

NOVEMBER 2016

SERVICE ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE OUTCOMES REPORT

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION AND HANDSON TWIN CITIES



OVERVIEW

In 2014, the national Points of Light organization selected the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) and HandsOn Twin Cities (HOTC) as hubs to provide a service enterprise certification program to Minnesota entities. This Service Enterprise Initiative (SEI) is a cutting edge national program designed to maximize organizational impact through best practices in volunteer engagement. Through this initiative, 28 Minnesota entities are now designated as certified service enterprises and many more are in the process of achieving certification.

To determine the impact of MAVA's and HOTC's work with entities working toward service enterprise certification, HOTC held a focus group with representatives from five certified service enterprise organizations and MAVA interviewed an additional fourteen staff and volunteers from four organizations that participated in the SEI. MAVA and HOTC gathered input for this report within six months to two years after the organizations had participated in SEI training.

The focus group and interviews were based on questions developed by Wilder Research with the goals of helping MAVA and HOTC to gather information to:

- » Develop marketing strategies for Service Enterprise to recruit organizations to participate.
- » Secure funding to support future Service Enterprise cohorts.

CAER, City of Roseville, DARTS, Hastings Family Services, Jeremiah Program, Lutheran Social Service, Maple Grove Hospital, Minnesota Historical Society, RESOURCE, and YMCA of the Twin Cities participated in this study. Interviews conducted with staff included a Supervisor of Volunteer Services, an Executive Director, a City Manager, a Director of Nursing, and a Head of Archeology. The staff had been in their positions for between 2 to 30 years. Three volunteers also provided feedback through interviews.

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**THIS IS A PROCESS THAT
KEEPS ON GIVING.**

FINDINGS

Motivation for SEI participation

Organizations were asked what made them decide to become involved in SEI. Each organization provided a slightly different reason for participation ranging from wanting to grow their volunteer program to the desire to be on the cutting edge. The reasons cited included:

To be forward thinking and continuously improve.

“Staff in volunteer services department are forward looking people; they won’t cruise along and continue on as has been done in past. Always looking for new ways to improve.”

“Organization [was] at a good place; program [is] 22 years old; needed fresh energy – knew [we] needed to make changes; trying to do it on [our] own and spinning wheels. Internal push to embed more skills based volunteers.”

To grow the volunteer program.

“We wanted to grow our volunteer program; streamline it; needed more structure.”

To develop the volunteer program model.

“At first we thought we needed to wait because pieces were not yet in place; we went ahead and participated in order to develop a volunteer program model using best practices. This is a process that keeps on giving.”

To be on the cutting edge.

“Innovative entity; found the money; happy to be a pioneer in this. Want to be at cutting edge.”

“Interest in leading health care and being on the front edge.”

“Fits culture; excellence in all we do drives us; volunteers are a part of our services and our approach of excellence.”

What separates SEI from other volunteer management trainings

When asked what separates SEI from other volunteer management trainings, the reasons cited included that SEI:

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**IT IS A PART OF WHO WE
ARE AND OUR CULTURE.**

Enabled them to make real progress unlike other one-time conferences.

“We go to conferences and learn a lot but don’t do anything after. With SEI, it has become a way we do things and way we get things done. We had to make the time and it is ongoing. It is not a fad diet. It is a part of who we are and our culture.”

“More conclusive; good follow through and follow-up process. Not just a one-time inspiring conference. Concrete programming and commitment established. SED showed areas of opportunity; relevant training; carrying through the action plan. Well rounded program.”

Gets staff from different departments on the same page.

“Great to have executive and line staff in the same room talking about volunteer management. Great conversation about SED. Invited all staff to learn about volunteer management. Getting staff to attend trainings was huge.”

Focused on organizational development.

“More thorough; focus on infrastructure. More holistic view.”

“Focus on organizational development and organizational change vs. individuals and this sets it apart.”

Provided networking opportunities that helped them stay accountable.

“Staff liked interaction with other organizations. Wanted more time for that. It is great that first cohort continues to meet once a month. We hold each other accountable.”

“The details we worked through, the coaching was helpful. This process had good hand holding; helped us stay accountable.”

