



CASE STUDY

Volunteer Generation Fund Evaluation: Massachusetts Service Alliance



BUNDLED EVALUATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT

The Massachusetts state service commission, the Massachusetts Service Alliance, 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 and longitudinal data from the AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of each of the data sources that were used to inform the following brief.

¹ The VGF grantee, Massachusetts Service Alliance, 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 56 percent response rate with a total of 27 individual respondents representing 23 unique organizations. Across survey participants, there was substantial variation in reported average number of volunteers; 10 percent reported fewer than 10 volunteers; 25 percent reported 10–20 volunteers; 5 percent reported 21–30 volunteers; 20 percent reported 31–50 volunteers; 20 percent reported 51–100 volunteers; and 20 percent reported 100 or more volunteers.

EXHIBIT 1.—Overview of data sources

Data Source	Participant Count	Date Collected
Grant Application	–	May 2020
Fiscal Year (FY)2020 and FY2021 Volunteer Generation Fund Progress Reports	–	December 2020 and 2021
AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplements	–	September 2017, 2019, and 2021
Project Director Focus Group – Massachusetts Service Alliance	2	March 2022
Program Implementer Focus Group – Massachusetts Service Alliance	2	September 2022
Beneficiaries Focus Group – COVID Mini Grant	3	September 2022
Beneficiaries Focus Group – Youth Development Mini Grant	5	September 2022
Beneficiaries Focus Group – Service Enterprise Mini Grant	5	September 2022
Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey	27	January 2023
Final Commission Focus Group – Massachusetts Service Alliance	2	June 2023

Overview of Grant Structure and Goals

The focus of the Massachusetts Service Alliance’s VGF grant was to enhance volunteer engagement within Volunteer Connector Organizations (VCOs) and youth-serving agencies across the state, especially focusing on organizations that did not have the capacity to have national service programs. Utilizing a multipronged approach, Massachusetts Service Alliance employed the following five strategies:

1. Deep and intensive training and certification at least 15 organizations through delivery of Service Enterprise;
2. Focused in-person and online trainings and a statewide conference providing best practices from the field;
3. Grants to community-based organizations and schools to support the implementation of a Service-Learning initiative developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE);
4. Grants to community-based organizations and VCOs for capacity building in volunteer engagement specifically for either youth-serving programming or for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic recovery efforts; and
5. Creation of a new advanced online platform to connect volunteers and organizations.

Therefore, across the indicated strategies, Massachusetts Service Alliance reported in the grant application they planned volunteers would serve a total of 18,200 hours, at least 2,200 at-risk youth

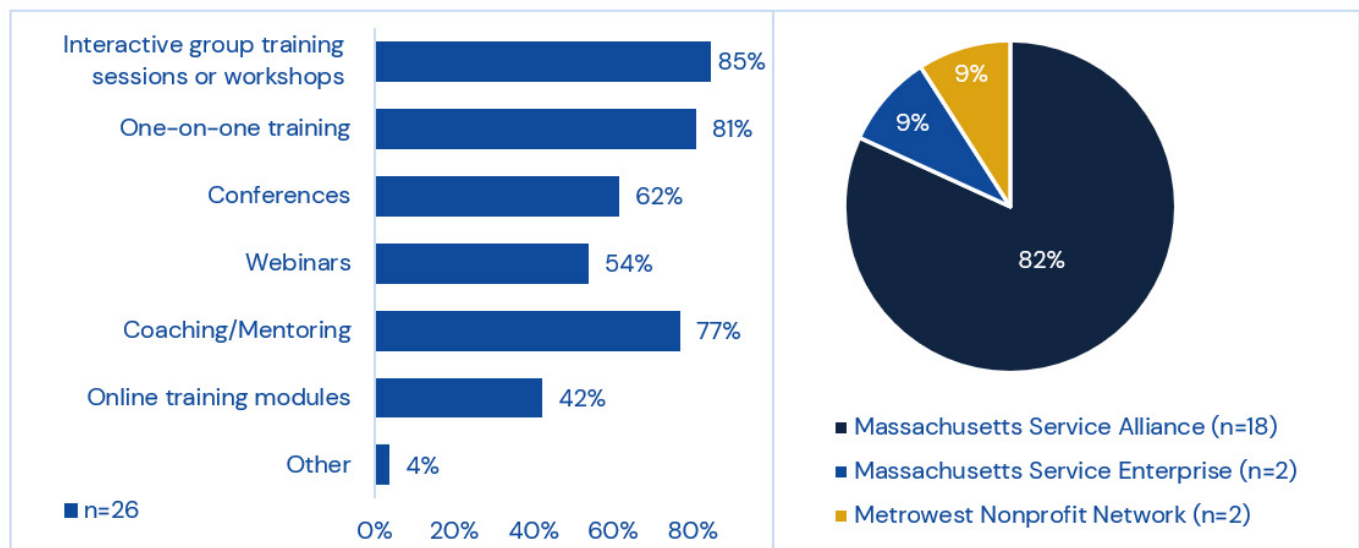
A Note on Program Beneficiaries

In the context of this case study, “program beneficiaries” include subgrantee volunteer organizations and volunteer connector organizations (VCOs) that took part in Massachusetts Service Alliance’s initiatives, including the Service Enterprise program and mini-grants, and volunteer organizations that participated in other volunteer management trainings and conferences.

