

FOCAL ARTICLE

# Industrial-organizational psychologists and volunteer work

Nancy Tippins<sup>1</sup>, Milton Hakel<sup>2</sup>, Karen Grabow<sup>3</sup>, Elizabeth Kolmstetter<sup>4</sup>, Joel Moses<sup>5</sup>, David Oliver<sup>6</sup>, and Peter Scontrino<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Nancy T. Tippins Group, LLC, Greenville, SC, USA, <sup>2</sup>Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, USA, <sup>3</sup>KGH, Minneapolis, MN, USA, <sup>4</sup>NASA, Arlington, VA, USA, <sup>5</sup>Retired, Boynton Beach, FL, USA, <sup>6</sup>PepsiCo, Dallas, TX, USA and <sup>7</sup>Scontrino-Powell, Inc., Seattle, WA, USA

**Corresponding author:** Nancy Tippins; Email: [nancy@tippinsgroup.com](mailto:nancy@tippinsgroup.com)

(Received 30 June 2021; revised 22 February 2022; accepted 7 March 2022)

## Abstract

Many of the larger employers in this country and abroad have benefited from industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologists' evidence-based practice. However, charitable and not-for-profit organizations have not always been aware of our services or able to afford them when cognizant of them. Volunteering professional services to charitable organizations provides an opportunity to extend these benefits. In addition, volunteers reap the intrinsic rewards of service, acquire opportunities to hone their skills, and learn from others, and pro bono work has the potential of informing our understanding of the science and practice of I-O psychology. This paper provides five case studies from five I-O psychologists who share their volunteer experiences in their own words. Each case study describes what the I-O psychologist did for the organization, how he or she became involved, and what he or she got out of the experience and learned. The paper offers ways SIOP and the SIOP Foundation might facilitate volunteer activities and concludes by inviting readers to share their own volunteer experiences and suggestions for encouraging volunteer work.

**Keywords:** volunteer; pro bono; case studies; evidence-based practice

## Introduction

The scientist–practitioner model is a fundamental precept of industrial and organizational psychology. We are scientists who apply our knowledge to practical problems in the workplace and other organizations. Many have benefitted from our evidence-based practices. However, charitable and not-for-profit organizations have not always been aware of our services or been able to afford them.

The benefits of our efforts are well-known among I-O psychologists. For example, we can increase productivity; we can improve the well-being of people who work in the organization; we can increase the level of engagement of the workforce and enhance the organizational cultures; and we can raise the level of effectiveness of organizations through selection, development, and training programs. Volunteering provides opportunities for I-O psychologists to extend these advantages to organizations that might not otherwise have access to them.

Volunteering has benefits for the giver too. Many who give their time cite the intrinsic rewards that come with substantive contributions to other people and organizations. Others recognize opportunities to practice their craft and hone their skills in receptive environments. Many volunteers point out how much they have learned from their activities, particularly when other experts are involved. At times, the volunteer activities of I-O psychologists have increased the awareness and visibility of the profession. For example, SIOP's engagement with the United

Nations has provided opportunities for I-O psychologists to apply their knowledge and skills to humanitarian and development issues within the United Nations common system while exposing United Nations personnel to the field (<https://www.siop.org/About-SIOP/Advocacy/SIOP-and-the-United-Nations>).

In addition, volunteer work has the potential to enrich our understanding of the science and practice of I-O psychology. There are many research questions that could be informed by pro bono activities. For example, someone might explore if and how contextual differences between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations affect the implementation of selection procedures, training programs, or coaching initiatives. Others might consider the workplace dynamics of volunteers and paid employees working side by side. We might also find that charitable organizations are more inclined to share the details of successful programs broadly than businesses that see these programs as a competitive edge.

Many professionals in other fields volunteer their service. The American Bar Association formally establishes each lawyer's professional responsibility to provide pro bono services and encourages voluntary financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means. (See [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/probono\\_public\\_service/policy/aba\\_model\\_rule\\_6\\_1/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/probono_public_service/policy/aba_model_rule_6_1/).) Although the medical profession has no formal rule that fosters volunteer activities, examples of physicians working for no or low fees abound, ranging from free clinics to medical missions. Corporate philanthropy is becoming increasingly popular and is moving beyond corporate donations of money to charitable organizations. Some companies match employees' individual contributions to charitable organizations; others devote a day to charitable activities during which all employees work on a project for a nonprofit organization. Some give employees some amount of time off with pay for their volunteer work. (See <https://blog.shrm.org/workplace/the-business-of-giving-make-volunteering-part-of-your-corporate-strategy>.)

