

Agency: Volunteer Center of Story County

Liaison: Kirk Youngberg

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1. Need for the Program.

The VCSC organization serves individuals, nonprofit organizations, and other volunteer groups throughout the county in an effort to connect them with the causes they wish to serve and to help them fulfill their own volunteer goals.

2. Program Strengths.

The organization is highly effective at utilizing volunteers and paid staff to streamline the process of finding and placing volunteers where needed. It connects these various volunteer groups and organizations with each other to amplify their effectiveness, reduce redundancy, and develop a better volunteer experience by identifying volunteer needs ranging from administration, fundraising, community clean up, youth programs and social services, and effectively placing volunteers where they can be most effective. Youth engagement programs help instill a service mentality in the counties young people while recognizing them for their efforts. Their online referral system allows partner agencies to access an average of 80 volunteer opportunities each week, greatly streamlining the volunteers search for service opportunities. It also tracks involvement in volunteer opportunities for Silver Cord graduation honors, and has multiple schools participating in this module. Their efforts in collaboration with dozens of local non-profits has helped with everything from winterizing homes and doing light repairs, providing school supplies to those in need, and even repurposing and reusing landfill bound items that people need. They are in the top 20% of organizations in the Points of Light Foundation which is focused on effective and efficient use of resources. Perhaps their greatest strength is that they function as the hub for volunteer work in Story county, making all participating agencies more effective at achieving their service goals.

3. Needs and Weaknesses

The VCSC has seen an increased demand on their funding through their efforts and role as a recruiter and trainer for volunteers for their many collaborative efforts, as well as their growing online presence. The need for an online portal that is effective and thorough is undeniable, and the participating agencies have responded overwhelmingly in the positive about the resource, but the need for additional funding to effectively utilize such a tool is pressing. Because the

VCSC plays a largely “behind the scenes” role in volunteer organization, it rarely is on the receiving end of donations from many donors who prefer to fund the cause or the agency that are being referred through the VCSC. This year, the “scorecard” system has changed the way they count their clients. In the past, their client list was hundreds of agencies. Due to the changes in who they can count, it appears that their ASSET approved client list is more like 30, though they believe that to be inaccurate. All organizations they serve in one way or another benefit Story County (through education, health, and financial stability) and actively strive to meet the funding goals of all 5 funders. The reduction in ASSET approved agencies and programs is misleading when compared to the services their partner agencies provide in whole or in part.

4. Financial Outlook.

As is the case every year, the organization relies primarily on ASSET funds. Some other fundraising avenues are being examined, though since they are more of an administrative and “behind the scenes” partner in the service opportunities they help facilitate, it is unlikely they could replace ASSET funds through other fundraising events. Due to their role in administration, training, and placement of other agencies volunteers, a good deal of their own funding goes to efforts to help other agencies volunteers to become properly trained and organized for whatever their service project might be. The VCSC needs further ASSET funding if it is to continue and grow its ability to facilitate efficient use of the thousands of volunteers they currently serve.

5. Internal Management Practices.

The VCSC is run with a minimum of paid employees. Much of the organization's efforts are already achieved using volunteers of their own. The board is made up of 10 members, and board recruitment goals include finding additional members who represent more diversity.

General Assessment: The VCSC plays a crucial, if not highly publicized, role in facilitating thousands of volunteers for hundreds of projects each year throughout Story county. They connect the areas youth, professionals, students, and citizens with opportunities to serve their community in a way that, without them, would be entirely impossible. No other organization reaches the number or groups of assets that they do. While not the most public or flashy non-profit organization, they arguably provide one of the most crucial roles in volunteer work, and that is making sure that all of their partner agencies are able to find and participate in the volunteer efforts important to them, and to do it effectively and efficiently.