would benefit from Massachusetts Service Alliance initiatives each funding year, 15 organizations would participate in an intensive training and certification program (i.e., Service Enterprise), and an additional 200 unique staff and/or volunteers would be trained in volunteer management best practices annually by Massachusetts Service Alliance trainings and a biannual conference. During the final director interview, Massachusetts Service Alliance staff shared they had exceeded, if not far exceeded, their intended goals. Having received VGF grant funding since the beginning of the program, Massachusetts Service Alliance has historically used their VGF award to expand the Service Enterprise initiative and fund other mini-grant opportunities.

With the continued COVID-19 related barriers, not all proposed initiatives were implemented as anticipated. Based on the survey data from training participants, the most frequently reported volunteer training and capacity building activities were interactive group training sessions or workshops, one-on-one training, and coaching/mentoring, with the majority (82 percent) of reported training provided by Massachusetts Service Alliance. 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.

An overview of the status of each key initiative is included below, as described by the state service commission, through which the majority of initiatives are provided.

Service Enterprise: As the primary program implementers, Massachusetts Service Alliance leads the Service Enterprise program across the state utilizing the curriculum previously created and owned by Points of Light (in 2022, the program transitioned to ALIVE, which currently manages the curriculum). Additionally, Massachusetts Service Alliance occasionally coordinates with external consultants who provide in-person coaching services in central and southern Massachusetts so they can physically meet with the organizations. Initially proposed in the grant application, Massachusetts Service Alliance had intended at least 15 organizations across the state complete the certification process. At the time of the state service commission focus group in December 2022, an estimated 13 organizations would receive the certification; a commission representative noted that the COVID-19 pandemic posed a challenge as they had never struggled to reach their certification goals in the past.

COVID mini-grant: The COVID-19 Resiliency Grant (COVID-19 mini-grant) is a selection of subgrantees who are awarded a \$4,000 no-match grant with 6-month funding cycles. As of the fall 2022 site visits,

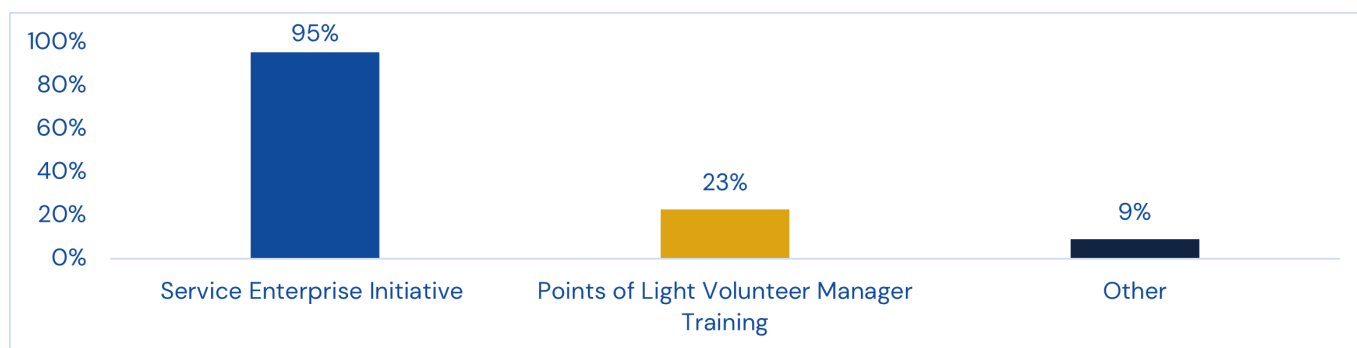
Massachusetts Service Alliance had three different rounds of fundings for the mini-grants, with the largest funding cycling having 30 grantees and the smallest with 22 grantees. Through the COVID-19 mini-grant, Massachusetts Service Alliance reached a new group of nonprofit organizations across the state with diverse missions and in rural communities, many of which Massachusetts Service Alliance was unlikely to have reached without the grant.

Youth Development: The Youth Development mini-grant is a selection of subgrantees who are awarded a \$10,000 matching grant with a 9-month funding cycle. There are roughly 14 subgrantees each year for the Youth Development mini-grant, with slight variation depending on the number of applications each year.

Additional training opportunities: Massachusetts Service Alliance utilizes additional online and regional volunteer management trainings and the biannual conference to expose new organizations to Massachusetts Service Alliance as an introduction to the resources and supports they can provide organizations across the state. State service commission representatives noted that the training opportunities are mainly informed by field surveys offered every few years to identify the key needs of organizations, with some offerings also based on the Service Enterprise core competencies. Additionally, every conference year, the commission does an evaluation that also highlights areas of need, which helps guide planning for future training opportunities. The commission had planned to offer the statewide conference in Year 1 (2021) and Year 3 (2023) of the VGF grant, however, due to the pandemic, the conference was postponed to Year 2 (2022). During the first commission focus group in December 2022, staff expressed that they hoped the conference would still be held in Year 3. Based on previous participation in previous years, it was anticipated that 300–325 individuals would attend in May of Year 2, however, participants noted that participation may be impacted by the pandemic.

