Webinar: Skilled Volunteering 101 Give Back and Gain Experience

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Thanks to the folks who just jumped in. Hi, Rose. Hi, Mike. Thanks so much for joining us. Hi, Lisa.

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Since it is officially two minutes past the top of the hour, I'm gonna go ahead and get things rolling here, we've got a lot of really, really great content to get through. And we have a really fantastic guest speaker on the line with us as well. And I want to make sure that we leave plenty of time and space for that we are recording this event. So if you do need to step away, halfway through completely fine, we'll share out the recording links with everyone who registered for the event. And if folks are joining later, they can always access the recording as well. So hi, everyone, welcome to skilled volunteering. 101 give back and gain experience. We're so excited to have you join us today as we all look to kick off National Volunteer Week 2023 on a really, really fantastic note getting more folks interested in donating their expertise to pretty incredible social causes.

So I'm excited to share information about taproot about our nonprofit, and about how our skills based volunteerism programs offer business professional opportunities to make a difference using those professional skills. So in case you haven't heard, by now, April 16, through the 22nd marks National Volunteer Week, which is a really special time to recognize volunteer service, and the individuals who are really striving to make their communities a better kinder place for everyone. So taproot was really inspired by our friends at points of light, who founded this week celebration. And so we try and take advantage of this opportunity annually to spotlight the impact of skills based volunteerism, and communities around the globe. So this year, taproots, not just celebrating social good, we're really out to make even more of an impact. And so we're challenging ourselves, to find new ways to make these connections and get nonprofits the resources they need for free. And we're definitely calling on your help to help make that happen. So during National Volunteer Week, taproot does have a goal of connecting 200 social good organizations with volunteers this week for transmit transformational social good partnerships. And so hopefully, this webinar is just the inspiration and has all of the information you need to dive into one of those pro bono connections so that you can help us meet that goal of 200 social good connections. So without any further ado, I want to make sure we get you that motivation and get you that information. So let's dive in. My name is Kimberly Swartz. I'm the Director of Community Engagement here at Taproot Foundation.

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I have been at this organization for six plus years now, and obviously really love what I do. It's all about creating connections between nonprofits, small businesses, companies, foundations, and individuals like all of you, who are just passionate about making a difference. And so really, really excited to be joined by my taproot colleague, Megan Gillette, who's covering the chatbox. During today's presentation, we're both really looking forward to digging in today's content, but also just answering your questions and and having a conversation with all of you. So all attendees will be muted throughout today's event. But please ask those questions or make comments in that chat box you should see in the lower right corner of your screen. Meghan will be handling questions throughout and will also direct them to me during the q&a portion that we do have reserved at the end of this webinar. So I'm going to take a little bit of time to introduce Taproot Foundation and our nonprofits work. But as I do that, I really encourage more of those introductions in the chat.

So please, if you haven't already, introduce yourself, introduce where you're joining this webinar from. I know we have folks joining from across the US, Canada and perhaps some other international regions as well, which is fantastic. Please feel free to share your LinkedIn and share the professional skill. You're thinking about donating to taproots nonprofit partners, we'd love to to learn more about those skill sets that you all are wielding. Alright, so the Taproot Foundation is a nonprofit that drives social change by leading mobilizing and engaging professionals and pro bono service. So our goal is to make sure that nonprofits have the resources they need to succeed, and we're going to work towards that goal by getting you all

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Other resources and information and motivation you need to partner up with these social good causes. So since the early 2000s, taproot is partnered with over 10,000 nonprofit organizations, and 25,000 volunteers, totaling around 280 million in donated professional services going right towards right to the nonprofits who need it most. And in addition to taproots pro bono programs and the CSR consultancy work that we do in the corporate space, we also lead a global pro bono network and are committed to advancing this field advancing this ethic of giving back through further research, education and events.

So during today's event, we're going to be specifically covering why your skills matter for the social sector, especially now in this moment, we're going to be joined by an experienced taproot volunteer who's going to share his thoughts on the value of giving back through skills based volunteerism, and the joy that comes from that experience. Following that conversation, I'm going to share a step by step guide for how you can sign up to donate your skills through taproots programs. And then of course, we're going to save a healthy amount of time at the end of the presentation for question and answer. So as I mentioned, use that chat box, let us know what you're thinking about, and any questions or hurdles that are coming up for you as we go through today's content. So let's get into it.

