

August 18, 2011

The Use of Volunteers in State Agencies on Aging and Disabilities

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Background

Engaging Volunteers in the Aging Network: A National Resource Center is a project funded by an Administration on Aging (AoA) grant to the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). This three-year project is designed to enhance the engagement of volunteers in the Aging Network, with an emphasis on increasing volunteer participation of the Baby Boom generation¹. In addition to AoA and n4a, the project partners include: the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD); the AARP Foundation; Senior Service America, Inc. (SSAI); the University of Michigan; and The Council on Certification for Volunteer Administration (CCVA). The National Council on Aging (NCOA) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) are also working on the project in a collaborative role.

The primary goal of the project is to develop a national volunteer resource center to provide technical assistance for organizations and agencies to establish AoA and the National Aging Network as leaders in civic engagement. An additional aim of the project is to facilitate enlistment of Baby Boomers in civic engagement to fill a service gap created by budget constraints and a growing number of older adults who seek assistance from the Aging Network.

Given the recent economic downturn, states are looking for ways to cut spending, while maintaining as many services as possible. Enlistment of volunteers, especially Boomers, in the delivery of Aging Network services represents an opportunity for states to continue serving older adults despite the declining budget, as the population of older adults steadily grows. Through assessment, collaboration and coordination of resources, project partners aim to develop a national resource center that will assist state and local organizations in utilizing volunteers to overcome economic barriers.

¹ The large cohort of people that make up the Baby Boom generation, or “Baby Boomers,” are currently ages 47-65, nearing or recently beginning retirement. The population of Baby Boomers is viewed by project partners as an important target for volunteer recruitment due to their numbers, professional skills and possible free time to devote to volunteerism.

In order to establish a baseline for the level of civic engagement in the Aging Network, NASUAD and n4a conducted both quantitative and qualitative assessments of current state and local programs, which rely on a volunteer workforce. The assessments drew information on volunteer program details such as funding sources; volunteer demographics and participation numbers; program management; screening; training; and the value programs place on their volunteer programs. The assessment results will help inform the partners on areas of focus throughout the development of a national resource center.

Methodology

The NASUAD assessment was performed in two parts: an online scan², and three follow-up conference calls with program directors. The online scan was sent to 204 state-level directors of four programs on March 2, 2011: 1) 51 directors of State Health Insurance Programs (SHIP); 2) 51 directors of Senior Medicare Patrol programs (SMP); 3) 51 directors of State Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman programs; and 4) 51 directors of Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC). In the first phase of the assessment, NASUAD's online scan was comprised of both 'core questions' (questions included both in NASUAD and n4a scans), and supplemental questions including in-depth state program-specific questions about current volunteer program details and techniques for recruitment and retention. The purpose of the assessment was to establish a baseline for the level of civic engagement in the programs reviewed, and to gain a broader understanding of how programs recruit, retain, coordinate, and utilize their volunteer base.

The State Long Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman program serves as an advocate and resource for older adults who reside in long-term care facilities such as nursing homes, assisted living and board and care homes. The Long Term Care Ombudsman volunteers, known as "Ombudsmen," help residents and their families understand and exercise their rights to quality of care and quality of life. The Ombudsman program advocates for residents at both the individual and systems levels by receiving, investigating and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of residents.

² See Appendix 2 for full NASUAD online scan

The program also promotes the development of resident and family councils, and informs governmental agencies, providers and the general public about issues and concerns impacting residents of long-term care facilities.

The NASUAD assessment aimed to capture only state-level programs, however many states also have similar volunteer programs at the local level which are generally administered by Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Details regarding local volunteer programs were captured through n4a's assessment of the AAAs. Eight states and the District of Columbia do not have Area Agencies on Aging: Alaska, Delaware, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Wyoming. For these states and the District of Columbia, the State Agencies on Aging and Disability function as both the state and local agency, and details regarding their volunteer programs are captured in a separate NASUAD assessment of State Agencies on Aging and Disability.

The second phase of the assessment was a series of three program-specific conference calls held with the state directors of the SHIP, SMP, and state LTC Ombudsman programs. The Ombudsman call was one hour in length and was held on April 4, 2011. Approximately 13 Ombudsman directors, one representative from the Administration on Aging, one representative from the Ombudsman Resource Center and three NASUAD staff members participated in the call. During the call, NASUAD presented program-specific findings from the online scan, and asked the Ombudsman directors follow-up questions to gain a more in-depth understanding of the individual program data collected in the online scan. NASUAD also elicited suggestions for the new national volunteer resource center.

Key Findings

Ombudsman responses in the scan differed from the overall responses in several ways. Ombudsman programs were the oldest: 65 percent of volunteer Ombudsman programs are over 10 years old, compared to 45 percent overall and Ombudsman programs also have the highest rate of Boomer volunteers. They have the lowest number of volunteer coordinators, both state and local. Statewide, 28 percent of Ombudsman directors reported having a volunteer coordinator, compared to 38 percent overall. Locally, 32 percent of Ombudsman directors reported having a volunteer coordinator, compared to 45 percent overall. Directors report higher

perception of benefits provided to their programs by Ombudsman volunteers when asked if volunteers help fulfill the mission of the program, allow them to offer more services, and increase visibility of the program within the community.

