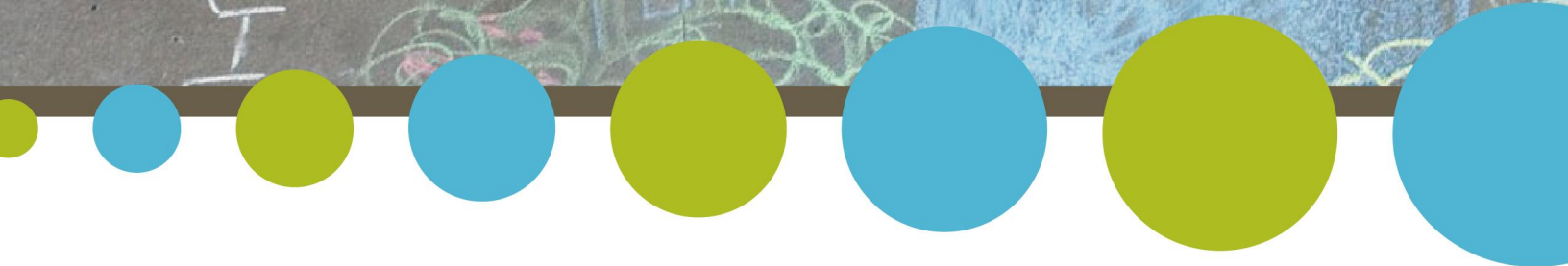




POINTS OF LIGHT INSTITUTE

Measuring the Impact of Hands On Network: An Evaluation of Direct and Secondary Impact from the Stakeholder Perspective




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**Points of Light Institute advances innovative civic
change strategies.**

**Hands On Network inspires, equips and mobilizes
people to take action that changes the world.**

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And key staff for their practical insight into the processes and the findings...

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They are an amazingly powerful partner. We rely on the Affiliate to let us know what is going on in the community, and we are then able to support agencies...They have given us support and have helped our numbers increase...*The [Affiliate's] level of professionalism -- I have been so impressed with it. I have talked to a lot of colleagues, and many of them have similar feelings . . . I don't know if [our program] could be as successful as it is [without the Affiliate]. It might happen, but I don't know if it would be as successful. I will use Day of Caring in that example. Absolutely it wouldn't happen . . . The [Affiliate-supported] event made the school look more inviting, and the parents are motivated to do more when they see volunteers giving back to the community. It also means a lot to the students, because it really makes them feel that people do care about them. They students understand that the volunteers are doing all of their work for free...[If there were no Affiliate] the numbers would be reduced drastically, because the Affiliate is responsible for mobilizing the volunteers. If the Affiliate did not recruit and train the volunteers there would be a tremendous shortage of volunteers serving our school system...***I think they are the civic voice. They are a place for young people to get connected. They are in a position to influence. Without the organization, I don't think there would be that kind of influence. They have the infrastructure to bring people together around issues. Without the infrastructure, it would be harder for us...**Our other partners just don't do things as well or as organized...*They have that leadership voice. They are a partner in a different way...I just know that I don't have the time in my schedule to do what the Affiliate already does: preliminary screening and training of prospective board members. It takes a huge burden off of me and the organization...We are lucky to have their expertise to inform what we are doing. Therefore we don't have to do a lot of research or bring in highly paid consultants who we don't even know. Here we have in our own community people who are experts in this and we benefit from them being available with their expertise.*

Introduction

Points of Light Institute (POLI) commissioned a study to document the impact of HandsOn Network, its network of Affiliated member organizations (Affiliates), on the communities Affiliates serve. Researchers designed the first of its kind study to advance the state of outcomes measurement at the network level beyond self reports of output data:

- Historically the legacy organizations of the Points of Light Foundation (POLF) and Hands On Network (HON) relied on **self reports** of data by Affiliates to provide evidence of impact in local communities. This study taps stakeholders of Affiliates, their primary customers, to acquire an outside assessment of impact on individuals, institutions, and communities. Additionally, researchers used stakeholder “type” as a lens to view the data, based on other research that suggests that who is doing the evaluation is as important as what is being evaluated.
- In the past, the national organizations used **output data**, or counts of service, to make claims of impact. Output data is generally considered by the evaluation community to capture process or implementation; measures in this study focus on outcomes, or the perceived change that occurs as a result of Affiliate outputs or services.

Outcomes measurement by Affiliates and the network was not occurring for lack of trying. For example, both legacy organizations maintained ongoing data collection and reporting and used the best methods available at the time to produce a picture of network activities (Brudney, 2002; Brudney, 2005; Hands On Network, 2007; Points of Light Foundation [POLF], 2004; POLF, 2005). At the grant-funded program and special initiative level, both also conducted evaluations through in-house units or through contractor assistance. Some Affiliates even instituted advanced performance measurement systems. Yet, from the network perspective, these efforts did not allow a confident statement about impact at the national level. This situation resulted in a continuous struggle for the network to show value-added as a contributor in building civil society.

The mission of HandsOn Network is to “inspire, equip, and mobilize people to take action that changes the world” (POLI, 2008). We have broken down the mission’s meaning to highlight the intermediary, varied, and indirect nature of Affiliates:

To inspire, equip, and mobilize people...

Affiliates are primarily intermediary organizations that assist individuals and other organizations to provide services more efficiently and effectively. It is where these more efficient and effective actions are taken by individuals and more efficient and effective services are delivered that impact occurs. Most often, this place-based impact is not directly managed or observed by Affiliates, leading to logistical reporting issues and substantive attribution issues.

To take action...

This clause aligns with the Affiliate ability to create service menus in response to local needs in absence of national program mandates. This flexibility creates a network of Affiliates varied in

programs, activities, and services—but results in substantial measurement challenges at the network level.

That changes the world.

With a mission to improve people’s lives, the status of Affiliates as indirect service providers becomes important. Affiliates have limited reach into client pools and, lacking purse strings, offer little incentive for organizational partners to collect client data on their behalf.

Along with the realities of funding and time constraints, these challenges led to many in the system depending on the traditional measurement scheme Table 1 depicts. Note without the complementary outcomes/impact measures, the organization fails to show how it “inspires, equips, and mobilizes people to take action that changes the world.”

Table 1 Traditional and Ideal Measurement Schemes Examples

Traditional Measurement Scheme		Ideal Measurement Scheme
Outputs	Process Measures	Outcomes à Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of volunteers referred/slots filled • # of students tutored • # trainings on volunteer management • # agency staff trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteers reporting satisfaction with volunteering • agencies reporting satisfaction with volunteers • students reporting satisfaction with program • agency staff reporting quality volunteer management training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteers reporting increased civic dispositions, knowledge of issues • agencies reporting increased capacity to meet mission • students increasing on test scores • agencies reporting improved volunteer management systems

The network is diverse, which creates measurement complications due to the various sizes and structures involved. Affiliates structure themselves based on local circumstances, and also comprise various legacy types (and subsequent program models) and governance arrangements. Table 2 displays the network composition by legacy and governance type. In addition, size based on expense budget matters, and has a very large range. The average Affiliate budget is \$318,855; the minimum is \$1,000; and the maximum is \$5,345,783.

Table 2 Frequency of Affiliates by Governance and Legacy Type

LEGACY	n	%
POLF	316	82.3
HON	40	10.4
Dual	28	7.3
Total	384	100.0
GOVERNANCE		
Embedded	205	54.2
Independent	173	45.8
Total	378	100.0

Direct service organizations have access to a multitude of performance measurement resources, even though the issue remains complicated (Kellogg Foundation, 1998; United Way of America [UWA], 2005; UWA, 2007; Urban Institute & Center for What Works [UI&CWW], 2006). For intermediary organizations, such as Affiliates, there are few – if any – best practice resources

available. Even highly ambitious efforts to document outcomes in the service sector have not addressed the challenge of assessing the performance of indirect service providers (for example, UI&CWW). Without replicable models to follow, conducting such research is a major investment of labor and resources.

In this report, we describe a study of impact to overcome the measurement barriers and move past self reports of output data to document the effects of Affiliates and, subsequently, the network on individuals, institutions, and communities. Further, the timing of this study makes it especially salient, offering a sense of the outcomes of the HandsOn Network unified membership base. The report shows how the merger led to a more robust network that capitalizes on the strengths of each national organization and local membership bases. Finally, the study set the stage for a conceptual framework for other types of intermediately organizations to use when evaluating outcomes.

Methods

Theory

As mentioned, POLI chartered this study to document HON impact by transitioning the network from outputs to outcomes and tapping stakeholders to evaluate these outcomes. Researchers also incorporated another unique aspect into the study, including both direct and secondary impact.

Researchers developed questions that probed the impact of the assistance Affiliates provide *directly* on the entities themselves (e.g., nonprofits) and, *indirectly*, their clients. This juxtaposition of impact was termed *direct impact* and *secondary impact*:

- Direct impact—The impact Affiliates effect on the volunteer infrastructure itself.
- Secondary impact—The impact Affiliates effect as a result of their support of volunteer infrastructure, typically directly effected by another entity.

Table 3 illustrates direct and secondary impact based on common Affiliate activities. This study attempts to bridge the measurement gap between direct and secondary impact, enabling Affiliates to assess the change in communities that client organizations effect with Affiliate assistance.

