



CASE STUDY

Volunteer Generation Fund Evaluation: Volunteer Florida



BUNDLED EVALUATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

The Florida state service commission, Volunteer Florida, participated in the AmeriCorps Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) evaluation through several different phases, including focus groups/interviews with commission staff, program implementers, program beneficiaries, and a program beneficiaries survey.^{1,2} In addition to the evaluation data collection activities noted, the following case study brief incorporates additional data sources from VGF grant applications and progress reports, longitudinal data from the AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, Volunteer Florida's 3-year VGF evaluation, and the Nature of Volunteerism in Florida survey data. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of each of the data sources that were used to inform the following brief.

¹ The VGF grantee, Volunteer Florida, also served as the primary program implementer for VGF programming and services.

² For the Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey, the state service commission had a 20 percent response rate with a total of five individual respondents representing five unique organizations. It is important to note that due to the small sample size of respondents who participated in the survey, findings should be considered with caution.

EXHIBIT 1.—Overview of data sources

| Data Source | Participant Count | Date Collected |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Grant Application | – | May 2020 |
| Fiscal Year (FY)2021 Volunteer Generation Fund Progress Report | – | December 2021 |
| AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplements | – | September 2017, 2019, and 2021 |
| Commission Focus Group – Volunteer Florida | 2 | January 2022 |
| Program Implementer Focus Group – Volunteer Florida | 2 | September 2022 |
| Beneficiaries Focus Group – Subgrantee Group One | 3 | September 2022 |
| Beneficiaries Focus Group – Subgrantee Group Two | 1 | September 2022 |
| Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey | 5 | January 2023 |
| Final Commission Focus Group – Volunteer Florida | 1 | June 2023 |
| Additional data and evaluation documentation provided by Volunteer Florida | – | June 2023 |

Overview of Grant Structure and Goals

Volunteer Florida used their VGF grant to support 24 subgrantees in increasing their volunteer management capacity. Through VGF, Volunteer Florida set out to generate 9,600 skills-based volunteers and contribute 72,000 hours of service—with a focus on rural areas. Volunteer Florida provided statewide training and technical assistance to the subgrantees. As noted in their grant application, Volunteer Florida used the Volunteering Reinvented: Human Capital Solutions for the Nonprofit Sector framework.³

This plan reflects Volunteer Florida’s four primary goals in their State Service Plan:

- 1. Strengthen Florida's Communities:** “We will utilize resources and work with our partners and communities to focus on volunteerism and national service where the need is the greatest.”
- 2. Increase Volunteerism and Promote National Service through Strategic Partnerships:** “We will facilitate the development of partnerships that will provide additional volunteer opportunities and inspire more Floridians to engage in national service.”
- 3. Connect Floridians to Volunteer/National Service Opportunities:** “We will facilitate connections to opportunities for all Floridians to serve.”
- 4. Increase Florida’s Disaster Resiliency:** “We seek to ensure that all Florida’s counties are better equipped to utilize volunteers and donations in a disaster.”

A Note on Program Beneficiaries

In the context of this case study, “program beneficiaries” include volunteer organization subgrantees who participated in Volunteer Florida’s initiatives, including volunteer management training and webinars, technical assistance, and site visits.

³ For additional information on this framework, please visit [Volunteering Reinvented: Human Capital Solutions for the Nonprofit Sector](#).

Volunteer Florida’s plan calls particular attention to skills-based volunteers. In their grant application, they cite U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics showing unemployment in their state at 3.6 percent, as well as statistics from the Corporation for National and Community Service showing that volunteerism is associated with a 27 percent increase in the odds of finding employment.

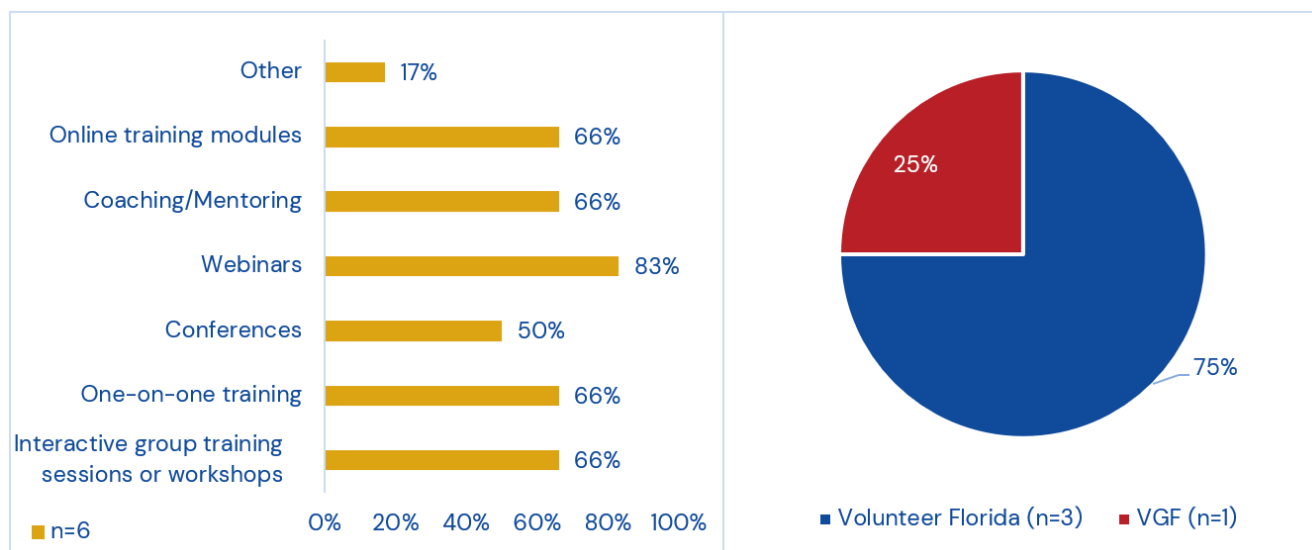
Subgrantees apply for funding every year and can do so for up to 3 years. Subgrantees are selected from across the state, with at least one selected from each of Florida’s seven emergency management regions. Priority consideration is given to organizations that primarily serve rural communities and increase economic opportunities for communities by preparing people for the workforce. Subgrantees participate in one 3-day, in-person volunteer management training; 5–6 annual webinars/meetings; technical assistance; and site visits from Volunteer Florida. Volunteer Florida staff noted that subgrantee organizations target three or more of the eight volunteer management practices to increase volunteer management through capacity building services.⁴

Volunteering has been connected as a pathway to employment, if volunteers are gaining or updating skills that are needed in the workplace through their volunteer activities, those skills may make them more attractive to and productive for employers, and increase their chances of becoming employed.