Had value by having both HOTC and MAVA involved.

“Having HOTC and MAVA expertise helped.”

How organizations got involved

Organizations indicated that they became involved through a staff person hearing about the initiative from MAVA and HOTC. The decision to get involved was usually made by the staff person bringing the idea to appropriate decision-makers in the organization.

“Staff approached a supervisor and made a recommendation to a senior leader. Very important to have institutional buy in.”

“City Manager made ultimate decision. Group decision.”

Benefits of participating in SEI

Key takeaways that organizations cited from the SEI process covered a wide range of benefits, including:

Realizing the importance of taking a strategic planning approach to volunteer engagement.

“More deliberate and strategic about approach to volunteers; before it was ad hoc and disorganized.”

“Takes more planning and mapping than just telling volunteer coordinator to find volunteers...not as simple as it seemed to be.”

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INCLUDES UNDERSTANDING THAT VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT A FREE MAGIC SOLUTION.

Understanding that volunteers are not free and need to think of volunteers as a program with a budget.

“Includes understanding that volunteers are not a free magic solution...There is a cost to volunteers and its staff time from everyone.”

“Learning that volunteerism is not just free people; there is cost in terms of staff time and finding out value of your volunteer program. Volunteerism provides extra service, but is not only about dollar saving.”

“SED confirmed that we didn’t have adequate space and technology for volunteers; helped us to allocate new physical resources.”

Recognizing that there are systems and processes for volunteer engagement and that it is important for the organization to agree on the processes.

“There are models and best practices we need to follow. Staff supervising volunteers need training. Nice to take a step back and look at it.”

“Coming to an agreement and understanding of how the process works and role of volunteer coordinator is and what role of all staff has.”

Increasing awareness of volunteers and broadening perspective on how volunteers can be involved, including the use of skilled volunteers.

“Opened eyes for every department regarding how volunteers can fit into daily work.”

“How much you can utilize skilled volunteers to help the organization.”

“Huge blossoming of volunteerism and we should take advantage of that.”

“Increased awareness of volunteer services by other staff and awareness that volunteers are integral to getting work done throughout the organization.”

“As a larger organization, helped different areas of the organization learn from one another. The coming together in and of itself was a good thing. This put our volunteer program in the forefront. People started thinking about how to utilize volunteers differently. Tore down some barriers about why volunteers couldn’t be used in particular areas. New awareness came out. Changed the way people thought.”

“Established a lot of credibility for volunteer services. Raised visibility of how volunteers can increase capacity. Silos removed.”

Building an understanding that a change management process strengthens volunteer involvement.

“Change management – helped to engage all staff; we don’t have to do this alone.”

“Change management brought light bulbs – people connected with this piece.”

Increasing buy-in from upper management.

“Buy-in increased from upper management.”

“Having the whole staff participate in SED gave insights to all staff. Had a good volunteer program but SEI helped us to become a well-oiled machine.”

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LIFTED UP THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM. VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT NOW SEEN AS A LEADER WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION.

Moving organization along in the process.

“This is an ongoing process, but there is benefit to pushing yourself in a short period of time; moved us along more than we would do on our own.”

“Action plan was awesome; time line.”

“SEI and the assessment tool helped us with regard to areas of growth as well as strengths: good starting point. We are a service organization so this helped us look at how volunteers can be used in new ways; more use of volunteers in professional roles.”

“Lifted up the volunteer program. Volunteer department now seen as leaders within the organization. Leaders who should be at the table and leaders who have a voice. Volunteer Services Department now gets invited to all meetings like strategic planning. Not seen as a resource before. Now seen at the planning stage. Development finally sees how volunteer services is a resource and support. Process elevated volunteer services. The SED helped us to see that we were not as bad as we thought we were. Now have SEI champions in the organization.”

“SED helped us to see what we need to do. Having CEO and COO there helped legitimize the process. We are more seen as a resource; asked what we can do to help other departments. Staff now see how helpful volunteers are to the organization.”

Recognizing other benefits such as the value of networking with other organizations and the recognition of what they are already doing well.