The conference call with Ombudsman directors elicited important information on Ombudsman programs and how they can be strengthened. In discussing recruitment, several directors noted that the best advertisements were articles on real-world volunteerism stories. One director said she has a monthly column in a local newspaper to discuss Ombudsman issues and to encourage people to become volunteers. Another director noted that current volunteers are the best recruiters, because they are extremely effective at educating others about the program through word of mouth.

The benefits and challenges associated with Boomer volunteers were also discussed. Directors reported that, Boomer volunteers often possess more professional skills, have higher energy levels, and are more diplomatic, proactive, and assertive than other generations of volunteers. They often have a greater desire than older generations to be recognized and to learn from their volunteer experience. One director reported that Boomer volunteers often tend to be more interested in promoting social justice and human rights, traits that make them especially well-suited for working as Ombudsmen. Because of their wealth of professional knowledge and experience, many Boomer volunteers try to work outside the Ombudsman job description; for example, retired doctors may try to diagnose residents rather than focusing on the traditional work of an Ombudsman. For all of the above reasons, directors reported that the participation of Boomers in volunteer programs presented new set of benefits and challenges. One director commented that all Boomers could not be considered within one group, given the large degree of variation among this cohort.

Many Ombudsman directors reported that their programs are facing severe staffing issues. Only 28 percent of directors reported having a statewide volunteer coordinator, and 32 percent have a coordinator at the local level. Because of this shortage of coordinators, Ombudsman directors have expanded the volunteer job descriptions beyond the traditional Ombudsman role. One director said her program uses long-term Ombudsmen as trainers and mentors for new volunteers.

Another director reported having volunteers advocate with legislators for more funding and support.

Because of the demands of the Ombudsman program, all volunteers must participate in a rigorous training process before they can volunteer. This training is time-consuming and difficult for many Ombudsman programs to implement. Directors reported that online training would be a good resource for many possible volunteers, especially in rural areas, though it may also be most useful for Boomer volunteers who are generally more comfortable with computers and the internet than older generations. They reported that the development and implementation of online training could save both administrative and staff time and better prepare volunteers.

Ombudsman programs have their own resource center, the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center. This center provides support to Ombudsman programs throughout the country. However, directors on the conference call had ideas for how the new national volunteer resource center could further assist their programs. Several Ombudsman directors suggested help with advertising from the national resource center including a national campaign for volunteering in the aging network, and/or a national campaign aimed at recruiting Boomers. This large-scale advertising effort would provide a cohesive national message, prevent duplication of effort throughout state and local organizations, and allow SHIPs to focus on other programmatic elements. Though the Ombudsman resource center provides information on best practices and other ideas within the Ombudsman program, one director suggested a library of best practices on a range of practices from different national volunteer programs would help broaden their range of ideas and perspectives. Another director discussed the use of databases for improving recruitment of volunteers. Though there are currently several different recruitment databases, the national resource center could compile a list of the most comprehensive state and national databases, allowing Ombudsman programs to recruit more successfully by accessing a broader base of volunteers.

Conclusions

Ombudsman programs have faced serious budgetary and staffing issues related to the recent economic downturn. It has affected their volunteer base, because many possible volunteers are unable to retire as early as they would have otherwise and

other volunteers are still searching for employment, their clients who are facing more financial hardship, as well as the programs themselves that are facing budget and staffing cuts, despite increasing demand. The strength of the Ombudsman program is its base of trained, dedicated volunteers who use their training to help protect those in need. Ombudsman programs are well-supported by the National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center, however directors identified ways in which the program could be further supported by a new national volunteer resource center. Some of their suggestions included a national volunteer advertising campaign, a library of best practices, assistance with recruitment, a broadened scope of information on national volunteer databases, and help with online training.

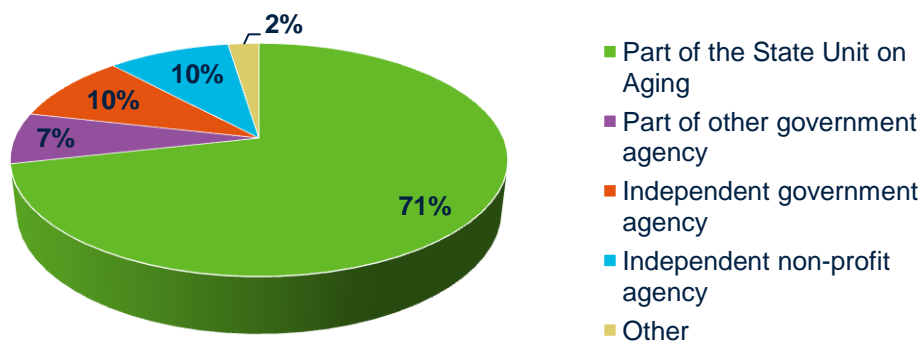
Appendix 1: Aggregate Ombudsman Program Results