Psychology has long encouraged participation in volunteer activities. Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility of the American Psychological Association's (APA's) *Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct* points out psychologists' responsibility to others: "They are aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to society and to the specific communities in which they work." In his APA presidential address, George A. Miller (1969) highlighted the "human problems whose solutions will require us to change our behavior and our social institutions" and argued that psychologists must "not only extend and deepen our understanding of mental and behavioral phenomena, but we must somehow incorporate our hard-won knowledge more effectively into the vast social changes that we all know are coming" (p. 1063). Miller wanted to give psychology away and warned psychologists that "we must try to diagnose and solve the problems people think they have, not the problems we experts think they ought to have, and we must learn to understand those problems in the social and institutional contexts that define them" (p. 1073–1074). Miller believed that we as psychologists have the opportunity to influence society and in turn to be influenced by these activities.

Over the years, I-O psychologists have made significant contributions to nonprofit organizations. For example, following a 1969 business meeting of Division 14 of the APA (the predecessor of SIOP), leaders voted to provide technical assistance to the National Association of Secondary School Principals on the assessment of candidates for principal positions. After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005, the year the SIOP conference was held there, a group of psychologists led by Steven Rogelberg offered services to the community. A volume in SIOP's Organizational Frontiers Series, *Using Industrial-Organizational Psychology for the Greater Good: Helping Those who Help Others* (Olson-Buchanan et al., 2013), provided summaries of a wide range of I-O psychologists' pro bono work.

Despite our past history of volunteering and current role models for volunteer work inside and outside of I-O psychology, many I-O psychologists are unaware of the volunteer opportunities that exist or the value their service might bring to themselves and to the organization. One purpose of this paper is to encourage I-O psychologists to contribute their expertise and share

their skills with charitable organizations that could not otherwise afford them. Case studies are used to illustrate the many ways to become involved and the many benefits of service. Five I-O psychologists who have done substantial amounts of volunteer work were asked to describe one or two of their contributions and specifically address questions like these:

- What did you do for this organization?
- How did you become involved in this kind of work?
- What did you get/are you getting out of your experience?
- What lessons did you learn?

The examples included are varied, focusing on different causes in different localities. The authors of these case studies are all I-O psychologists. Some are retired; some are still working; all are busy. Joel Moses describes his work with SCORE, which is part of the Small Business Administration. Karen Grabow discusses two of her many volunteer activities: her work with the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), which is focused on closing the academic achievement gap and ending generational poverty in North Minneapolis, and her work with the Constellation Fund, an antipoverty program. Peter Scontrino provides an overview of his work developing leaders through the Southeast Asia Foundation. David Oliver presents his work at The Family Place, an organization that addresses the housing and other needs of victims of family violence in Texas. Elizabeth Kolmstetter describes a variety of volunteer activities that she has participated in over the years.

A second purpose of the paper is to explore ways to facilitate the pro bono work of I-O psychologists. Whether the appropriate organization to do this is SIOP, the SIOP Foundation, or some other organization is not clear at this time. What is obvious is the need to inform I-O psychologists and charitable organizations of talents and needs respectively, and to identify ways to make connections. We offer these five cases and seek your ideas about how to bring I-O psychologists and charitable organizations together.

## Case studies

### *Life with SCORE—Joel Moses*

I've had a fantastic and rewarding career as an I-O psychologist, first at AT&T, then heading up my consulting firm, Applied Research Corporation, and finally, after selling my business, spending five wonderful years at Valtera with such outstanding colleagues as Bill Macey, Dick Jeanneret, Mort McPhail, Ben Schneider, Nancy Tippins, and many others.

When I finally retired, I looked for something to do. Having spent a lot of time volunteering, including a stint as Chair of the MedicAlert Foundation, I wanted to continue in this activity but wanted an organizational setting that had a broad outreach, rather than one serving a specific community. I found this at SCORE.

SCORE is a national organization, part of the Small Business Administration, with 250 chapters nationwide. Founded in 1964, it provides free services to small businesses (typically with less than \$25 million in net worth), and over the years, it has had an impact on over 11 million small businesses. Its clients range from individual entrepreneurs who are just starting a business to established firms that are either in the growth or turnaround phases of their business lifecycles. SCORE is staffed by volunteers who serve as mentors (business advisors), workshop presenters, and subject matter experts on call to local chapters. In addition to counseling services, SCORE has an excellent library of resources available on its web site covering just about any issue a business owner might face.