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All right. So this year, last year, the year before, nonprofits are really having to operate more cleanly than ever. So since a COVID 19 pandemic kicked off, they have really been rising to meet these increased community needs, while dealing with decreased access to hands on volunteer support, canceled fundraising events, and more. And even though we are through the first quarter of 2023, many organizations, especially those on the smaller side, are still feeling the effects of the ongoing pandemic. So in a resiliency survey that we conducted about six to seven months into the pandemic, we did find that 63% of nonprofit respondents reported a decrease in funding due to COVID 19, meaning that the small and scrappy teams are still making do with even smaller budgets and less bandwidth. And I should mention here that many of the organizations if you do choose to participate in taproots programming are small and scrappy. So many of them that you'll you'll come into partnership with are completely volunteer run, or maybe they only have one or two paid staff members. And so I'm sure you can only imagine what that looks like and the infrastructure that they're trying to build, while also having to address and rise to meet these community needs and demands that are being placed upon them in this very, very busy and stressful time.

So it goes without saying what a vital role social good organizations play and keeping our community safe, strong, unkind, but social good organizations are being looked to more and more for vital services. And at the same time, traditional funding and volunteer sources are shifting and or shrinking. And so even more reason that your virtual volunteerism is going to be all the more vital during this time and space. So to put it really simply, most organizations tackling social problems don't have the access to the resources, funding or staff expertise needed to fully accomplish their vital missions. So this lack of ability to invest in their internal operations, saps their ability to create strong, resilient and sustainable organizations. And that's really where we come in. So Taproot Foundation, bridges, this nonprofit resource gaps through connections with skilled volunteers, like everyone on the line here today, who provide your tech, your operations, your finance, your strategy, your marketing, your HR expertise, pro bono. So I do want to pause here for just a moment because

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generally when we say the word pro bono,

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people automatically go to the legal space, but it really does mean so much more than that. So pro bono is the donated professional services that benefit organizations or individuals, working to improve society and the business community. It could mean anything from legal to things like marketing, strategic planning, financial management, HR, IT, etc. So Tapper.

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programs specifically focus on the areas of marketing, HR, operations, finance data, and strategy.

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And I know many folks on the line may be familiar with volunteering with organizations, I'm sure everyone has gone to a volunteerism event locally in their community. Or maybe you've given back virtually during the pandemic's through like a mentorship or a tutoring program. I'm sure everyone here has given a donation to an organization before all of those are great and very, very impactful in their own ways. But sometimes, when thinking about where this puzzle piece of pro bono, this puzzle piece of skills based volunteerism fits into the spectrum, it can be helpful to see it all laid out in front of you.

And so that's what we're trying to do here with this table that you see before you. So it kind of shows the full spectrum of common community service activities. And they're grouped by common types of nonprofit needs that have to be addressed and, and the different ways that companies businesses, but also individual people, and business professionals can step in to support them. So you'll see that making budget, extra hands, infrastructure, and leadership are all categories of nonprofit needs that we can really rise to help. But it's this infrastructure in leadership piece, having those critical components, like an IT infrastructure, collateral pitch decks created so that they can go and sell their missions and bring in those financial support dollars, the HR, infrastructure and policies and handbooks in place, that are the backbone of a healthy institution. Those are the pieces that we're really going to focus on during today's presentation. And those are the pieces that we focus on at taproot, those critical components that are the backbone of sustainable, stable organizations. And so your impact in this category is going to be a really long lasting one, you're going to help strengthen or build nonprofits capacity in a functional area of doing business. And doing business for nonprofits means serving greater amounts of people with the programming are really, really vital thing to keep in mind here.

So I do want to touch on the value of doing business pro bono the value of volunteering your skills. In 2019, taproot and CECP update updated the findings around what the actual financial impact of an hour of skills based volunteering was in key areas like public relations, information technology, financial services, design, etc. So through this survey, we determined that the average hour of business pro bono consulting was worth $195. And that's something that we can include a link to, either in the chat or in the follow up email when we send it out to everyone following this event, in case you want to check out the data in more detail.

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But all of this is to say hands on volunteering, financial donations, and skills based volunteerism, all play really key roles in strengthening your nonprofit and helping it to achieve its mission. And so one form of community service, one form of volunteer engagement should not fully replace another. They're all wonderful. However, pro bono service offers a really fantastic option for professionals who may not have 1000s of dollars to donate to make a huge difference in their community, just by using the things that you're already really, really good at. To put this into context. Early on in my professional career.