Participating States

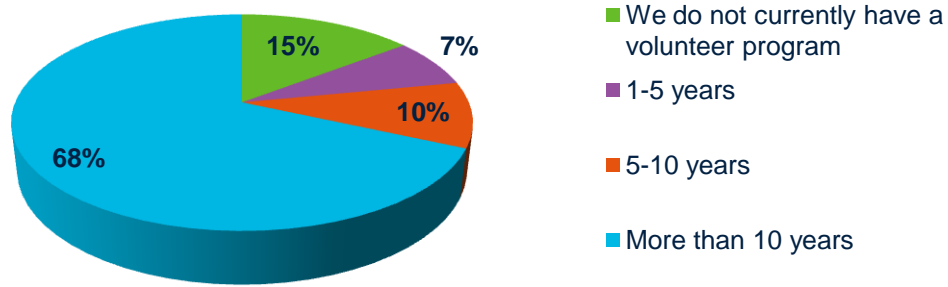
Total Responses: 42

Alabama	Idaho	Missouri	South Carolina
Alaska	Illinois	Nebraska	South Dakota
Arizona	Indiana	Nevada	Tennessee
Arkansas	Kansas	New Hampshire	Texas
California	Kentucky	New Jersey	Utah
Colorado	Louisiana	New Mexico	Washington
Connecticut	Maryland	New York	West Virginia
Delaware	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Wisconsin
Florida	Michigan	Ohio	Wyoming
Georgia	Minnesota	Oregon	
Hawaii	Mississippi	Rhode Island	

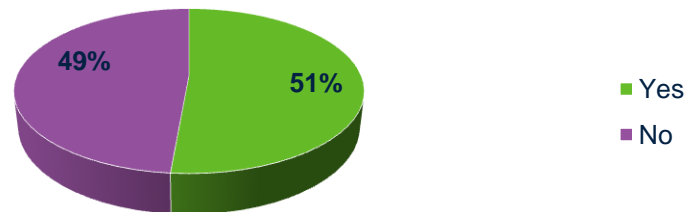
Type of Agency Housing Ombudsman Program



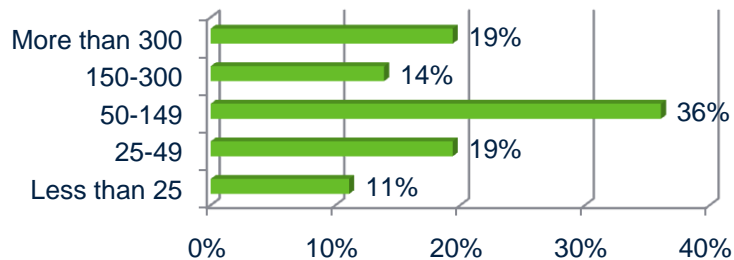
How long has your state had a volunteer Ombudsman program?



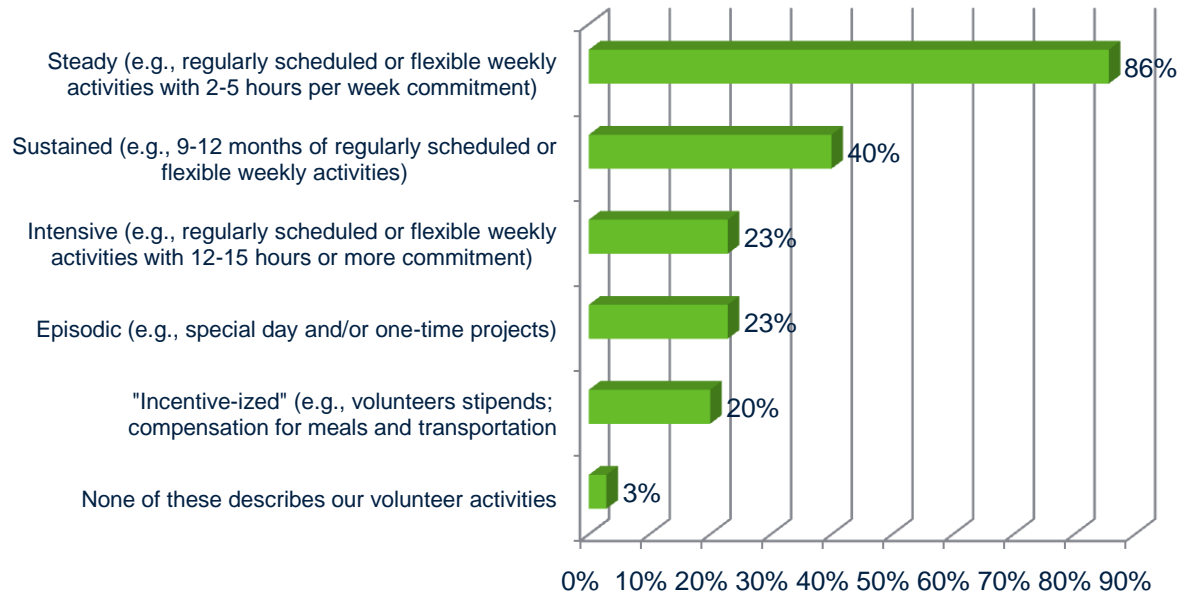
Is your state's volunteer program required by state or federal law?



