



**Metropolitan Volunteer Program
Fiscal Year 2023**

**Student Fees Advisory Committee
Program Questionnaire**

1. *Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.*

Mission:

The mission of the University of Houston Metropolitan Volunteer Program is to create and provide service opportunities for students by collaborating with campus and community partners. Through this, we aim to develop responsible citizens with a lifelong commitment to service while creating sustainable change in our campus and community.

Accomplishing Our Mission:

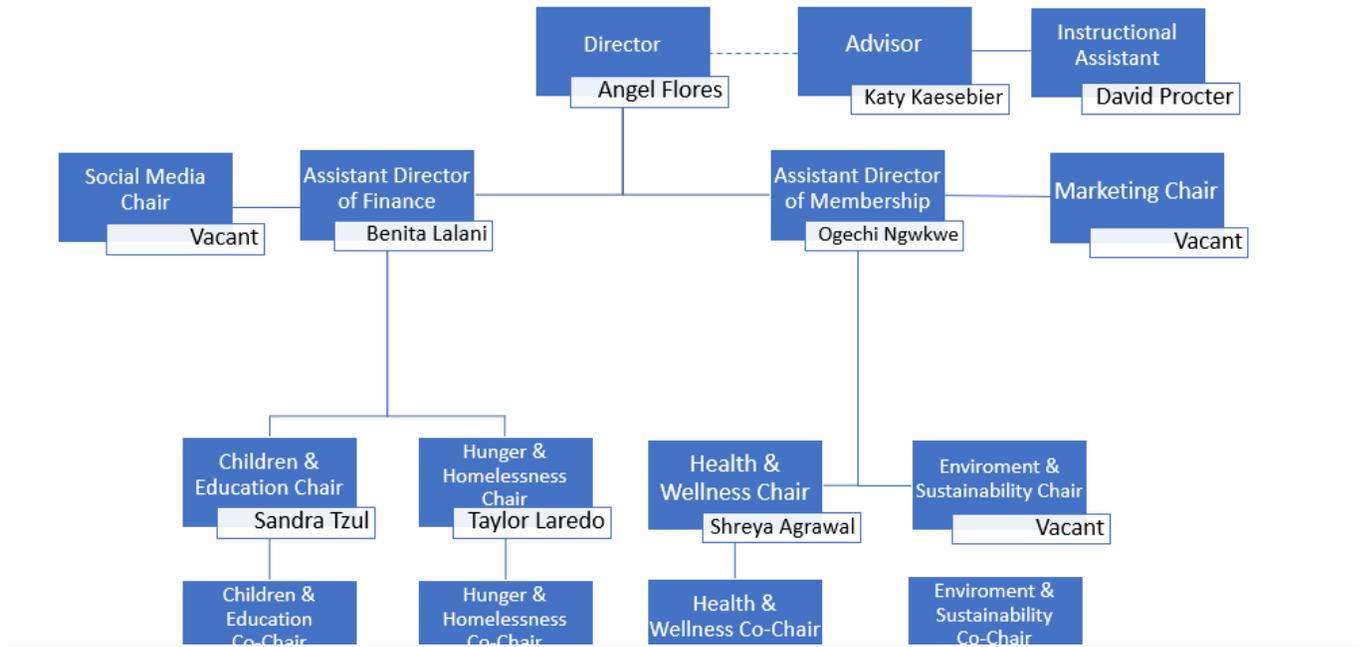
The Metropolitan Volunteer Program (MVP) accomplishes our mission by providing the diverse student body of the University of Houston with unique service and awareness opportunities that fall under the following social issue areas: Children & Education, Environment & Sustainability, Health & Wellness, and Hunger & Homelessness. A more specific description of each of the committees can be found under the current structure in section 2 of this report.

