



Who we are

Community Action Partners is a volunteer organization of Harvard Business School (HBS) alumni helping Boston-area nonprofits apply management skills to their business challenges. CAP operates under the aegis of the HBS Alumni Association of Boston.

Founded in 1993, CAP has grown quickly and now marshals more than 100 HBS alumni volunteers each year to serve 13 - 16 nonprofits. Alumni from Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) have also volunteered since 2004 and add valuable perspectives and resources to our teams. Since inception, more than 800 CAP volunteers have served 154 nonprofit clients. Each year we provide more than 9,000 hours of *pro bono* management consulting services worth ~\$2 million at market rates.

Volunteers typically spend four or more hours per week between October and May on each engagement, working in teams of approximately six alumni per client. Volunteers range in age from their late twenties to their seventies and have experience in many different industries and functional areas.

HBS alumni volunteers derive personal satisfaction from making an impact on an area nonprofit. They also benefit from interacting with other HBS alumni from diverse backgrounds. The positive experience of CAP teams has contributed to a high repeat rate of volunteers. Typically, more than 50 percent of the volunteers have experience with prior CAP projects.

“What a great service to our organization! ... we learned things that will help us to function more efficiently and to better serve our audiences.”

– Catherine Carr Kelly, Executive Director, Central Square Theater

Who we serve

Our Boston-area client base spans from five-person organizations to nationally known nonprofits that operate in a variety of sectors, including:

- Arts & Culture
- Education / Out-of-School Time
- Health and Human Services
- Conservation & Environment
- Workforce Development
- Housing & Community Economic Development

In the current economic environment, nonprofits are challenged to secure funding and make

“CAP offers a unique opportunity – talented and committed consultants who offer an ‘outsiders’ fresh and objective perspective at no cost!” – Denise Maguire, Executive Director, Cambridge Family & Children’s Service

sometimes painful tradeoffs for how they spend their limited funds. In many cases, nonprofits are unable to pay for consultants, even when they recognize the potential payoff. Many nonprofit staff members have learned mainly through on-the-job experience. Skill transfer is an important side-benefit of working with a CAP volunteer team that many clients value.

Examples of CAP Clients by Nonprofit Area

Arts & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic New England / S.P.N.E.A. • Central Square Theater • Passim • Boston Athenaeum • Massachusetts Historical Society • Huntington Theatre Company • Danforth Museum of Art • The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Education / Out-of-School Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New England Center for Children • Raising A Reader MA • Steps to Success • Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston • Boston Renaissance Charter Public School • ACCESS • Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mass Bay • Newbury College • United South End Settlements • The Carroll School • Museum of Science • ReadBoston
Health & Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare • Bridge Over Troubled Waters • American Red Cross of Mass Bay • More Than Words • Newton Community Service Center • New England Health Care Institute • Planned Parenthood League of MA • Women of Means
Housing & Community Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Than Wheels (Bonnie Car Loans & Counseling) • The Boston Foundation • Project Place • Roxbury Multi-Service Center • Somerville Homeless Coalition
Conservation & Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Food Project • Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Mass Audubon • Environmental Defense Fund • Appalachian Mountain Club • Earthwatch Institute • Minute Man National Park Association • New England Wildflower Society • The Trustees of Reservations
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roca • ACCION International • National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship • The Women's Union

What we provide

CAP projects vary according to the needs of the nonprofit client, but always address a significant client challenge. Clients specify a project objective during the application process, but the project objective or scope can be amended during the first few weeks based on dialogue between the client and team members.

In many cases, nonprofits seek assistance either clarifying missions or translating organizational objectives into action plans. In other cases, nonprofits seek assistance evaluating specific options they face, such as whether or how to embark on a new program or how to develop revenue sources. While CAP volunteers do not work on fundraising or grant writing, they can help clients address how to better attract and retain members or sponsors or how to develop earned revenues sources, such as admission fees or retail sales.

