



VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

# The complete *buyer's guide* to volunteer management software.

For volunteer professionals and nonprofit leaders who want leverage technology to spend less time on admin and more time engaging volunteers.

# This guide is for you.

If you're juggling spreadsheets, chasing down sign-up emails, and somehow still finding time to actually support your volunteers, this was written with you in mind. It moves the way a good buying process should: education first, comparison in the middle, decision support at the end. Skip to whatever is most useful right now.

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## Here's where we're going.

Use this checklist as your roadmap. Each step corresponds to a section of this guide.

- ☐ Diagnose your pain points  
Complete the needs assessment on page 3
- ☐ Build your evaluation framework  
Answer the 6 buyer questions on pages 4–6
- ☐ Calculate your ROI  
Run the numbers for your program on page 7
- ☒ Ready to learn more about Better Impact's volunteer management solutions?  
Connect with a Volunteer Tech Advisor to see how it works for your organization.

# Do you actually need software?

If you check YES to 3 or more questions in any category, that area is costing you significant time and is a strong signal that purpose-built software will pay for itself.

## DATA MANAGEMENT

- Do you store volunteer data in more than one place (spreadsheet, email, paper)?
- Is your volunteer data ever out of date or inconsistent?
- Do credential or background check records require manual tracking?

## REPETITIVE TASKS

- Do you manually confirm or remind volunteers before every shift?
- Does scheduling consume more than 4 hours of your week?
- Do you re-enter the same data in multiple places?

## SIGN-UP EXPERIENCE

- Do new volunteers call or email you to ask how to sign up?
- Is your onboarding process different for every new volunteer?
- Do you have no way to publicly display available volunteer opportunities?

## HOURS TRACKING

- Are volunteer hours tracked on paper or in spreadsheets?
- Are you manually tracking hours after each volunteer shift is completed?
- Is it hard to tell how many volunteer hours were given to your organization last month?

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Do you send the same message to all volunteers even when only some need it?
- Do you have no record of past communications with individual volunteers?
- Are shift reminders sent manually, one at a time?

## REPORTING

- Do your quarterly or annual volunteer impact reports take more than a day to compile?
- Are you unable to breakdown volunteer reports by program or location?
- Are you missing data on volunteer retention and turnover trends?

## VOLUNTEER RETENTION FORMULA

$$\text{Volunteers this year} \div \text{Volunteers last year} \times 100$$

A result below 80% means you are losing more than one in five volunteers annually. A platform with automated re-engagement, milestone recognition, and anniversary messaging directly addresses this.

THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

# How to evaluate volunteer management software.

7

steps from first question to confident decision

6

feature categories that move the needle for managers

# Six questions every buyer should ask.

Before you request a demo or start evaluation pricing, get clear answers to these six questions. They apply to every platform, and they will help you filter quickly.

## 1 Does it fit your program structure?

Some platforms are built single-site nonprofits. Others are built for multi-location organizations with complex requirements. You'll want to find a system that fits your unique organization.

## 2 Does it match your volunteer profile?

High-volume, event-based programs need different tools than programs with long-tenured, credential-dependent volunteers. Ask vendors specifically how their platform handles your volunteer type.

## 3 Can it grow with you?

If your volunteer strategy is oriented towards growing your program, make sure the system you choose and accommodate change without significant price increases or system rebuilds.

## 4 How does it handle compliance?

Background check integrations, GDPR compliance, HIPAA-adjacent access controls, and data residency matter, especially in healthcare, government, and service to vulnerable populations.

## 5 What does implementation involve?

The honest cost includes staff time for setup, data migration, volunteer communication, and training, not just the subscription fee. Ask for a realistic timeline and what support is included.

## 6 Does it cultivate a better volunteer experience?

The experience your volunteers have with your organization and technology is one of the most important parts of any volunteer strategy. Find out how each system supports the volunteer experience.