“Networking huge – though not other hospitals; community networks.”

“Recognizing how they already are very strategic in use of volunteers; very welcoming culture – good to reflect that we are doing a lot of things right. Staff very open to volunteers.”

How entities have changed

Organizations indicated that they had implemented changes as a result of SEI, including:

An increased focus on volunteerism.

“General acceptance that volunteerism is here to stay.”

“Greater understanding of potential from volunteers. There are so many places where volunteers can be used.”

“More focus on volunteer integration.”

“Volunteer department is more visible now; now at the front of the house. Volunteers are more visible. Volunteers are our greatest resource.”

Identification of new roles for volunteers, including roles in leadership.

“New volunteer positions.”

“New lead volunteer position – support, mentor, supervise.”

“More experienced volunteers used as supervisors.”

“Volunteers feel more heard – they share what the challenges are.”

Systematized processes and getting agreement on processes.

“ WE NEVER HAD A VOLUNTEERISM LINE ITEM IN BUDGET. NOW WE DO.”

“All staff and board members on board with the process... Staff get that this is the reason we have certain processes.”

“Streamlining of the program so there is a step-by-step process every volunteer goes through. Systemization of process. Now use all job descriptions; handbook, policies.”

Clarified roles.

“Clarifying of roles for staff and volunteer coordinator.”

“Volunteer coordinator now gets more support. She feels like an equal to other director level staff.”

“Volunteer office seen as functioning like an HR office—focus more on on-boarding, training more like HR.”

“Now we meet as a group about embedding value of volunteerism in every job description.”

Training and orientation.

“Working on annual training for all volunteers.”

“More focus on volunteer training.”

Increased volunteers.

“There is an increase of volunteerism.”

“Increased use of respite volunteers.”

Increased resources to support volunteers.

“Break down barriers about time needed to manage volunteers.”

“Provide volunteers with equipment to do jobs.”

“We never had a volunteerism line item in budget—now we do.”

“SEI helped us to see the value of investing more money and resources into volunteerism.”

One staff person reported that they were not sure if there had been changes yet.

How volunteers have changed

When asked how changes have affected volunteers, organizations reported better training, utilization, integration and recognition.

Better training.

“SEI volunteers had option of attending orientation with paid staff; taking people skills and using them strategically.”

“More training.”

Improved utilization.

“Better utilized and increase use of volunteers.”

“Now we have changed to a group orientation; more efficient use of volunteer coordinator time. Processes are now streamlined. More staff training on working with volunteers. Staff now oriented on how to supervise volunteers and understanding how volunteers are incorporated into the program. We do beginner level and advanced level training for staff. There is an increase of staff demand of volunteer services.”

More integration and recognition.

“Feel part of something bigger. More connected to the organization.”

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VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATE SEEING HOW THEY ARE INTERWOVEN INTO THE ORGANIZATION.

“Volunteers appreciate seeing how they are interwoven into the organization. The org chart now includes volunteers. They know where they stand. They have expectations too and now have an avenue to express that. Volunteer reviews are on the action plan.”

“Volunteers understand the mission more and they get how they affect the mission; they are more well-informed.”

“SEI has impacted quality of interaction clients have with volunteers. Volunteers have more insight and training about the clients served, how staff work with them; more collaboration between staff and volunteers. More information sharing so this impacts quality of interaction with clients. Volunteers are trusted and respected more by staff and clients. Credibility increase is huge. Greater use of technology to communicate and engage volunteers.”

Three of the staff interviewed responded that volunteers were not seeing changes yet, or it was hard to say what changes they were seeing.

How staff and overall organization have changed

When asked how SEI has affected staff and organization, entities reported a range of answers, including:

Improved staff and the organization openness to volunteerism.

“Treat volunteers as staff; they get how integral volunteers they are to the work of the organization. Staff interact more positively with volunteers.”

“Much more appreciation for volunteers and the work they do; recognition of how much we lean on volunteers. Staff get how much volunteers can help when things get tight.”

Increased utilization of volunteers.

“Much greater utilization. Volunteers can do some things that free up staff to do other things.”