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I chose to do some pro bono consulting projects using my marketing expertise. And an average taproot project is around 30 hours of donated time, from the skilled volunteer and using our 195 valuation. That means at the end of the project, I donated just under $6,000 to the nonprofits that I worked with. When I was 25 years old. There's no way I had the budget. There's no way my family had the budget to donate $6,000 to three different organizations that I was really passionate about their missions. However, by using my time and using my energy and using the professional skills that I already had locked and loaded, I was able to make that donation and make that

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impact on causes that I really cared about,

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even though I didn't have the finances at the time. So definitely take that into consideration, I found it a really special experience personally. And so speaking of the personal benefits of skill, space, volunteerism, we've talked a good amount at this point about the benefits that a nonprofit of the mission driven organization will get out of working with you, they're going to receive a deliverable, they're going to receive a strengthened infrastructure, or maybe infrastructure having been created for the first time. But you, as the pro bono consultant, hugely benefit from these relationships as well in a few really key ways. One of them being the ability to make a substantial impact on causes near and dear to your heart, while learning about challenges that are impacting people and communities and societies across the globe. It's something I definitely try not to take for granted, as a nonprofit professional myself, I'm really proud to go and work at a place where I really believe in the work we're doing and, and I know that my time at work is spent in a way that's making this world a better place. Not everybody gets to feel that same sense of purpose from their day to day career. And so if that is describing you, in this moment, or whatever profession you're currently in, and you're looking for a way to find that purpose, and create more connections to things you really believe in, volunteering alongside a nonprofit is a great place to start.

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One benefit that definitely can't be understated is the ability to build your professional network and strengthen professional connections. doing pro bono service allows you to connect with people in your local community, connect with people across the country, connect with fellow pro bono consultants who are in a similar business space as you are. And so it's a great, great way to build those connections and create really lasting ones as well. And I think related to that is this benefit of strengthening your resume and portfolio with really tangible examples of your experience, and also your values as a professional. And then lastly, here, it's a great way to flex existing talents in new environments.

It's, it shows a really great example of experiential learning, where you're thrown into a new space with a brand new team, and you're still able to project manage, you're still able to collaborate and communicate really effectively in this new environment. And for folks on the line who are coming from the corporate space. This is a really great opportunity to I mean, truly flex your skills and experiences in a whole new environment, because nonprofit work is going to look a lot differently than especially if you're coming from a large company or corporation.

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So I touched on the different types of causes, that your skills have the opportunity support. And at the end of the day, the biggest benefit of pro bono is the support that you're able to provide to the nonprofits, you are assisting a great mission. You're learning a lot about what that mission is and challenges that community members are facing. And so this is really, really what's most important. And so when you give back on taproot plus or outside of taproot plus you'll have the opportunity to support organizations working in just to name a few examples, civil rights, criminal justice reform science and technology, legal services, housing and homelessness, health and nutrition and much, much more. So taproot supports nonprofits in all issue areas, we are issue area agnostic, which means that all are welcome. And that means that you are empowered and enabled to align your professional talents with a cause area that you are uniquely passionate about.

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And as you can see from this quote from an Hohokam of the nonprofit unity parenting and counseling, which is a really special organization, your efforts as skills based volunteers really do pay off for nonprofits at the end of the day. as I mentioned before a nonprofits bottom line is ultimately their mission and their promise to the community that they're serving. And you can help get them there when your skills are paired with the right nonprofit need.

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And so actually

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Think that's the perfect transition to welcome in our guest speaker for today, Jeff Brady, because I really, really want to pull his perspective into this conversation.

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Jeff is based out of Alexandria, Virginia. So he happens to be taproots accounts director, but he was invited here today to speak to his experience as a really prolific pro bono consultant himself. He's definitely one of the most active ones we've had on the on the taproot Plus program this year. And he's always always encouraging both people within tampered Antinous network, from his past experiences with the United Way, and other organizations to get involved as well. Most recently, he's been engaged in an event marketing event planning strategy with a nonprofit. He's provided grant writing recommendations, project management advice, marketing, strategy, Project scoping, and more. So really, really looking forward to hearing your perspective with that taproot pro bono consultant hat on Jeff, but also feel free to pepper in perspective, as a taproot staff member as well. Both are totally acceptable, but welcome.

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All right, and I'm gonna bring us over to just a camera mode so that folks can see our faces as we chat with one another. Please, as I'm asking Jeff posing him some questions that were pre submitted when folks registered for this event. If you do have any questions for Jeff, put them in the chat box. And we'll try and get to them as we as we talk. All right. So Jeff, please introduce yourself to everyone on the line. And we'd love to hear about what brought you to skills based volunteerism in the first place, what motivated you to submit your first pro bono consultant application? Well, thank you, Kim, for having me. And thank you, to all of you whose years are open and are ready to hear what I have to say. I hope that what I do have to say will resonate with some of you cost some of you to think and ultimately to volunteer, everything that Kim said about me is true.