## Building your scoring rubric.

Once you have narrowed to two or three platforms, score them on the dimensions that matter most to your organization. Weight the categories based on your program's current pain points.

| Evaluation dimension         | Suggested weight | What to assess                                         |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Fit with program structure   | 25%              | Single site, multi-site, or enterprise hierarchy       |
| Volunteer experience quality | 20%              | Interface, mobile app, self-service capabilities       |
| Scheduling and communication | 20%              | Automation, targeted messaging, no-show reduction      |
| Reporting and compliance     | 15%              | Board, funder, and audit-ready reports                 |
| Implementation and support   | 10%              | Onboarding timeline, training, ongoing support quality |
| Scalability and pricing      | 10%              | Cost at current and future scale, contract terms       |

"We didn't just want something that met our current needs—we wanted a system we could grow into. Better Impact helped us see what was possible, not just what we knew to ask for.

And I really felt like they cared about our success. They're always available and always helpful."

– Wendy Wilbur



## Calculating the real value for your program.

Manual volunteer admin costs staff time. Volunteer management software returns some of that time to higher-value work. Apply your own hourly rate to the time saving and the subscription cost is usually recovered many times over in the first year. The numbers below come from a Better Impact ROI calculator scenario for a real customer profile.

CALCULATOR SCENARIO County government volunteer program, modeled in the Better Impact ROI calculator.

# 3,980

Annual staff hours returned to the program in this calculator scenario.

# 2,970%

Projected first-year ROI in the same scenario.

# \$132k

Annual staff time value at the program's \$33.18/hr rate, same scenario.

Calculator scenario only. Actual results vary by program size, staffing model, adoption, and current process. Run your own numbers below or with a Better Impact specialist.

### WHERE MANUAL PROGRAMS LOSE TIME EACH MONTH

- |                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Onboarding admin</b><br/>Processing applications, chasing documents, updating records</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Scheduling</b><br/>Assigning shifts, following up on vacancies, confirming attendance</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Communication</b><br/>Individual and bulk emails coordinated manually</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Hour tracking</b><br/>Collecting paper timesheets, entering hours manually</li> </ul>            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Reporting</b><br/>Pulling data from multiple sources, formatting for boards and funders</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Data entry</b><br/>Typing application data, updating volunteer profiles manually</li> </ul>      |

### Run your ROI estimate with us.

Bring your program size and current process. We will model the staff time you would recover and the value of that time.

[Calculate your ROI →](#)

# What getting started with software actually looks like.

- 1 Account setup and onboarding plan**  
Many volunteer management software providers offer classes, video training or on-boarding specialists to help you get started with your new platform.
- 2 Make a data plan**  
Work with your new software provider on how to import your volunteer data.
- 3 Admin training**  
Make sure your admin team has participated in the training provided by your new software.
- 4 Volunteer communication and launch**  
Once you're setup it's time to share your new volunteer site with your team.

## 24x5 human support, included.

Better Impact provides live human support five days a week, 24 hours a day. Not a chatbot. Not a ticket queue. A real person who knows the platform.

**24x5**  
LIVE SUPPORT

# Volunteer Program Health Check.

Where is your volunteer program strongest, and where is it leaking time, trust, or engagement? Score each area below, then take your top gaps to Page 2.

SCORE 0 TO 3   0 = Not in place   ·   1 = Inconsistent   ·   2 = Mostly working   ·   3 = Strong and repeatable

## SECTION A · SCORE YOUR VOLUNTEER LIFECYCLE

|   |                                                                                                                                                                            |                          |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Planning &amp; Process</b><br>Do we have a clear process from planning to role design, recruitment, matching, supervision, recognition, and evaluation?                 | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 2 | <b>Role Design</b><br>Are volunteer roles written around outcomes, not just tasks? Do they include purpose, time frame, supervision, qualifications, and success measures? | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 3 | <b>Recruitment</b><br>Do our recruitment messages name the role, purpose, requirements, benefits, and next step clearly?                                                   | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 4 | <b>Screening &amp; Matching</b><br>Do we match volunteers to roles based on skills, motivation, availability, risk, and fit?                                               | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 5 | <b>Onboarding &amp; Training</b><br>Do new volunteers know the mission, policies, tools, expectations, first shift details, and who supports them?                         | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 6 | <b>Scheduling &amp; Communication</b><br>Can volunteers easily find shifts, receive reminders, update availability, and get relevant updates?                              | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 7 | <b>Supervision &amp; Retention</b><br>Does every volunteer have a clear supervisor, feedback loop, recognition plan, and path to stay engaged?                             | <input type="text"/> / 3 |
| 8 | <b>Reporting &amp; Evaluation</b><br>Can we report hours, outcomes, retention, volunteer activity, and program impact without manual scrambling?                           | <input type="text"/> / 3 |