In January 2023, Massachusetts Service Alliance training participants participated in a Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey. As seen in exhibit 3, the majority (95 percent) of the survey respondents reported they participated in training that utilized the Service Enterprise curriculum and 23 percent reported participating in a training that used the Points of Light Volunteer Manager Training. A few participants also reported they participated in other training curriculums, noting miscellaneous professional development offerings and volunteer management prerecorded training series sessions.

EXHIBIT 3.—Types of curriculum used (n=22)

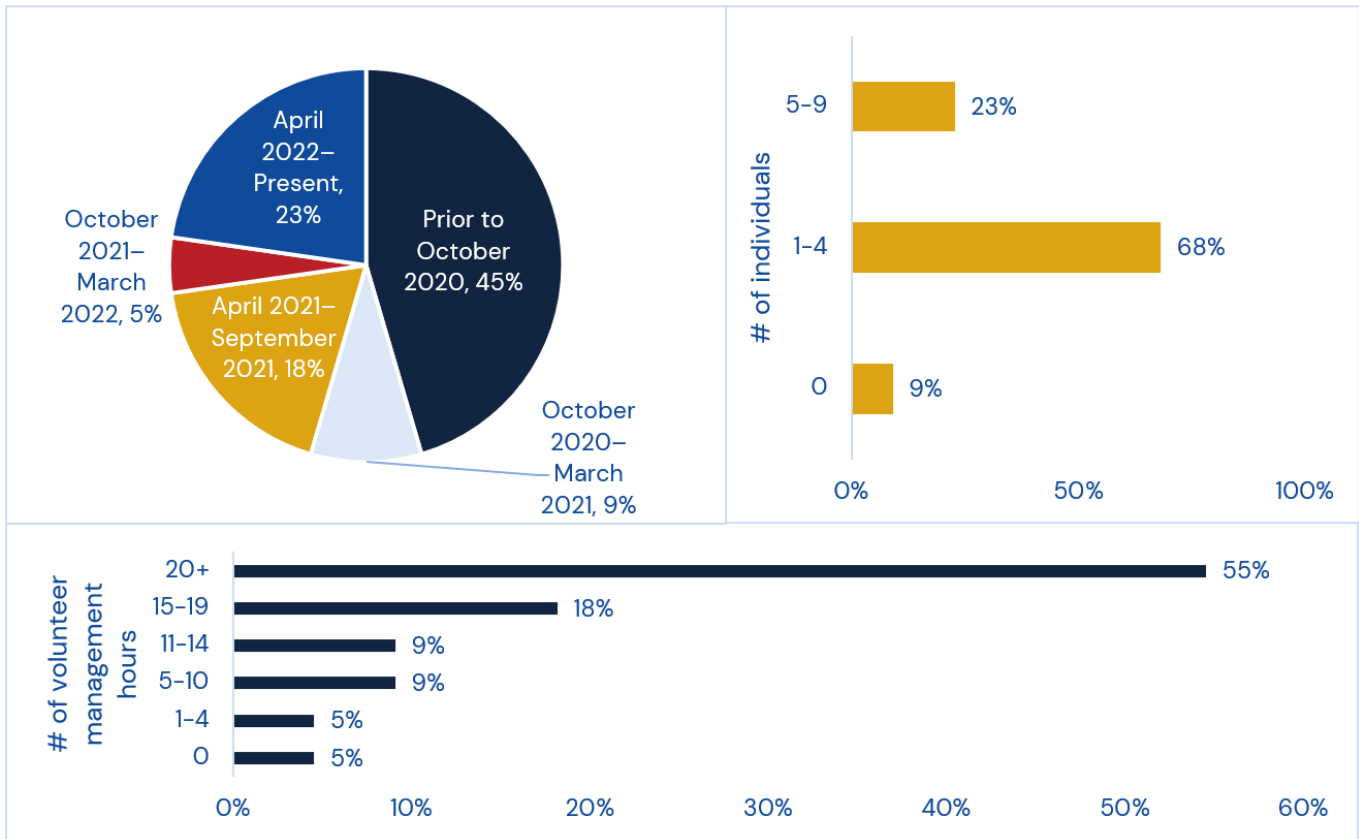


Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.

The time in which survey respondents reported first participating in an Massachusetts Service Alliance training varied; 45 percent of respondents noted their organization first participated prior to October 2020 while 23 percent noted they did not first participate until more recently (April 2022–Present). Since October 2020, the majority (68 percent) of survey respondents noted that 1–4 individuals from their organization participated in a training or capacity building activity through VGF and 23 percent noted 5–9 individuals participated. Over half (55 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.