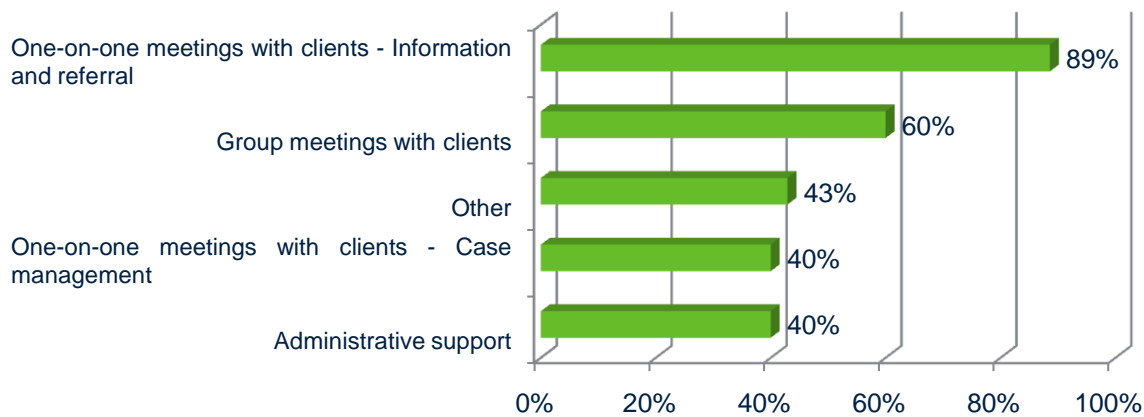
How many active volunteers does your organization currently have?



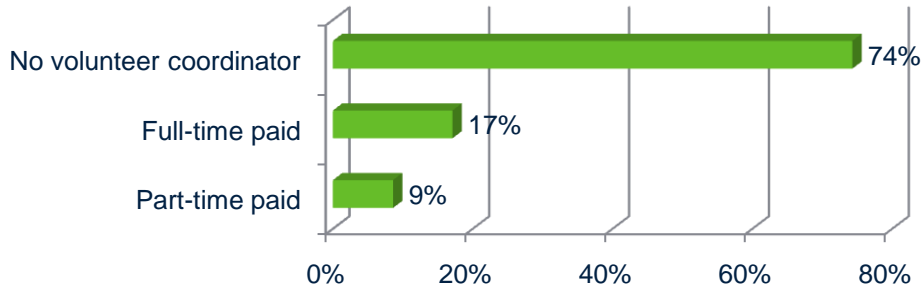
Which among the following choices represent volunteer opportunities within your organization? (Check all that apply.)



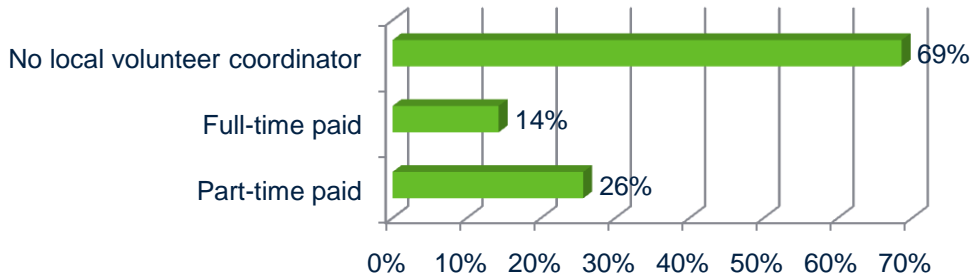
In what tasks do your volunteers in your organization (or program) participate?



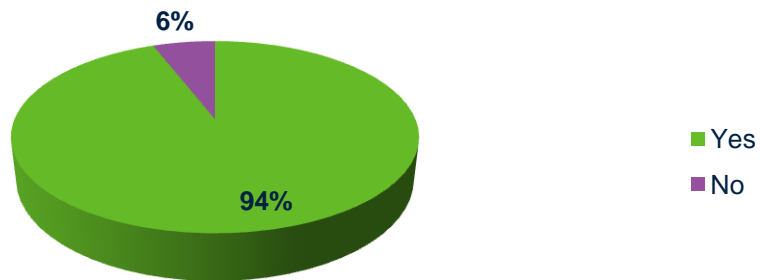
Does your organization have a statewide volunteer coordinator?



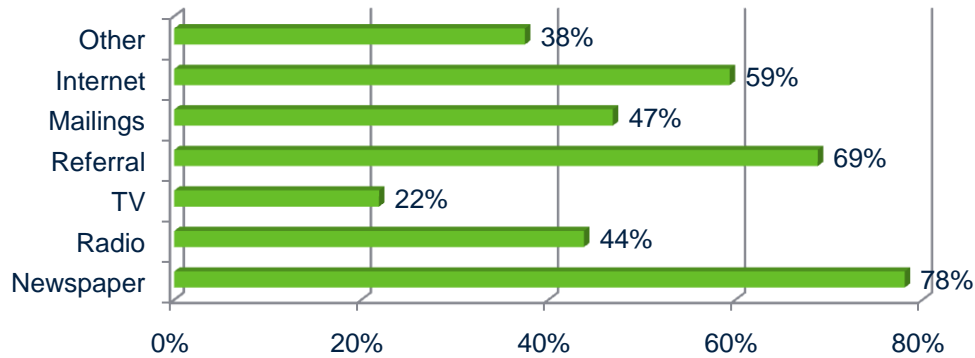
Does your organization have a local volunteer coordinator?