“As a repeat CAP client, Historic New England has benefitted tremendously from the business skills that our CAP team members bring to our projects. We've challenged the teams with a wide range of issues from public programming, to membership, to function rentals, to farming operations. Each team has jumped in with enthusiasm, energy, focus, and invaluable skills to deliver practical recommendations that have moved our programs forward. We truly value the outstanding work that CAP does.”

– Diane Viera, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer
Historic New England

The CAP team typically starts by understanding the organization. How has the mission been interpreted and driven goals? What are the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges? Based on this understanding, CAP teams identify necessary research and formulate work plans. Ongoing dialogue with the client sponsors is used to both optimize use of the CAP team and client resources and to agree on scope for the project.

The final recommendations are typically delivered in a presentation accompanied by a report. Depending on the project objectives, the recommendations could address organizational structure, financing, marketing, or strategic planning.

In the course of a project, there is typically some skill transfer. The team might help a nonprofit board or staff learn how to conduct external marketing research effectively, without spending a

fortune. Or they might show the staff how to build an economic model to evaluate a planned program. Often the CAP team can provide insight into how to gather data needed to support better decision making.

CAP teams provide an outsider's perspective and insight. This can help a nonprofit think about how they are perceived externally. It can also give nonprofits new ways of thinking about their issues. Sometimes a new framework is as valuable as a specific recommendation.

Volunteers

Volunteers range in age from their late twenties to their seventies and have experience in many different industries and functional areas. More than 70% of volunteers have at least a decade of post-MBA experience.

Volunteers work in a variety of sectors: manufacturing, retail, financial services, and high technology among others and have experience in areas such as marketing, finance and organizational development. A significant number work or previously worked as consultants.

Volunteers derive personal satisfaction from making an impact on an area nonprofit. They also benefit from interacting with other HBS alumni from diverse backgrounds. The positive experience of CAP teams has contributed to a high repeat rate of volunteers. Over 50 percent of the volunteers have experience with prior CAP projects.

Here are some of the sources of volunteer satisfaction:

- Helping a good cause
- Learning about the social service sector
- Acquiring job-related information (e.g., a real-estate professional working with land trusts)
- Understanding how nonprofits work and think
- Getting to know fellow alumni

Bottom line: volunteers can get as much or more out of CAP projects as clients. Often volunteers are as pleased with new, often unexpected things they learn as they are with client appreciation for their contribution.

Volunteers typically spend four hours or more per week between October and May on each engagement, working in teams of approximately

“It is clear that our interactions with you all, from beginning to end, have broadened our thinking. This new perspective, an attitude really, plays out consciously and unconsciously in all sorts of unanticipated ways. In some ways, this may be your most profound and lasting impact.”

– Will Ogburn, Executive Director,
National Consumer Law Center

“The CAP team we worked with had all the requisite skill and experience needed to develop our business plan. They worked well as a team and delivered high quality results. The team’s findings and recommendations will provide a sound basis for decision making. It was a great experience!” - Christy Foote-Smith

Sanctuary Director, Mass Audubon, Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary

six alumni per client. A team will typically meet once every week or two and often several times with the client. Each team is assigned a liaison to the CAP board who is responsible for helping get the team organized and ensures high quality work. With prior CAP project experience, the board liaison can be one source of information for how prior teams addressed particular issues.

Becoming a CAP Client

Organizations who meet the selection criteria below are asked to submit proposals to the CAP board in June (applications can be downloaded from our website). Our deadline will be in June. Please visit our website for the application and deadline. CAP teams begin work in October and typically finish in May.

Selection Criteria

CAP works with IRS 501(c)(3) status organizations who are located in Greater Boston and provide a benefit to the local community. CAP clients need to have a minimum of five paid full time employees, stable leadership, and a board of directors. CAP clients must assign an individual to oversee and support the CAP team project. CAP does not work with organizations that are in the midst of a crisis.

Prospective clients must identify a project that addresses a significant business or management issue. The project objectives must be clear and achievable by a volunteer team of six within six months. CAP does not do fund-raising work.