“Greater partnership with HR. We now include volunteer engagement in all staff job descriptions.”

“Volunteer services are more sought after all across the state. Employees are better equipped to support volunteers.”

Eased level of stress.

“Too much on everyone’s plates; eased stress – they can find volunteers to help them. Relieves burden.”

How has SEI affected the people, community, or clients served

When asked how it has affected the people, community, or clients you serve, the most common response was that it was hard to say, or too early to tell, though about a third of the staff interviewed cited changes.

“Hard to say. More awareness of volunteer opportunities. We are a changing demographics community; volunteerism will be more visible in community.”

“Assess two years from now. Too early.”

“Now we have different faces at our organization; that is noticeable to the community. More programs that impact

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VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATE SEEING HOW THEY ARE INTERWOVEN INTO THE ORGANIZATION.

community. We have retired teachers helping with new summer school food programs.”

“Community sees volunteers helping with good patient care; patients sometime know the volunteers– feel taken care of by community members.”

“More welcoming. Volunteers are at museums and historical sites; they provide welcoming face to people; guide people; direct interaction with visitors; this is useful and takes stress off staff.”

Visibility of changes

When asked if the implemented changes were visible or recognizable by board members, by people who did not know about SEI participation, or by outside partners, respondents answers ranged from yes, to not sure, to probably not.

“Board: yes... Others: new volunteers find it easier to volunteer here. They appreciate the process. Response to volunteers is now immediate. Volunteers feel well utilized. There is always work for them.”

“Would hope so. Patient experience scores are in the highest numbers in the nation. All team members and volunteers – in top 1% in nation.”

“Not sure.”

“Early in process; things in pipeline but not yet implemented. There are outside partners who might say we are doing it the right way, i.e. other cities, corporate groups they work with.”

“Probably not. SEI is a hard concept to explain. Takes some education. Some awareness that volunteers support parks but not much visibility about SEI.”

“Probably not as visible. Board has heard about level of volunteerism get annual reports; just dawned on folks that board members are volunteers.”

“Networking and improvement efforts within the Twin Cities community are very valuable. We keep each other accountable as a community; learning from each other is very valuable.”

Recognizing the difference in the volunteer program before and after participation

When asked about the volunteer program before and after participation, staff could identify a wide variety of changes, such as:

A switch from an informal to a systematic process to assess volunteer needs.

“Prior to SEI, there wasn’t much assessment. It was more on an ad hoc basis. If an idea came up that a volunteer could do, they would bring it up. Now there is more emphasis on how to create new positions.”

“In the past if staff needed something, volunteer department found someone. Change is that the process is more regularized; less reactive. More actively going out and convincing staff about use of volunteers; always finding new places for volunteers.

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**PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT ALL
VOLUNTEERS CAN DO IS
STUFF ENVELOPES. NOW
REALIZE VOLUNTEERS
CAN DO ANYTHING.**

From: “Fly by the seat of your pants.” To: “As staff we now are more aware that volunteers can help us get the work done.”

More requests from staff.

“Pre-SEI we had structures in place but staff didn’t know about them. SEI has enabled more staff awareness about utilization of volunteers. Staff are participating more in volunteer engagement.”

Positions more mission driven.

“As a result of SEI we are more mission driven with our volunteer positions. More mission driven but timing may be coincidental.”

“We now live by our values with regard to our volunteers. This was not as much a factor before SEI.”

Perceptions of volunteers

Respondents revealed that the perception of volunteers has changed as a result of SEI. Once considered a burden or only considered for limited roles, volunteers are now viewed as assets that can be valuable for all departments. Comments included:

“[Pre-SEI] staff viewed them as work; having to deal with them and manage them was seen as work. Volunteers were undervalued by senior management. Now seen as assets.”

“They were just here to stock shelves and bag groceries. [Now] people think volunteers are incredible; life savers; make our job easier.”

“[Before.] viewed very positively but viewed only as people who can help with entry level stuff. Now every staff person who works with volunteers will have that in their job description.”

“More respect for volunteers now. Previously thought all volunteers can do is stuff envelopes; now realize volunteers can do anything.”