Table 3 Affiliate Activities, Direct Impact, and Secondary Impact Examples

Activity	Direct Impact	Secondary Impact
Conducting trainings for nonprofit agencies on volunteer management	Strengthened volunteer program	Beneficiaries of nonprofit agencies lives improve in some way depending on issue being addressed
Convening key organizations to address social problem (e.g., Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Mentoring Coalitions)	Strengthened infrastructure to respond to social need	Beneficiaries of network service improve in some way depending on issue being addressed (e.g., More effective volunteer response in time of disaster, better connected service provided lead to

		more youth taking advantage of more services)
Recognizing superior volunteer achievement	Volunteers feel appreciated; dedication to volunteerism strengthened	Public awareness of volunteering and social problems increased
Supplying volunteers to public institutions	Demand for volunteers by public institution decreases; institutions able expend resources on other areas of administration besides volunteer recruitment	Beneficiaries of nonprofit agencies lives improve in some way depending on issue being addressed

Equally important to the overall study, researchers offered a more nuanced analysis of outcomes through application of multiple constituency theory. Multiple constituency literature suggests different stakeholder groups evaluate a focal organization differently because stakeholders judge the focal organization against criteria unique to their interest (Connolly, Conlon & Deutsch, 1980; Zammuto, 1984; Tsui, 1990; Boschken, H, 1994; Tschirhart, 1996; Herman & Renz, 2004). Accordingly, we collected and analyze data received from diverse Affiliate stakeholders and are able to categorize their responses by stakeholder type. This perspective helps gauge the direct and secondary impacts of the HandsOn Network Affiliates, and allows a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes achieved for the “community” through the different reported experiences of the stakeholders.

Finally, to develop the measures used in this study the researchers conducted a literature review of outcomes measures from previous research to strengthen consensual validity of the results (Hatry, Morley, Abravanel, Marshall, 2002; Hatry & Lampkin, 2003; Urban Institute & Center for What Works, 2006; Urban Institute & Center for What Works, n.d.).

Sample

The study comprised two main parts: 1) an in-depth study of selected Affiliates and 2) a study open to the entire Network of Affiliates. Both parts ascertained the viewpoints of community partners and volunteers. When designing the in-depth site study portion, researchers did not intend for it to represent the network; rather, the purpose was to answer the question “what impact is attainable when an Affiliate functions at its best?” Researchers elicited self-nominations from Affiliates and scored applications based on criteria thought to signify “high performance” by the legacy national organizations. Thirteen Affiliates participated in the in-depth study. A total of 126 community partners and 21 volunteers were interviewed from these Affiliates.

To provide a more representative assessment of impact throughout the network, researchers undertook the second part, the universal study of all Affiliates. We requested that participating Affiliates send separate on-line surveys that we developed to Affiliate community partners and volunteers to assess the respective outcomes. To encourage participation, POLI agreed to host a random drawing of survey respondents. Prizes were one complimentary airfare voucher for a volunteer and two complimentary registrations to the 2008 National Conference on Volunteering and Service, one for an Affiliate and one for a community partner. Forty-eight Affiliates opted into the universal study, including 12 of the in-depth study sites. These 48 Affiliates span 29 states; the largest representation comes from Virginia (14.3%).

Based on data collected by the national organization on all Affiliates, researchers compared respondents with the non-respondents to evaluate the representativeness of the sample of participating Affiliates with respect to three key variables: Affiliate size, legacy-type, and structure. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4 Affiliate Non-Respondents, Affiliate Respondents, and Responding Community Partners and Volunteers to Surveys by Characteristics

	Affiliate non-respondents		Affiliate respondents	
	N	%	N	%
SIZE (small=less than \$67,841; medium=\$67,841 to \$213,138.33; large=\$213,138.34 or more)				
Small	102	34.0	14	29.1
Medium	103	34.3	13	27.1
Large	95	31.7	21	43.8
Total	300	100.0	48	100.0

Chi-square not sig at .05

LEGACY (how the Affiliate relates to the pre-merger national organizations)				
Dual	20	5.97	8	16.3
HON	34	10.2	6	12.2
POLF	281	83.9	35	71.4
Total	335	100.1	49	99.9

Chi-square sig at .05

GOVERNANCE (independent, stand-alone entities and embedded units of another organization)				
Embedded	178	54.1	27	55.1
Independent	151	45.9	22	44.9
Total	329	100.0	49	100.0

Chi-square not sig at .05

The data suggest that the responding Affiliates do not deviate from non-responding ones on the dimensions of Affiliate size or governance. On these dimensions, participation in the study at the Affiliate, community partner, and volunteer level was adequate to yield data to approximate the entire network. Legacy, however, was possibly over-represented by Dual Affiliates. This circumstance is an acceptable limitation to the study. Dual Affiliates may signify a coming trend in the network base, and their over-inclusion gave researchers the occasion to understand more about how their outcomes compare to Affiliates operating a single program model.¹

Design

Researchers used the in-depth interview data to add richness to the mainly quantitative surveys. In the qualitative data, researchers identified patterns and themes that elaborate the more limited quantitative findings. The qualitative data were coded into meaningful categories which were tabulated to create a service and activity “audit.”

¹ For a full discussion on representativeness and respondents, see Brudney, J., Menoher, B. & Mackey, C (2008). *Measuring the Impact of the Affiliated Organizations of the Points of Light & Hands On Network*. Paper submitted to International Conference on Volunteer Centers. (Available from Points of Light Institute, 600 Means Street, Suite 210, Atlanta, GA 30318)

The community partner and volunteer survey data were analyzed using a sophisticated statistical technique that categorizes individual survey items into underlying dimensions or themes. Called “Factor Analysis,” the statistical procedure produced one dimension for the community partner data and three dimensions for the volunteer data. Table 5 shows the dimensions along with the constituent items for each. These dimensions enabled researchers to create composite scales to analyze and compare outcomes at the network level (for more on Factor Analysis, see O’Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2003).

Table 5 Individual Items Comprising Volunteer Outcome Dimensions or Indexes

Dimension or Index	Constituent Items
Community partner outcome index * (uni-dimensional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliate helps my organization achieve greater impact • Affiliate helps my organization function more effectively • Affiliate increases number of high-quality volunteers in the community • Affiliate meets a real need in the community • Affiliate support helps my organization improve the lives of clients • Because of Affiliate, my organization is able to effect greater change • Compared to other partners, the Affiliate is very important in supporting my organization’s efforts • Volunteers referred to my organization by Affiliate appear to become more dedicated to improve the community • Without Affiliate, there would be a gap in services in the community
Volunteer indexes**	
Personal impact as a result of Affiliate-supported volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I improved people’s lives • I met a real need in the community • Volunteering increased my awareness of community issues • Volunteering increased my life satisfaction • Volunteering increased my skills in work, school, civic, or personal life
Affiliate impact on personal volunteer experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliate contacted me to ask if the volunteer experience was worthwhile • Affiliate offered me support throughout volunteer experience • Without Affiliate, I would not have found opportunities as rewarding
Affiliate impact on others and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affiliate increases the chances of people finding a regular volunteer opportunity • Affiliate increases the chances of people finding an opportunity that matches skills and interests • Affiliate meets a real need in the community • Would recommend Affiliate to other people as a place to get started or to continue volunteering

*70.9% variance explained

**65.1% variance explained

Network Outcomes

To assess the outcomes for the network, the researchers grouped the constituent items into each dimension category and calculated the mean. With scale points ranging from 1=not at all true to 5=very true, the higher the mean, the more positive the perception of the construct. Data are also displayed using a percent positive framework. Positive ratings were scores of 4 or 5.

Outcomes by Important Variables

Next, the researchers used variables POLI deemed important to further investigate the data. These variables include those relevant to the Affiliates such as legacy, governance, and size and those relevant to the respondents including volunteer age and community partner organization type. Researchers had expectations about how these variables would play a role, which were

tested statistically. Based on established convention, if the risk of error in accepting a finding (i.e., rejecting the null hypothesis) was less than five percent, we concluded that the finding was reliable (F-test; $p < .05$).

The Factor Analysis statistical procedure allows researchers to create composite scales of the dimensions for the community partner data and for the volunteer data. These scales capture information from all the constituent items and, by summarizing these complex concepts, lead to more efficient testing and easier interpretation of statistical differences ($p < .05$). To create the scales, the researchers took the grand mean of the constituent items (higher score on the five-point index indicates more positive perception).

The following analysis presents the network outcomes and the outcomes by important variables, starting with the results for the community partner outcomes. Then, the discussion turns to the more complex volunteer outcomes, which comprise three indexes that tap different aspects of the volunteer experience with Affiliates.

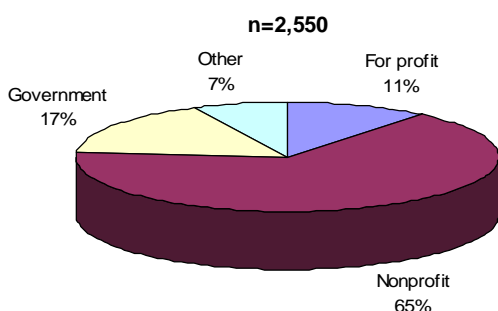
Network Outcomes

Community Partner Results

Respondents

The majority of respondents to the community partner survey were women (81.6%, $n=2,488$), who were employed (94.5%, $n=2,745$), and highly educated (78.9% hold a BA or above, $n=2,514$). Most respondents represented public sector organizations including nonprofits and government, as Figure 1 shows.