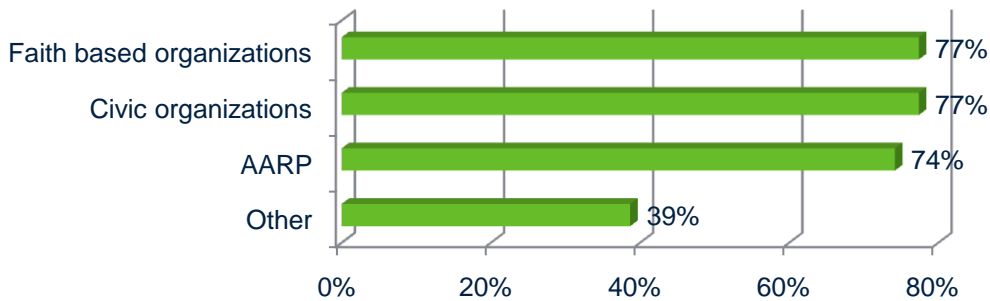
Does your organization advertise to recruit new volunteers?



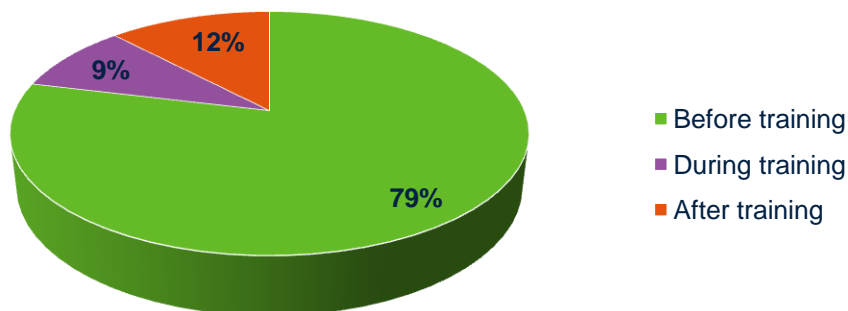
What medium do you use to advertise? (Check all that apply)



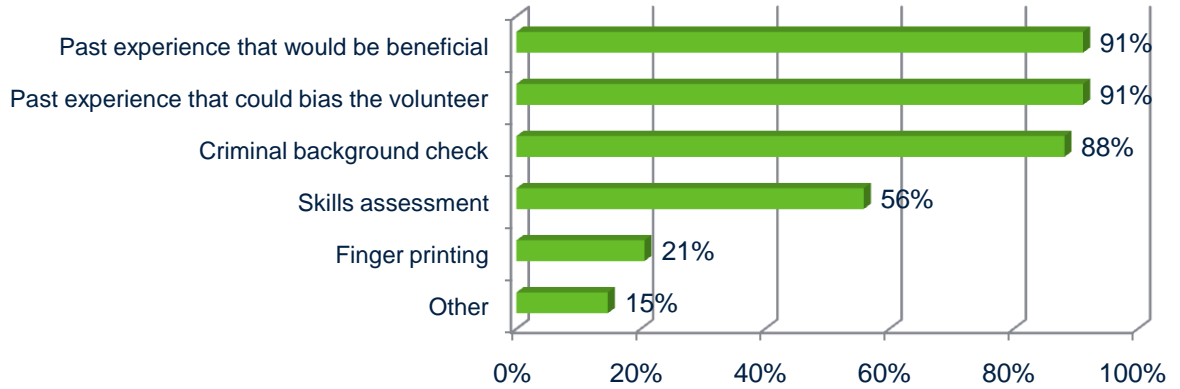
What other organizations does your organization use to recruit new volunteers? (Check all that apply)



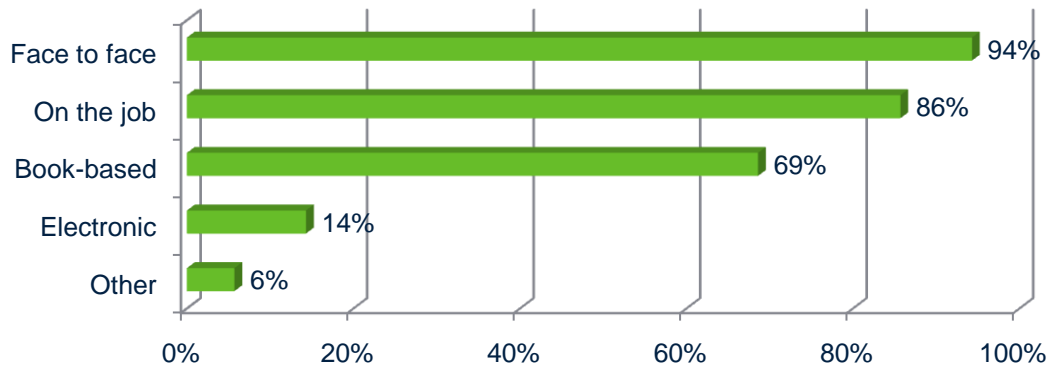
When does your organization screen potential volunteers?



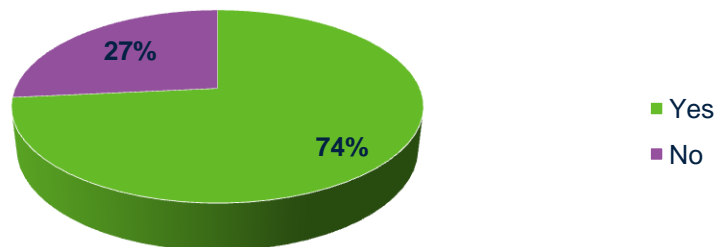
For what does your organization screen volunteers?