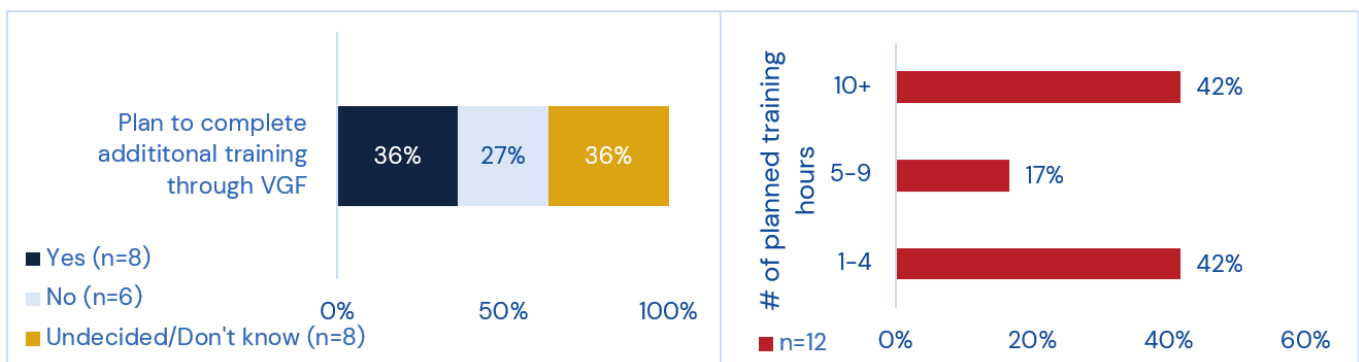
EXHIBIT 4.—Organization’s participation time frame, range, and number of hours (n=22)



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

As grant programming continued following the data collection, survey participants were also asked to report on their organization’s plans for additional training. Exhibit 5 displays the percentage of participants who reported they intended to complete additional training through VGF, with 36 percent noting Yes and 36 percent noting *Undecided*. The majority of survey respondents indicated they planned to complete 1–4 additional training hours (42 percent) or 10 or more hours (42 percent).

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 Massachusetts and Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the 2021 AmeriCorps Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, over two-fifths (23 percent) of Massachusetts residents formally volunteered through organizations, comparable to the national rate (23.2 percent) of individuals who formally volunteered. However, in Massachusetts, this was a substantial decline compared to the 2017 and 2019 rates of 33 percent and 31 percent, respectively. In the state, formal volunteering contributed \$2.6 billion in economic value. Alternatively, informal volunteering remained relatively consistent. Informally, over half (53 percent) of residents noted they helped others by exchanging favors with their neighbors, which is comparable to 2017 and 2019 rates of 55 percent and 56 percent, respectively.

From the perspective of participating volunteer organizations, the use of and engagement with volunteers during the pandemic varied substantially, depending on the context of the organization's volunteer program. Several participating organizations shared that during the pandemic their challenge was not around recruiting volunteers, since they had to decrease their numbers of volunteers. Instead, they had to focus on how to maintain engagement with volunteers, which some organizations were still trying to figure out. One survey participant noted:

The timing [during the pandemic] made it more difficult for us to immediately put into practice what we learned. I believe some things would be different had that not been the case. Nonetheless, we feel very fortunate to have been able to participate.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Broadly, Massachusetts Service Alliance described that they were working internally to incorporate more intentional and consistent uses of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across their work. Massachusetts Service Alliance held a community review in which members from the communities served were involved in the selection of subgrant recipients, instead of exclusively Massachusetts Service Alliance staff.

We're actually later this week holding our first ever community review, where we're having external reviewers come and look at and review proposals for our Youth Development initiative. So, trying to get more community involved in that process, trying to find folks who are working and living and understand the communities that we are trying to support. In the past it's really been an internal review with Massachusetts Service Alliance staff, who may have a relationship with the grantee, but may not necessarily know what the challenges are for an organization in the Berkshires. So we are certainly moving in a direction that's more intentional around having community voice in that review and selection process.

Within the Service Enterprise curriculum, program implementers noted that they have received feedback from the participating organizations related to the lack of emphasis on DEI within the curriculum. Program implementers shared that feedback had been provided to Points of Light (who had managed the curriculum at the time). Even so, one program implementer noted they have found methods to incorporate DEI into coaching:

I think [program implementer] and I have both done a lot of training and work in that area, so we bring our knowledge to that, but it maybe isn't formally built into the curriculum. We get a lot of organizations that want to focus on diversifying their recruitment efforts with their volunteer base. So we will work on that sometimes in the coaching time with them and more individualized, based on exactly what they're looking for.

The program implementers noted that the feedback on incorporating DEI or justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion components into the curriculum was well received and ALIVE is working on updating the curriculum.

With the postponement of the biannual conference in Year 1, Massachusetts Service Alliance focused on providing additional training and capacity building opportunities to organizations, many of which focused on DEI. Of the six virtual trainings offered in Year 1, half (three trainings) focused on DEI in volunteerism. In Year 2, at the time of the first commission interview, Massachusetts Service Alliance held eight DEI focused training sessions (six of which were offered as part of a multipart volunteer management series). Additionally, a substantial focus for the biannual conference hosted in Year 2 was DEI.