Figure 1 Respondent Employer Types



Interaction

The breadth and depth of respondent relationships with Affiliates were evaluated. The majority of respondents reported that their organization has been involved with their local Affiliate for four or more years (57.2%). To understand the depth of relationships with Affiliates, respondents estimated the interaction their organization had with the Affiliate over the past year, in which interaction could be in-person, telephone, or electronic. The majority of respondents reported interacting with the Affiliate 10

Community partners generally view interaction with the affiliate as important to the goals of their organization.

or fewer times (63.8%). More than three-fourths of the respondents (76.3%) considered this interaction important to the goals of their organization.

Outcomes

As mentioned in the methods section, the community partner outcomes index constitutes a single dimension. This dimension comprises five indicators of direct organizational impact and four indicators of secondary community impact. An interpretation of this single dimension is that respondents assessed Affiliate impact on the organization and the community similarly. That is, respondents believe that their organization helps the community, and since the Affiliate helps their organization, the Affiliate, too, helps the community. Table 6 displays the full complement of results (variables) for the community partner data.

Table 6 Community Partner Outcome Items Means and Percent Positive Scores

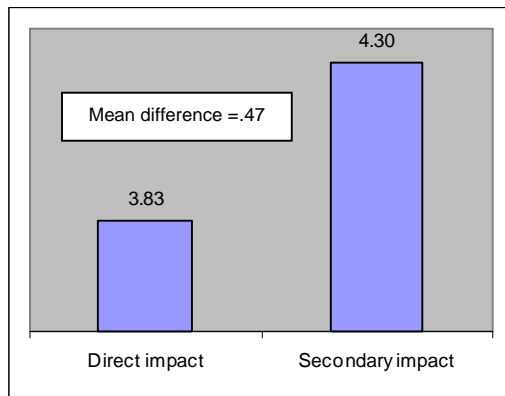
Items	n	Mean	% positive
Affiliate meets a real need <i>in the community</i>	2,437	4.50	87.8
Affiliate increases number of high-quality volunteers <i>in the community</i>	2,377	4.26	81.0
Without Affiliate, there would be a gap in services <i>in the community</i>	2,422	4.14	75.6
Affiliate support helps <i>my organization</i> improve the lives of clients	2,407	3.93	69.1
Affiliate helps <i>my organization</i> achieve greater impact	2,467	3.90	67.5
Volunteers referred to <i>my organization</i> by Affiliate appear to become more dedicated to improve the community	1,961	3.85	67.4
Because of Affiliate, <i>my organization</i> is able to effect greater change in the community	2,435	3.79	63.2
Compared to other partners, the Affiliate is very important in supporting <i>my organization's</i> efforts	2,458	3.78	63.3
Affiliate helps <i>my organization</i> function more effectively	2,461	3.74	62.7

From these data emerge a confidence in the Affiliate role and impact *in the community* (secondary impact), evidenced in the three highest means: ability to meet needs in the

Affiliates create impact in the community through their support of institutions and individuals.

community, increase the number of high-quality volunteers in the community, and fill a gap in the community. Notably, the greatest mean observed, *Affiliate meets a real need in the community*, is nearly .25 of a point greater than the next highest mean. This sizeable difference signals that community partners are strong in their perception that Affiliates address community problems through their programs and services.

Means begin to drop off when respondents evaluate direct impact on their organization by Affiliates, which is denoted by the phrase *my organization* in the item. In fact the second greatest marginal difference is .21 of a point, between the *Affiliate fills gap in the community* and *Affiliate helps my organization to improve the lives of clients*, underscoring the decline in means from secondary to direct impact. Another illustration of the difference is Figure 2, a calculation of the group means of the items in the index types, which shows nearly a half a point advantage for secondary impact. However, while this decline for direct impact is considerable when compared to the strong ratings for secondary impact, these scores still support a positive rather than a negative or even neutral score (i.e. above a 3.5).

Figure 2 Community Partner Direct Impact Items and Secondary Impact Items Group Means

To close out the survey, respondents were asked to list three words or phrases that reminded them of their local Affiliate. Researchers tabulated the most frequently cited of the 6,565 useable responses and display them in Table 7.

Table 7 Community Partner Most Frequently Cited Affiliate Descriptions

Responses	n
Help or helpful	499
Dedicated or dedication	246
Organized, well	204
Resources or resourceful	201
Support or supportive	183
Community	165
Professional	148
Commitment or committed	141
Caring or cares	110

These statements underscore that Affiliates have the important business-sense to be professional, resourceful, and well organized yet still are frequently defined by the “softer” values of helping, caring for, and supporting the community. While bias is without a doubt prevalent in this instance (typically only respondents with very strong views respond to such open ended questions), it is important to mention that none were negative in tone, again highlighting that these community partners think “value-added” in regard to Affiliates.

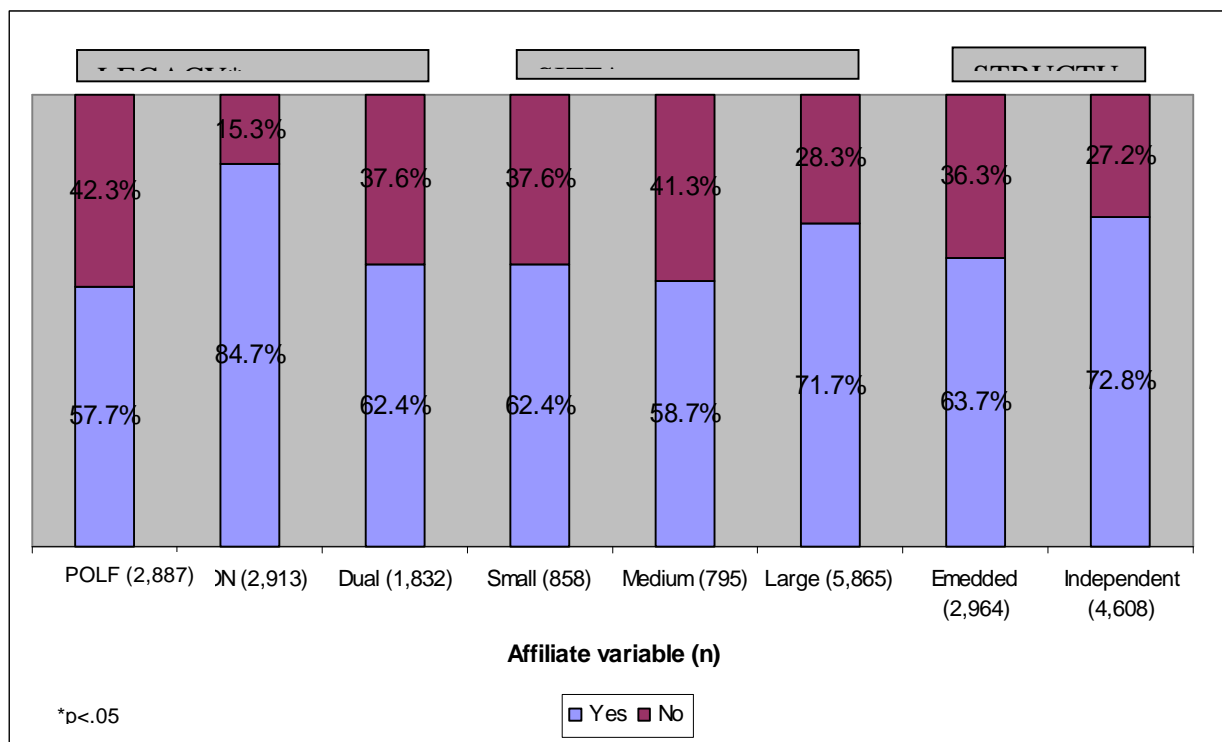
Helpful,
dedicated, and
well organized
are the most
frequent
descriptions of
Affiliates.

Volunteer Results

Interaction

Of the 7,641 respondents who entered the survey system, 68.4 percent performed service as a result of the interaction with the Affiliate. Researchers looked into this rate of “service acceptance” further to determine what role size, legacy, and governance played. Figure 3 shows the results of this analysis.

Figure 3 Rate of Service Acceptance by Important Variables

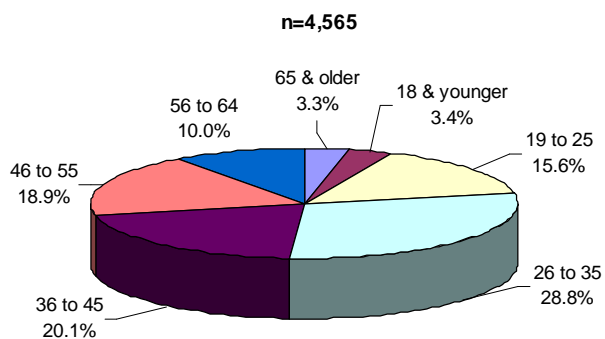


For all three important variables, there is a significant difference in the rate of service acceptance with HON, large, and independent Affiliates achieving the greatest rates ($p < .05$). The most striking difference within groups is HON surpassing POLF by over 27 percentage points (84.7% versus 57.5%). This difference is speculated to be an effect of the HON model's direct connection (as opposed to a referral) to volunteer opportunities. The HON model requires little to no legwork on the part of the volunteer; all information required to volunteer is provided, creating a closed system that diminishes the "drop off rate." Referrals, conversely, require additional steps of the potential volunteer and the potential site of volunteering. These extra steps open the system up to inefficiencies, such as lack of follow through by either the volunteer or the site, that may result in a lower service acceptance rate.

