

Pro/Con: Should my agency furlough Volunteer Engagement Office during COVID-19?

Pros:

(reasons why decision makers might want to close the volunteer office)

1. Not engaging volunteers in regularly scheduled events
2. Not engaging groups of volunteers in planned spring projects
3. Other programs of the agency have furloughed staff because clients are not available to serve
4. Some staff not available due to COVID crisis
5. Fiscal realities of less than expected revenue due to reduction in fee for services, fundraising events, and reduction in giving overall

Cons:

(reasons why the decision makers might NOT want to close the volunteer office)

CURRENT NEEDS:

- Cannot engage volunteers in delivering essential services to people in need as peer social service organizations are doing during the COVID crisis (e.g. Meals on Wheels, Salvation Army, etc)
- Cannot support programs currently involving volunteers using innovative (online and phone) tools via remote or virtual mechanisms
- Cannot keep in touch with volunteer cadre built up over the last **X** years, especially long-term, ongoing volunteers
- Cannot offer an alternative to recognition event for volunteers nominated by staff for their outstanding contributions during the last year and to life-time volunteers who are retiring
- Cannot offer appreciation to volunteers, especially to those continuing in “virtual” roles during COVID
- Cannot maintain fledgling partnerships with organizations that will offer volunteers and activities to clients
- Cannot facilitate Exec Team review of volunteer project plans during COVID emergency
- Cannot engage long-term service (e.g. AmeriCorps VISTA and Capuchin Corp) fulltime volunteers placed in Volunteer Engagement Office who are expected to continue working
- Agency regresses on its public commitment engage people with a desire to serve (reputational risk)
- Agency not fulfilling its second mission to enable people to fulfill our faith’s call to serve / accompany the most vulnerable in our midst (reputational risk)
- Agency minimizing the program that is the CEO’s innovative addition to our work

FUTURE NEEDS:

- Cannot prepare to engage volunteers post-COVID
- Cannot conduct onboarding for people currently in the pipeline and related support to staff members who requested them, examples include:
 - volunteers in ongoing roles
 - academic interns for fall placements

- summer interns
- Cannot review volunteer applications or conduct volunteer orientation
- Cannot recruit volunteers for current and new ongoing roles and calendar events that will re-start post-COVID
- Cannot capture much needed and long deferred input from program managers re content and type training for their front-line staff and feedback to improve volunteer services to colleagues
- Cannot improve volunteer software for more widespread use
- Cannot update COVID-19 content and refresh design of webpage on CC site and the volunteer portal
- Cannot update volunteer engagement office's organization and procedures to improve operations
- Cannot continue work on agency teams and taskforces nor can team members complete professional development