Volunteer Florida’s
VGF Grant Application

Of the subgrantee training participants who participated in a January 2023 survey administered by ICF, the most frequently reported volunteer training and capacity building activities were interactive group training sessions or workshops and webinars, with the majority (75 percent) of reported training provided by Volunteer Florida. Exhibit 2 provides additional details on the types of activities respondents noted were available to their organization through VGF grant activities.

EXHIBIT 2.—Volunteer training and capacity building activities and providers



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.
 Note: Response percentages will not add up to 100 percent because respondents were able to select multiple responses.

⁴ Eight volunteer management practices included Market Research and Community Needs Assessments; Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact; Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers; Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers; Orienting and Training Volunteers; Ongoing Supervision and Management; Recognition and Volunteer Development; and Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process.

The 3-day in-person training consists of 10 sessions, covering the same 8 volunteer management best practices. Subgrantees also learn how to engage and track skills-based volunteers. Subgrantees who attend these trainings tend to be new to volunteer management in general.

Volunteer Florida additionally hosts five to six virtual meetings per year for subgrantees. These meetings each cover one of the above volunteer management practices and offer subgrantees a chance to connect with one another and share knowledge.

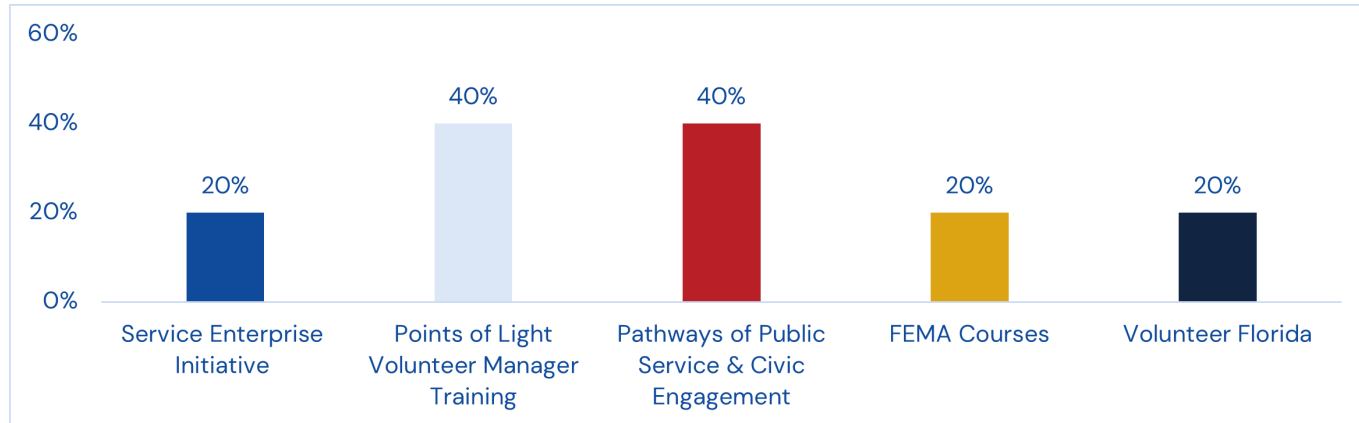
Subgrantees are also provided with technical assistance opportunities from the commission. Topics have included navigating background checks, questions about reports to the commission, exploring expectations for reimbursements, and more. One-on-one technical assistance delivery is most frequently conducted by phone, followed by email for follow-ups.

Volunteer Florida visits each subgrantee at least once per 3-year grant cycle, usually in the first year as grantees need the most help at this time. Volunteer Florida collects data on the three volunteer management practices each organization selected as their personal priority, performs a fiscal evaluation and background checks, observes volunteer activities, followed by writing a report and discussing the visit with each grantee.

At the time of ICF's fall 2022 site visits, Volunteer Florida was also within its first year as a Service Enterprise Hub—the only such hub within the state. No Service Enterprise cohort participants were interviewed by ICF and all information about training curricula cited in this case study refers to Volunteer Florida's other training curricula.

In January 2023, VGF training participants participated in a Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey. As seen in exhibit 3, survey respondents reported a variety of training curricula.

EXHIBIT 3.—Types of curriculum used (n=5)