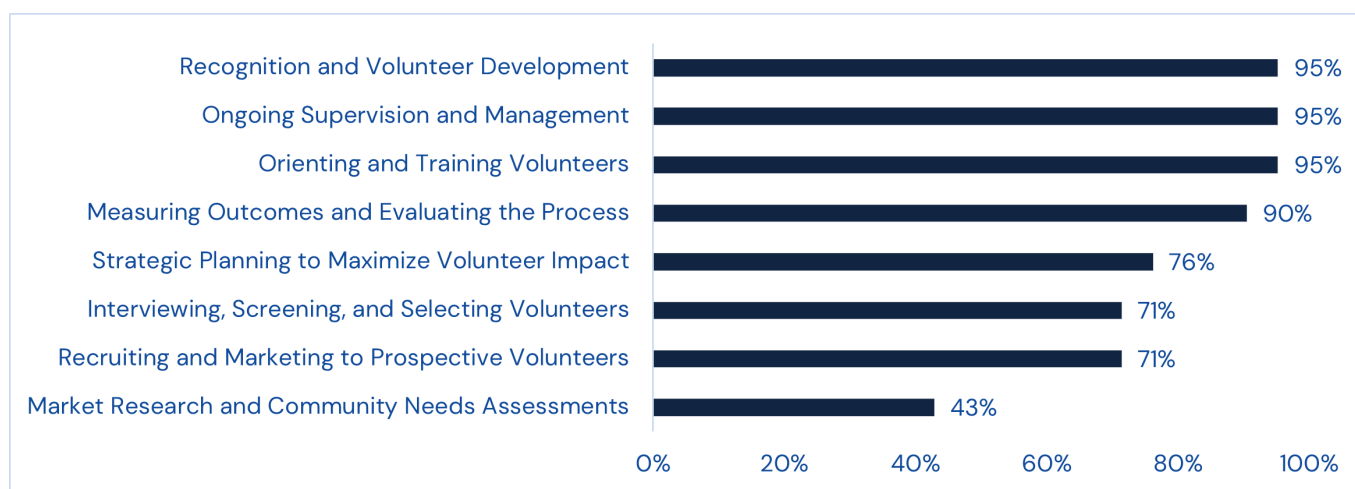
Strategies Used and/or Learned

Massachusetts Service Alliance reported one of the highest priorities for their organizations, post-pandemic, were recruitment strategies, as organizations were trying to return to their pre-pandemic volunteer numbers. Organizations were struggling to engage volunteers, so Massachusetts Service Alliance noted that the need was specifically targeted at intentional recruitment to diversify the organization’s volunteer base.

I would say that organizations are also being more intentional and aware about who they’re recruiting and wanting to diversify their volunteer base. So, they’re wanting to have more volunteers that reflect the communities that they are serving in and wanting to be more intentional about that recruitment. So I think those are the two biggest needs, because I think we’ve heard a lot about—it’s not just about recruitment—but it’s recruiting the right people for the role.

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 included recognition and volunteer development (95 percent), ongoing supervision and management (95 percent), orienting and training volunteers (95 percent), and measuring outcomes and evaluating the process (94 percent). Exhibit 6 provides additional details on the types of practices reported by respondents.

EXHIBIT 6.—Volunteer management practices learned about in trainings (n=21)



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

Volunteer organizations who participated in the site visit largely agreed on the priorities. Below is a list of strategies reported by volunteer organizations to increase recruitment and retention.

Identifying methods to make volunteerism less transactional. A few organizations highlighted that they were striving to make volunteerism less transactional by listening to what volunteers were interested in and

doing “matchmaking” to ensure volunteer work is meaningful and engaging, especially among youth volunteers. One organization described how they used surveys to identify their volunteers’ interests and skills so they can get to know their volunteer better and establish strong relationships to support retention.

Importance of intentionality in volunteer recruitment. One organization noted that they identified that many of their volunteers were there because it looked good on a resume, or they were doing so to make themselves feel good (which the organization explained was rooted in “white saviorism”). As part of their Youth Development mini-grant, the organization was focusing on intentional volunteer recruitment to diversify their volunteers and recruit volunteers from the communities they serve.

One thing we’ve learned is the value of intentionality. I think our strategies of reaching out to different organizations and the different communities, especially the neighborhoods in which many of our youth come from have been helpful. ... I think we are also making a space for diverse mentors to come in. If we are actively recruiting Black mentors, do we have a space that’s welcoming that they feel like they’re seen and they feel like they’re being heard.

