

Hourly Value Of Volunteers Grows 41 Cents To \$22.55

By Patrick Sullivan - April 3, 2014

Nonprofits that used volunteer services last year got a little more bang for their buck. The value of a volunteer hour stood at \$22.55 during 2013, according to a report from Independent Sector in Washington, D.C. That's 41 cents, or 1.9 percent more than 2012.



The revised figure comes just ahead of National Volunteer Week, running this year from April 6 through April 13. “The 40th anniversary of National Volunteer

Week is a great time to recognize the extraordinary value that volunteers add to nonprofits and the lives of the people and causes they serve,” said Diana Aviv, president and CEO of Independent Sector, via a statement. “Forty years ago, we could never have imagined the tools that now exist that give volunteers immense choices and opportunities to contribute to the causes closest to their hearts.”

While \$22.55 is the highest value on record since 1980, when the value of a volunteer hour was \$7.46, the 41-cent increase is the third-lowest in a decade. The greatest increases were from 2006 to 2007 and 2007 to 2008, both 74 cents. The lowest increase was between 2011 to 2012, when the value increased by 35 cents, and 2003 to 2004, a 36-cent increase.

A volunteer hour is worth the most by far in Washington, D.C., at \$38.69 and Massachusetts at \$27 than Arkansas, the lowest value at \$18.93. Six other states came in less than \$20: South Dakota (\$19.04), Nevada (\$19.05), Mississippi (\$19.35), Montana (\$19.64), New Mexico (\$19.77) and Idaho (\$19.92).

The report comes on the heels of survey results released by the federal Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) that show traditional volunteering is at a 10-year low. The rate of volunteering declined 1.1 percent to 25.4 percent of the population, or about 62.6 million people, between September 2012 and September 2013. Volunteers were most likely to serve religious organizations (33 percent), education or youth services organizations (25.6 percent) and social and community service organizations (14.7 percent).

According to the Independent Sector report, the value of volunteer services can be used on financial

statements such as grant proposals and annual reports if the volunteer is providing a specialized skill under Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) rules. FASB's rule of thumb is the volunteer services can be used if the nonprofit would have purchased the services the volunteer provided.

“It is important to remember that when a doctor, lawyer, craftsman or anyone with a specialized skill volunteers, the value of his or her work is based on his or her volunteer work, not his or her earning power,” according to the report's authors. “If a doctor is painting a fence or a lawyer is sorting groceries, her or she is not performing his or her specialized skill for the nonprofit, and their volunteer hour value would not be higher.”

Independent Sector establishes the value based on hourly earnings estimates of non-management, non-farm workers from the BLS, plus 12 percent for fringe benefits. “It is very difficult to put a value on volunteer time,” according to the report's authors. “Volunteers provide many intangibles that cannot be easily quantified.”



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