MVP is made up of four committees, each led by a Chair and focused on one of the specific service areas mentioned above. Through the work of the committees, our volunteers are able to connect with these 4 different social issues and others, enabling them to engage with the issues that matter most to them. With the Chair's passion and expertise in the service area, meaningful and intentional dialogues are created through our service events. For example, if a student is studying education we can directly connect them with tutoring or other education-related opportunities. Similarly, when groups request our assistance for volunteer/service events, we have a wide range of partnerships for specific service areas that we can connect them to. MVP continues to hold service as a core value of the organization and we aim to ensure that students have access to opportunities that make a tangible and sustainable impact within the UH campus and local community.

Justification:

The Metropolitan Volunteer Program offers a large variety of service opportunities to UH students, faculty, and staff to participate in both the fall and spring semesters. MVP scheduled a total of 38 volunteer events during the 2020-2021 school year, a significant decrease due to COVID-19 and its effect on our community partners to provide in-person volunteering. Of these events, 81.58% were hosted in collaboration with campus and community partners.

2. Provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and then more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position (e.g. counselor, advisor, etc.), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.



3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2020-2021 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (DSAES) Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate (links below). Please comment on your success in achieving these strategic initiatives/action steps. If a strategic initiative/action step changed during the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new strategic initiatives/action steps, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these items.

DSAES Plan: (http://www.uh.edu/dsaes/about/strategic_plan.html)

UH Goals: (<http://www.uh.edu/about/mission/>)

1. Restructure the Metropolitan Volunteer Program's social media accounts to display specific impacts on the Houston community.

Action Step 1: Consistently make educational posts that display the impact made during our volunteer events.

Status: Accomplished/Ongoing

With limited events last year, MVP had fewer opportunities than normal to share the impact of events via social media. While we did post several highlights from the year, including the MVP Packathon in the spring, we hope to continue building on this goal in FY22.

Action Step 2: Post "spotlights" about our community partners, registered student organizations, and student volunteers.

Status: Accomplished

During the 2020-2021 school year, MVP hosted a social media takeover for five of our community partners that we marketed in advance including The Beacon, Precious Plastic, Nora's Home, BARC Houston, and The Mental Health Hub. This event provided a way for our volunteers to interact with our partners and learn about what they were doing during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also posted spotlights of our board members so they can be more accessible and recognized to our organization members. Our goal with the board spotlights is to help members get connected to MVP and create a welcoming environment.

Action Step 3: Engage MVP volunteers and partners on social media accounts through tagging volunteer partners, registered student organizations, and department social media accounts.

Status: Accomplished

Through the spotlights and social media takeover, MVP was much more effective at engaging our volunteers and partners than we have been in the past. While we continue to post on Facebook and Twitter, Instagram has been by far the most active for both our members and community partners. Due to our increased engagement with social media, we saw a 20.2% growth in our followers on Instagram. We plan to continue building on our social media presence this year and in the future.

UH Goal: Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.

DSAES Partnerships 3: Create opportunities for our students by developing initiatives that support our neighboring communities

2. Increase Volunteer Retention

Action Step 1: Create more social event opportunities to encourage a stronger sense of community within MVP.

Status: Accomplished/Ongoing

Due to COVID-19, and wanting to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, this goal was challenging. While we did not host any events that were solely intended to be social, we did strive to incorporate a social aspect to the service events. For example, we completed multiple projects with an organization called “Zooniverse” where individual volunteers support environmental-based research projects. In order to help build community, we would open a Zoom room and put on music so volunteers could socialize while completing the projects. While we were not able to accomplish this to the level we had intended, we look forward to offering more social opportunities this year to help both new and returning students build a stronger connection to MVP and UH.

Action Step 2: Train the MVP Board and site leaders to include an event improvement component at the end of each event.

Status: Accomplished

With many of the board members being new to leadership roles with MVP, we incorporated training on how to be an effective site leader for service events in the retreat, with additional components throughout the year. Each of our board members was trained to facilitate a conversation about the event they led and ways that we can improve as an organization. Topics that we focused on included the process for signing up for events, communication with the board, and overall experience. This feedback was recorded by the board member and discussed in board meetings each week so we could continuously make improvements for our members.

Action Step 3: Diversify volunteering events and target specific registered student organizations on campus that focus on the social issue to encourage service with MVP.