HBS Association of Boston

CAP operates under the aegis of the HBS Association of Boston (HBSAB), the regional Harvard Business School alumni group. HBSAB provides financial and marketing support, including outreach to area alumni who are interested in volunteering with CAP.



For more information on becoming a client or volunteer, please visit www.cap-hbsab.org

CAP Clients 1993 – 2011: 154 Served

<p>ACCESS ACCION International ACCION USA Acre Family Child Care Alliance Francaise Allston-Brighton Healthy Boston Coalition American Humane Education Society American Red Cross of MA Bay Appalachian Mountain Club Arsenal Center for the Arts Arts Boston Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence ATLAS Communities Beacon Hill Village BELL Foundation Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mass Bay Blue Hills Observatory & Science Center Boston Architectural College The Boston Athenaeum Boston Ballet Boston Cares Boston Center for the Arts Boston Classical Orchestra Boston Partners in Education The Boston Foundation The Boston Home Boston Natural Areas Network The Boston Photo Collaborative The Boston Public Library The Boston Public Library Foundation Boston Renaissance Charter Public School The Boston Running Club The Bostonian Society Boston Symphony Assoc. of Volunteers Bottom Line</p>	<p>Conservation Law Foundation The Copley Society of Art Crittenton Hastings House Danforth Museum of Art Earthwatch Institute Dimock Community Health Center Discovering Justice Dorchester House Multi-Service Center Earthwatch Institute Eastern Massachusetts Literacy Council The Esplanade Association Environmental Careers Organization Environmental Defense Fund Families First Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses The Food Project Horizons for Homeless Children Gloucester Adventure Hanson Initiative for Literacy & Learning Harbinger Partners Health Care for All Historic New England / S.P.N.E.A. Huntington Theatre Company Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion Institute of Contemporary Art The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Jason Foundation for Education Jumpstart for Young Children Lena Park Community Development Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences Massachusetts Audubon Society, BNC Massachusetts Audubon Society, Drumlin Farm</p>	<p>New England Center for Children New England Health Care Institute New England SCORES New England Wildflower Society New Profit, Inc. Newton Community Service Center N-W-W Com. for Community Living Open Circle Program, Stone Center Oxfam America PACT Project Passim Peace Games Planned Parenthood League of MA Plimoth Plantation Project Bread Project Place Psychoanalytic Couple & Family Institute Raising A Reader MA ReadBoston Riverside Theater Works Roca Root Capital The R.O.S.E. Fund Roxbury Multi-Service Center Roxbury Youthworks, Inc. Sabre Foundation Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare Science Clubs for Girls Second Nature Snappy Dance Theatre Social Capital Inc. Solutions at Work Somerville Homeless Coalition South Africa Partners South Boston Harbor Academy SpeakEasy Stage Company</p>
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Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston The Brain Tumor Society Brazelton Touchpoints Center Bridge Over Troubled Waters Building Materials Resource Center Cambridge Family & Children's Service Career Collaborative The Carroll School Center for Women & Enterprise Central Square Theater Charles River Watershed Association Children's Services of Roxbury Citizens Schools The City School CitySprouts City Year Codman Square Health Center Commonwealth Zoological Corporation Community Boating, Inc.	Massachusetts Audubon Society, JFC Massachusetts Historical Society Massachusetts Horticultural Society Minute Man National Park Association More Than Wheels (Bonnie CLAC) More Than Words Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Museum of Science Museum of Transportation NFTE National Consumer Law Center The National Heritage Museum Needham Children's Museum Neighborhood of Affordable Housing Newbury College New England Aquarium New England Board of Higher Ed	Squashbusters Sudbury Valley Trustees Tenacity The Trustees of Reservations United South End Settlements USS Constitution Museum Vinfen WBUR The West Suburban YMCA Women of Means The Women's Union Young Audiences of MA Youth Enrichment Services Youth Orchestra of the Americas YWCA
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