I belong to the Palm Beach County, Florida Chapter, a two-time winner of the national Chapter of the Year Award from SCORE. With many retired C Suite executives living in the West Palm

Beach—Boca Raton Florida area, we have a team of 70 amazing volunteers, all of whom have been vetted and trained as mentors. We serve about 1,000 clients annually either in person or via ZOOM, offer weekly webinars and training for our clients and the public, serve on advisory boards for some clients, provide an annual conference open to the entire business community, and interact with local Chamber of Commerce chapters, local universities, and key business leaders.

Although we offer considerable encouragement and advice to our clients (some of whom have been working with our chapter for over 10 years), there are several things we do not do. We cannot assume any financial or fiduciary role in a business, nor can we do the work for the client (we advise, teach, coach, and encourage). We also do not recommend specific vendors or collect fees for our services.

After being a mentor for over 7 years, I can reflect on what I've gained from this experience. It has been a wonderful opportunity to give back and is a natural outgrowth of applying many of the lessons of professional experience gained by serving as an executive coach and advisor to many business leaders. One of the surprises for me was how much I have learned working with many of the successful businesspeople in our chapter, and I hope I have shared some of my insights with them as well. Finally, it is nice to have the support of a national organization that helps us operate in a low-stress environment with lots of appreciation for our efforts.

The opportunities to give back for I-O academicians and practitioners, whether retired or just wanting to participate in this venture while still working, are endless. For example, in addition to my mentoring activities, I have developed a highly effective selection process for prospective mentors, designed an onboarding and personal coach process for our new mentors, and conducted several workshops and webinars for the public. To learn more, there is a lot of information available on the SCORE website, [www.SCORE.org](http://www.SCORE.org). In addition, please feel free to contact me at [Joelmoses@aol.com](mailto:Joelmoses@aol.com) for further information regarding how you can get started.

### ***My pro bono work—Karen Grabow***

I have long found it enormously rewarding to support high quality nonprofit organizations. Our I-O toolkit enables us to provide wide ranging support to nonprofits making a difference in our community—with visible benefit for the nonprofits (and the community) and much psychic benefit for me!

Let me describe two of the pro bono experiences I have most enjoyed.

The Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) is a collective of 30 local nonprofits and schools with the shared goal of permanently closing the academic achievement gap and ending generational poverty in North Minneapolis. NAZ and its partners align resources that holistically address needs related to education, housing, career and finance, and health and wellness to support children's academic success. NAZ serves as the "backbone" for the collaboration, employing Family Achievement Coaches, Academic Specialists, and wraparound-support specialists (subject matter experts in various areas of cross-partner support) who work directly with families. NAZ facilitates consistent communication among partners and provides a centralized data tracking system.

I am a long-time Board member, and my service to NAZ has ranged from fund-raising to coaching to various HR supports to serving on the Impact Committee which works with Wilder Research, an external evaluator, to quantify the results of NAZ programing. Among my most satisfying contributions has been the opportunity to bring my organizational effectiveness knowhow to support this maturing organization—recommending structural changes as they grew, outlining an employee engagement approach when there was turmoil, helping to find appropriate consultants, and periodically coaching NAZ leaders through challenges. I have also enjoyed the Impact Committee work. Evaluating academic achievement across multiple schools is challenging, and my I-O training has armed me to scrutinize the data, question the evaluators, suggest supplemental inquiries, and push for clarity in what we can and cannot conclude as well as clarity in how we communicate results.

I've learned a lot. I have a new appreciation of the difficulties of evaluation in such a complex environment. More fundamentally, though, I've gained greater insight into important cultural dynamics, such as the difference between swooping in to "help" and capacity-building; and the importance of role-clarity and balance of power in the coordination of this collective—and in the work of nonprofits in underserved communities in general. It has been eye-opening.

That work and the connections I made there led me to the opportunity to support another project I find exciting—The Constellation Fund—a 2-year-old antipoverty program modeled after the Tipping Point Community in San Francisco and the Robin Hood Foundation in New York. Nonprofits applying for grants go through a rigorous quantitative evaluation of the long-term quality of life impacts of their interventions. In an assessment created by leading economists, research organizations, and issue area experts, the Constellation assessment is based on peer-reviewed research, local demographics, and data from the nonprofits to identify a cost-benefit ratio that enables funding decisions to be made across dissimilar initiatives. Grants are provided to those programs with the greatest expected long-term poverty-fighting impact. Then using the organizational diagnosis that emerges from the evaluation, expert volunteers are procured from leading companies to work with the grantees in their areas of greatest organizational need. For example, talented marketers from Target Corporation helped one agency design their website. McKinsey analysts helped another agency with its business plan. Facilitating partnerships with best-in-class pro bono resources is work they call "Beyond Dollars." Access to expertise and services inaccessible to most poverty-fighting organizations is one way Constellation Fund works to ensure that the worthiest programs grow in their viability and impact.