Status: Accomplished/Ongoing

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the board members successfully navigated a pandemic environment by diversifying volunteer opportunities with a focus on virtual opportunities, and grab-and-go events through collaborative efforts with various student organizations. Through events such as Zoom Zooniverse and Notes from Nature, the board was able to continue engaging the student body through this virtual method. In addition, DIY events were created to allow for students to participate in an activity and drop donations off. This approach allowed for a strong student life connection in collaboration

with registered student organizations with events such as *I'm a Succa for You* which was done in partnership with Frontier Fiesta. MVP also engaged with various other student organizations, and MVP Takeover Week, where we connected with numerous RSO's to gain a wider audience through MVP's social media. We hope to continue to utilize the knowledge gained from providing opportunities in a virtual environment to enhance the organization within upcoming years.

UH Goal: Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.

DSAES Student Success 5: Enrich the sense of connection, belonging, and shared UH identity among all students.

3. Evaluate the current board structure to assess the overall effectiveness of each service committee.

Action Step 1: Survey UH students to determine what they think the current needs are in the community, what type of events they would expect to see within the existing committees, and ways to improve volunteering events.

Status: Deferred

The MVP board developed this survey with the goal of assessing the type of events our volunteers want to participate in when they volunteer with MVP. Questions included topics such as preferences for on-campus vs. off-campus events, ideal group size, days of the week and times that generally work best, and perceived relevance of the current committees (Health and Wellness, Environment and Sustainability, Hunger and Homelessness, and Children and Education) within the Houston community. This survey was included in the weekly listserv each week for the spring semester and distributed via email to volunteers from the year. Despite our efforts, we did not have any volunteers complete the survey. The board for this year is revisiting the survey to ensure relevance, and developing a new distribution plan to hopefully collect some data that will allow us to best serve the community and our students.

Action Step 2: Re-evaluate the structure of theme weeks.

Status: Partially accomplished

In previous years we have focused our theme weeks on doing smaller, daily, off-campus events focused on one particular committee. These weeks have been quite stressful for the board and have limited our reach based on the group sizes our community partners could host. COVID-19 gave us the opportunity to step back and reevaluate our goals for theme weeks since Environment and Sustainability Week was the only theme week we held in person during FY21. During this week, we were able to get creative with our approach including hosting an event called "Love Letters to Earth." For this event, we hosted a table in the Student Centers and had students write a commitment for an action they could take around sustainability on compostable paper with flower seeds in it. We

collaborated with the Office of Sustainability to plant the commitments in the Campus Community Garden. With 127 students making a commitment to sustainability through this event, it provided us with a great avenue to spread awareness and education to a larger group of students than we typically would. For FY22, we plan to host an “MVP Week” in the fall semester to try a new approach. This week will incorporate a service night on campus, a tabling/marketing event, an off-campus project, and our fall Volunteer Fair. Through this variety of events we believe we will reach a broader audience of students, and more effectively connect students to MVP than our previous approach.

UH Goal: Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.

DSAES Student Success 4: Enhance assessment of student success by defining measures at the departmental and divisional level with focus on the impact of our programs and services.

4. *Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons and/or unique students served by each of your programs and any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success.*

Attendance:

MVP's primary method of evaluating the success of our organization is by tracking attendance at general meetings, service events, workshops, awareness events, and other MVP events. Students must register for events in advance via the website, and then sign in or swipe into the event under the supervision of an officer. After every event, MVP records the information in a database that tracks the number of volunteers, individual service hours logged with MVP, the annual number of service hours, and a monthly/yearly participation count. Attendance is also recorded in Get Involved for each of our events.

Our tracking for events in 2020-2021 indicated that our 1,227 volunteers gave over 999 hours volunteering through our events. We found that a high number of individuals have volunteered with MVP multiple times indicating that our retention is high. Our tracking also shows our most popular events included our signature event Rock the Campus with 57 volunteers and our event, Love Letters to Earth, with 127 attendees. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to host some of our largest and most popular events, including Adopt a Beach and Rock the Block. Even as UH moved toward hosting more in-person events with safety precautions in place, many of our community partners were unable to host volunteer groups, limiting our ability to take volunteers into the community.