“With some staff, they saw volunteers only as gray haired folks greeting at front desk. Now there is an increased awareness that volunteers are 14–90 and do many different roles. Now there is more public awareness; platform to further educate staff.”

“Pre-SEI, volunteers were seen as emergency backup. They were valued but not as highly as overall organizational values. Volunteers now more visible, more called upon for higher level job. Volunteers leverage growth and drive growth forward. Volunteers are in forefront of website and other aspects of the organization. More visible internally and in the community.”

Volunteer program resources

Organizations described increasing the resources allocated to the volunteer program. One organization reported increased volunteer management staff time and others reported increased technology, supplies or space budget, or increased time by staff in other departments”

“[Pre-SEI] staff’s position very part time; had other job duties. Now staff is full time with volunteer management.”

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POST-SEI MINDSET SHIFT ABOUT RESOURCES NEEDED TO MANAGE VOLUNTEERS. NOW VOLUNTEERS ARE NOT AN ADD-ON—IT’S THE WAY WE WORK.

“[Before, there was] no budget. Now we will have a line item on the budget. Increasing volunteer recognition line item; t-shirts etc.”

“No new paid employees but can reach into other departments and use their resources.”

“New resources for technology and volunteer work space, more emphasis on the website.”

Staff training and resources

The training and resources provided to staff working with volunteers was described as being in the process of increasing in three of the entities but most reported that it needs to be increased more.

“More money for training now.”

“Now it’s on a case by case basis but action plan is to have training for managers.”

“Need improvement here. Have a volunteer integration PowerPoint but need to roll it out formally.”

“We need to increase training provided to staff but this is a challenge.”

“Before SEI fewer resources to manage volunteers. Post SEI mindset shift about resources needed to manage volunteers. Now volunteers are not an add-on; it’s the way we work. More ingrained into overall program.”

Other changes

Other changes described included becoming more systematized in working with volunteers, being less siloed and being more collaborative.

“Was project by project; staff self-organized. Volunteers may or may not come back; was not systematized—now it is.”

“Very siloed. Done by program as well as by department.”

“Before they had ‘silos of excellence.’ The volunteer department was a silo of excellence; now much more integrated into the organization; volunteers more integrated.”

“Underground before; less collaborative. A few people doing good work but not connected—now have more people involved and more transparent. Now more of a partnership.”

“Pre-SEI we had tools and resources but few staff were using them. There were pockets of support. Post-SEI, so much more awareness of resources, support available; created enthusiasm for engaging volunteers. There are still pockets doing their own thing but in general there is more standardization and people are using the same process and procedures.”

“Before SEI there were fewer resources to manage volunteers. Post SEI mindset shift about resources needed to manage volunteers. Now volunteers are not an add-on; it’s the way we work. More ingrained into overall program.”

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ABILITY TO MINE OUR VOLUNTEER'S ASSETS—USING VOLUNTEERS BASED ON WHAT THEY WANT TO OFFER AND WHAT THEY HAVE TO OFFER.

Organizational support for change

When asked if implemented or planned changes have been supported by all levels of the organization, two organizations reported the changes were support all levels in the organization and two reported there was some support, but not at all levels.

“Yes, there has been lots of buy in from senior leadership—every department is connected to the volunteer department in some way. Front line staff supportive.”

“Yes buy-in from everyone.”

“Yes and no at every level. It is a big organization. So many priorities. Voice has been heard on a broader base than before SEI. Helped position them; but will be challenged to hold ground and keep momentum going. Daily grind.”

Certification

The organizations that have been certified as a Service Enterprise describe the benefits of certification as:

Validating and adding credibility to the volunteer program.

“Validate volunteer program. Legitimizes that this is an actual program; volunteers don’t just show up. We have put effort into getting the right volunteers involved.”

“Benefits are visibility within the organization as experts in the field; gave volunteer department some credibility; there are lots of certifications in industry; In the history/museum field lots of award opportunities; this put volunteer program in that milieu gold standard. Internal credibility.”

Increasing awareness of volunteer and creating good experience for volunteers.

“Greater awareness of volunteers.”

“Volunteer department treats people well; professionally. Good experience for volunteers.”