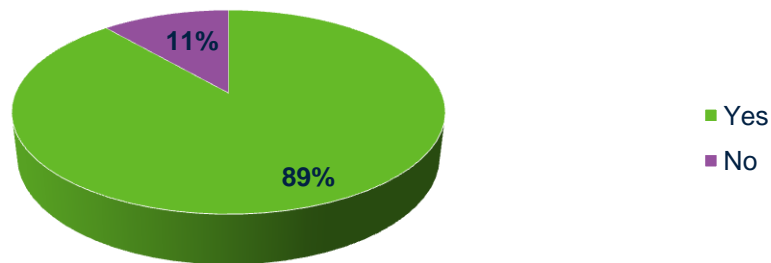
What kind of training does your organization provide?



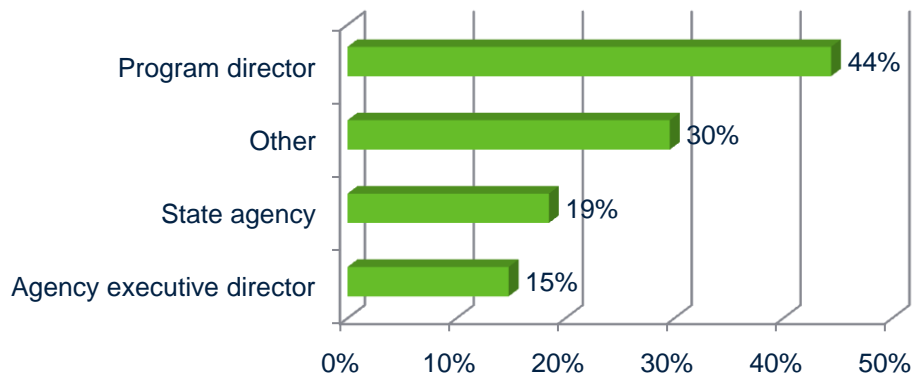
Is there a mentorship component of your organization's training program?



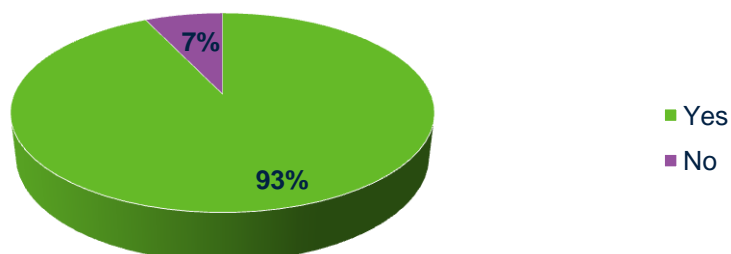
Does your organization certify volunteers after training is complete?



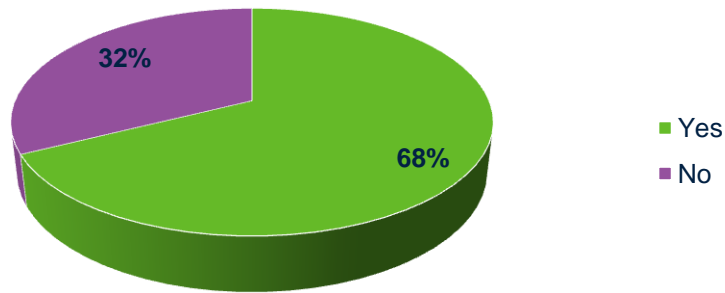
Who certifies your organization's volunteers?



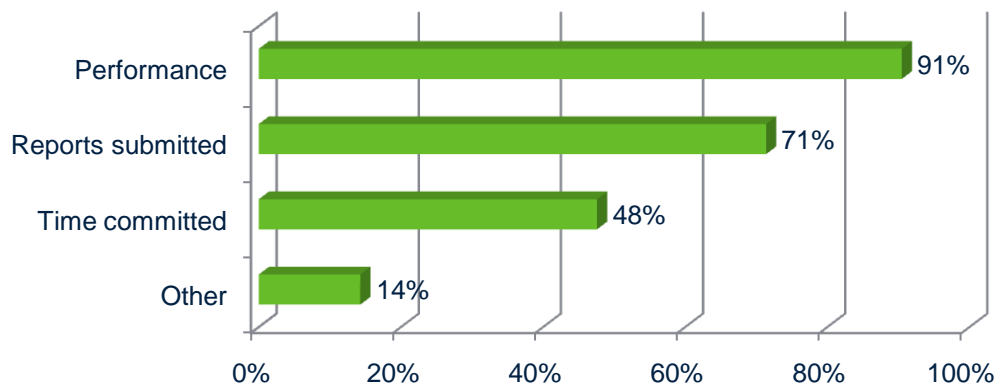
Can volunteers be de-certified if they are no longer meeting the standards of certification?