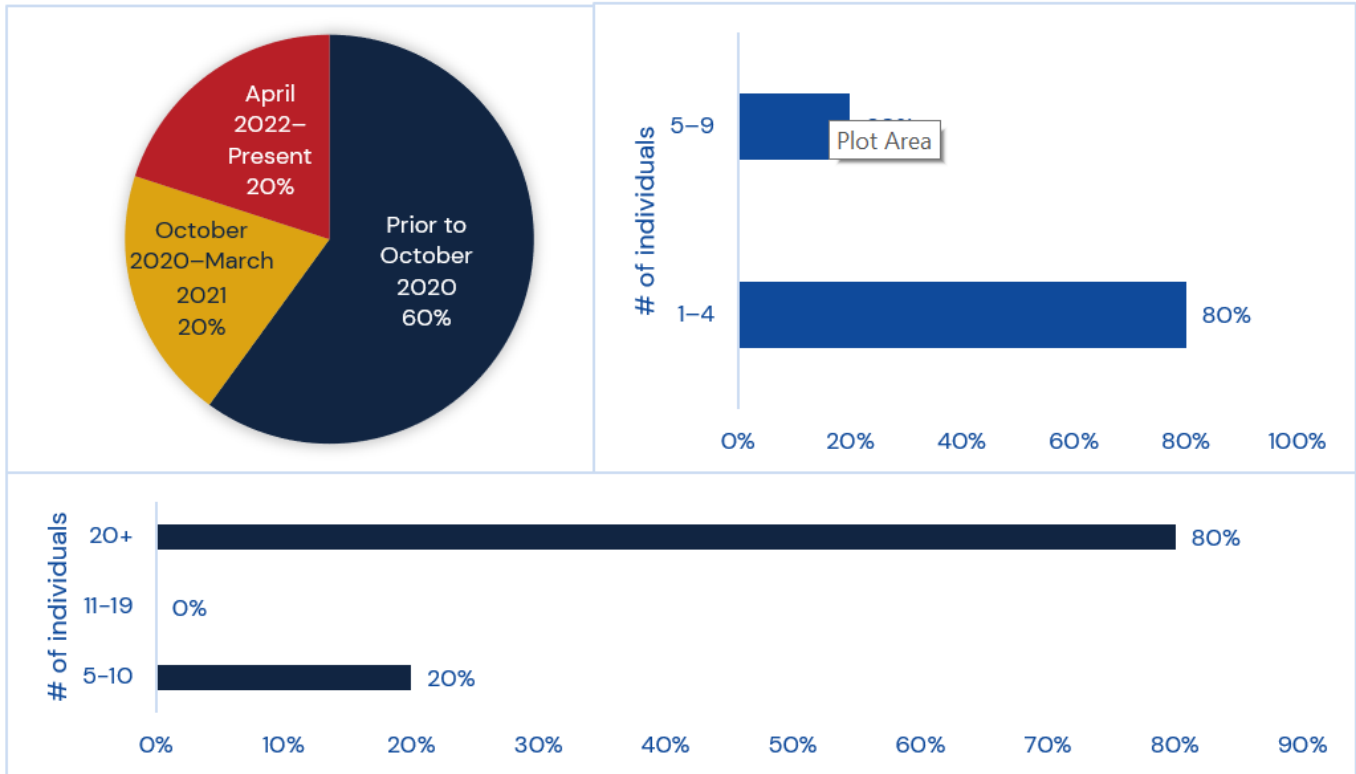


Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.

Note: Response percentages will not add up to 100 percent because respondents were able to select multiple responses.

The time in which survey respondents reported first participating in a training varied: 60 percent of respondents noted their organization first participated prior to October 2020, while 20 percent noted they did not first participate until more recently (April 2022–Present). Since October 2020, the majority (80 percent) of survey respondents noted that 1–4 individuals from their organization participated in a training or capacity building activity through VGF and 20 percent noted 5–9 individuals participated. A majority (80 percent) of respondents participated in 20 or more volunteer management hours. Exhibit 4 provides an overview of the time frame in which participating organizations reported they first participated in training and the range of individuals who participated.

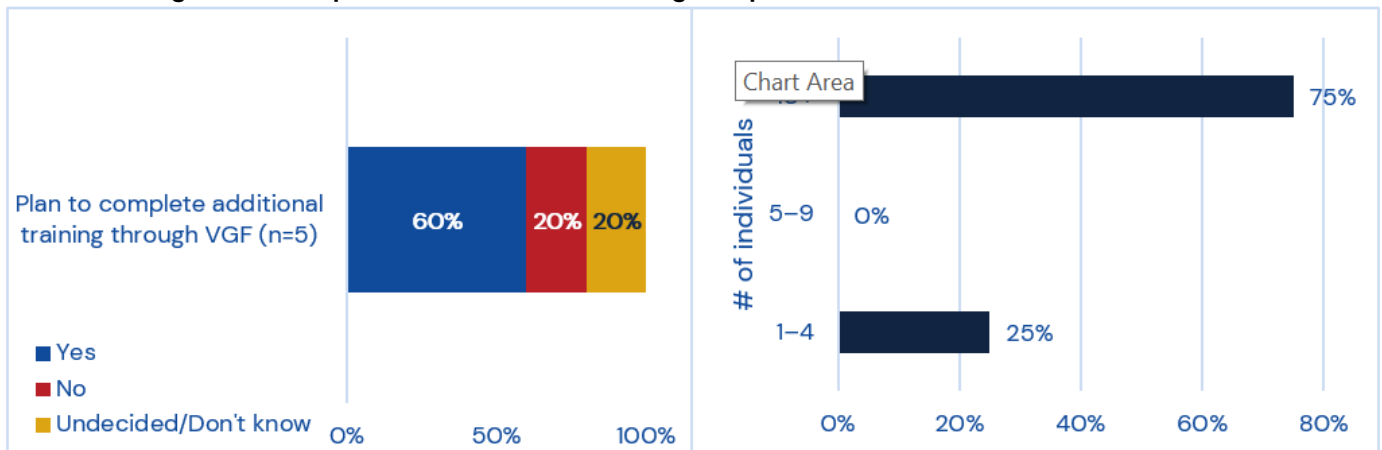
EXHIBIT 4.—Organization’s participation time frame, range, and number of hours (n=5)



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.

Survey respondents were also asked to report on their organization’s plans for future training. Exhibit 5 reports the percentage of respondents who reported they intended to complete additional training through VGF, with 60 percent noting Yes, 20 percent noting No, and 20 percent noting they were undecided. Three-quarters of survey respondents indicated they planned to complete 10–plus additional training hours.

EXHIBIT 5.—Organizational plans for additional training and planned hours



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.

Recent Volunteerism Trends in Florida and Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the 2021 AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, more than 2.8 million residents volunteered through an organization, contributing \$4.9 billion in economic value. In 2021, fewer than one-fifth (16 percent) of residents formally volunteered through an organization, which was 7 percentage points lower than the 2021 national rate (23 percent), and an 8-percentage point decrease compared to Florida's rate in 2019, before the onset of the pandemic. Alternatively, for informal volunteering, more than two-fifths (45 percent) of residents noted they helped others by exchanging favors with their neighbors in 2021, which was a 2-percentage point decline compared to the pre-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-rate (47 percent).

Additionally, Volunteer Florida commissioned the University of North Florida to conduct a large survey to assess volunteer engagement perspectives among Floridians.⁵ The survey sought to understand what motivated and prevented Floridians from volunteering, where and how often residents were currently volunteering, and the effect the COVID-19 pandemic had on residents' willingness and capacity to volunteer. Survey responses were collected from 2,077 respondents. Findings indicate that over half (52 percent) of residents volunteered weekly for at least a quarter of the year or more and 59 percent of residents reported helping their neighbors at least once a month—which are notably higher rates than the results from the 2021 AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement. Floridians primarily reported volunteering in religious organizations (47 percent) and social or community service organizations (37 percent) and noted most frequently that they joined organizations due to their family or friends (45 percent). Lastly, the survey results demonstrated that during the pandemic, residents made donations to charitable or nonprofit organizations (36 percent) and helped run errands, get groceries, or provide free childcare for others (34 percent) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants in the VGF site visits also shared their perspectives on the impacts of the pandemic on volunteerism. One subgrantee noted that their program had recruited fewer volunteers after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, they also found that the volunteers who remained seemed to increase the amount they worked, including participating in more complex and demanding tasks.