**Total Score**

/ 24

## SECTION B · INTERPRET YOUR SCORE

### 0 to 8

#### High friction

Your program likely depends on manual work, informal knowledge, or heroic effort from staff.

### 9 to 16

#### Growing but inconsistent

You have some good practices, but gaps may hurt volunteer experience, retention, and reporting.

### 17 to 24

#### Strong foundation

Your program is more mature. Focus on optimization, better reporting, segmentation, and scaling.

## SECTION C · YOUR TOP 3 GAPS

My lowest-scoring areas are:

1.
2.
3.

The biggest operational pain this creates is:

# Build your 30-day improvement plan.

Use your top 3 gaps from Page 1. Choose one practical action for each gap, then identify what your volunteer management system needs to support.

## SECTION A · ACTION PLAN TABLE

| PRIORITY GAP                                 | WHAT NEEDS TO IMPROVE?        | 30-DAY ACTION                            | WHAT SOFTWARE SHOULD SUPPORT                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EXAMPLE</b><br>Scheduling & Communication | Too much manual reminder work | Set up a standard shift reminder process | Self-scheduling, automated confirmations, reminders, cancellation rules |
| Gap 1:                                       |                               |                                          |                                                                         |
| Gap 2:                                       |                               |                                          |                                                                         |
| Gap 3:                                       |                               |                                          |                                                                         |

## SECTION B · SOFTWARE FIT QUESTIONS

Bring these questions to your next software demo. Check the ones that apply to your program.

- |                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can volunteers self-schedule for shifts or opportunities?                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Can we send automated confirmations and reminders?                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can we segment communications by role, program, location, status, or interest? | <input type="checkbox"/> Can we track volunteer hours, qualifications, training, and availability in one place? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can staff supervisors access what they need without creating data silos?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Can we report on retention, activity, impact, and volunteer engagement?                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can we create different onboarding paths for different volunteer roles?        | <input type="checkbox"/> Can we support short-term, long-term, skilled, episodic, and corporate volunteers?     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can we recognize milestones, service history, and contribution patterns?       | <input type="checkbox"/> Can we reduce manual spreadsheet work without making the volunteer experience harder?  |

### Not sure which gaps are process problems and which are software problems?

A Better Impact specialist can map your volunteer program needs to the right system, whether you are replacing spreadsheets, improving scheduling, strengthening reporting, or scaling a more complex program.

[Book an intro call →](#)

## YOUR NEXT STEP

# What to do next.

You have the framework. You have the matrix. You have seen how the platform performs across real-world scenarios. Here is the path forward.

## 1 Book an intro call with Better Impact.

Start your evaluation with a Volunteer Technology Specialist. Tell them your program type, your current pain points, and your must-have requirements. They will map you to the right product and answer your specific questions.

## 2 See a live demo

Explore how Better Impact can support your unique organization. Ask to see what workflows that mirror your current volunteer initiatives. Watch how volunteers experience the platform, not just how admins do. Bring your scoring rubric.

## 3 Run your ROI calculation

Use the framework from Chapter 5 to estimate time savings for your specific program. Include the hours your team spends on the tasks a platform would automate.

## 4 Monitor and measure results

Set KPIs before you go live so you have a baseline to measure against. Volunteer retention rate, scheduling time, report production time, and volunteer satisfaction are the four most common. Schedule a formal review at 3 months and again at 6 months.

### Book your volunteer software fit call

No pressure. No script. We will map your program to the right product and answer your specific questions.

[Start the conversation](#)



Unlock the volunteer experience

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