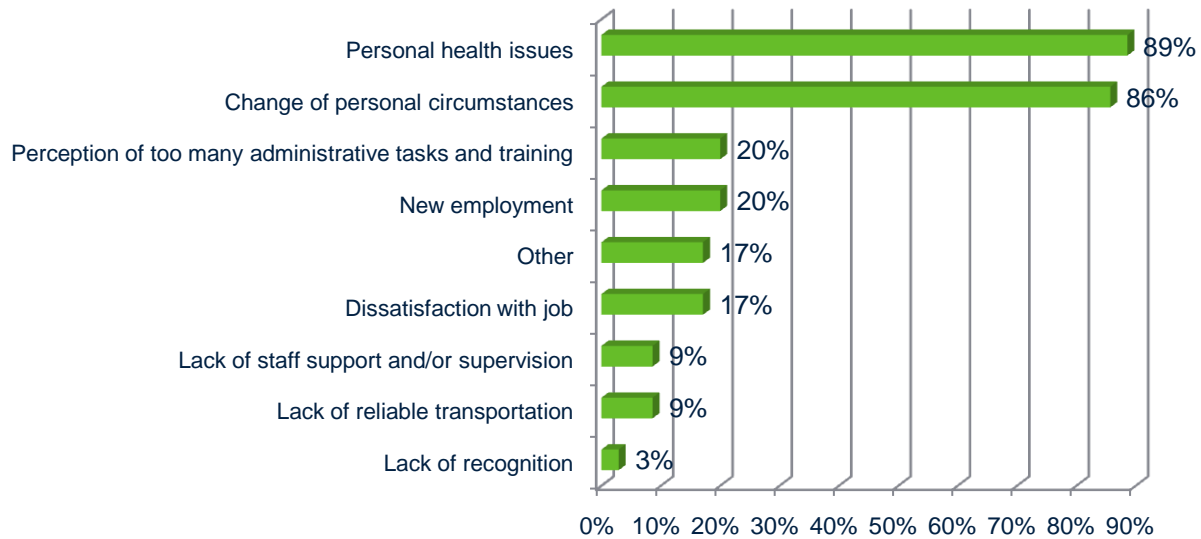
Do you evaluate your volunteers?



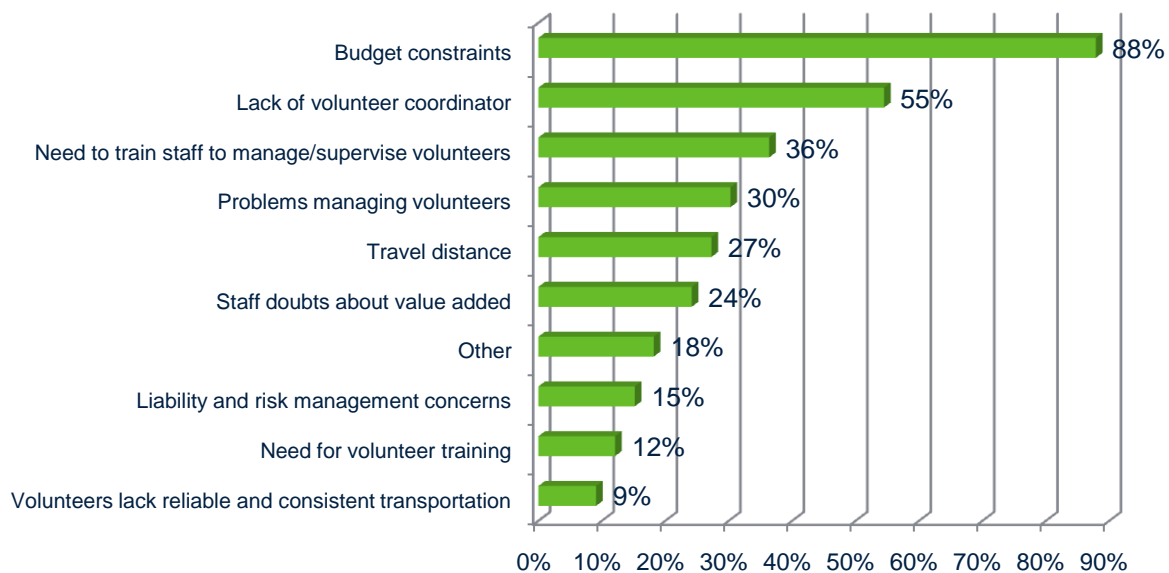
On what are volunteers within your organization evaluated?



What are the top reasons why volunteers leave your program?
(Check all that apply)



Which of the following barriers, if any, prevent your organization from developing service opportunities and roles for older adult volunteers? (Check all that apply)



Appendix 2: NASUAD Civic Engagement Environmental Scan

1.) Your organizational level (select the best answer):

- Administrator/executive level
- Program director
- Volunteer coordinator

2.) Your name:

3.) Select your program

- Ombudsman
- SHIP
- SMP
- ADRC
- Other (Please describe)

4.) Your state

5.) Type of agency

- Part of the State Unit on Aging
- Part of other government agency
- Independent government agency
- Independent non-profit agency
- Other (Please explain)

6.) How long have you had a volunteer program?

- We do not currently have a volunteer program
(If you do not have a volunteer program, please stop here.)
- Less than 6 months
- 6 months – 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

7.) Is your volunteer program required by state or federal law?

- Yes
- No

8.) What is the funding source for your volunteer coordinator?

9.) What funding is available for your program?

10.) What agency funds your volunteer program?