“Don’t just leave volunteers to parks and rec; integrate in all operations.”

“More focused conversations about volunteerism; more strategic.”

Improving process.

“We walk the walk. Now handbook and job descriptions, all staff and volunteers know of process; expectations are up front instead of as you go.”

Providing public relations opportunities and is of interest to funders.

“Funders are interested in SEI certification.”

“Public acknowledgment; stamp of approval.”

The one organization that is planning to do the Service Enterprise certification soon describe seeing the benefits of public recognition, being more strategic and increasing capacity.

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EXCITEMENT AND PRIDE IN A PROGRAM THAT HAS GOALS AND DIRECTION.

Return on investment

When asked about the returns on participating in SEI a broad range of returns were identified, including:

Growth.

“More sustainability and grow ability of volunteer program; better use of time and talent; old model we were at capacity in what we could manage; model ability to grow.”

“Newer and younger staff have increased percent of staff who work volunteers. 12% to 22% in this age group now supervise volunteers.”

Increased visibility.

“Increased visibility internally and externally.”

“More program promotion internally.”

Progress.

“Progress made on to do list – getting things done.”

“Provided a lot of good information that can be used to development a better volunteer program; create a more in-depth understanding of volunteerism. Better utilize volunteer help.”

“Huge return. When I go out to talk about us; more aware of what our volunteer needs are. Now we have job descriptions and positions; easy to advertise.”

“The ability to mine our volunteer’s assets; using volunteers based on what they want to offer and what they have to offer.”

“Better trained staff.”

Encouragement and realization we are not alone.

“Provided a lot of encouragement.”

“Good to know that this organization is not alone in this. We can learn together.”

Excitement and pride.

“Excitement and pride in program that has goals, direction etc. Certification has helped to equip the volunteer program with how to showcase the work being done.”

Overall health of the organization.

“Contributes to overall health of organization.”

A good investment.

“Change management investment; follow through needed. We got things done and had accountability and good PR.”

“Awareness and changing job to 30 hours a week a big positive for everyone.”

“Direction setting for programs.”

“Yes, not necessary to quantify in dollars; energy, positive feelings, smiling volunteers, community building.”

“It brings everybody to the table; full buy-in.”

“Networking, reengaging one another; length of program helped; connections made. Good to share with other organizations.”

“Validates the good work we are already doing.”

“Very good investment; it was a huge time investment. Needed another 10 hours of staff time invested in this.”

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**THIS IS NOT SOME CRAZY
THEORY WITH NEW
TERMINOLOGY. VERY
ADAPTABLE TO CITIES OR
ANY ORGANIZATION.**

“Easier to communicate the return on investment for now and into the future. SEI gave us the language and knowledge in order to share information. Helped us to find common ground and shared values throughout a very large organization.”

Challenges

When asked about challenges in implementing changes, the main challenges identified were:

Time and capacity.

“Typical challenges around time and capacity.”

“Prioritizing all the changes that are needed. Leadership excited and tend to ask for a lot of changes – need to prioritize. Sticking to plan of action but can’t do it all at once.”

Worries about staff buy-in.

“Staff buy-in sometimes a challenge– front line staff supervising volunteers need some more buy-in.”

“Challenge of putting theory into practice. Need accountability across staff and even some of the volunteers. Some change resistance amongst staff and volunteers. Our change happened very quickly–we didn’t allow change to settle.”

Concern if volunteers will like the changes.

“Challenges with some of the long term volunteers; getting them to recognize that volunteers have a variety of expectations. Some volunteers only want a onetime gig. Some lack of acceptance to short term volunteerism.”

Staff turnover.

“Turnover of staff involved in project. Always new education needed.”

“Staff turnover and then we feel like we have to start all over to get people on-board.”

Concern over sustaining changes.

“Want to make sure this is not ‘flavor of the day’; want this to be sustainable. This is common when there’s a new initiative that it becomes less a priority. Need to make sure it is fully embedded in organization. Common for new initiative to fade away; want to make sure this doesn’t happen here.”

“Because of the large size of our agency, it is hard to get the changes to stick across all parts of the organization.”