Benchmarking:

Texas A&M University

- AggieServe!
 - Where agencies, organizations, and the university upload volunteer events as well as internships
 - Department under Department of Student Affairs (DSA)
 - Staff operated

University of Texas

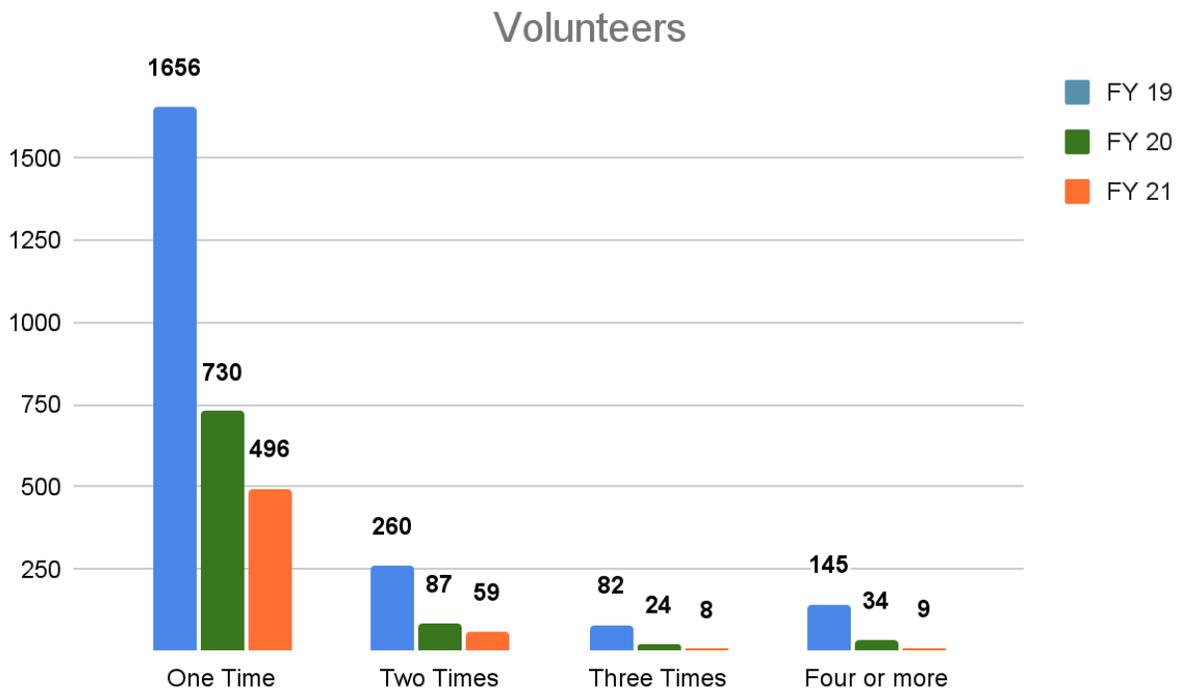
- HornLink
 - Portal similar to GetInvolved
 - Unable to find a volunteer organization as large as MVP

Sam Houston State University

- Justserve.org
 - Links to community organizations

Number of Returning Volunteers:

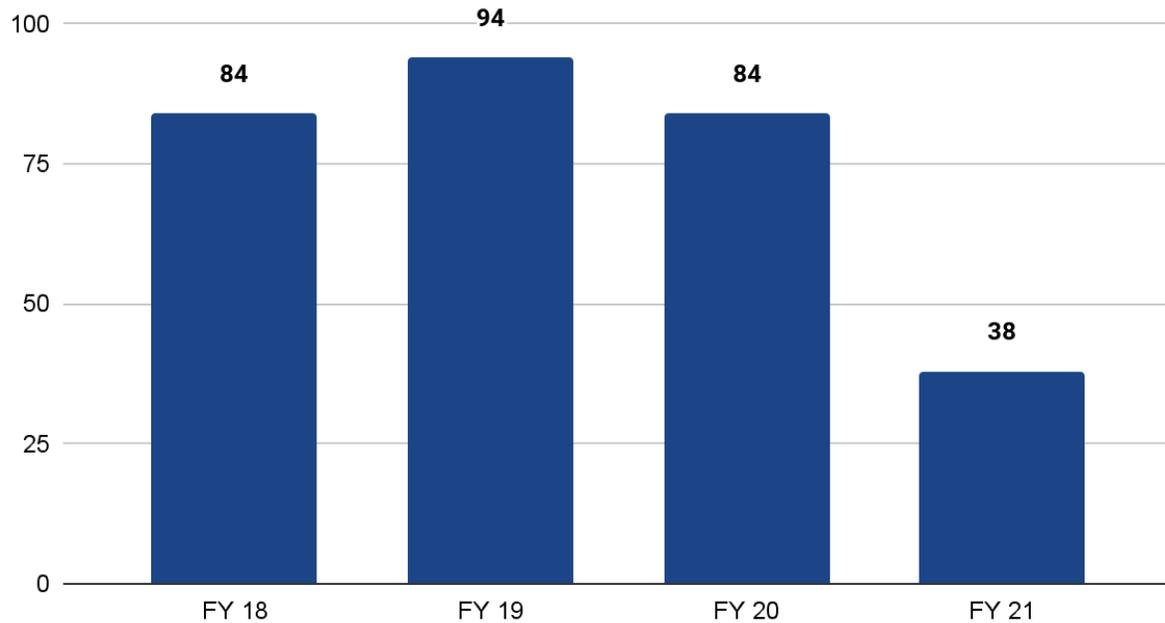
Another method that MVP utilizes to evaluate the success of volunteering events is by analyzing data about the number of returning volunteers. During FY21, we saw 496 one-time volunteers, 59 two-time volunteers, 8 three-time volunteers, and 9 four-time volunteers. These numbers reflect the unique students who participated in our events. One of the major ways we were able to focus on our retention this year was through providing more awareness events and using our social media more to advertise our organization. Despite our best efforts, we did see a decrease in our overall attendance and the number of returning volunteers within each category. COVID-19 was the primary factor resulting in the decrease due to its effect on the closure of community partners and regulations that did not allow us to have in-person events. Without these complications, our data shows that we likely would have exceeded our 2020 volunteer numbers.



Number and Variety of Volunteer/Service Events Provided:

During FY21, MVP hosted 38 service events. Due to our inability to provide off-campus volunteer events as we were following COVID-19 regulations, along with many of our community partners being unable to accept volunteers once we could host in-person events again, we saw a significant decrease in events this year.