Regarding training related to COVID-19, Volunteer Florida reported not providing much specific training to respond to the pandemic. As an emergency support organization for the State of Florida, they played a role in directly addressing the crisis by coordinating volunteers to provide support and gathering donations.

Volunteer organizations themselves reported responding to COVID-19 in different ways. One organization, which historically used volunteers in-person in a medical setting, had to pivot away from that due to safety concerns. Another organization, by contrast, could not afford to reduce their use of volunteers and therefore stop providing services, as they were the only Humane Society in the area; they instead focused more on retaining current volunteers and being as transparent as possible with those volunteers. They also took the chance to mature their workforce development programs after the pandemic created staffing issues. Now they have an internship program for high school students of color and one for veterans.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Volunteer Florida did not provide any specific training on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), though they did report highlighting diversity within their portfolio through a series of peer sharing webinars.

⁵ For more information, please reference [The Nature of Volunteerism in Florida](#) report.

Program beneficiaries did not generally report a specific focus on recruiting diverse volunteers. One organization found their volunteers to already be diverse, while others prioritized their recruitment through specific partnerships with nonprofits or former volunteer service recipients. As previously noted, one program used the additional time available to them during the pandemic to grow workforce development programs, one of which was an internship program for high school students of color.

Strategies Used and/or Learned

Volunteer Florida reported the greatest needs of their beneficiaries to be capacity building, flexible funding, more volunteers, and infrastructure. In a macro sense, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the priorities of organizations back and forth; within the grant period, volunteer organizations adjusted to social-distanced and virtual volunteering, followed by a reversal back to in-person volunteering.

Across survey respondents, there was a wide variation in the types of practices respondents noted receiving training on through the VGF grant. The most frequently reported training practices—reported by all respondents—included measuring outcomes and evaluating the process, recognition and volunteer development, recruiting and marketing to prospective volunteers, and strategic planning to maximize volunteer impact. Exhibit 6 provides additional details on the types of practices reported by respondents.

EXHIBIT 6.—Volunteer management practices learned about in trainings (n=4)



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023.

Volunteer organizations participating in ICF's site visits elaborated further on strategies learned to increase volunteer recruitment and retention, as described below.

Reducing barriers to entry for volunteers. Volunteer organizations learned to reduce the time and effort for volunteers before they began volunteering, such as reducing complicated onboarding tasks. One volunteer manager discovered that their initial generic onboarding process would become redundant or incorrect after volunteers moved to begin working with specific staff members, so they streamlined that initial training considerably.

Being open to new types of volunteers or using volunteers in new ways. Volunteer organizations reported learning how to increase the number of volunteers they could recruit by being open to recruiting volunteers from groups they did not typically recruit from. For example, multiple organizations found they had assumed they could not use older volunteers for tasks that required computers, but upon further investigation, this was not actually the case.

Aligning volunteers to their preferred tasks. Volunteer organizations learned to reallocate volunteers who were not able to serve in certain roles to other tasks, including ones they had not previously used volunteers to complete. One recipient noted how “[not] all volunteers fall into one role, but you can also utilize them in other roles if maybe that role isn’t right for them ... from the conversations we realize—‘Hey, this might not be the right fit.’ But what can we find and identify is the right fit?” Volunteer organizations also learned to consult their staff to identify new roles to create for volunteers. These strategies increased retention as volunteers were participating in tasks they felt suited for or enjoyed.

Leveraging existing volunteers. Multiple participants from volunteer organizations cited using their existing volunteer forces in ways that increased both recruitment and retention rates, usually by giving them more responsibility. Recruitment strategies included encouraging existing volunteers to recruit their friends and families as volunteers. Long-term volunteers were also given new roles within organizations, including training, leading, and coaching new volunteers, which increased buy-in and retention for those volunteers who held more responsibilities as well as reducing work that would otherwise be performed by paid staff. “Volunteers have a general want to learn and help,” noted one participant, adding, “Out of that help we can teach them other things that will keep them on. The more they’re learning, the more they want to stay around and continue to be a part of the program.”

Volunteer appreciation: Volunteer organization participants recalled being encouraged to show appreciation for their volunteers and sharing how useful they were. They recalled learning to show appreciation for volunteers after extended periods, such as after 30 days or a year of volunteering as well as immediately when they began.

Not getting discouraged: Volunteer organization participants said that when they connected with other volunteer managers, they discovered that their organizations were not the only ones having trouble recruiting and retaining volunteers during the pandemic, as cited by one participant: “The realization that that happens everywhere not just here. And it’s just the nature of volunteers. Because you know they are (volunteering) free of charge, but it does help us and benefits us a lot. But sometimes people choose other causes they would rather go to or have other priorities.” Participants learned to build resilience in the face of these rejections and not to take them personally.

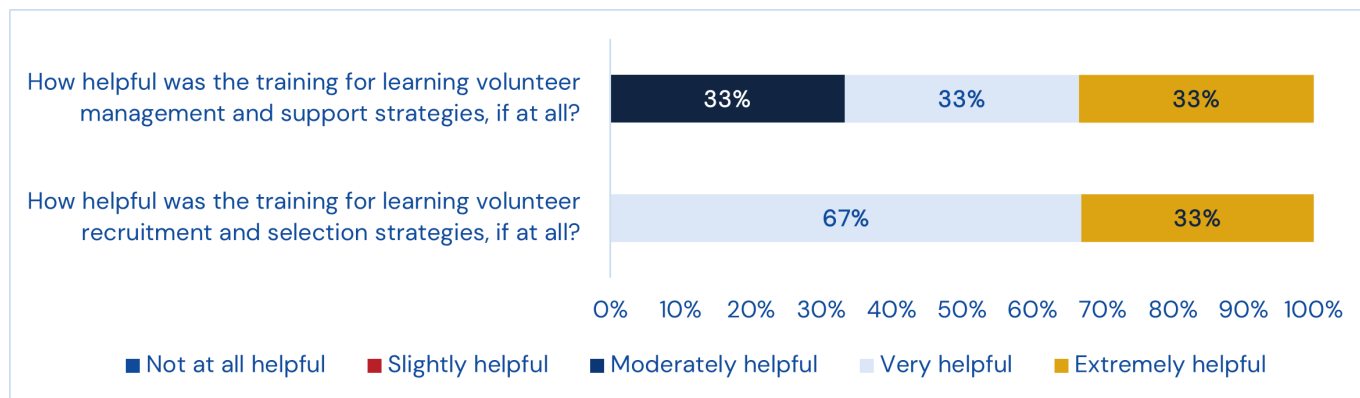
Gaining staff buy-in: Volunteer organization participants learned how to further integrate staff who did not have time or capacity to use volunteers previously and to encourage them to use volunteers. Participants did so by connecting with their organization’s staff members and asking directly what tasks with which they could use volunteer help. They also learned to gain staff trust to prevent them from mistreating or devaluing volunteers in a way that would encourage them to leave.