“Keeping SEI alive is a challenge. We need to make SEI a part of our staff meeting agenda. It is easy to get slack about some of the changes. Sometimes the old way was less structured and people liked that better.”

Recommendations to other organizations thinking about participating in SEI

When asked what they would say to other organizations thinking about participating in SEI, responses were mostly positive with the acknowledgment that organizations must be committed and prepared to invest the time.

“Great process; covers all needed facets. You sit and focus on it and helps to see that these are good practices; take the time to look at volunteer management through a new

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**GO FOR IT! JUST DO IT. IT
IS A GOOD INVESTMENT.**

lens. Process makes perfect sense. Its common practices applied towards volunteerism. This is not some crazy theory with new terminology. Very adaptable to cities or any organization.”

“This is a game changer. Opportunity to bring folks together and have deep dive conversations; volunteer management is a flexible model; need to design it to meet needs of each department. Having the forced time lines is helpful. Ownership. Sense of urgency. Common goals and agreements.”

“Would encourage it; best thing is to get the conversation moving. Rare to get all departments heads together. Dive into department that needs volunteers most. See successes in one department then have other departments follow. Each department is very different.”

“Highly recommend it. Great way to engage a variety of individuals.”

“To cities: make sure they are serious about committing to volunteerism. Must have leadership commitment; not something you do on the side; must commit; won’t work if done half-heartedly.”

“It is a commitment of time but in the long run worthwhile; will increase the return on investment.”

“It will be an investment of time, money (more than you anticipated) but it is worth it. I believe in it; we had positive results and a positive experience. I only want to put my name and reputation on to something that was positive.”

“We are surprised by huge growth and huge demand for volunteer support.”

“Worth the investment and time; what you get back is immeasurable for staff, volunteers etc. Breaks everything down into doable steps.”

“Go for it! Just do it. It is a good investment. Understand that something else will take a back seat; can’t maintain everything at previous level but worth it. Will have to make some sacrifices.”

The future

When asked where they saw their organization going in terms of their volunteer programs, respondents indicated positive expectations of growing volunteer involvement, having more staffing, a strong program, being more strategic, more systematized and more skilled based.

“It will continue to grow. Assessing needs and matching up will continue. More outreach. Whole organization will grow. Volunteer program is leading the growth of the organization.”

“Would like more staffing; then could formalize more of these plans discussed earlier.”

“Ideally a strong cadre of people and experts we can rely on to extend services for community.”

“Not as reactive; more strategic. Taking feedback and making changes.”

“Systematized; better use of technology; more infrastructure. We will see results in a year or two.”

“There will be more emphasis on finding skills based volunteers, i.e., using real estate volunteer to sort out properties records.”

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SEI IS A FLEXIBLE MODEL THAT WORKS IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS.

CONCLUSION

The interviews and focus group indicated wide-spread agreement about the value of being involved in the Service Enterprise Initiative. The organizations reported truly advancing in volunteer engagement as a result of participating. When asked if there anything else they would like to add about SEI, responses included:

“So happy we are doing this. Great to focus on this. Found value. Great to have this structure. Positive experience.”

“Highly recommend it. It was a journey. At first I wasn’t sure we could do it.”

“Good standing relationships organized, positive program to be a part of.”

“We will continue to get more and more out of it. Putting stuff up on website will help.”

“This is a lifestyle change; continues on.”

“SEI is a flexible model that works in a variety of settings.”

“Program very flexible.”

“Committed to moving forward.”

“Hope this process does not get lost.”

“Tell Points of Light to jazz up certificate; have a real seal on nice paper. Mail them a signed certificate; something they can be proud of. They were posted on POL website before they even learned they were certified.”

There were only two areas where several organizations reported not achieving what they had hoped:

- » Getting buy in from the full organization, especially line staff. All organization reported getting top management buy-in but two reported that they did feel had reached yet the full organization and line staff.
- » Increase in resources for staff training on volunteer involvement. Three organizations reported more work needed to be done in this area.

These are two areas to look at for future improvement of the SEI process, however two years may not be enough time to assess improvement in this area.