

Hi!

I chose the advanced web development project to build a non-profit website that helps volunteers find opportunities in the United States across multiple organizations.

I will discuss current trends in volunteering in the US, the changes related to disasters, and some interesting statistics. Then, I will evaluate two American websites for volunteers and, finally, explain what is missing and how my website can add extra value to this important topic.

As you can see, there is a declining trend in the US across all four main categories of volunteering, ranging from formal help, where individuals are registered with an organization, to donations exceeding 25 dollars. Informal help shows the least decline, but that is a factor that can only be measured by the volunteer's honest responses, while the others can be verified through factual data.

On the other hand, as an effect of climate change, there has been an increase in disasters causing more than a billion dollars in damage. From the 1980s to 2023, there was an annual average of 8.5 such events, but in the past five years, this number has increased to 20.4 events.

Some interesting stats about volunteering in the US:

- over 71% of volunteers work with only one organization, raising the question: why is that?
- 67% of volunteers find opportunities online, which indicates that a well-designed website could help reach even more people.
- 77% of nonprofits believe skilled volunteers could improve their business practices so allowing organizations to search for volunteers would be beneficial.

There are more than 1.8 million nonprofit organizations in the US. Among the top 15 most trusted organizations, only two — Red Cross and Salvation Army — focus on multiple areas of volunteering, including disaster recovery efforts.

If we look at the American Red Cross website, finding volunteer opportunities is a multi-step process, and the filters for opportunities are limited, mostly by distance and a few categories. Additionally, it only shows opportunities provided by the American Red Cross, without listing opportunities from other organizations.

If we look at the Volunteers of America website, it doesn't properly list the available volunteer opportunities. Instead, it provides contact information for volunteers to reach out. It also offers a reverse option where users can search for services likely provided by Volunteers of America's volunteers, but the search is limited, and the results are just a list of contacts with a map.

I believe my website could increase the number of events a volunteer participates in by offering a single platform where they can browse opportunities from multiple organizations. It would also provide a reverse search option for organizations to find skilled volunteers, but only if the volunteer opts in to be visible to them. If not, their information would remain private.

Additionally, users could track statistics about their efforts, such as the number of organizations they've worked with, hours spent on tasks, and more. The search functionality would be extended to allow filtering by organization, distance, required skills, or event date.

If time allows, I will also try to implement an event-based chat feature, so volunteers participating in the same event can communicate and discuss it on a common platform.