The analysis that follows is based on the responses of the 5,226 people who answered *yes* to whether they volunteered as a result of Affiliate support.

Respondents

Respondents to the volunteer survey were mostly women (77.1%), highly educated, (71.6% hold a BA or above), and employed (82.1%). Figure 4 displays the ages of respondents; nearly half are between 26- and 45-years.

Figure 4 Respondent Ages

Outcomes

As stated, the Factor Analysis identified and divided the volunteer outcome data into three dimensions. The first dimension or index encompasses indicators of impact on the volunteer, including how the volunteer was impacted and how the volunteer impacted the community and others. The second index comprises items that signal the impact of the Affiliate on the personal volunteer experience, including whether the Affiliate supported, followed-up, or facilitated a rewarding experience for the volunteer. Lastly, the third index measures how volunteer respondents perceive Affiliate impact on other people's volunteer experiences and community needs. The following analysis is organized by these three dimensions.

Dimension 1 Personal impact as a result of Affiliate-supported volunteering

Table 8 contains the five items that comprise this dimension. Each item stresses the personal side of volunteering: how volunteering changed the volunteers, and how volunteers changed the community.

Table 8 Volunteer Outcome Items Means and Percent Positive Scores (Dimension 1)

Items	n	Mean	% positive
I met a real need in the community	5,064	4.27	81.4
I improved people's lives	5,014	4.21	79.4
Volunteering increased my awareness of community issues	5,086	4.15	77.7
Volunteering increased my life satisfaction	5,074	4.13	77.3
Volunteering increased my skills in work, school, civic, or personal life	5,023	3.56	53.9

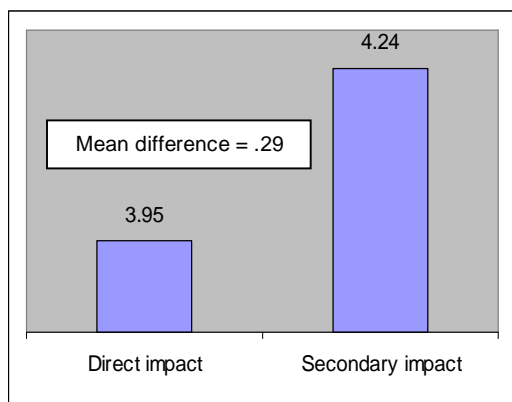
Volunteers are confident that they are effective and aware agents of community change.

Here, the data suggest that volunteers who are mobilized by Affiliates are certain that their volunteering enabled them to be effective agents of community change, as indicated by the two highest mean scores. Both items (*I met a real need* and *I improved lives*) relate to the amount of impact volunteers perceive they effected in the community, which then translates to secondary impact attributable to Affiliates. In addition, the data indicate that Affiliate-supported volunteering helped respondents to understand more fully issues effecting their community and to lead more fulfilled lives. At nearly three-quarters of a point below the highest mean, the

item *Volunteering increased my skills* registers below all other items. A reason for the small effect on volunteer skill sets may be that the respondent group is both educated and employed (71.6% hold a BA or above; 82.1% are employed). With this education and training, it is very likely that they bring an advanced skill set to the volunteer position. Rather than increasing their skills, Affiliates leverage them in the volunteer experience.

Stated earlier, this dimension assesses how Affiliate-supported volunteering impacted the volunteer (direct impact) and how the volunteer impacted the community and others (secondary impact). Figure 5 highlights the mean difference for the items by type of impact, where secondary impact is assessed more positively than direct.

Figure 5 Volunteer Direct Impact Items and Secondary Impact Items Group Means (Dimension 1)



Volunteer respondents seem to feel that they have impact at a rate higher than they themselves are impacted by the service experience. Employed and educated, it is difficult for Affiliates to directly impact volunteer skill sets, and this low scoring item pulls the direct impact group mean in a more negative direction (see above, life satisfaction and community awareness both increased). In terms of secondary impact, volunteers drive change, with support from the Affiliates. By coordinating systems for these volunteers to meet real needs and to improve people’s lives, Affiliates may facilitate secondary impact that permeates communities.

Volunteers create impact at higher rate than they are themselves impacted by the service experience.

Dimension 2 Affiliate impact on personal volunteer experience

The second dimension contains three items, all of which constitute evaluations of how Affiliates supported the volunteer experience. The results for these items are in shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Volunteer Outcome Items Means and Percent Positive Scores (Dimension 2)

Items	N	Mean	% positive
Affiliate offered me support throughout volunteer experience	4,750	3.91	69.8
Without Affiliate, I would not have found opportunities as rewarding	4,766	3.52	53.3
Affiliate contacted me to ask if the volunteer experience was worthwhile	4,447	3.42	55.9

Each item in this dimension achieved modest results -- not one surpassed a mean of 4.0 on a five-point scale). The results are far from negative; instead, they are not particularly strong. For instance, volunteers express that the Affiliate offered them support. The extent of this support, though, is not clear; the data do not exude ardency in either direction. In regard to whether the Affiliate is considered essential in finding rewarding volunteer opportunities, the score may stem from the fact that respondents perceive that many volunteer opportunities can be rewarding. Lastly, the lowest scoring indicator for this dimension was for whether the Affiliate conducted follow-up. Infrastructure variations make follow-up impossible for some Affiliates -- many referral systems do not require contact information, thus limiting the ability of Affiliates to follow-up. However, this item is the not just the lowest scoring in this dimension or for volunteers, but the lowest of all items assessed in the study. Thus, even for those Affiliates in which follow-up is a logistical possibility, it is likely that follow-up is not occurring in a way that positively impacts the volunteer experience.

Dimension 3 Affiliate impact on others and the community

The items in this dimension underscore how volunteer respondents perceive Affiliate influence on other people's volunteer experiences and the community. One process measure is considered, whether respondents would recommend Affiliates as a place to get started or to continue volunteering; the remaining three items measure impact on other entities (secondary impact). Table 10 shows the results.

Volunteering does not occur in a vacuum; Affiliate support is available. Effectiveness and extent, though, is not clear.

Table 10 Volunteer Outcome Items Means and Percent Positive Scores (Dimension 3)

Items	N	Mean	% positive
Would recommend Affiliate to other people as a place to get started or to continue volunteering	4,902	4.64	93.3
Affiliate meets a real need in the community	4,889	4.64	93.9
Affiliate increases the chances of people finding an opportunity that matches skills and interests	4,830	4.44	88.6
Affiliate increases the chances of people finding a regular volunteer opportunity	4,289	4.22	80.0

Volunteers believe that Affiliates meet real needs in the community and contribute to long-term civic action through sustained volunteering.

Respondents are very likely to recommend Affiliates to others to find a volunteer opportunity; the mean for the item is the highest observed in this study. However, it can be argued that scoring well on this traditional indicator of quality is not difficult because it measures perceived action on others. Perhaps more meaningful, is that this same high mean score was given to the item *Affiliate meets a real need in the community*, suggesting that respondents believe that the community is healthier because of the Affiliate. The high rating awarded to Affiliates' in regard to the ability to meet needs is a possible indication of their value as community change agents.

The last two items in this dimension ask respondents to rate how Affiliates may effect others' volunteer experiences and may have implications for long-term volunteer and civic commitment.

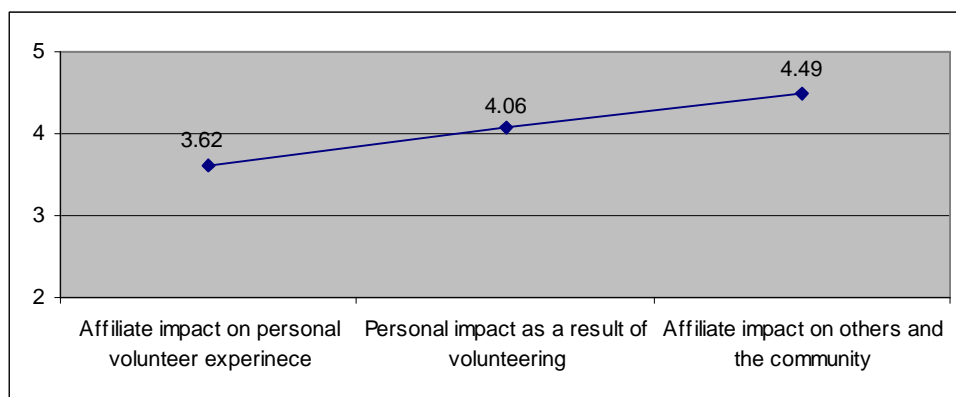
The results suggest that Affiliates have systems in place to help create positive experiences for volunteers. They are able to make interest and skill-based volunteering accessible and to make long-term volunteer commitments more appealing.