Regarding implementation of the various strategies learned, volunteer organizations cited a variety of contextual factors that led them to pick and choose or adapt strategies based on their own circumstances. For example, one participant described how they were from the only organization in their cohort that works with children under the age of 3. As such, they found a strategy regarding cycling out many volunteers who work for short periods to not be useful, as children that young require a longer period to develop a relationship with a volunteer or even come to learn their name. Another volunteer organization working in animal welfare found suggestions to remove barriers to entry to be difficult to implement as they have more safety concerns and other intense training elements to implement. A third organization working with medical volunteers uses different training curricula and background checking for their different sites, and therefore had to adapt training differently depending on the location. Finally, an organization noted wanting to implement the reporting of exact money saved by volunteers to demonstrate their value, but due to their accounting practices, they were not able to find that exact sum. Each of these volunteer organizations acknowledged that

though they had challenges implementing certain training elements to the letter, they were able to mix and match training elements and adapt them to their own programs.

Overall, two-thirds of volunteer organization survey respondents noted that the training for learning volunteer management and support strategies (67 percent) were Very or Extremely helpful, and all respondents found recruitment and selection strategies (100 percent) to be so, as seen in exhibit 7.

EXHIBIT 7.—Reported helpfulness of training (n=3)



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023.

Collecting and Tracking Data

Volunteer Florida supports robust data collection on volunteer management and engagement within the VGF grant and more broadly in the state as a whole. Volunteer Florida funded a VGF impact study from 2014–15 to 2020–21 to assess the value and impact of VGF resources to support skills-based volunteer programs and local communities. Additionally, Volunteer Florida commissioned the University of North Florida to conduct a study on the nature of volunteerism in the state, as described in the Recent Volunteerism Trends in Florida and Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic section. Findings from both of these studies were used by Volunteer Florida to inform programming and services provided by the commission.

Among the participating subgrantees, Volunteer Florida also collects a variety of data, including midyear and end-of-year reports which include number of skills-based volunteers leveraged and hours contributed, activities of individuals, success stories and challenges, and performance measures as well as any additional training and resources they need. This data informs Volunteer Florida’s annual performance report to AmeriCorps, as well as social media posts and information to government commissions reported quarterly on VGF activities. Volunteer Florida sends written feedback to subgrantees evaluating their achievement of performance measures and their financial obligations of the grant. Organizations who are not on track to complete their obligations must provide a plan for how they will do so. Additionally, Volunteer Florida staff said they measured the number of organizations that received capacity building services and increased their program’s effectiveness, efficiency, and/or reach. Subgrantees participate in pre- and post-assessments for the three strategies which they identified as their area of focus. Volunteer Florida staff noted the post-assessment included Likert-scale questions to assess outcomes of their participation in training and capacity building services.

In their 2021 VGF progress report, Volunteer Florida reported conducting a webinar related to VGF contract requirements, including data collection. Subgrantees then certified that they would maintain a volunteer tracking system which includes “relevant demographic information including location of residence (city), method of recruitment, participation in orientation and/or training activities, planned and actual role, assignment(s) or activities, start and end dates of service, and hours served related to the program that the

capacity building activities were intended to support or enhance.” Subgrantees also received training from Volunteer Florida on how to collect these data during the VGF subgrantee annual training.

Volunteer organizations collect a variety of data about volunteers, including volunteers per county, numbers of skilled and unskilled volunteers, volunteer time logs, and other data elements. One organization uses the number of hours volunteers have given in comparison to how much time full-time staff would require, and how much money this has saved. Another does not record any data.

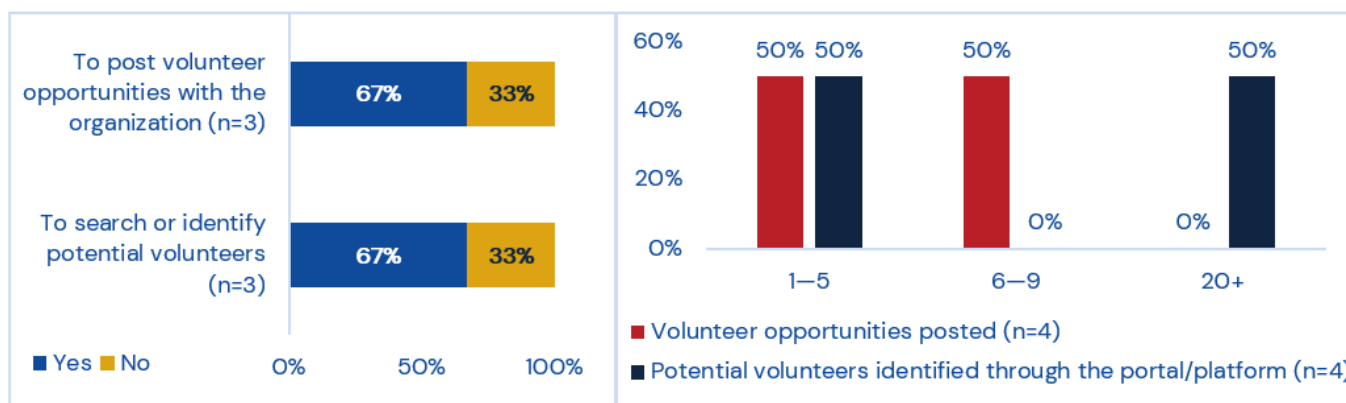
Organizations interact with different levels of sophistication regarding technology to track volunteers. One organization, which cited a more sophisticated tracking system, uses specific volunteer management software that allowed them to track the number of hours as well as when certain volunteers have been inactive. In contrast, another organization that uses many volunteers who the organization perceives to be less tech-savvy has been learning how to encourage their volunteers to record their hours on paper.

Volunteer Network

Volunteer Florida provides a volunteer network called Volunteer Connect, which subgrantees are expected—though not required—to use. Volunteer Florida provides training on its functionality annually. All organizations interviewed were aware of Volunteer Connect but were not using it at the time of fall 2022 site visits.

