's needs. Invite the limitless pool of talent your volunteers offer to help create new answers to the unsolved questions.

Now is the time for entity leaders to ensure the capacity to serve our nation's communities is sustained and developed for the future. This only happens when your greatest resource—caring, talented, resourceful people—benefits from your continued investment.

What steps are you taking today to ensure volunteer energy is essential to your sustainability plan? How will you and peer leaders answer the call to support volunteers as the lifeblood of your organization?

The mission for **The National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement** is to guide and inspire collective action towards embracing volunteer engagement as a key strategy for driving positive community change.