In sum, the favorable results for this dimension indicate that Affiliate programs and services increase the likelihood that people will locate meaningful volunteer opportunities. These opportunities, which stimulate their interests and skills, may encourage a regular volunteer commitment. Through the intimate matching of volunteer to opportunity, Affiliates, then, may meet real needs in the community and foster deeper civic connections.

A Comparison of the Volunteer Outcome Dimensions

A final analysis of volunteer outcomes at the network level examines the dimensions' grand means (the mean of all items in that dimension) relative to one another (Figure 6). This type of marginal analysis highlights comparison of how Affiliates perform on the volunteer dimensions identified (statistically) in this study.

Figure 6 Aggregate Volunteer Dimension Means



As shown on Figure 6, every volunteer dimension rates above neutral (by mean score); all in all, outcomes are positive. However, the sizeable step from the lowest to the highest mean scores is important, and suggests an area for further study. Affiliates, the data suggest, are very successful in impacting how volunteers substantively connect to their volunteer position (e.g., by matching

Volunteers value the Affiliate-coordinated connection to personally meaningful volunteering that produces real change in the community, for both their own volunteer needs and for others.

skills and interests, by providing positions that are appealing on a regular basis), yet after that introduction is made, provide only mediocre ongoing support. With advances in volunteer matching software on the horizon, it seems imperative that mechanisms to coordinate information to provide this ongoing support be instituted. Almost directly in the middle falls how volunteering impacted respondents, and how respondents impacted the community by volunteering. Breaking this dimension into direct and secondary impact (see Figure 5), it becomes clear that volunteers see themselves as effective agents of change, which may have to do not just with the volunteering itself, but the talents that they bring. Educated and experienced, these volunteers have much to contribute; for this same reason direct impact on volunteers is harder for Affiliates to achieve.

In this sense, the data call attention to the need for more skill-based volunteer positions that encourage people to challenge and enhance their current profile.

The volunteer outcomes survey closed with one open-ended question asking respondents to provide three words or statements about the Affiliate. Table 11 shows the most frequently cited words or phrases from the 11,906 usable responses.

Table 11 Volunteer Most Frequently Cited Affiliate Descriptions

Responses	N
Help/helpful	1,106
Community	763
Well organized/organized	519
Caring or cares	419
Service or servicing	329
Commitment or committed	224
Dedicated/dedication	173

The data indicate that volunteer respondents perceive their local Affiliate as *helpful* and *caring* organizations in their *communities*. Of the over 11,000 statements, only 20 were negative, again highlighting the positive opinions these volunteers had of their Affiliate.

Outcomes by Important Variables

In addition to understanding network outcomes, researchers performed subgroup analyses to document how different variables important to POLI effect perceptions of outcomes. The presentation of outcomes by these important variables begins with the single community partner outcome index and then moves to the three volunteer outcome indexes. For each variable we present a chart of means, the expectation, and the findings based on the survey data. (Note throughout the analysis, Dual Affiliates are evaluated separately in order to use this study to understand more about this relatively recent phenomenon.) If the difference is statistically significant based on our decision rule ($p < .05$), we infer that the finding is reliable.

Community Partner Results

Table 12 displays the results for the community partner index analysis by important Affiliate and respondent characteristics. Affiliate size, legacy, and structure were used to stratify the data to determine any differences in outcomes. We also analyzed the data using respondent interaction level with the Affiliate (low=10 or less v. high=11 or more) and organization type (faith-based public v. non-faith-based public v. private) to uncover any differences.

Table 12 Community Partner Outcomes by Important Affiliate and Respondent Variables

Important variable	Expectation of Outcome Means	Outcome Means	Difference significant based on decision rule? ($p < .05$)	Finding of Outcome Means	Explanation Based on the Data
Affiliate size	Small = Medium =	Small (3.96) Medium (4.02)	No	Small = Medium =	Size is not an important factor in determining community

	Large	Large (3.96)		Large	partner outcomes.
Affiliate legacy	POLF > HON	POLF (3.99) HON (4.16) Dual (3.92)	Yes	HON > POLF	HON scores significantly higher than POLF.
Affiliate structure	Embedded > Independent	Embedded (4.00) Independent (3.98)	No	Embedded = Independent	No matter the governance arrangement, Affiliates perform equally well.
Respondent Interaction Level	Frequent > Infrequent	Frequent (4.34) Infrequent (3.80)	Yes	Frequent > Infrequent	Frequent customers of Affiliates have a significantly more positive view of Affiliate impact than infrequent customers.
Respondent organization type	Faith-based nonprofit = non-faith-based nonprofit = private	FBO (3.97) NPO (3.97) Private (4.22)	Yes	Private > faith-based nonprofit = non-faith-based nonprofit	A significant difference exists in outcome means by organization type; private sector respondents are more likely to rate outcomes positively than public ones, according to data.

The results indicate that the only systematic difference in community partner outcomes on Affiliate variables is for legacy type. It appears that the HON model achieves a critical mass of volunteer labor through its group-based model of volunteering, enabling a visible and valuable impact on the community, as assessed by community partners. Outcomes for the POLF Affiliates, it is surmised, often occur in the longer-term and apparently are not associated with POLF. For size and structure, any differences in categories are random.

Both respondent level variables produce a significant difference, which suggest that the difference is not random. The evidence indicates that as interaction rate increases, so does respondent view that the Affiliate is a driver of change (i.e., frequent > infrequent). We surmise the significant difference between private and public respondent scores relates to how dependent the sector is upon the Affiliate to accomplish its work. Although for-profits function without Affiliate support in improving the bottom line, Affiliates may be viewed as primary conduits to community issues. Public sector respondents may perceive Affiliates as an enhancement to what the community requires of them.

There are no systematic community partner outcome differences when size or structure are considered; legacy and respondent interaction level and organization type produce significant outcome differences.

In the end, variables that were pivotal in influencing community partner outcomes were Affiliate legacy, respondent interaction level, and respondent organization type. These findings suggest that legacy-HON, frequent customers, and private sector respondents perceive that Affiliates have greater impact on their organizations and the community than do their respective counterparts. By contrast, size and structure do not appear to contribute to differences in community partner outcomes.

Volunteer Results

The volunteer analysis is more complicated because of the three different volunteer outcome indexes. Both Affiliate- and respondent-level analyses use these indexes to distinguish the findings. The same Affiliate variables were assessed as in the community partner outcomes index above: size, legacy, and structure. Volunteer-level variables considered were respondent age (youth=18-years and younger v. Boomers=44-62-years v. and all other ages) and employer type (public v. private sector).

Dimension 1 Personal impact as a result of Affiliate-supported volunteering

Outcomes for the first dimension, how respondents perceive volunteering effected them and how they effected the community through volunteering, are contained in Table 13.

Table 13 Volunteer Outcomes by Important Affiliate and Respondent Variables (Dimension 1)

Important variable	Expectation of Outcome Means	Outcome Means	Difference significant based on decision rule? (p<.05)	Finding of Outcome Means	Explanation Based on the Data
Affiliate size	Small = Medium = Large	Small (4.08) Medium (4.15) Large (4.05)	Yes	Medium > Small > Large	Medium Affiliates rate a more intensely, at a significant level.
Affiliate legacy	HON > POLF	POLF (4.04) HON (4.07) Dual (4.08)	No	POLF = HON = Dual	There is no systematic difference in outcomes by legacy type.
Affiliate structure	Independent > Embedded	Independent (4.03) Embedded (4.13)	Yes	Embedded > independent	Embedded Affiliates are significantly more likely to have stronger impacts than independents.
Respondent age	Youth = Boomer = All others	Youth (4.12) Boomer (4.11) All others (4.07)	No	Youth = Boomer = All others	Age of respondent is not associated with any difference in outcomes.
Respondent employer type	Public = private	Public (4.07) Private (4.07)	No	Public = private	There is no difference in outcomes when employer type is considered.

The results suggest that size and structure are associated with significant differences in outcomes. We believe that medium size Affiliates strike a balance, having the capacity to offer a more personalized experience than either smaller or larger Affiliates. For structure, the multiple combined service areas of embedded Affiliates and their parent organization offer the volunteer more points of contact, increasing the attractiveness of the organization and helping to create a more positive experience, both contributing to customer loyalty. As mentioned, there is no systematic difference in outcomes by legacy type. Overall, the scores across the three types are consistently high, indicating that volunteers are confident that Affiliate-supported volunteering contributed positively to their lives. The lack of a significant difference further implies that Affiliates, regardless of legacy type, provide life-enhancing experiences for volunteers that include direct impact on the volunteer and, consequently, on the community through the volunteer's work. Finally, respondent characteristics do not have an influence on outcomes.

Neither age nor employer type are related significantly to the way that people rate their personal impact from and by volunteering.

Dimension 2 Affiliate impact on personal volunteer experience

Table 14 displays the results of the analysis of the second index, *Affiliate impact on the personal volunteer experience* by Affiliate size, legacy, and structure and by respondent age and employer type. This index measures how the Affiliate's involvement effected the volunteer experience.