I got involved when there was a need for executive coaches to support several of the grantee leaders. I was able to identify, solicit, and select a cadre of expert executive coaches who agreed to work pro bono and then worked with the coaches and the Beyond Dollars leader to set up a framework to sustain the coaching initiative. The framework articulated expectations around time commitments, starting and ending engagements, balancing structure with autonomy for the coaches, matching coaches with different approaches and strengths to clients with different needs, and setting up reporting that balances accountability and confidentiality. I continue to coach and to support Constellation Fund and the Beyond Dollars leader in managing this cadre.

Lessons I've learned here? I have become a real booster of Constellation's evidence-based approach to making philanthropic decisions. They describe their approach as "shifting the philanthropic mindset from feel-good charity to strategic investment." I-Os' get the importance of using evidence to measure things that are tough to measure. And the Beyond Dollars approach is a model for doing the capacity building to enable strong antipoverty nonprofits to have the impact our communities need them to have.

What's more, both of these organizations are national pacesetters. With charismatic leaders, strong community support, powerful board members, and great visibility, these nonprofits are making things happen beyond their programs and beyond our region. It is energizing, challenging, and thrilling to spend time in the orbits of these leaders and their organizations. The learning never stops!

How did I become involved? My path has been to go find interesting people working on interesting projects and volunteering to do whatever needs doing. With NAZ, I started on a Committee and kept raising my hand when I learned of projects where I could help. Ultimately, I was able to join the Board and leverage my expertise more directly. Constellation was an initiative I followed as it was getting off the ground. A former colleague of mine there introduced me to the Beyond Dollars leader. When she shared her vision, I saw the opportunity to help build the team and structure to maintain the executive coaching resource she saw as an ongoing need.

In my long and gratifying I-O career, I've learned to pick my spots, maximize my relevance, and sell the value I-O can bring. The nonprofit sector is an opportunity-rich environment, and it hasn't been a tough sell!

**Volunteer work with the Southeast Asia Fund—M. Peter Scontrino**

About 9 years ago, I reconnected over lunch with a friend of mine, Bill Taylor, who was a retired management consultant. Bill and I had worked together over the years but in recent years had slowly drifted apart. Bill and I did similar work, which included coaching, leadership development, performance management, and business planning even though we took different academic and business paths to get there. I am an I-O psychologist whereas Bill is a certified management consultant. Over lunch, Bill shared an experience with me about a recent trip to Bali, Indonesia where he had visited some social services organizations that were in desperate need of leaders with effective skills. I was fascinated by Bill's story and volunteered to work with him in Bali.

Before Bill and I met for lunch, Bill had come to the realization that he needed a substantial amount of financial support to address many of the needs he had identified. Bill decided to create a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization and entitled it the Southeast Asia Foundation ([www.seafund.org](http://www.seafund.org)). Incredibly, the fund has been an undeniable success—it has continuously raised \$250,000.00 to \$400,000.00 per year to support our work in Southeast Asia. 100% of the funds raised directly finance the work we do.

I-O has been very good to me over the years. I enjoyed helping individuals, teams, and organizations. The variety of my work was stimulating. I made a nice income. I decided that this was the time in my life to give back in a meaningful way. I am a nurturant person as most psychologists are. I was attracted by work that would really make a difference in people's lives.

Bill and I spent the next couple of years working with the leaders in Bali and seeing dramatic improvements in the way their organizations were managed. Our work included coaching a university president and his senior staff, developing business plans, conducting team building sessions, performing organizational audits, and creating competencies and standards of performance. The leaders we coached were very supportive of our work. Unfortunately, the senior leaders to whom they reported were not very supportive. We knew all too well that without top-down support the good work we had done would quickly fade away. After the promised leadership and financial support failed to materialize, we decided to seek other organizations within Southeast Asia that may recognize and value the contributions our initiatives would have on their organizations. We found these organizations in Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar (Burma).