So far, I'm on fire for this kind of work, because I have experienced the benefits. And it is just one of the more engaging things you can do to create purpose and meaning in life. So I'm not just saying that is an employee of taproot. I am an Accounts director in encouraging investors in taproot plus, to have positive experiences for the nonprofits they support, as well as the employees that are at their companies. I have had personally a passion for all kinds of volunteering. Since I served in the AmeriCorps program. That's a national service program, 10 months of voluntary community service. So it's something I signed up for, and not something I was being punished for. But it was my experience in those 10 months of AmeriCorps, and that was in 1999. So give you a sense of how long I've been at this. But it really transformed my thinking as to what volunteering could offer. My skill set based volunteer journey, however, did not begin until I was a young professional. And I was in job transition, I found an opportunity to serve in local environmental nonprofit. And that answers some of the whys Kim, my motivations. I was motivated both by a love and passion for a social cause environmental conservation, but I was also facing an opportunity to find my next career.

And so I had an opportunity there to leverage some of my skills that I had developed in my past career to give to this nonprofit and never returned back from skilled volunteering after that point. Yeah, and we're luckier for it, and I'm glad that you mentioned AmeriCorps. It's something that Jeff and I share is that we're both AmeriCorps Alums. And so I'd love to hear if there's anyone on the line who also has AmeriCorps experience. Shout yourself out in the chat, because we love we love to hear from our national service alums. And also, I really appreciate that you called out. Sometimes it's just a very practical reason, right? You're in job transition, and you've got to fill that resume. You've got to fill that time with something productive so that you can talk about it and interviews and you can help it help you take that next step in your professional journey. And I'm sure that might resonate with some folks on the line who are in similar spaces of needing to make a career transition or being on the job

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Search themselves. So I want to dig a little bit deeper into a particularly impactful skill volunteering engagement that you might have had so that folks on the line can hear an example of kind of what that full process of pro bono looked like for you. So pick one from I know, it's a long list of what you've engaged on. But I would love to hear a deep dive on maybe one example that really sticks out in your mind.

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If I'm like others, I will think back to my first time. And so this goes back almost to the day, 10 years ago, I was helping this environmental, local nonprofit prepare for one of their big events. So most nonprofits will have either one or have multiple events that are very important to them for their brand, for extending their reach, helping people understand that they exist in the community and what they're doing, as well as raising the funds that are necessary. And also having fun and celebrating some of their work. So Earth Day is coming up. And 10 years ago, this was an Earth Day celebration by this organization, I was asked to use some of my event planning, skills and fundraising and partnership skills to produce in kind of sponsorships and donations, product donations, ways for different businesses, and other community organizations to engage in this event.

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And if you think back 10 years ago, just about every other channel on the Food Network, was focused on cupcakes as well as a cupcake business on every street corner. And it was truly all the rage. And so I had an opportunity to connect with local bakeries and caterers that stated that they were environmentally focused, and ended up putting a contest together. So this is all legit, you could check it out through Google searches. But I was held, I was really the one that was leading this event called ace of cupcakes, it delivered more than 1000 cupcakes to this particular event. So who's not going to love that it involved on the judging panel, some elementary school students, community residents, a state senator, and a county board member. And so it just really added a lot of flavor, no pun intended to the event, which was great in its own right to celebrate some of the work this organization was doing. And at that time, I was in job transition. So it kept my skills.

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be solid, you know, use the word flex, in some cases, it flex stem, I'm not very good in the kitchen, but I got an understanding of that area of the business as well. So it was good on so many levels. That's the one that comes first to mind. But so many others come to mind for different reasons. The impact metrics are different as an individual, as well as an organization. And that is part of the spice in skill based volunteering as well. Yeah, it sounds like such a outlet for creativity, as well. And I wonder if that will stick out to some of the folks that we have on the line who maybe are in a position that doesn't allow a lot of flexibility and approach to a problem or a challenge because I mean, let's be real, like sometimes the corporate environment is a little bit of a more rigid one. And working with nonprofits offers a lot more room to room to dance, and explore and experiment and try new things. And so I really, I love that example. And I wrote down ace of cupcakes is I don't know how to look that up.

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And use the word outlet for creativity. It was just a few weeks ago, I had a conversation with one of our employee volunteers from the tech space. And they gave me perhaps the greatest story or the potential to be the greatest story of an employee and nonprofit partnership to explore that creativity in their job in the tech sector. Whether the software development, there's a lot of coding language that I'm not on top of, but his statement to me was simply that, that this volunteer opportunity is giving him a chance to be creative in ways that he's not able to do. He's getting the support from his supervisor, he's involving his family members in this activity. And he was just like looking at a mirror of all the enthusiasm I have reflecting that back for for that purposes. So very exciting. And I know as I see all of you in the in the attendees and the skills that you have shared, you're gonna get that to you're going to give and you're going to receive probably more than you're giving but what you're giving is going to be incredibly important to whoever you serve 100% It is a

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a win win situation, there are definitely no losers here.