Table 14 Volunteer Outcomes by Important Affiliate and Respondent Variables (Dimension 2)

Important variable	Expectation of Outcome Means	Outcome Means	Difference significant based on decision rule? ($p < .05$)	Finding of Outcome Means	Explanation
Affiliate size	Small = Medium = Large	Small (3.63) Medium (3.70) Large (3.60)	No	Small = Medium = Large	The means of the Affiliates by size do not differ statistically.
Affiliate legacy	HON > POLF	POLF (3.48) HON (3.73) Dual (3.55)	Yes	HON > POLF	HON outcomes are significantly greater on this dimension.
Affiliate structure	Independent > Embedded	Independent (3.65) Embedded (3.56)	Yes	Independent > Embedded	Data show independent Affiliates have significantly higher outcomes.
Respondent age	Youth = Boomer = All others	Youth (3.66) Boomer (3.62) All others (3.65)	No	Youth = Boomer = All others	Age is not a factor in determining outcome differences, evidence indicates.
Respondent employer type	Public = private	Public (3.67) Private (3.63)	No	Public = private	Employer type does not contribute to differences in outcomes.

Affiliate level variables linked to non-random differences in outcomes were legacy type and structure. Researchers believe service modality is key for legacy differences: HON Affiliates provide a direct connection to volunteer opportunities and are engaged in tracking placements and conducting follow-up; POLF Affiliates most often act as a referral service that facilitates a connection for the volunteer to the area of community need. POLF Affiliates typically do not have the human resources to document the results of these referrals, much less have contact information for follow-up. With respect to structure, because more HON Affiliates are independent agencies, their more clear supports for volunteering would impact the ratings by governance structure as well. As with other findings described above, size is not an important factor with respect to perceived differences in how Affiliates may impact the volunteer experience. In addition, the respondent characteristics assessed are not associated with systematic differences in outcomes.

Dimension 3 Affiliate impact on others and the community

The findings on the third index are displayed in Figure 15. This index gauged the impact Affiliates have on other people and the community, from the volunteer perspective.

Table 15 Volunteer Outcomes by Important Affiliate and Respondent Variables (Dimension 3)

Important variable	Expectation of Outcome Means	Outcome Means	Difference significant based on decision rule? ($p < .05$)	Finding of Outcome Means	Explanation Based on the Data
Affiliate size	Small = Medium = Large	Small (4.48) Medium (4.53) Large (4.49)	No	Small = Medium = Large	The means of the Affiliates categorized by size and governance type do not differ statistically.
Affiliate legacy	HON > POLF	POLF (4.45) HON (4.52) Dual (4.49)	Yes	HON > POLF	Legacy-type varied in favor of HON.
Affiliate structure	Independent > Embedded	Independent (4.49) Embedded (4.48)	No	Independent = Embedded	Independent and embedded Affiliates have equal outcomes.
Respondent age	Youth = Boomer = All others	Youth (4.41) Boomer (4.53) All others (4.49)	Yes	Boomers > All others > youth	The mean difference for age on this outcome is significant; Boomers score highest.
Respondent employer type	Public = private	Public (4.52) Private (4.49)	No	Public = private	There is no difference in outcomes on this dimension by employer type.

Legacy is the only category that achieved a statistically significant difference. Here, the data substantiate the expectation that HON Affiliates would have more profound effects on outcomes than POLF Affiliates, as a result of the citizen-centered HON model. Size of the Affiliate is not associated with outcomes, perhaps because it is largely a function of community size, with smaller Affiliates meeting the needs of smaller communities and larger Affiliates meeting the needs of larger communities. Structure does not seem to influence the outcomes either, thus, imbedded and independent Affiliates alike add value to communities.

The results indicate that Baby Boomers perceived Affiliate outcomes on other people and the community in the most favorable light, when compared to the other age groups. Employer type, however, is not associated with systematic (perceived) differences in outcomes.

Affiliate and respondent variables are more likely not to play a pivotal role in volunteer outcomes than to be associated with a significant difference.

Qualifications and Elaboration

The methodological foundation of this study is survey research. As with any methodology, surveys have advantages as well as limitations. For example, surveys cannot go into great depth,

and are limited in tapping the “how” and “why” of what is being measured. (For a full discussion on limitations, see Appendix B.) We attempted to address these limitations by employing the in-depth interview portion of the study. The in-depth interviews examined community partners and stakeholders of those Affiliates that self-nominated into the study and were selected by the national office and researchers using criteria thought to signify high functioning programs and services. Through these interviews, we were able to probe the “how” and “why,” by asking “what happens when an Affiliate functions at its best.”

To address the “how” question (i.e. how are Affiliates accomplishing these outcomes?), researchers asked interview respondents to describe the activities that the Affiliate conducts with and/or for them. Table 16 summarizes these coded responses, which provide a programs and services “audit.”

Table 16 Frequency of Affiliate Activities by Type

Activity Types	n	%	Examples
Volunteer promotion and recruitment	120	47.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating Day of Caring • Identifying opportunities for specific populations such as students or types of volunteering such as social action projects • Providing systems to find volunteer opportunities matching interests and skills • Recruiting general volunteers, promoting to the public • Recruiting skill-based volunteers such as tutors and board members
Projects, partnering, and networking	70	27.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering the Hands On Projects model • Building capacity of nonprofits through resources provision (e.g., networking events, resource library) • Coordinating resources powered by volunteers (e.g., publicizing Winterization program to eligible populations) • Coordinating the emergency response system • Educating and training Citizen Leaders • Implementing events to raise awareness of the democratic process and upcoming electoral issues • Managing SUVS in disaster through VOAD • Providing interpreters for clients and patients while receiving services • Running the Business Volunteer Council
Training and technical assistance	44	17.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing technical assistance such as service-learning and employee volunteer program, running satellite centers • Providing training including board, volunteer management, organizing service projects and leadership
Volunteer Recognition	20	7.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administering awards programs such as business volunteer of the month • Coordinating recognition in the media through Web, print, radio, and television presence • Hosting annual and monthly in-person recognition events
Total	254	100	

Although these data may not describe the entire network, they shed light on “how” these Affiliates operate. By far, Affiliates are most frequently involved in volunteer promotion and recruitment, a finding that becomes even more telling when broken out by Affiliate type (Table 17).

Table 17 Frequency of Affiliate Activities by Type by Legacy

	POLF 8 sites		HON 2 sites		Dual 2 sites		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Volunteer promotion, recruitment, and supply	91	55.4	9	24.4	20	35.7	120	47.2
Projects, partnering, and networking	29	17.6	20	58.8	21	37.5	70	27.5
Training and technical assistance	29	17.6	3	8.8	12	21.4	44	17.3
Volunteer Recognition	15	9.1	2	5.8	3	5.3	20	7.8
Total	164	100	34	100	56	100	254	100

As Table 17 details, the most frequently cited activity by POLF Affiliates is volunteer promotion and recruitment; for HON Affiliates, it is projects, partnering, and networking with an emphasis on the signature Hand On projects. Dual Affiliate activities are a near-even split between the respective POLF and HON most frequently cited activities. This stands to reason -- Dual Affiliates operate both models of service.

With respect to “why,” the interview data provides some depth and richness to the survey responses. Some of the recurring themes from these interviews are:

Affiliates provide needed services and activities for organizations that aid in their ability to operate.

Affiliates provide needed services and activities for organizations that aid in their ability to operate. As a result of Affiliate support, data suggest organizations can direct resources to other areas than those provided by Affiliates. Furthermore, Affiliates specialize and excel in providing those services. As one interviewee stated, “I think there would be a reduction [without Affiliate support]. There wouldn’t be much of a push to get involved in more of the community events, and we’d be more isolated to the school. I think our activities would probably be cut in half.” Another stated, “If it wasn’t for [our Affiliate], we couldn’t run the program.” A third interviewee said “[The Affiliate] allows me to target market for specific volunteers with specific skills at no cost to us.”

Affiliates conduct activities with and for organizations that are very important to the community’s wellbeing.

Affiliates conduct activities with and for organizations that are very important to the community well-being. Respondents stressed the vital role volunteers, with support from Affiliates and their organization, play in addressing community needs and building social capital. One statement from the interviews to illustrate this point is: “Volunteers are the backbone of what we do. We recruit and train about 500 volunteers a year, most of which do prepared taxes.” Another interviewee stated, “It is something that creates community within the community. You have somewhere you can go. Most of the volunteers come from within the county.”

If no Affiliates existed, the amount of impact organizations have in the community would be reduced.

When asked about hypothetically doing without Affiliates, interviewees speculated that eliminating Affiliates would not necessarily take away services but would decrease the quality and quantity of the services provided. Three quotes supporting this claim are: “It would be very hard to replicate what they have in the community - contacts and skills. We would really be spinning our wheels”; “The same results would not be achieved without the Affiliate, because no other organization is so connected to the community”; and “Without them, it would be a bunch of organizations trying to accomplish things that would be much more difficult to accomplish than the way they are now. We would not be aware of other activities and that could lead to a lot of overlap or big voids.”

Affiliates help organizations function more effectively.

Through providing services, Affiliates help reduce social problems more so than the organizations could do alone. For these reasons, respondents reported that Affiliates are very important partners. A few comments to expand on this notion are: “We don’t work with any other partners in this sort of way and don’t know of anyone else that allows us to access an array of service opportunities;” “The Affiliate was so much more responsive and more willing than other partners.”

Affiliates meet real needs in the community.