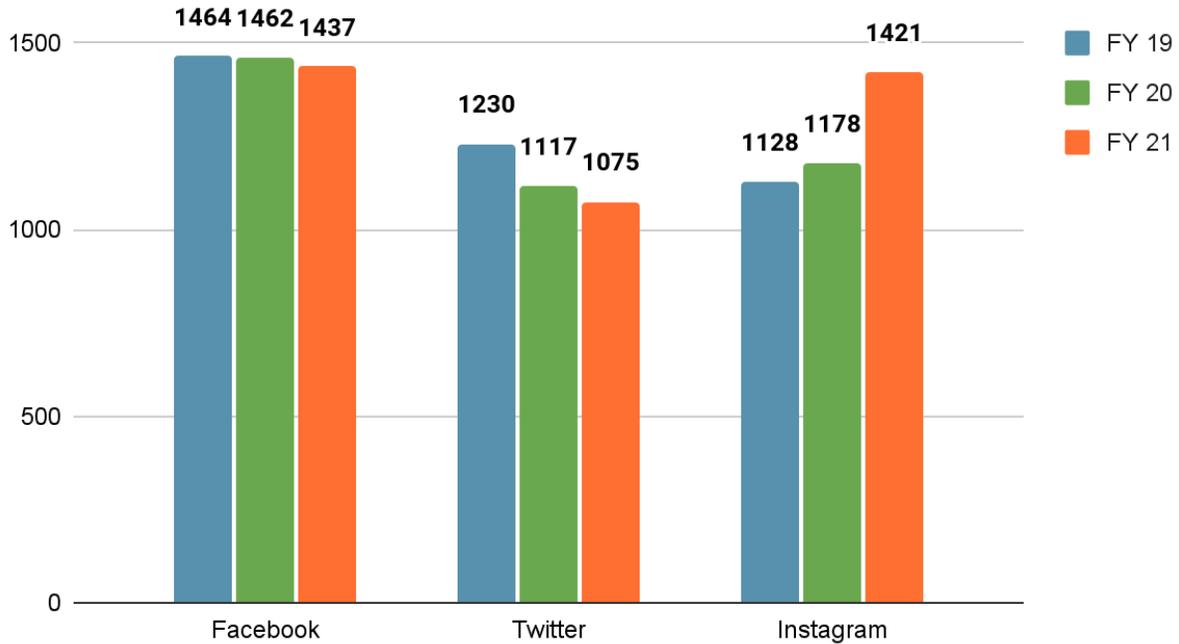
Service Events



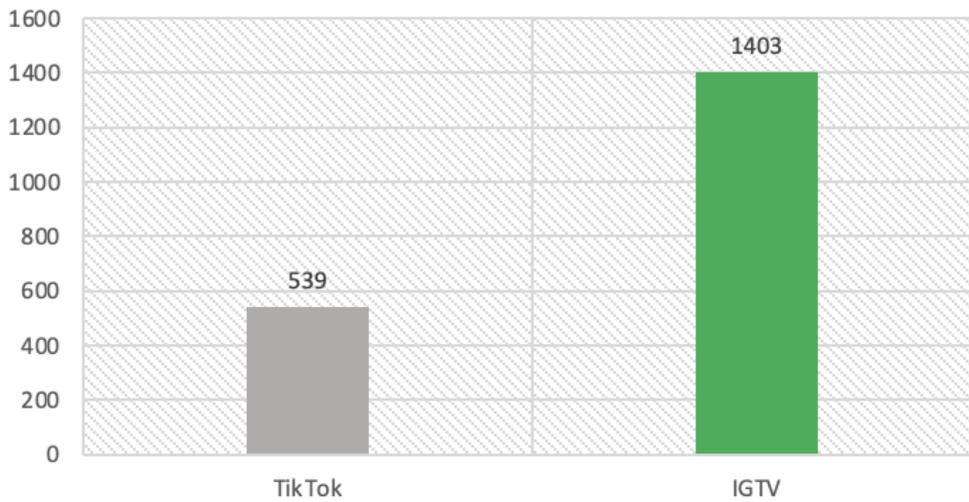
Growth of Social Media Pages:

MVP is currently active on Instagram, Twitter, and Tiktok/IGTV. We monitor the growth of followers on these social media pages to gauge how effectively our organization is reaching new students and promoting our events. As shown in the charts, we have had a stable amount of followers these past years and a significant increase in our Instagram users. During the 2021-2022 year, we plan to put emphasis on our social media and our usage. Our plans include giving spotlights to our various community partners and providing more creative accessibility between the board and the volunteers.

Social Media



2021 Additions:



Survey Assessments & Reflection:

Every service event hosted by MVP is followed by a site lead, who is an MVP board member that is responsible for organizing and managing volunteers during the event and facilitating a reflection. The post-event reflection consists of addressing the social issues that the event was focused on, challenging student perspectives, and asking students what they learned through their

volunteer experience. Each board member is trained in the reflection process prior to leading events.

MVP sends each volunteer a thank you email and a link to a survey within 24 hours of each event, so we can measure their overall experience. The responses are evaluated by MVP and are discussed during our board meetings to help us continually improve the student experience. From our survey, 93% of students responded that they were likely or extremely likely to volunteer with MVP again.

5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2021) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.

MVP did not have any budget or organizational changes during FY21.