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And actually, because of this tech story that you just brought up, I'm seeing a few chats from folks that have come in since we've been talking around

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this uncertainty of how their corporate skill set will be able to apply in the nonprofit world because they don't see that direct parallel. And I'm wondering if that's something you would be willing to talk to a little bit more offering advice for applying that technical expertise from the corporate space to a nonprofit setting, what will help set these people up for success as they're looking for skills based volunteerism opportunity, and then when they're working in a totally new environment, great to have that come to the surface for that to be a question and and for us to address it here. For sure. Anybody that's traveled to another country or another community and didn't speak the language. That's what I would encourage you to put into your minds when thinking about how you're going to translate the skills that you do every day into how a nonprofit might receive it. And vice versa, nonprofits are going to share with their challenges with you, and you're going to need to take some time. So patients, definitely a spirit of adventure,

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patients, spirit of adventure, but I think my best practice is like to have that first conversation. Again, for anybody that's traveled internationally or to another community where the language is different. There is this innate desire to want to help. So I would begin there and harness that. But Prepare yourselves to have a little bit of patience, so that you can share, but then also interpret. It takes time, it takes time, it's not always automatic, even though you're trying to be clear. And Kim, you had asked him what my advice would be, as you're searching,

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continue to use that patience, but also take that chance. So in the case of when you experience a volunteer opportunity on taproot Plus, my encouragement to each and every one of you, is to take that chance, there'll be an opportunity for you to state your interest in that volunteer opportunity. And do your best to be as honest as you can.

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Including if and I saw some questions in the chat about people who are uncertain about their skills and professional expertise can continue to just be as open and honest about your lived experience, much like you would in presenting yourself on a resume. skill based volunteering, although we ask on tap root plus that you have three years of it, to provide a nonprofit with the assurance that they're getting the expertise that they need.

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Be confident about what you have to offer. Yeah, because it is a lot, it's a lot more valuable than than you might initially think. And, and comparing it to how you would present yourself on a resume is a really helpful framework for folks to keep in mind. Because when you apply to a new job, you're not going to have 100% of the things that that job is looking for. If you do

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that, you might want me to look for a different type of job that's going to stretch and challenge you in some way. Maybe that matches up with 85% or 90%, of what you have. So you still have that opportunity to be curious and learn and grow in your own professional career, right, there's never going to be that 100% match. The same thing is going to be true for the pro bono opportunities that you see through taproot and through other volunteerism, intermediaries as well. It's going to be rare where you see something and you're like, oh, my gosh, I've done this for another hunger nonprofit, I've created this exact strategy for them before, there's always going to be something new and a potential challenge inherent within that skills based volunteerism opportunity.

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So embrace the uncomfortability of that. I mean, that's really, really good advice, Jeff.

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I want to be cognizant of time. And we've gotten some really good questions into the chat. We're gonna bring Jeff back during the q&a section. So sit in and marinate on what Jeff has been sharing. And if you do have additional questions, we're going to bring him back in. So Jeff, I want to close this section with closing advice. What's one piece of advice you'd give to someone who's brand new to the world of pro bono, the world of skills based volunteerism, what was one thing you would share with them? Yeah, this one likes the hair on the back of my neck and it's just simply an encouragement for everyone. Everyone that's listening right now. Move beyond whatever is holding you back.

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If it's insecurity, you don't think that you're good enough, you know more than you think you know, and you're going to be helpful. If it's pride, I'm too good for this. That's okay. That might be something you're experienced as well, I really encourage you to just move through that and take that chance. If you think you don't have the time, taproot Plus offers an opportunity for you to provide your professional expertise to nonprofits for an hour. And so my encouragement to everyone is whatever is holding you back, reflect on it and try to move through it. Because you'll be glad that you did, and so will the nonprofit

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100%. And as you reflect on things that are holding you back, have a conversation with a taproot staff member about them, we're here to help you give back. And so use us as a resource and overcoming those hurdles, or perceived barriers. That's, that's why we're here. That's why we come to work every day is to help everyone like you who wants to make a difference in the world in our community. All right, Jeff, thank you so much for sharing with us. We're gonna bring you back in so please don't go anywhere. But Jeff has already done a really good job of teeing up opportunities, like a one hour consultation session that he already mentioned. So I do want to make sure that we have time to just cover in brief, what is the simplest way to find these skills based volunteerism opportunities. And so

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I want to make sure that we have a chance to introduce you to taproot plus.org. And I see Megan has put a link at the top of your screen. So if you have not experienced taproot plus before, or you don't have your account created yet, please use that link, and walk through the account creation process with us right now during this event. We've made things really simple and streamlined through our free online nonprofit volunteer matching platform tap requests. This site is designed to be really flexible and nimble so that any nonprofit, regardless of issue area, where they're located across the United States, and a few other regions around the world can access us. It doesn't matter what their budget size is, how many staff members they have.