As shown in exhibit 8, two-thirds (67 percent) of survey respondents used the platform to post volunteer opportunities and two-thirds (67 percent) used the platform to search or identify potential volunteers. Exhibit 8 also shows the range of volunteer opportunities posted by survey respondents and the range of volunteers identified through the platform.

EXHIBIT 8.—Use of state service commission portal/platform



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023

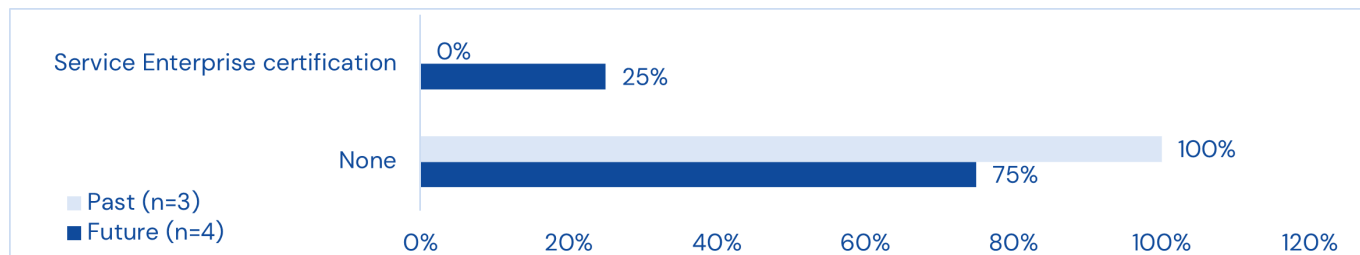
Outcomes

Volunteer Florida conducted a 3-year VGF impact study from 2014–15 to 2020–21 to understand how VGF resources were being leveraged to support skills-based volunteer programs and local communities. The study engaged a total of 88 organizations and 147 subgrantees. Volunteer Florida staff shared that each year, based on the findings from evaluation, they implemented changes in subsequent years. Key findings from the impact study are also presented along with the findings from ICF’s site visit and beneficiary survey. Overall, since 2014, Volunteer Florida staff shared their VGF programs engaged 103,456 skill-based volunteers who have contributed 1,495,388 hours of service, generating over \$39 million in value.

Overall, both Volunteer Florida and participating volunteer organizations reported high satisfaction with the training and capacity building provided through the VGF grant program. As seen in exhibit 9, survey

respondents indicated the certifications their organizations had received since October 2020 and/or were planning to receive by September 2023. While no respondents had reported receiving any kind of certification at the time of survey administration, one-quarter of survey respondents (25 percent) noted their organization might receive a Service Enterprise certification by September 2023, which likely reflected the status of the new Service Enterprise Hub in the state. At the staff level, no staff had received certification in the past or planned to in the future.

EXHIBIT 9.—Certifications organizations received as of October 2020 and/or planned to receive by September 2023



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023.

Volunteer Florida's Outcomes

Volunteer Florida representatives called out the flexibility of the VGF grant as a major highlight. According to one interviewee, "VGF is the best ... one of the great things for state service commissions for VGF is it's very broad and flexible ... a state could apply for and take that resource and really apply it to state issues." The same representative also found value in the larger America's Service Commissions network created because of the grant, as Volunteer Florida was able to learn from grantees in other states and expand their capacity.

Volunteer Organizations' Outcomes

Based on the findings from the 2020–2021 Volunteer Florida impact study, there were several key positive outcomes volunteer subgrantee organizations achieved as a result of their participation in VGF. Overall, over the last 7 years, the study found that two-fifths (40 percent) of subgrantees reported improvement from the pre- to post-assessment in each of the 8 volunteer management practices, with only a few exceptions. The practices with the greatest change from the pre- to post-assessment were Market Research and Community Needs Assessment (65 percent), Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact (63 percent), and Measuring Outcome and Evaluation the Volunteer Process (62 percent). As noted previously, subgrantees were eligible to participate for up to 3 years. Volunteer Florida's impact study found that of the 26 percent of subgrantees to receive the maximum 3 VGF subgrants, almost all (10 of the 11) reported positive changes in all 8 volunteer management practices.

During the site visits, volunteer organizations reported high satisfaction with the training provided to them from the VGF grant. Staff were described as helpful, kind, and quick to respond. Noted one participant, "Kudos to their staff. [They have] always been very quick to respond. Just yesterday I needed some help with budget clarification and I was like, 'Yeah the questions you asked me are not making sense in my brain. You have to tell this to me like I am 12 please.' And they were like no problem and helped me out!"

One volunteer manager found training to be a useful way to understand what they were doing well within their organization and what could be improved. "For us it has just really shone a light on areas we needed to work on or areas that we were doing well, or areas that we're missing altogether. It's ... made us more aware of what was succeeding, what wasn't, and what we can do to get things more standardized and focused and work on our processes."

Volunteer managers appreciated the ability to network with volunteer managers in other organizations, instead of just within their internal team. As one said, “It’s just been super helpful knowing that there’s an entity basically that I can go and bounce ideas off that isn’t so stuck in the everyday. Sometimes I go and talk about ideas to my team. They’re focused on the children every single day.” Training recipients highlighted the Blackbaud Grants Management platform provided to them by Volunteer Florida as being particularly useful for ongoing collaboration with other volunteer managers as well as being able to communicate face-to-face during 3-day trainings.

Echoing Volunteer Florida’s comments, a subgrantee was grateful for the flexibility of the grant, finding that few others exist to support volunteerism for their type of organization, saying “[Having] a grant that supports a volunteer capacity building is very impactful, because it’s rare that you find ... funding for our organization. And this is the only ... government-supported grant that we receive. To find this grant was very empowering for our organization because we have always viewed our volunteer program to be good, but we know it has the potential to be great.” That same respondent also appreciated the regular check-ins the grant provides to improve capacity, as opposed to more infrequent reviews from other types of grants. “Often with grants—‘Here’s a chunk of money, make it happen. Check in with us in 6 months to tell us how you did.’ Versus here, you know you always have a resource or someone you can reach out to or a community that you can reach out to.”