We decided to work with organizations that focused on helping disadvantaged women and girls. Community Partners International (CPI) is an NGO (non-government organization) created to empower communities in Asia to meet their essential health, humanitarian and development needs. Founded by U.S. doctors and philanthropists in 1998, it serves more than 500,000 people each year in Myanmar and Bangladesh. CPI has 200 employees.

An excellent example of the work we do is a 2-day leadership retreat we facilitated with CPI in Myanmar in 2019 before the military coup took over the government. Bill had been coaching the managing director of the organization. It became clear to Bill and the managing director that the organization had grown to the point where changes in roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships were needed to help the organization achieve its goals. Bill asked me if I would co-facilitate a 2-day retreat with the expanded leadership team of 30 staff.

We began the retreat by forming two-person teams who interviewed each other. Interview questions included:

- What are the strengths of the leadership team and its structure?
- What are the weaknesses of the leadership team and its structure?
- What are the challenges the organization is facing?
- If you had a magic wand and could change one thing about the leadership team and its structure, what would you change?

While team members interviewed each other, Bill and I interviewed the managing director asking the same questions.

Teams reported out, issues were identified, and the next day and a half were spent problem solving and agreeing on needed changes. We developed a task and time line plan which was successfully implemented over the next year.

CPI leadership began to make the identified changes immediately after the retreat. The changes resulted in clearer roles and responsibilities and better lines of communication.

For many of my pro bono interventions, I see almost immediate results. The NGOs are managed by caring people who are thirsting for better ways to manage their organizations. When I help an organization create a business plan, I see it put to immediate use. Goal setting and empowerment techniques fit the cultures of these organizations and have profound impacts. Plus, there is a special relationship that forms with clients when they know that on my own time, I have flown half way around the world to work with them. One leadership team composed a four stanza thank you song, which they sang at the end of the leadership retreat. This really touched my heart. This work meets my need to have a significant positive impact on the lives of others. It has now been 18 months since I have been able to travel to Southeast Asia, and I am anxious to return once countries allow travel without a 14-day quarantine.

I knew that I/O has much to offer any organization. This knowledge was reinforced daily in my work in Southeast Asia. I-O does have universal application. I saw the power of coaching and the immediate impact it could have. Goal setting raised organization performance significantly. I found that being a 70+ year-old White male from America gave me a platform I could not have imagined. I almost always found appreciative and respectful clients in America, but this appreciation and respect was doubled or tripled in Southeast Asia. I learned that working in Southeast Asia is incredibly rewarding.

### ***The family place—David Oliver***

My 26-year career in I-O psychology has been spent in corporate America, with a short stint at GTE/Verizon, and the last 21 years at PepsiCo. Today I lead the Talent Management and Development function for one of PepsiCo's most successful sectors, PepsiCo Foods North America. It's been an incredibly exciting and rewarding career, but not always conducive to volunteer work. Combine that with a wife who also works in corporate America, plus two teenagers and two dogs, and finding time outside of work isn't easy. But, over the last several years I've ventured into the volunteer world, and it's been a more rewarding experience than I ever expected.

PepsiCo has a long-standing reputation of being active in our communities, and early on I got involved in occasional volunteer efforts throughout the year. The one I looked forward to the most was the annual Day of Caring through the United Way, where employees would go into the community each year and support a local charity. Our HR function always supported The Family Place. Their mission is a critical one for our community, as highlighted in this description from their website:

*The Family Place empowers victims of family violence by providing safe housing, counseling and skills that create independence while building community engagement and advocating for social change to stop family violence.*

*In 1978 a group of community volunteers organized The Family Place as one of the first family violence shelters in the state. Today, The Family Place is the largest family violence service provider in Texas, with three emergency shelters providing 177 shelter beds each night, including the state's only shelter for men and children, and three counseling centers. We served*

*11,933 clients last year providing 62,118 days of emergency shelter, 36,015 days of transitional housing, 18,526 hours of counseling to nonresidential clients, and 8,758 hours of counseling to batterers.*

Our Day of Caring always followed the same routine. We would load a bus, travel to the undisclosed shelter location (security is very critical for people trying to escape domestic abuse), and spend the day doing chores around the facility. And although I held my own with various “home improvement” projects—replanting a garden, repainting walls, or assembling furniture, I was pretty sure I had better skills to offer.