Respondents viewed Affiliates as connectors, linking citizens and solutions. Affiliates make volunteering accessible to citizens, and Affiliates identify where and how volunteer power can best be utilized in providing the solutions. A few comments from the interviews illustrate: “They certainly have a way of having needs identified and maybe some of the solutions to those needs identified all in one package;” “I see our Affiliate as the coordinating hub of our community;” and “[The Affiliate] meets the need of community members to practice citizenship. Through their promotion of volunteering...they raise awareness of the importance of participation and they facilitate it by making it easy to identify community organizations.”

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to expand what is known about the impact of HandsOn Network, one business unit of Points of Light Institute. Recognizing that prior assessments of network impact depended on self reports of output data, researchers sought to assess impact from the perspective of Affiliate clients, namely community partners and volunteers. Further, researchers were presented with an opportunity to capitalize on the timing of the recent merger to document for the first time the outcomes achieved by the newly unified membership of Affiliates.

Participation in the study at the Affiliate, community partner, and volunteer level was adequate to yield data to approximate the entire network. Affiliates who opted into the survey were

representative of non-responding Affiliates in terms of size and structure. Legacy, however, was possibly over-represented by Dual Affiliates. This circumstance is an acceptable limitation to the study. Dual Affiliates may signify a coming trend in the network base, and their over-inclusion gave researchers the occasion to understand more about how their outcomes compare to Affiliates operating a single program model.

Findings Based on Surveys with Support from Interviews

Community partners value Affiliates

The results indicate that respondents believe Affiliates serve a unique purpose that fills a service void and amplifies the quantity and quality of volunteer labor available in the community. Perhaps most importantly, however, community partners are certain that Affiliates meet a real need in the community. Affiliates, these data suggest, contribute to the public infrastructure by achieving secondary impact. Evidence is not as clear cut for direct impact. Community partners are more hesitant in their assessments about how the Affiliate directly impacts their organization including the lowest scores for whether Affiliates make the organization more effective and how important Affiliates are when compared to other partners. An explanation for the difference in direct and secondary impact results may be that community partners perceive Affiliate impact to be incremental when considered on a case-by-case basis; but, when this individual impact accumulates at the community level, community partners may view it as a powerful contributor to social change and civil society.

Volunteers see themselves as drivers of change

Affiliate volunteers evaluate their secondary impact strongly and are confident in the change they effect. Thus, at the individual level, volunteers view their experiences as important in terms of achieving community outcomes. This outcome may have to do not just with the volunteering itself, but the talents that they bring to the endeavor. Educated and experienced, these volunteers have much to contribute, which makes demonstrating direct impact more difficult for Affiliates. In this sense, the data call attention to the need for even more skill-based volunteer positions that encourage people to challenge and enhance their current resumes.

Volunteers are substantively matched to opportunities yet seek ongoing support

Another more modest finding is Affiliate support of the volunteer experience. As stated, Affiliates are very successful at impacting how volunteers substantively connect to their volunteer position; yet after that introduction is made, the data suggest ongoing support is only mediocre. We attribute this finding to realistic constraints of time, staff, and variations in Affiliate program modalities, which make ongoing support and follow-up difficult and less likely. However, with advances in volunteer matching software on the horizon, it seems imperative that mechanisms to coordinate information to provide this ongoing support be instituted, and that the national office provide resources for Affiliates on how to conduct appropriate and worthwhile volunteer support and follow-up.

Extraordinary volunteer experiences lead to healthier communities

Finally, the results suggest that volunteers believe Affiliates have systems in place to create positive experiences for volunteers and meet real needs in the community. Affiliates provide or facilitate the provision of opportunities that pique volunteer interests and skills, thus encouraging a regular volunteer commitment. Such meaningful and positive experiences, it can be surmised, may also encourage deeper and wider forms of civic engagement and participation by volunteers. By doing so, Affiliates help to connect citizens to the community and, ideally, to the democratic process, possibly raising social capital and creating healthier communities.

A diverse network; a strong network

Overall, the results indicate that the network is robust and that, although Affiliate and stakeholder variations produce systematic and significant differences in some outcomes, more often than not, differences do not play a pivotal role. This finding suggests that a network of diverse Affiliates generates consistent outcomes on many measures. That said, there are systematic differences in outcomes worth mentioning to highlight a sense of strength in this diversity. For both community partner and volunteer outcomes, HON Affiliates consistently score higher. We attribute this finding to the direct, tangible, and immediate nature of the HON benefits. Perhaps an idealistic recommendation, it is worth considering whether POLF Affiliates could be more intentional in creating processes by which clients can attribute benefits to the Affiliate in the long term (e.g., perhaps through follow-up and/or ongoing support). Most often, size is not an important factor in producing outcome differences, save for in the *personal impact of volunteer experience* index in which medium size Affiliates achieved the greatest mean rating. The pattern for structure is not clear. The means for independent and embedded Affiliates do not differ statistically on community partner outcomes and on one volunteer outcome, and each surpasses the other on one of the remaining volunteer indexes.

Recommendations for Future Outcomes Measurement

The mission of the HandsOn Network is to “inspire, equip, and mobilize people to take action that changes the world.” Without explicit statements about what to achieve and how to do so, though, measuring impact will be challenging. It seems a reasoned approach, then, to frame the national organization’s campaigns for impact using specific issue areas, such as restoring schools, preserving the earth, developing communities, and alleviating poverty. It is recommended the approach utilized in this study be applied and strengthened to carry out this endeavor – use the present foundation to make the outcome assessment process strategic, regular, and expected. Regular measurement of outcomes over time in particular areas can reveal impact. Affiliates will come to know that they can depend on these measures for local reporting and schedule their own local data collection accordingly. Once a regular measurement process is established, systems can be instituted to take into account the larger network’s opinions to ensure the fidelity of measures to on-the-ground operations.

A Conceptual Framework for Intermediary Organizations

Finally, through the application of multiple constituency theory together with the conceptualization of direct and secondary impact, this research provides an important framework

for other intermediary organizations to begin to measure outcomes. Although in its formative stages, the approach presented here extends previous research by embracing the direct effects of Affiliates on volunteers and community partners, and the indirect or secondary effects of Affiliates for clients and communities, in which ultimate interest is in how the services received from the Affiliates effect, and hopefully improve, the ability of the partners to exert desired impacts on communities. Intermediary services providers, as mentioned, are not designed or expected to impact the community directly but are thought to have impact indirectly through assisting other organizations that serve clients in the community. We could find but little research attempting to measure the impact of such secondary organizations: we hope that we have begun to make a contribution to that challenge here.

APPENDIX

- A. Glossary
- B. Limitations
- C. References
- D. Selected Annotated Bibliography

A. Glossary

CHI SQUARE: **Chi Square** is any statistical hypothesis test in which the test statistic has a chi-square distribution when the null hypothesis is true, or any in which the probability distribution of the test statistic (assuming the null hypothesis is true) can be made to approximate a chi-square distribution as closely as desired by making the sample size large enough.

F-TEST: An **F-test** is any statistical test in which the test statistic has an F-distribution if the null hypothesis is true. The hypothesis that the means of multiple normally distributed populations, all having the same standard deviation, are equal. This is perhaps the most well-known of hypotheses tested by means of an F-test, and the simplest problem in the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCY THEORY: Multiple constituency literature suggests different stakeholder groups evaluate a focal organization differently because stakeholders judge the focal organization against criteria unique to their interest.

OUTCOME DATA: The results that a program aims to achieve. Outcomes are the changes that occur because of a program, or the difference that is made by a program.

OUTPUT DATA: The measurable products of a program; the concrete items that are produced as part of a program.

QUALITATIVE DATA: Data described in terms of quality, as opposed to "quantity" (see "Quantitative data"). Qualitative data is often obtained through asking open-ended questions, to which the answers are not limited to a set of choices or a scale. Qualitative data collection is most useful when you would like information in people's own words, or when the questions you are asking have too many possible answers for you to be able to list them. Qualitative data is more time-consuming to analyze than quantitative data, but can be a worthwhile and important part of a data collection effort.

SAMPLE SIZE: The size of the representative sub-group chosen from the larger group to act as a base for data collection. Different sample sizes result in different "confidence levels" or reliability of the final data.

SAMPLING: A data collection technique in which results are collected from a representative sub-group, or sample, of a larger group.

UPWARD BIAS: The overestimation or overstatement by a statistical measure of the event it is attempting to describe.

Source: Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation (<http://ericae.net/edo/ed315430.htm>) and Successlinks (<http://www.successlinks.biz/glossary.html>)

B. Limitations

The reliability of Affiliate budget data used in this analysis is questionable. In addition to missing data, in the case of dual Affiliates 100 percent were recorded by the separate national organizations to have different budgets for 2006. The range of this discrepancy was \$57,633 to \$903,982, and totaled \$5,143,060. To ameliorate this inconsistency for the purpose of this Report, the POLF figure was taken for dual Affiliates. Additionally, the system used to track respondents to Affiliates (and thus by budget, type, etc) was flawed, contributing to reliability issues. Survey respondents were asked to provide the official name of their Affiliate using links to the national organizations' Web sites. However, because of discrepancies in where people volunteer, service size area, and other unknowns, it is possible that respondents were mismatched to Affiliates. In addition, many respondents provided the place where they volunteer, as opposed to the Affiliate name, which creates uncertainty regarding whether their responses related to the Affiliate or the site of volunteering.