Everyone, every social good organization is welcome to use our services to make connections with passionate professionals like all of you. And so it's completely free to use. So there's no price tag associated, we do not charge nonprofits, for using our resources. And we certainly do not charge any fee for volunteers who are looking for a way to give back. This is our way of scaling up the pro bono movement and building this ethic of giving back building your own professional network, building your own professional resume, while making an impact at the same time. And so we want to make sure that everyone has a way to do that safely, and from the comfort of their own home. So currently, taproot plus is open to business professionals and registered nonprofits, public schools and fiscally sponsored social good organizations across the United States, as I mentioned, but we're also accessible in the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, and India. And we have over 125 total users or 125,000. Users, I should say.

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So Signing up is a super, super easy process. Hopefully, some of you are already clicking on that link and going through the signup process yourself, you're just going to need to share some basic information with us. And after this initial form, you will get an email sent to your inbox. It's a small but critical step, you cannot access pro bono opportunities through taproot plus unless you verify your email account. So that's why I'm highlighting it now.

You would be surprised with the number of people that this small step seems to trip up so please make sure that that's an inbox that you do check frequently. And then you'll get to tell us what skill sets you feel comfortable donating to nonprofits. And so typically, we do recommend that volunteers have around three years of professional experience in a skill set that they flagged themselves for. And the reason we provide this general guideline is that when nonprofits reach out to taproot for support, it's because they're understaffed and they're under resourced, and they probably don't have someone who can train a volunteer in that topic or in that subject matter. So with this in mind, pro bono projects, you should only apply for them if you

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You feel comfortable executing independently without a mentor or without someone who can instruct you on the process, because the nonprofit's team won't be able to train you.

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So keep that in mind. And keep in mind that your work does impact the nonprofit's bottom line, like we said, the mission that they're they're serving our community with. And so just flag yourself for skill sets that you do feel really comfortable and confident that you are experienced in and update your profile when you gain a new skill, right. So your profile is is yours to keep up to date, and you're set to wield as you'd like. And we also have an option. I know it wasn't shown on the slide just now. But right after you tell us the skills that you'd like to donate, you'll also tell us about social causes that you're particularly interested in. So if you really love to focus your pro bono donations on organizations serving women and girls, mark that as your preferred social issue topic, and our team and our system will work at to find you opportunities specifically in that area. And you can select multiple areas, right. So definitely take note of that during the signup process.

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All right. So as you are using your tap requests account, you're going to get to browse a list of hundreds of opportunities that you can curate to fit your fit your skill set, as well as fit your issue area interest, these span projects and consultation calls. So I want to spend a little bit more time talking about those core options. consultation sessions are something Jeff mentioned a little earlier, this is a one hour one time commitment. So this is a great option for folks who came to this event because they're curious about National Volunteer Week. And they're curious about giving back through pro bono, I really highly recommend sessions as a great place to start. So these are one hour calls with a nonprofit staff member or sometimes there's a they bring a team with them. And you're talking about brainstorming or immediate problem solving. Or maybe you're helping them scope out a project that they're going to complete with a different pro bono volunteer. So sessions are a great way to kind of dip your toes into the pro bono water, so to speak. And then projects are other core offerings through taproot Plus, these are totally customizable, depending on the nonprofit needs. So each project is going to have its own unique flair, depending on that nonprofit and their team makeup, and what their mission is focused on. So typically, the timeline falls between two to 10 weeks where you as the volunteer consultant are donating anywhere from two to five hours of your time and talents per week. Again, this is really flexible and customizable. tapper doesn't say, No, you have to donate five hours each week. Some people who donate through taproot plus are retired, and they could knock out a project. You know what I'm going to do this whole thing in two weeks time, whereas others are working nine to five, and they are able to donate two hours over a series of weeks. That is completely fine. Either method works, you're just going to need to be communicative with your nonprofit partner about which timeline makes more sense for you.