11.) How many active volunteers does your organization currently have? *

- Less than 25
- 25-49
- 50-149
- 150-300
- More than 300
- We have no volunteers in our organization

12.) Approximately, what percentage of your volunteers fall into each of the following age categories? (Percentages must equal 100%) *

18-39 years of age:

40-54 years of age:

55-64 years of age:

65-74 years of age:

75+ years of age:

13.) Since Baby Boomers overlap two of the above categories, can you estimate what percentage of your volunteers are between the ages of 47 and 65?*

14.) What percentage of your volunteers are male and female?

Male:

Female:

15.) Which among the following represent your volunteer opportunities? (Check all that apply.)*

- Episodic (e.g., special day and/or one-time projects)
- Steady (e.g., regularly scheduled or flexible weekly activities with 2-5 hours per week commitment)
- Intensive (e.g., regularly scheduled or flexible weekly activities with 12-15 hours or more commitment)
- Sustained (e.g., 9-12 months of regularly scheduled or flexible weekly activities)
- "Incentive-ized" (e.g., volunteers stipends; compensation for meals and transportation)
- None of these describes our volunteer activities

16.) In what tasks do your volunteers participate?

- Administrative support
-

* Part of the core questions developed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

- One on one meetings with clients - Information and referral
- One on one meetings with clients - Case management
- Group meetings with clients
- Other (Please Describe)

17.) Does your organization have a statewide volunteer coordinator?*

- Part-time unpaid
- Full-time unpaid
- Part-time paid
- Full-time paid
- No statewide volunteer coordinator

If part-time, what percentage of their time is spent as volunteer coordinator?

18.) Does your organization have a local volunteer coordinator?*

- Part-time unpaid
- Full-time unpaid
- Part-time paid
- Full-time paid
- No local volunteer coordinator

If part-time, what percentage of their time is spent as volunteer coordinator?

19.) We are interested in finding out about the infrastructure you provide or are thinking about providing for your volunteers. Please read the following ten statements and tell us to what degree the policy/practice has or has not been implemented.*

	Not implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
a.) Regular supervision and communication with volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.) Liability coverage or insurance protection for volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Part of the core questions developed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

c.) Regular collection of information on volunteer hours or numbers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d.) Screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.) Written policies and job descriptions for volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f.) Recognition activities such as award ceremonies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g.) Annual measurements of impact/value of volunteer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h.) Training and professional development for volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i.) Training for paid staff in working with volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j.) Resource allocation to support volunteer programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20.) To what degree do your older adult (60+) volunteers... *

	Not at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Very much so (5)
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* Part of the core questions developed by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

...help you fulfill your mission and meet your goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...allow you to offer services you could not otherwise provide or fill gaps in service you already provide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...save staff time and allow your staff to perform other duties?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...help you reduce the costs of providing services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...increase visibility, build community understanding, and strengthen outreach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...have the necessary experience and training to participate on your leadership teams, lead programs, and spearhead new initiatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21.) Do you advertise to recruit new volunteers?

- Yes
- No

22.) What medium do you use to advertise? (Check all that apply)

- Newspaper
- Radio
- TV
- Referral
- Mailings
- Internet
- Other (Please explain)

23.) What other organizations do you use to recruit new volunteers? (Check all that apply)

- AARP
- Civic organizations
- Faith based organizations
- Other (Please explain)

24.) When do you screen potential volunteers?

- We do not screen
- Before training
- During training
- After training (Please describe)

25.) For what do you screen?

- Past experience that could bias the volunteer
- Past experience that would be beneficial
- Skills assessment
- Criminal background check
- Finger printing
- Other (Please explain)

26.) What kind of training do you provide?

- Face to face
- Electronic
- Book-based
- On the job
- Other
- Combination (Please describe)

27.) How many hours of training are required?

28.) Is there a mentorship component of your training program?

- Yes
- No

29.) Do you certify volunteers after training is complete?

- Yes
- No

If so, who certifies volunteers?

- Agency executive director
- Program director
- State agency
- Governor's office
- Other (Please explain)

Can volunteers be de-certified if they are no longer meeting the standards of certification?

- Yes
- No

30.) Do you evaluate your volunteers?

- Yes
- No

If so, on what are your volunteers evaluated?

- Performance
- Time committed
- Reports submitted
- Other (Please explain)

31.) Do volunteers submit reports?

- Yes
- No

If yes, are the volunteer reports the same as paid employee reports?

- Yes
- No

32.) What are the top three reasons why volunteers leave your program?

- Personal health issues
- Lack of reliable transportation
- Change of personal circumstances
- Lack of staff support and/or supervision
- Dissatisfaction with job
- Lack of training
- Lack of recognition
- New employment
- Perception of too many administrative tasks and training
- Other (Please explain)

33.) Which of the following barriers, if any, prevent your organization from developing service opportunities and roles for older adult volunteers? (Check all that apply.)

- Lack of volunteer coordinator
- Budget constraints
- Staff doubts about value added
- Need to train staff to manage/supervise volunteers
- Need for volunteer training
- Problems managing volunteers
- Liability and risk management concerns
- Volunteers lack reliable and consistent transportation
- Travel distance
- Other (Please specify)

34.) Does your agency have a cost analysis of volunteer work?

- Yes
- No

If yes, would you share your cost analysis model as an example with other organizations?

Yes

No

35.) What plans, if any, do you have to add to your volunteer base in order to capitalize on the assets and opportunities of the aging of the Boomers?

36.) How can the National Resource Center be helpful to you?



National Association of States

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