Measurement validity is at issue. From a research perspective inappropriate operationalization of terms is a risk in any empirical study, in this case especially with regard to the novel exploration into direct and secondary impact attempted here. Social desirability is a factor should respondents want to make their Affiliate score well, for any number of reasons including, for instance, if the Affiliate is a funder such as the United Way. A final aspect threatening measurement validity is a lack of dosage differentiation; although Affiliate usage was assessed, these estimates are imperfect, and respondents receive widely varying amounts of Affiliate support, yet their ratings are all treated equally.

In the universal site study (survey), researchers requested that Affiliates send e-mail surveys to all community partners and volunteers. In the end, however, Affiliates had full license to modify the recipient list, potentially skewing results and diminishing researcher ability to generalize to the entire network. The in-depth study, as stated, used a criterion for selection of "excellence," thus increasing the chance that data will be positive and a picture only of a best practice. Both these factors limit external validity.

Internal validity can be challenged due to the fact that respondents self-selected into the survey portion of the study, which aimed for a universal assessment. Yet, statistical analysis of non response did not reveal sample bias. History or intervening events is also an issue of internal validity. For instance, one Affiliate site had multiple respondents who had recently volunteered for an event the prior weekend. The large number of volunteers experiencing the same event and reporting on it as part of an impact study is not typical, and may have biased the results for that Affiliate.

As in the use of attitudinal scales more generally, the scale used for the outcome measures in this study raise the possibility of measurement error. Further, as noted in the Representativeness section of the report, the small number of responding Affiliates renders findings suggestive, especially regarding the Affiliate-type analysis. These issues diminish our confidence in the study's statistical conclusion validity.

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D. Selected Annotated Bibliography

Boschken, H. (1994). Organizational performance and multiple constituencies. *Public Administration Review*, 54 (3). 308-312. Retrieved December 11, 2006, from JSTOR by Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University. (doi:10.2307/976739).

Boschken focuses the article on public organizations, a different and more relevant arena than much of the business-focused literature detailed in this review. The author contends that scarce resources, multiple perspectives, and joint provision of services have led agencies to a “‘metapolicy’ policy environment” in which multiple perspectives must be considered when evaluating performance, albeit these perspectives often clash. After discussing a dearth of research incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives, Boschken moves into current limitations including that evaluators neglect to compartmentalize performance evaluations at the employee/small group, program, and organization levels and that multiple constituency groups are omitted from the analyses. The consequence of these two issues, according to the author, is that research is often skewed toward one constituency more than another, mitigating the results. The author forwards a framework based on the organizational theories of legitimated authority and organizational function, which is argued to “broaden the number of organizational perspectives and provides a means of measuring who gets more and who gets less from the allocation of public resources”(311). Because of its focus on public sector outcomes, this article is one of the most applicable to the Affiliate study, yet the methods used to create the framework are embedded in serious organizational theory that might be overly complex for the purpose of the Affiliate study.

Connolly, T., Conlon, E., & Deutsch, S. J. (1980). Organizational effectiveness: A multiple-constituency approach [Electronic version]. *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review* (pre-1986), 5(000002), 211. Retrieved December 12, 2006, from ABI/INFORM Complete database. (Document ID: 84835004).

Connolly et al begin by discussing organizational goals and systems approaches to organizational effectiveness, which while very different, are grounded in the same fundamental principle: “it is possible...to arrive at a single set of evaluative criteria, and thus at a single statement of organizational effectiveness”(212). Yet, through this paper, the authors counter this thinking, suggesting that “multiple evaluations from multiple constituencies” will produce a more comprehensive understanding of effectiveness. In their description of the multi-constituency view of effectiveness, the authors note that different groups become involved in organizations for different reasons, thus their view of effectiveness will be different, and not one of these perspectives is more correct than another. They further stress that the definition of goals and constraints, purpose of a system, and system behavior is dependent on which system member is being asked. The authors also comment on recommendations for empirical research, which includes an outline of distributional, organizational location, and temporal dimensional issues pertaining to the MC approach. Three questions posed in the concluding remarks align well with the Affiliate study’s attempt to survey constituents using different instruments in the anticipation of different effectiveness and impact ratings: “what constituencies exist in a particular setting, what effectiveness assessments does each now reach, and what are the consequences of these

assessments”(216)? The article falls short of an exact match for the Affiliate because, like the majority of the business literature reviewed, the focus is on effectiveness only.

Herman, R. & Renz, D. O. (2004). Doing things right: effectiveness in local nonprofit organizations: A panel study [Electronic version]. *Public Administration Review*, 64(6), 694-704. Retrieved December 13, 2006, from Research Library Core database. (Document ID: 737582431).

Overall, Herman and Renz’s article is the most pertinent article examined in this review. Using panel data at two time intervals, the main purpose of the paper is to answer the following questions:

- § “Do different nonprofits constituencies or stakeholder groups judge effectiveness similarly?” (694)?
- § “Do nonprofits that increase their use of recommended board-process practices become more effective”(694)?
- § “Do nonprofits that increase their use of practices identified as enhancing overall organizational effectiveness, in fact, become more effective”(695)?

As understandable, the first question posed is highly applicable to this review, and the body of the paper that addresses it is considered in detail. To gauge nonprofit organizational effectiveness, the authors base their study on multiple-constituency approach paired with social constructionism. The former, as described elsewhere, is grounded in the theory that the multiple stakeholders of an organization are likely to evaluate effectiveness using criteria important to that stakeholder group; the latter theory deems reality as a social construct “created by people’s beliefs, knowledge, and actions,” implying that “effectiveness is whatever multiple constituents or stakeholders judge it to be”(695). Nonprofit effectiveness, then, the authors maintain, is evaluated from the differing viewpoints of multiple stakeholders and these effectiveness assessments can change over time and influence one another. [The next sections of the paper give background to the second and third questions posed above; because the Affiliate study does not tackle board or management issues, they are not covered in the review either.] The researchers interviewed and sent a short questionnaire to stakeholders in organizations providing services to developmentally disabled clients and health and welfare organizations in 1993-94 and 1999-2000. The article provides much detail on the methods used to determine indicators of board practices, correct management practices, board effectiveness, and organizational effectiveness. Data from the analysis suggest low correlations on effectiveness scores among stakeholders, making it “inappropriate to combine organizational effectiveness scores from the three groups into a single score for each organization”(700). In the concluding remarks, the authors contend that the proliferation of best practices from organization to organization is not always practical or effective and what may be more important is that nonprofits respond to the needs and interests of their important stakeholders. The drawback to this article for our purposes is that stakeholders included in the study are very much an internal audience and speak to nonprofit effectiveness from that perspective.

Tschirhart, M. (1996). Exploring challenges associated with stakeholder groups. *Artful leadership* (63-73). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

In this chapter, Tschirhart proposes a method to diagram stakeholders called stakeholder mapping. Starting out by asking respondents to list all stakeholders, or “a group or individual

who influences or is influenced by an organization”(64), the author then grouped the stakeholders by internal or external, which is sub-categorized by customer, industry, community, political, and resource provider. This strategy appears a logical way to organize diverse stakeholders of nonprofits, such as Affiliates.

Tsui, A. (1990). A multiple-constituency model of effectiveness: An empirical examination at the human resource subunit level [Electronic version]. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(3), 458-483. Retrieved December 11, 2006, from JSTOR by Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University. (doi:10.2307/2393313).

Tsui examines three questions, “what constituencies exist for an organization in a particular setting; what effectiveness assessment does each constituency reach, and what factors influence these assessments?” (459), related to the multi-consistency model, premised on the notion that “organizations exist to serve a multiple of interest groups” (460). Working with three organizations, Tsui drew a sample and mailed surveys to executives, manager and employees, and the human resource subunit to test three hypothesis: the first based on resource dependency and strategic contingency theories, the second on munificence and adaptive-response theories, and the third on preferences by group. Evidence from the surveys suggests that constituencies did not rate the focal subunit equally, and the author posited arguments as to why these differences might exist. Perhaps most pertinent to the Affiliate study is the question Tsui posed to respondents to secure a list of stakeholders and the concluding “conceptual extensions” suggesting “the use of multiple approaches will yield a richer understanding of the effectiveness phenomenon than that provided by any one approach alone”(480), which justifies creating multiple surveys by stakeholder to appropriately assess the effectiveness and impact of Affiliates.

Zammuto, R. (1984). A comparison of multiple constituency models of organizational effectiveness [Electronic version]. *Academy of Management Review*, 9(4), 606-616. Retrieved December 11, 2006, from JSTOR by Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University. (doi:10.2307/258484)

Using past work on organization effectiveness gauged from a multiple constituency approach, Zammuto looks at how the perspectives of relativistic, power, social justice, and evolutionary play a role in the composition of organizational outcomes. Each is discussed in some detail to provide a basic understanding of each effectiveness model. However, the author draws upon Leach to indicate that the comparison of these theories does not advance the study of effectiveness and attempts to offer generalizations based on all of them in which human values and the impact of time are main drivers. For the Affiliate study, Zammuto’s discussion on the selection of constituencies, criteria for effectiveness, and plans for action is highly applicable in the starting phase of the project because each perspective will choose differently based on its fundamental values. Next, the impact of time is discussed by Zammuto, also pertinent to the Affiliate study because of the one-shot nature of the data collection proposed.

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