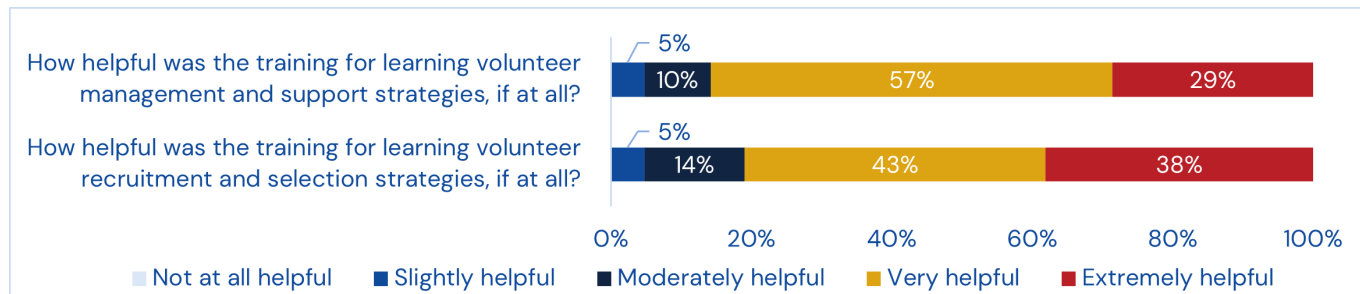
Remote recruitment. Especially with the pandemic and its continued impacts, participants noted there was an increase in remote recruitment. One participant explained that with this transition, some volunteers are not included in the process while some new ones are—emphasizing the tradeoffs of remote recruitment.

Volunteer recognition. Participating organizations noted that volunteer recognition was a key strategy for engaging and retaining volunteers, however some organizations were struggling with the application of recognition strategies after the pandemic. One organization described:

In the past we did volunteer recognition once a year. ... COVID had made that difficult, we still give the award, but Covid has made it difficult to celebrate that. So, we did a virtual one this past spring. Everyone was telling us we really want to see each other; we want to socialize. So, we planned all these events and had terrible attendance. People were not as ready to come out as I think they thought they were. So, we’re still kind of figuring out in this new COVID space. What does that type of volunteer socialization and recognition really look like? What are folks actually looking for? And I don’t have an answer to that but [I’m] interested if others do.

Another organization described how they do volunteer recognition more informally through “pop-up opportunities.” For example, the organization noted they had a volunteer connected to a sculpture exhibit who offered to give a special tour to the organization’s volunteers. While it may not be relevant or of interest to all volunteers, the organization noted that finding ways to provide rewarding and meaningful appreciation to volunteers supports retention.

Across survey participants, over four-fifths noted that the training for learning volunteer management and support strategies (86 percent), and recruitment and selection strategies (81 percent) were *Very helpful* or *Extremely helpful*, as seen in exhibit 7.

EXHIBIT 7.—Reported helpfulness of training (n=21)

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

Collecting and Tracking Data

Volunteer organizations who participated in site visits noted they collected a variety of data about volunteers, including number of volunteers, volunteer hours, volunteer intake data, and volunteer time logs. One organization noted that they utilized an online database to track volunteer data, however several participants noted that with or without a database it was still challenging to manage the data. One participating organization shared that even though the individuals served as the volunteer manager, the tracking process was still burdensome. Another organization noted that as they do not have a volunteer coordinator solely responsible for overseeing volunteers, it was a very time-consuming process, saying:

“We don’t have a volunteer coordinator... it’d be so wonderful if we did... tracking is difficult! I am not going to lie, it’s one of our biggest challenges, because it’s very time-consuming to do it right, and it’s very time consuming to train multiple staff people, especially with staff turnover.”

Massachusetts Service Alliance collects a variety of data through each of the different initiatives. For Service Enterprise, Massachusetts Service Alliance has the participating organizations complete a pre-test self-assessment on best practices in volunteer engagement prior to their participation. As part of Service Enterprise, participating organizations complete a diagnostic that is presented in a report highlighting how the organization performs in different characteristics of Service Enterprise. The diagnostic serves as “a snapshot of where they’re starting from prior to any of the trainings with Service Enterprise.” Organizations also complete a post-test and Massachusetts Service Alliance collects data after training to identify areas of improvement for future training.

For the mini-grants, Massachusetts Service Alliance collects data on the organizations through their applications, including active volunteers, youth volunteers, and goals for growth. In the Fiscal Year (FY)2021 VGF progress report, Massachusetts Service Alliance noted subgrantees provide the following data elements through their progress reports: number of volunteers; number of hours served by volunteers; number of new volunteers; number of hours served by new volunteers; and narrative data on program changes, challenges, and lessons learned. Mini-grantees also complete a financial report at the end of the year and participate in site visits with Massachusetts Service Alliance staff. Additionally, Massachusetts Service Alliance noted they use the data to inform planning for future years. The FY2021 progress report notes:

In 2021, we began asking subgrantees to provide feedback in their progress reports on their experience working with Massachusetts Service Alliance. We ask if they are interested in learning about other Massachusetts Service Alliance programs, such as Service Enterprise, and refer them to those opportunities when they become available throughout the year. We also ask them if there are other ways we can support volunteerism within their organization—such as specific training, funding initiatives, or other volunteer management resources. This

helps us get a better sense of volunteer needs across Massachusetts and how Massachusetts Service Alliance can address those needs.