Program beneficiaries also highlighted outcomes achieved through implementation of volunteer management strategies. These included the following:

- **Expanded perceptions of volunteer roles.** Through their training, multiple participants found that they had made incorrect assumptions about tasks that older volunteers could successfully complete. Changing these perceptions had the potential to increase the numbers of volunteers.
- **Better volunteer retention and reduced work performed by paid staff.** Participants described learning how to align volunteers to their preferred tasks to increase their retention. In addition, one participant described how they gave long-term volunteers new responsibilities to teach/coach others, which they cited as contributing to increased retention for these volunteers and reduced work for paid staff. This aligned with the 2020–2021 Volunteer Florida Impact Study, which found that measuring outcomes and evaluating volunteer process implementation was one of the three practices with the greatest reported improvement, which included using surveys to assess volunteer perceptions and support improved retention.
- **Volunteer manager resilience.** Participants found that when they connected with other volunteer managers, they learned to build resilience in overcoming volunteer management challenges. Participants found that when they connected with other volunteer managers, they learned to build resilience in overcoming volunteer management challenges. Shared one volunteer manager, “I find the group settings, being able to talk to other people in your same role one-on-one is super helpful... to be able to network and have conversations with people that are in the same role as you are, and that could be seeing some of the same growing pains, challenges, [and] successes.”

Based on pre-post self-assessment results analyzed by years of funding, it was clear the Florida VGF program catalyzed many positive subgrantee advances in volunteer management capacity over the past seven years. The majority of organizations made strong gains in many of the eight practices that had previously been underdeveloped at their organization. ... The findings that positive changes in volunteer management practices were realized by organizations regardless of size or time as a VGF subgrantee likely indicates that the training and support provided by Volunteer Florida was universally applicable to diverse organizations.

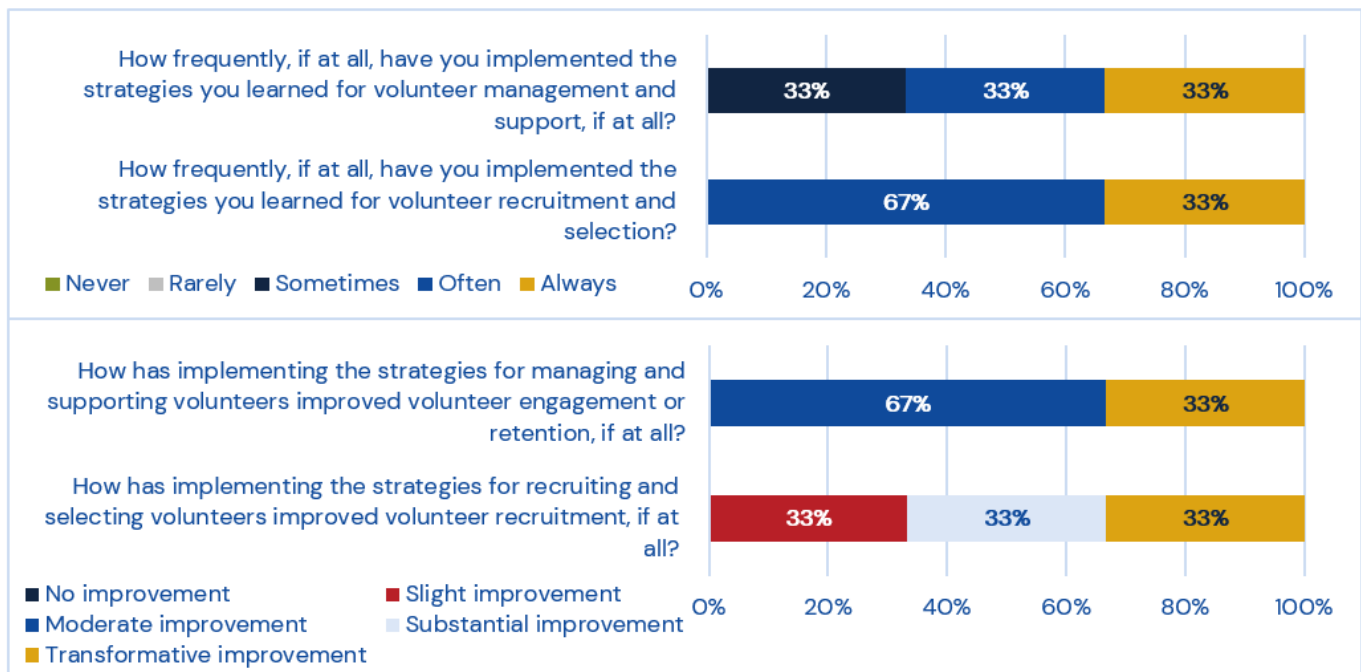
Volunteer Florida’s 2020–2021
Impact Study Report

Organizations cited a few recurring challenges with the trainings they encountered. These included the following:

- **Difficulty with finance training.** One recurring challenge cited by organizations was that the finance training provided was difficult for participants to understand. This was the case for average volunteer managers as well as for one organization’s finance team representative who attended the training.
- **Difficulty measuring retention.** Multiple participants still found it difficult to measure volunteer retention rates, and they identified this issue as something they could use more assistance on from Volunteer Florida. As described by one participant, there were different ways to measure retention, “From a grant-writing perspective and also from a programmatic perspective, how do you measure retention. ... I feel like everyone does it a little differently. Am I retaining them if they’re active once every 30 days, what does that look like? Is there a certain number of hours per year?”
- **Non-applicable trainings.** Some participants also cited certain aspects of their training as less useful for their specific organizations. This included two organizations that found it difficult to reduce barriers to entry for their organizations to accept volunteers, as trainings suggested, based on the specific missions of their organizations.

The majority (67 percent) of survey respondents said that they Often or Always implement the strategies they learned for volunteer management and support. Additionally, 67 percent of respondents noted they implemented volunteer recruitment and selection strategies Often or Always, as seen in exhibit 10. Regarding the outcomes of implementation, all respondents reported improvement in volunteer engagement and retention, with two-thirds of respondents reporting moderate improvement (67 percent) and one-third reporting transformative improvement in this area (33 percent). In terms of volunteer recruitment, a third of participants reported slight improvement (33 percent), while two-thirds reported substantial or transformative improvement (67 percent).

