



Three Kings Knocking at the Door: Is it All About the Money?

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The authors address the significance of volunteering in the Three Kings Collection (TKC), one of the largest door-to-door fundraising events for Caritas Czech Republic, by contrasting its quantified economic value with non-monetary value dimensions. This comparison can guide practitioners towards more holistic assessments of volunteer contributions and, more broadly speaking, inspire well-rounded monitoring, evaluation and reporting practices.

More specifically, the authors pose the following research question: How can the value of volunteering be fully captured beyond traditional approaches which focus on monetary quantification?

Traditional approaches to assessing volunteer contributions tend to focus on time spent volunteering and its monetary value. They can be understood as an expression of nonprofit organizations' need to demonstrate their legitimacy and deliver measurable impact. However, such approaches fail to capture broader social benefits of volunteering.

[#Caritas](#) [#door-to-door-fundraising](#) [#volunteering](#) [#value](#) [#charity](#)

Background

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Context



- **Quantifying the monetary value of volunteering**, especially hours spent volunteering, is a common practice in the philanthropic sector. It is often used to justify volunteer contributions in financial statements, and reporting vis-à-vis funders or policymakers.
- Such financial valuation methods are generally based on **inputs (hours spent volunteering)** and fail to capture many of the intangible **benefits created (outputs)**.
- Volunteering creates significant non-economic value through **impacts on individual volunteers** (e.g., increased skills, health benefits, overall wellbeing) and **society** (e.g., community building, reduced loneliness). This positive value created by volunteers is often vast but invisible to researchers, funders and policymakers.
- The **pressure many nonprofit organizations face to demonstrate their impact** makes the use of easily calculated metrics, like the monetary value of volunteer time, tempting. However, relying solely on simplified value metrics risks misinterpretation and might ultimately contribute to problematic and overly simplistic interpretations of legitimacy and impact in the nonprofit sector.

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Take aways & Learnings



- **Significant contribution to fundraising:** Volunteer time can in fact create major financial value. For example, its monetary value represented between **18.48% and 32.69% of the total financial donations** collected in the TKC fundraising boxes in 2022.
- **Limitations of economic estimates:** Traditional economic methods measure volunteer time (input) but fundamentally **fail to capture critical non-monetary value dimensions** (output), such as spiritual benefits or community-building.
- **The true value is non-monetary:** Caritas and Church representatives emphasize that the campaign's primary value is **non-financial**, focusing on spiritual significance, fostering community relationships, decreasing loneliness and supporting social outreach, not just monetary yield.
- **Conforming to monetary logics of the funding landscape:** Many nonprofit organizations find themselves needing to conform to implicit rules in order to fulfill reporting expectations and funding requirements. Working with limited capacities, this inevitably leads to **simplified narratives of impact and value**.
- **The need for diverse narratives of impact and value:** By including a variety of stakeholders (i.e. Caritas and church representatives), the authors were able to illustrate the **diversity of possible interpretations of volunteering value**. This highlights the **context-dependent nature of “impact” and “value”** and the importance of considering multiple stakeholders’ views and perception.

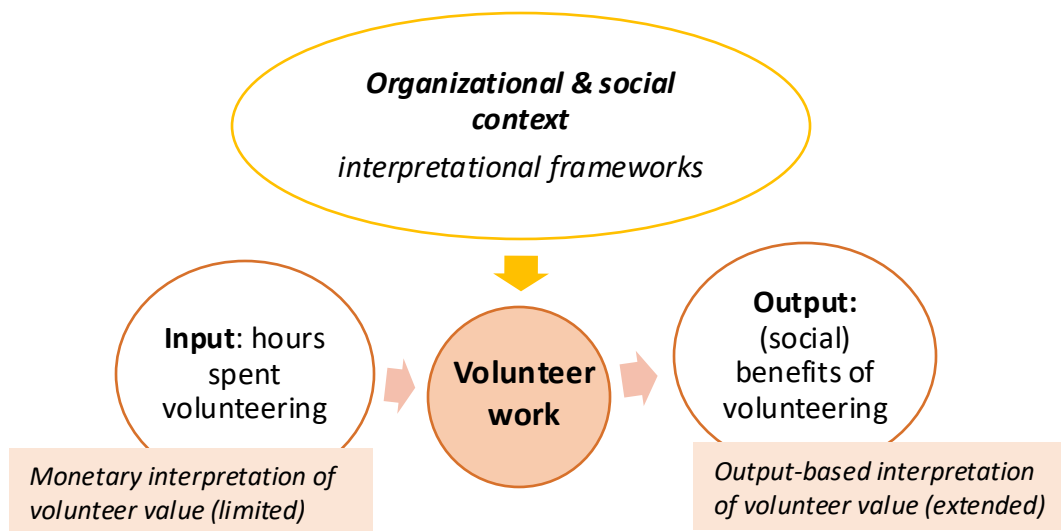


Figure: comparison of input- and output-based models of the value of volunteering

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