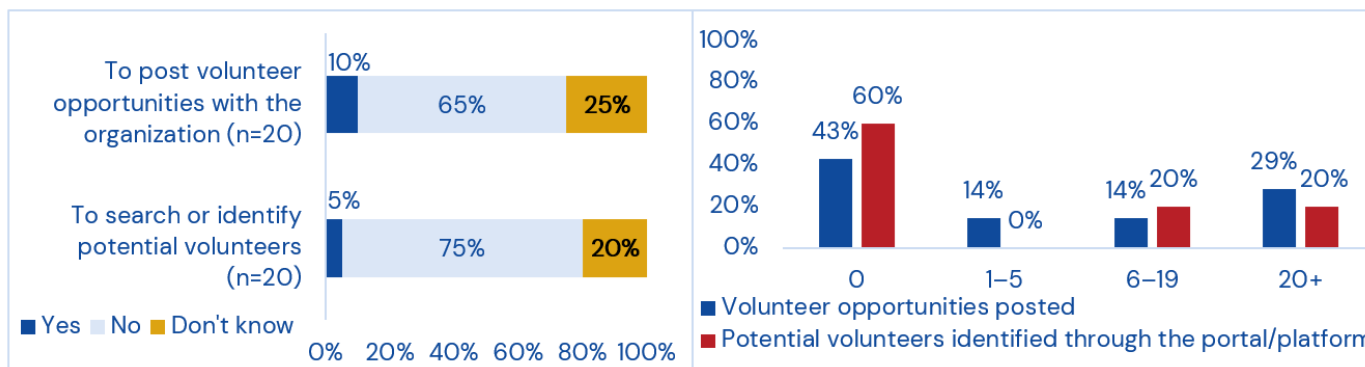
Massachusetts Service Alliance also utilizes VGF subgrantee data to inform decisions on future funding initiatives, which was one of the reasons for the implementation of the COVID-19 mini-grant in 2020.

Volunteer Platform

Predominantly in Year 1, Massachusetts Service Alliance utilized VGF funding to support the development of the new Massachusetts Service Alliance Connect for Good online platform. Funding was used to support the transition from Galaxy Digital to Inspiring Service in the hopes that it would allow the nonprofit organizations to establish deeper connections with the online users as well as encourage organizations to share data and impact stories. Additionally, one commission participant shared that some of their partners were also transitioning to the new platform, so they noted it would support increased connection with partner organizations as well.

However, as seen in exhibit 8, over half (65 percent) of survey respondents did not use the platform to post volunteer opportunities and three-quarters (75 percent) did not use 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

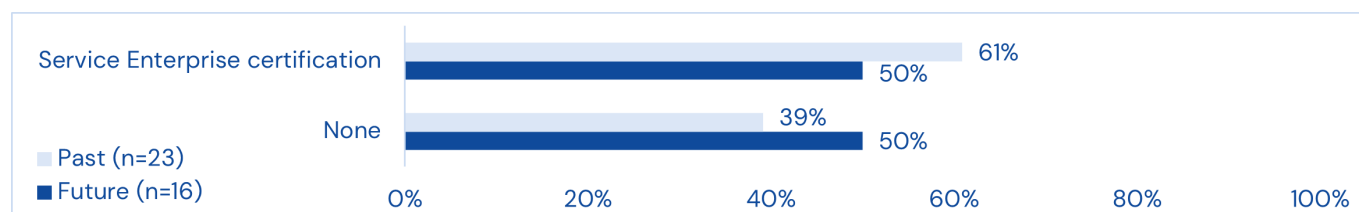


Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.

Outcomes

Overall, both Massachusetts Service Alliance and training recipients 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 have received since October 2020 and/or were planning to receive by September 2023. As of October 2020, over half (61 percent) of respondents had received the Service Enterprise certification and almost two-fifths (39 percent) received none. Half of survey respondents (50 percent) noted their organization might receive a Service Enterprise certification by September 2023.

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



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

Massachusetts Service Alliance's Outcomes

Broadly, Massachusetts Service Alliance shared how one of the greatest successes they have seen from the VGF grant is the pipeline it established for nonprofit organizations into national service membership and continued civic engagement—as both member and program recruitment. Over time Massachusetts Service Alliance staff shared they had seen organizations begin with VGF funds through Massachusetts Service Alliance subgrants of Service Enterprise and then progress on to larger state or AmeriCorps programs. In the context of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Service Alliance staff noted organizations start with participation in VGF training or services and then move on to become a Commonwealth Corps or Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) site, ultimately potentially even moving on to host an AmeriCorps program themselves. In support of this, Massachusetts Service Alliance noted within the project reports submitted by grantees, organizations indicate if they are interested in participating in any other programs. Using this information, Massachusetts Service Alliance can support the pipeline to flag interested organizations and connect them to the correct individuals.

Specific to the pandemic, in the FY2021 progress report, Massachusetts Service Alliance described how, due to the transition to virtual trainings, they were able to engage new individuals and organizations who would previously not been able to join in-person trainings. For example, Massachusetts Service Alliance more than doubled their target participation count in volunteer management, serving 496 individuals compared to their target of 200 individuals. Staff noted this increase was due to the inclusion of those who participated in live webinars as well as those who viewed recorded sessions.