In 2018, my boss and CHRO encouraged me to consider backfilling him on the Board. It wasn't a simple hand-off, as it included an application process, an interview, and final approval by the Executive Committee. A couple of months after my application and interview, I was formally invited to join the board. I was assigned to the Human Capital Committee (HCC), which provides support to the Human Resources Vice President (HRVP) of The Family Place in a variety of people related areas. The Family Place has nearly 250 employees, a 14-million-dollar annual budget, plus three shelters and a corporate office, which means they have many of the same HR challenges as other businesses. I learned a lot my first year, and I enjoyed getting to apply the skills I'd acquired over the years in a different environment. A year later, when the head of the HCC stepped down, the CEO asked me to join the Executive Committee and lead the HCC, which consists of the HRVP and six to eight other volunteers from the community.

As a member of the Executive Committee and leader of the HCC, I'm looked to as the voice for HR and people issues. I've already had the opportunity to lead the design of an engagement survey, steer the development of diversity and inclusion training, help orchestrate a compensation survey and make adjustments to pay ranges, propose a new set of benefit changes for the coming year, and provide support in the search and selection for a new CEO (to replace the retiring CEO who spent over 20 years shaping The Family Place to what it is today).

Today, I spend 4 to 5 hours a month on executive and committee meetings, several more hours in one-on-one communication with the HRVP, and a few more hours a month working on deliverables I've agreed to help with. The time goes fast, and I'm so appreciative of the lessons I'm learning.

I knew the experience would be rewarding, but I think I underestimated how much I'd learn. It's helped me grow as a leader and expand my understanding of broader HR issues. I've enjoyed being that voice for the president and CEO, and I've enjoyed being pushed to learn about new areas of HR like compensation, or to be part of discussions on fund raising, or community advocacy. I've also come to realize the value of the depth of experiences I've gained over the years in my specialty areas of IO psychology. In big organizations, it always seems the solutions are more complex and more expensive, require more buy in from a variety of people, and take longer to implement. At The Family Place (and other nonprofits I'm sure), my expertise is not something they'd routinely have access to, and we're able to implement simple solutions that can have immediate and visible impact.

It's ironic because I went into this experience wanting to help others, and in no time, I think the tables have been turned. I'm genuinely appreciative of PepsiCo for supporting me to do this work and for the opportunity to help a wonderful organization like The Family Place with the things I've learned over the years in I-O psychology.

### **Volunteering—Elizabeth Kolmstetter**

My advice? Find a cause you care about, volunteer—and it will undoubtedly benefit from your passion and I-O skills! Some of my most rewarding experiences, best friends, and happiest moments have come from my volunteer work. With 27 years of public service across eight federal agencies, I would say that I am very service oriented and purpose driven. I have served as a senior



executive across six of those agencies (I am currently at NASA), have raised twins (now 21), and can honestly say that I would characterize myself as “not having a lot of free time.” That is why I consider my contributions to SIOP, the Personnel Testing Council of Metropolitan Washington (PTC/MW), and our field part of my volunteer work. I do not complete *any* of this voluntary work during my job time and have taken numerous hours of personal leave (vacation time) to contribute to these important efforts. And for those readers not familiar with the rules of federal employment, I must obtain approval from my supervisor and the agency ethics attorney to participate in these “outside activities” to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

I have volunteered on many SIOP committees over the years including: Visibility, the Future of Work, the Fellow Selections, Distinguished Professional Contributions and Early Career Contributions Awards, Certification Task Force, and as a Practice Series Editorial Board member. Probably one of the best things about this volunteer work is getting to meet I-O colleagues with whom I would not otherwise have “crossed paths.” It is interesting to learn what others are doing and compare experiences. Inevitably I have used this network during my own I-O challenges and happily serve as a resource for them as well. In terms of lessons I learned . . . , I think by volunteering for these committees over the years and working with such a variety of I-Os, it has made me realize how very differently I-Os see issues, approach issues, problem solve, “practice what we preach” (or not), and even think about the priorities of I-O as a science and practice. SIOP as our professional association needs the expertise, perspective, and experience from a wide variety of us in this field—so my appreciation to all who serve as volunteers to SIOP and my hope that many more of you will do so.

I am currently writing my second chapter for the SIOP Professional Practice Series. Writing the chapters for the Practice Series has been a labor of love. Obviously getting to work with amazing editors like Cynthia McCauley, Morgan McCall, and now Rob Silzer is like winning the mentor lottery. They challenged me to think about describing my work and ideas in novel ways and were an endless fountain of knowledge. As a senior practitioner and HR executive, I don’t get to dive deeply into the latest research on a topic as much as I used to—so volunteering to write a chapter provided me a great reason to “read up and get smart” on the latest research in a topic I was passionate about. It has also provided me a unique opportunity to work with my coauthor, David Oliver (who is amazing), and gain deep insights from comparing similarities and differences between talent management in the private sector and public sector. I feel a lot of intrinsic satisfaction that these chapters assist other practitioners who are trying to tackle some of the same challenges—and in that way I am “paying it forward.”