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Alright, so a few tips. I'll share quickly, because I see in the chat that some folks are already looking at different volunteer opportunities. My first tip is to apply liberally and apply frequently. Keep in mind that nonprofits may be interviewing multiple volunteer candidates. And so reaching out about a project submitting an application doesn't necessarily commit you to a project, you'll have the opportunity to interview with the nonprofit and gauge whether you think the nonprofit is actually a good fit for you. You could tell the nonprofit, you know what, we're not actually I don't think we're going to be the best fit for one another. I'm going to step away from this project and I'd advise you to link up with someone else that's completely fine. You are enabled and empowered to make that decision. So just by submitting an application, you're not tying yourself to anything permanently. So definitely keep that in mind. My second tip is that when you apply to work with a taproot nonprofit, you'll have a chance to write a little statement of interest. It's basically

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The a mini cover letter. And this is your chance to write the nonprofit a message about why you're qualified and why you want to work on this project with them. And so really sell yourself. And Jeff mentioned this earlier, when he was talking about sharing what your lived experiences and how you think that could apply for the pro bono opportunity. Definitely feel free to speak to that, you know, treat this, like I said, a cover letter for a position you're interested in, demonstrate passion for the mission of the organization, chances are, you're probably reaching out about the project because you care about the cause. So let them know that and be prepared to provide your CV or resume or examples of prior work. We definitely train recommend and reinforce to both volunteers and nonprofits that folks should treat pro bono opportunities just like they would treat a paid opportunity ticket seriously, vet one another. Do your research and make sure that you're going to be a good fit to partner for several weeks together.

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All right, so with those tips, I do want to break for questions, because we've gotten a lot of really, really great items here in the chat. And I want to make sure we have plenty of time to chat about them. So on the screen, you're also going to find the link to taproot plus.org, and the taproot plus Help Desk. So if for whatever reason you don't feel comfortable speaking publicly about your question on this webinar, totally fine. Email us. And we will get back to you after this event. We're also going to follow up either later this afternoon or tomorrow morning with the recording and some of the other helpful links that we've shared during this presentation. So you'll have the opportunity to engage us in conversation privately at that point.

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All right. So let me just quickly scan through some of the open questions that we have.

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So I have a question from an attendee around advice that you would give to a consultant when their advice was originally rejected by the nonprofit. But the nonprofit still wants help going in a direction that will mean guaranteed failure or lost resources, or their mentors or staff, we can point them to say, get a second opinion to take us seriously. I really appreciate you asking this question. Because this is very real, you as a professional want to make sure that you're spending your time and energy on something that isn't just going to sit on the shelf and never be used, or even worse, is going to be utilized in a way that you've already advised the nonprofit is not going to be a successful one. And so a few pieces of advice here. And then Jeff, I do want to pull you in because I wonder if you have any tips on this situation as well.

One is taproot staff members are here to mediate in challenging situations. So please reach out to the tap requests Help Desk, we have a nonprofit Success Coach available, where we can link them up with the nonprofit in question, and help do a little bit of root cause analysis with the organization to see, all right, why do you feel so strongly that you're pushing the volunteer in this direction? And, you know, at the end of the day, if the nonprofit does want to continue in that direction, even though you've advised them against it, there is nothing wrong with you saying, all right, I have completed my piece on this project, I no longer believe in the direction of it. So I am respectfully going to take a step away. However taproot is going to help you connect with a volunteer who would be a better fit to carry this work forward in the long run, that ultimately might be the healthier route to take. But again, please, please, please, please use taproots staff as mediators in that situation, because I mean, that's what we're here for. And we want to help with that.

But Jeff, I'm curious if you have any additional thoughts here. I'm just also thankful that you would bring up that not all volunteering is the land of Oz, where you're just skipping through your experience. Anybody that has teenagers can also feel that same kind of frustration. as a parent of two, I have offered some things that are pretty solid advice that they are unwilling to take. So want to acknowledge that frustration, as well and that that can exist. I also loved the solution. In that question as well though about seeking additional advice. One of the great ways for nonprofits if you're a nonprofit attending today's conversation is to think about getting multiple opinions. You have a negative health diagnosis, find out at least a couple of opinions. If you're doing home remodeling, find

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Got a couple of opinions on what's necessary to fix a challenge. And similarly, if you care personally and deeply about the nonprofit, and you really feel that they're heading in the wrong direction, do consider how to leverage taproots help. But then also other influencers to help steer that nonprofit in the right way. Yeah, absolutely.

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Jeff, I'm seeing a few questions here around

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corporate skills, not fitting neatly into categories, such as HR marketing strategy, etc. And I know we spoke to this a little bit earlier on, but from your experience working as accounts director and working with companies to try and get their employees who might be working on projects or have day to day skills that don't on paper fit nice to meet into these categories. What do you typically advise these companies or these team leaders with?