6. *If your unit concluded FY21 with a Fund 3 addition to Fund Equity in excess of \$5,000, please describe the conditions which caused the addition and provide a line item identification of the budgetary source(s) of the addition (i.e. lapsed salary, conference travel, etc.).*

At the end of FY21, MVP had a fund equity of \$52,770. Due to COVID-19, we were unable to host many of our large-scale events including Adopt a Beach, Service Nights, Volunteer Fairs, and Rock the Block. When we were able to start going back to volunteering in-person with community partners, many of our partners were not in a position to accept volunteers due to safety concerns. Throughout the year, we had various empty positions and multiple students volunteering for their role leading to a large fund equity in the salary/wage/fringe line.

- Salary/Wage/Fringe: \$31,119
- Maintenance & Operation/Travel: \$21,651

7. Please list your 2022-2023 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) that you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.

1. Improve the Metropolitan Volunteer Program's interactions and communication with community partners
 - a. Action Step 1: Develop and distribute an assessment to community partners to identify areas of improvement for MVP (communication, scheduling, etc.)
 - b. Action Step 2: Identify new community partners to engage in service projects with each committee
 - c. Action Step 3: Evaluate the effectiveness of the community partner newsletter

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DSAES Partnerships 3: Create opportunities for our students by developing initiatives that support our neighboring communities.

2. Enhance volunteer experience and increase retention
 - a. Action Step 1: Evaluate existing signature programs (i.e. Volunteer Fair) and establish new signature programs to better meet the needs of students
 - b. Action Step 2: Develop a membership plan to incentivize volunteers to attend multiple events

UH Goal: Student Success: UH will have a student profile consistent with a nationally competitive public research university by creating an environment in which student success can be ensured.

DSAES Student Success 2: Expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive environments.

DSAES Student Success 5: Enrich the sense of connection, belonging, and shared UH identity among all students.

3. Enhance the brand of the Metropolitan Volunteer Program
 - a. Action Step 1: Create initiatives that make board members more relatable for volunteers (i.e. IGTV episodes highlighting life with MVP)

- b. Action Step 2: Create content on the website to “live” track the impact of the organization (number of volunteers, number of volunteer hours, etc.)
- c. Action Step 3: Develop and implement a marketing plan promoting MVP (i.e. tabling, digital presence, outreach to RSOs, etc.)

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DSAES Student Success 2: Expand diverse experiences on exploration and education while identifying and meeting the needs of our student population through supportive, inclusive environments.

8. Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2022 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5% in your total FY2022 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.

If MVP were to receive a 5% reduction (\$4470.75) in our total approved FY23 base Student Service Fee budget, we would be forced to cut our MVP Service Nights budget by nearly 60%. Service Nights are a monthly event allowing students to help create a variety of donations for the Houston Community. Service Nights are an important way MVP engages the UH student population and allows students the opportunity to remain active in the community while staying within UH campus as many students may have restrictions with leaving campus for in-person volunteering. In the past, MVP has made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to donate to the homeless population in the downtown area, created DIY blankets to donate to community partners during colder months, created Hygiene kits for the Women's Shelter, and more.

In addition, Service Nights are an opportunity for the UH community to engage in a volunteering event that highlights key social issues that directly impact the Houston community. With these events, we aim to bring awareness about the impacts of these social issues to our students in a fun and accessible way. Without our monthly Service Nights, our students would miss the opportunity to engage at a deeper, more meaningful level with one of our social issues and have an immediate, positive impact on the community.

9. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

MVP currently does not have any additional sources of funding available to the organization.

10. *Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.*

Various academic departments and organizations on campus include a volunteer component in their mission, but the Metropolitan Volunteer Program is the only student-led organization that provides service and volunteer opportunities to all students regardless of major, classification, or involvement with a specific organization. As an organization, we also serve as an outlet for local nonprofits to connect with students with the hope of recruiting them to continuously volunteer. Thus, we value both working with and giving back to the community outside of the events that MVP coordinates. Through our commitment to service, volunteerism, and awareness, MVP is a vital resource for both the University and the city of Houston. We create a community for students to feel welcome in giving back to their community and making a visible, positive impact.