When my husband and I moved to Washington, DC to begin my career, I really did not know many I-Os. I joined the PTC/MW to meet other I-Os in this area. Very soon after joining, I volunteered to chair the membership committee. Flashback: I had to maintain a RapidFile database (a flat-file database run off the DOS operating system of my IBM personal home computer)! From there I served as secretary, vice president for programs, president-Elect, president, and past-president—what I learned was once you started on that track there was no return! Another flashback: In those days, we printed the newsletter; took it to be copied, folded, and stapled them; stuck a printed address label on each; and then carted the box of them to the post office to be mailed. And, I also had to lug a huge overhead projector and heavy metal screen to the Channel Inn each month for the lunch presenters. Now that was volunteer commitment! I absolutely loved my volunteer work with PTC/MW. The best parts were the friends I made, laughing and sharing during our board meetings, and oh yes, we did have some awesome lunch speakers from which I learned a lot too! I highly recommend for anyone moving to a new location and wanting to meet I-Os in that area—join and volunteer for the local I-O group—you will both give and receive by doing so!

I have also volunteered for causes that are passions of mine. I want to share a few of them that are outside of our profession because I did not start out doing so to bring any I-O expertise to pro bono work . . . , but inevitably it turned out there were always ways I could contribute my I-O

skills. For example, as president of the Washington, DC Chapter of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America, I helped hire a new executive director (i.e., developed reference checks, structured interview), developed a governance structure for the chapter, designed and conducted membership surveys to determine services desired, and created a physician's advisory council. This also provided me a great opportunity to stretch and develop my own leadership skills (gaining and organizing a volunteer base is not like paid employees).

While a board member for the Worldwide Assurance for Employees of Public Agencies, a nonprofit association for federal employees, I was able to help write an RFP for a compensation study, review technical proposals, select the consultant, and review the final findings; helped determine pay equity adjustments for the staff; worked with a recruiting firm to hire a new executive director (developed interview and reference questions, conducted interviews); helped update performance plans of the staff; assisted in designing the strategic planning process; and, provided leadership and guidance for the IT modernization and security upgrades. These activities helped me learn a broader range of HR and I-O practices and how to apply them in a growing organization.

As a final example, I currently volunteer and serve on the board of trustees of my alma mater, Hollins University. I am passionate about liberal arts education, women's education, and educational equity in this country. I contributed to the selection of our new university president, work on strategic planning, financial planning, enrollment, academic programs, and student affairs (i.e., now transgender policy). I also love speaking on career panels about I-O psychology and mentoring students! I took this volunteer role to give back to my beloved alma mater, but as I reflect on what I have gained from this experience, especially during the global pandemic, it has shown me how very much our higher education system and curriculum must *flex and evolve* with the "times" including changes of diverse student expectations and needs, technology advances (i.e., how/when/where we deliver education), and both societal needs *and* demands. And sometimes because of volunteering, you might just get a once-in-a-lifetime surprise that fills your heart with complete joy . . . , as I did when I was asked to be the commencement speaker at this year's 2021 graduation!

### **SIOP and pro bono work**

As noted above, the second goal of this paper is to identify ways to stimulate volunteer work among I-O psychologists and explore possible roles for SIOP and the SIOP Foundation. The examples provided by Joel, Karen, Peter, David, and Elizabeth are inspiring; yet, a question remains about how such activity might be supported and sustained. Here are several possible ways.

### **Communicating**

A number of I-O psychologists are making significant contributions to charitable organizations. Unfortunately, there is no convenient communications vehicle, and most of us know little about what others are doing in this area. One solution is to include a regular column in *TIP* that focuses on volunteer work in charitable organizations. We might ask for a description of what work was done as well as a discussion of how the organization and its client were aided and how the I-O psychologist benefitted from the experience. We might also highlight how the I-O psychologist's experience shaped his or her knowledge of best practices in organizations. For example, we might ask about the effects of the not-for-profit context relative to for-profit organizations and other organizational contexts on organizational problems and their solutions. An alternative to a *TIP* column is a blog dedicated to the volunteer activities of I-O psychologist.