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Thanks, good conversation. So

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I mentioned this earlier, it's so important to have conversations start with taproot staff, I'm really interested to volunteer but I just don't see that there's a fit. Consult with one of us here at taproot to see how we can pair you also leverage that statement of interest, to try and introduce yourself to the nonprofit to get a sense of what they're trying to achieve. They're not always going to be perfectly clear with the help that they need, because part of the skill based volunteer experience is that adventure together to carve a more efficient, more effective path forward. So I think for me, the advice I give is that a conversation takes time.

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And it's more difficult than putting on a t shirt and serving in the community on direct service. And I love that work, I spent 10 months doing that work. And I continue to do that work on a regular basis, year in and year out with organizations. But skill based volunteering is going to take a little bit more time. So for the challenges of what is lost in translation. I mean, there are what 3000 plus languages spoken in the world. I encourage everyone to just have the conversations that they can and leverage professional support from people like Kim and our team. Yeah,

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definitely, underline highlight exclamation point, talk to taproot staff members, because we can help pull a list if you're wondering, I don't see anything on the platform that like automatically jumps out to me, we can help and do a little bit of curated matchmaking on your behalf. So let us know if you're facing that challenge. We want to get you involved. Also, I would add in.

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Sometimes what you see from the nonprofits, description of what they want, doesn't fully describe the activities that will be taking place throughout the project. So let me add a little bit context behind that.

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If we, as I mentioned earlier, many of the nonprofits who work with taproot, and you'll experience through taproot class are very small organizations who maybe don't have one paid staff member or zero paid staff members. And so they are having one or two people who are responsible for business development, responsible for fundraising responsible for marketing responsible for HR responsible for it responsible for operations, data values, all of it at the same time. And they might have experienced in one or two of those areas, but they're flying pretty blind in the other 56789 areas. And so it's actually very difficult for nonprofits at times to say, if I don't have a marketing background, here's a full description of the content marketing projects that I need completed through pro bono consulting. Here's a description of the website redesign or the IT infrastructure that I need created.

And so it's not only about having a conversation with taproot, staff members, it's also about the bravery of putting yourself out there for an opportunity that maybe is loosely aligned with your skills, and being willing to have an interview have a conversation with the nonprofit directly, saying, hey, on paper, it doesn't look like I 100% lineup with everything you have described here, but here's what I can deliver for you. And that description of what you can deliver might actually be what the nonprofit wanted in the first place. They just didn't know how to articulate it in their pro bono request. So please keep that in mind as well. There's

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is a bit of a knowledge gap that's going to exist between you and the nonprofit and many different factors. And so you've got to be willing to just talk about it and have those conversations to figure out if you if you are actually going in the same direction.

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All right, I see another question here around.

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Yeah, the three years of experience, or there's one from earlier around, what if you want to volunteer, but you don't have the needed skills. And I feel like Jeff has done a really good job speaking to this around just like the comfort with uncomfortability, putting yourself out there talking to taproot.

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I would also recommend, there are types of projects that you don't necessarily need three years of in Office experience to be able to do them really well. Things like social media, design or copywriting. I mean, there are teenagers in high school that could do an amazing job with creating creative social media content, and they've never worked in a professional setting, you know, one day in their life. So there are always going to be exceptions to that three year rule. That said, there also are projects out there where

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any one skill sets, just so you have any professional experience. Things like doing research are a really good example of that helping a nonprofit with like data entry or their data organization needs. In Excel, a really good opportunity of anyone can kind of fit into that mold pretty well if they've had any, like in Office experience previously. So again, I'm going to copy what Jeff said earlier just around. If you're unsure, and you can't find an opportunity right away, just reach out to taproot. And we can help do a little bit of searching on your behalf.

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All right, I think that might have been all of the open questions.

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That says, if there is a question that we didn't answer during this event, we will be looking through the chat logs, making sure we got to everyone's and so if we notice anything, we'll reach out to you directly. We're also going to be following up from this event with a recording and with a link to a few of the other resources that we've called out. And we'll be linking to Jeff's LinkedIn profile. So please stay in touch with him, stay in touch with the taproot team, and stay in touch with one another. I saw many of you sharing your LinkedIn profiles in your websites earlier.

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We're all from different places, different professional backgrounds, different lived experiences, but everyone here on this call is similar in that we want to give back and we have that desire to be a force of good in our community is, which is a really, really special binding factor for us all. So please continue to stay connected. And

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let us know if there's anything we can do to help you get involved with our National Volunteer Week volunteerism campaign. Or get involved with pro bono any other week of the year, but really, really grateful to everyone who joined and of course, to Jeff Brady, for being our experts, guest speaker.

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Alright, everyone. Thank you so much. And we'll be in touch later today, or at the very latest tomorrow morning, but appreciate you all and thank you again to Jeff.

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Bye, folks.