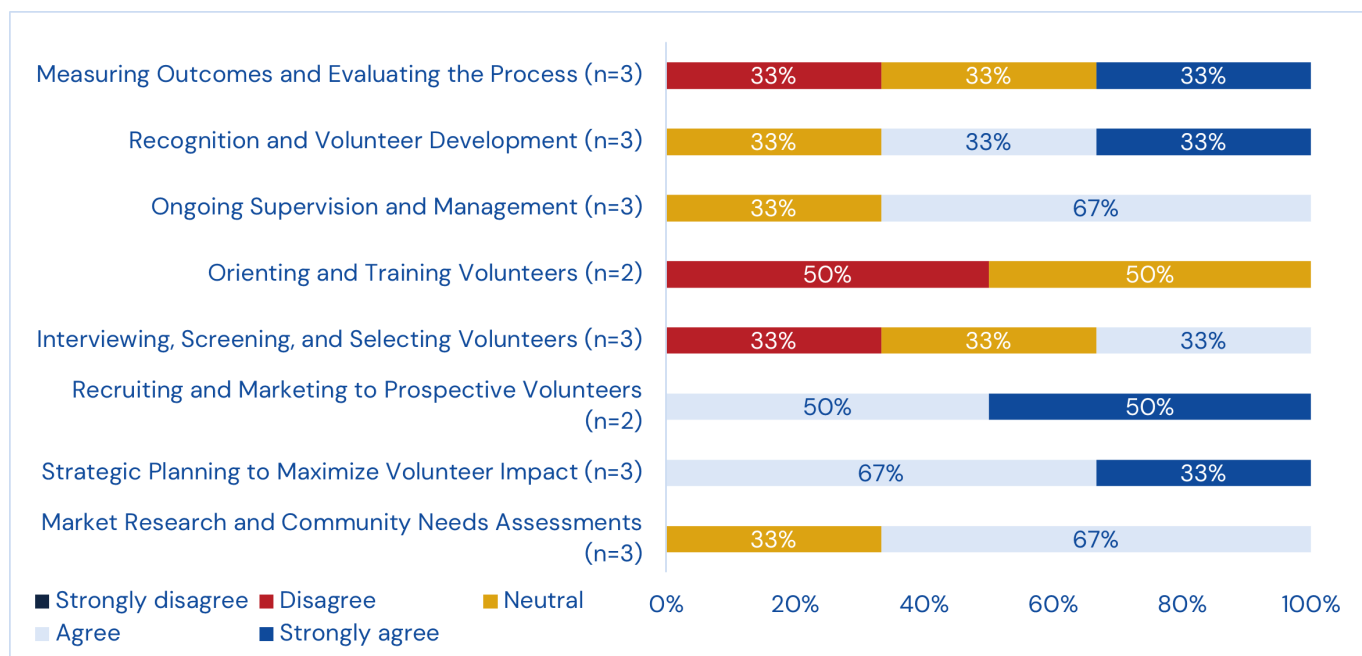
EXHIBIT 10.—Frequency of implementation & improvement in recruitment, engagement, and retention (n=3)



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023.

Survey respondents were also asked to share their agreement regarding their and/or their organization’s need for additional training or support on various topics, as seen in exhibit 11. The topics with the highest agreement on need were Recognition and Volunteer Development (66 percent), Ongoing Supervision and Management (67 percent), Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers (100 percent), Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact (100 percent), and Market Research and Community Needs Assessments (67 percent). Conversely, the topics for which respondents noted the lowest needs were on Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process (33 percent); Orienting and Training Volunteers (0 percent); and Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers (33 percent).

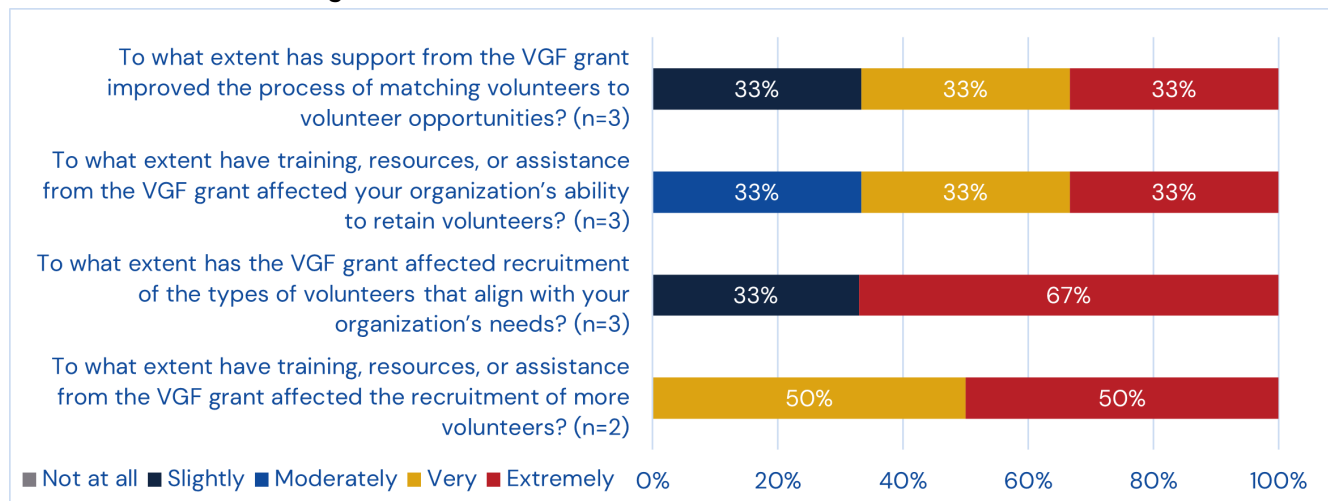
EXHIBIT 11.—Agreement with organizational need for additional training by topic



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023.

Lastly, survey respondents shared their perspectives on the effect of the VGF grant on various volunteer outcomes, presented in exhibit 12. All outcomes were rated highly by respondents. Responds perceived that VGF-sponsored activities had the greatest effects on the recruitment of more volunteers.

EXHIBIT 12.—Effect of VGF grant on volunteer outcomes



Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey administered in January 2023.

Conclusion

Overall, Volunteer Florida and the volunteer organizations served through VGF reported high satisfaction with the grant and in Volunteer Florida's implementation of it within the state. Volunteer Florida has demonstrated a strong culture of collecting and using data on volunteerism and volunteer management to inform decisions and build evidence. While training participants reported some individual strategies to be inapplicable to their organizations specifically, overall, training participants recalled many strategies that they used as well as outcomes from using those strategies in terms of volunteer recruitment and retention, and volunteer manager resilience. Volunteer Florida's own commissioned external evaluations found notable pre-to-post improvements among subgrantees in eight practice areas, which demonstrates the efficacy of Volunteer Florida's subgrant program and training model for building volunteer management practices. Beyond improving volunteer management practices, however, many subgrantees also praised the flexibility of their subgrants to support volunteerism as unique in the field, and therefore crucial to their work.

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AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency places more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers. Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov).

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