The annual conference is another outlet for communicating the volunteer activities of SIOP members. Similar to a *TIP* column, brief, structured presentations could inform other members

about the experience and what the benefits to the individual, the organization, and the profession were. There have been past sessions at the conference that featured pro bono work. Perhaps, such sessions should be a regular component of the conference to demonstrate our collective commitment to the greater good.

Another opportunity is to publicize these types of activities beyond SIOP membership. The External Affairs Committee may want to use our members' volunteer activities to illuminate the profession and the benefits of evidence-based practice.

## Funding

The SIOP Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization, which means it may receive donations that are tax deductible when used for purposes that are “charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, and preventing cruelty to children or animals.” At the end of 2021, the Foundation had received over \$5M in contributions and disbursed over \$1.5M for awards, scholarships, and grants. When considering ways to stimulate volunteer work, one possibility is to establish a designated fund for charitable work. Donations to that fund could be used to support the expenses associated with volunteer work or set up the administrative services necessary to connect organizations with needs and I-O psychologists volunteers.

There are a number of obvious concerns that would need to be addressed. For example, the questions of what expenses could be covered and what organizations might be assisted are central ones. Answers certainly depend upon one's values, and not all values are commonly held. Although it would be possible to fund personnel expenses associated with charitable work, many donors have an aversion to making contributions used to pay I-O psychologists to do volunteer work. There is also the concern about funding volunteer activities that are not consistent with SIOP's values or those that might be offensive to some members.

## Networking

Another idea is to develop a network that enables charitable organizations to share their needs and I-O psychologists to highlight their capabilities and connects the two. Of course, there are many, many questions beginning with what is a charitable activity and which charitable organizations would SIOP or the SIOP Foundation even want to be associated with. Would SIOP accept requests from any organization that is “charitable”? If not, how would boundaries be drawn? What will be the criteria for accepting an organization? How will we decide whom to match? What kinds of assurances of quality can or should we make? Details for funding such as the process for requesting and awarding funds, the criteria for making funding determination, the reporting requirements, etc. would also have to be developed. Similarly, the particulars of setting up and running a network must be worked out. Then, there are the questions of funding priorities within SIOP or the willingness Foundation donors to support financially the construction of a networking process. Publicizing opportunities to serve and to acquire services, particularly to organizations outside of the I-O community, is always challenging.

It merits noting that SIOP's UN team hosts a Corporate Social Responsibility and Prosocial/Humanitarian I-O Registry (<https://www.siop.org/membership/registries/CSR-Prosocial-Humanitarian-IO-Registry>), a searchable database used to identify individuals with interests, skills, and experience relevant to work with the United Nations. The database is available to SIOP members, members of the media, organizations, policy makers, and other relevant parties to easily identify and contact those with knowledge, experience, and interest in this area. What's missing is the other side of the equation—: What do organizations need from us? Can we provide an opportunity for organizations to come to us and tell us what they need?

### A call for commentary and action

Undoubtedly, there are many examples of I-O psychologists making significant contributions to nonprofit organizations, and there are many ways to facilitate volunteer work on the part of I-O psychologists. We hope that this paper encourages you to share your own activities in the realm of service to nonprofit organizations and stimulates your ideas regarding how to assist others in finding outlets for their skills. Specifically, we ask that you consider the following:

- Offer examples of your volunteer activities that explain how you found the opportunity, how you benefited the organization you served, and what you got out of it.
- Contribute your ideas about facilitating volunteer activities that capitalize on the special skills and knowledge of I-O psychologists.
- Suggest appropriate roles for SIOP, the SIOP Foundation, and other associations and organizations in promoting volunteer activities related to I-O psychology.

How we as professionals choose, individually and collectively, to share our wealth of evidence-based practice matters immensely, both now in these uncertain times and well into all of the years to come. We hope you will join us in this endeavor.

### References

- Miller, G. (1969). Psychology as a means of promoting human welfare. *American Psychologist*, *24*, 1063–1075.
- Olson-Buchanan, J., Bryan, L. K., & Thompson, L. F. (Eds.) (2013). *Using industrial-organizational psychology for the greater good: Helping those who help others*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203069264>.

---

**Cite this article:** Tippins, N., Hakel, M., Grabow, K., Kolmstetter, E., Moses, J., Oliver, D., & Scontrino, P. (2023). Industrial-organizational psychologists and volunteer work. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* *16*, 421–432. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2023.70>