Program Beneficiaries' Outcomes

Mini-grant subgrantees shared positive sentiments with the Massachusetts Service Alliance staff about the training and/or capacity building they received. Many participating organizations noted they appreciated the flexibility of the program, especially as COVID-19 continued to impact initial plans for funds. Comments that exemplified these sentiments include:

Mass Service Alliance was absolutely the best. They are an untouchable resource for the volunteer community in Massachusetts.

[Massachusetts Service Alliance] is always willing to field questions, provide networking opportunities, and offer an exceptional statewide event for networking and professional development.

Broadly, participating organizations valued the opportunities to engage in discussion and collaboration with other organizations, especially among Service Enterprise participants. A staff member of one of the participating organizations described that even though they had been a professional volunteer manager for several years, it was helpful that their cohort group had individuals with a wide range of skills and expertise. They also noted that with this wide range, Massachusetts Service Alliance successfully “balanced it really well,

helping people who were really starting in this role and getting that understanding and then people who had a lot more experience.”

Service Enterprise participants also expressed significant gratitude and appreciation for the Massachusetts Service Alliance staff and the Service Enterprise program as it helped them to think about volunteer management, recruitment, and retention from a systems perspective, which made it less intimidating and more feasible. The following comments typify the sentiments of the participating organizations:

Helping think about the systemic ways in which we can make those changes. That was really helpful, because it is a tad intimidating to do it on that scale! So, getting those sorts of resources, like everything from looking at that big picture to thinking about, “Okay, what does that mean for what our staff handbook needs to include?” ... It’s really helpful to look at it on both those levels. Because otherwise I can’t imagine we would be able to undertake this process. And in fact, our organization has not previously been able to tackle this challenge without this process.

The value of this program is really high. Not only the training is very good, like I mentioned. I feel like it’s one of the best training processes I’ve been through because I’ve been to a lot of these. Massachusetts Service Alliance administers it very well. And they’re such great resources, I think the way that they’re helping us to connect to one another, and I think the more resources we can throw at them for this sort of work, the better! So, if that’s part of the feedback that’s going up the chain, yes. More! Give us more Massachusetts Service Alliance!

We absolutely valued the tremendous amount of information provided as part of the [Service Enterprise] process and have implemented many strategies from the training sessions. The [Service Enterprise] has also provided us with a roadmap for further and future improvements as part of the certification process that has improved our volunteer program substantially.

Subgrantees also highlighted a particularly useful strategy, skills-based recruitment, which they were able to apply from training.

Skills-based recruitment. Several of the participating organizations that participated in Service Enterprise noted it provided the opportunity to be more selective in their volunteer recruitment and focus on the key skills or supports their organization needed. As a part of the skills-based recruitment, organizations emphasized that they were able to look at how they recruited volunteers, the types of questions asked in interviews, or volunteers’ availability. The following comments highlight the successes skills-based recruitment provided to organizations:

It sort of gave us permission to ... recruit people as a job, that it’s a skill-based job. And without that training, I never would’ve thought that was possible or had the confidence to do it.

It’s okay to have a high bar for your volunteers and you don’t have to take everyone who says they want to do it—and that was just reaffirming. We can be particular because we have a specific volunteer profile, and that’s okay. So that was affirming.

Organizations described two main areas for additional training and support. Challenges and needs identified by site visit participants included:

Increased support and resources on data tracking. Multiple participants expressed frustration tracking and managing volunteer data, noting that they would like additional resources or support on how to manage and track volunteer data, and to streamline the data collected.

It's challenging to figure out the nonduplicated volunteers, the new volunteers, the young volunteers. And again, I would just echo what everyone has said, which is if it's necessary for the funder ... and so to the extent that that can match up with getting us information that's valuable to us and information that's valuable to Massachusetts Service Alliance and to the funder, that's really helpful. And if it isn't necessary, unburdening that allows us to have time for more appreciation or evaluation, and just other forms of engagement.

Additionally, one organization noted specifically for Massachusetts Service Alliance as a mini-grant they report on new volunteers, but the organization described the metric as “frustrating and unhelpful” as it was not useful to develop a tracking tool for one specific metric only one funder requests. The organization member said, “If there was a better or different way to report it, or an opportunity for us to give feedback on that, that would be great.”

Discussions on diversifying volunteers in Service Enterprise. Some of the participating organizations from Service Enterprise shared that they would have liked more opportunities to discuss diversifying their organization’s volunteer base. One participating organization noted that “there was a clear desire from Massachusetts Service Alliance about thinking about [diversifying volunteers], but there wasn’t a lot of time dedicated to discussion,” which would have been helpful.

Overwhelmingly, the majority (95 percent) of survey respondents shared that they *Often* or *Always* implement the strategies they learned for volunteer management and support. Additionally, 66 percent of respondents noted they implemented volunteer recruitment and selection strategies *Often* or *Always*, as seen in exhibit 10. Regarding the outcomes of implementation, approximately half of respondents noted that the implementation of the strategies led to a substantial or transformative improvement in volunteer management and support (52 percent) and volunteer recruitment (48 percent).

EXHIBIT 10.—Frequency of implementation & improvement in recruitment, engagement, and retention (n=21)

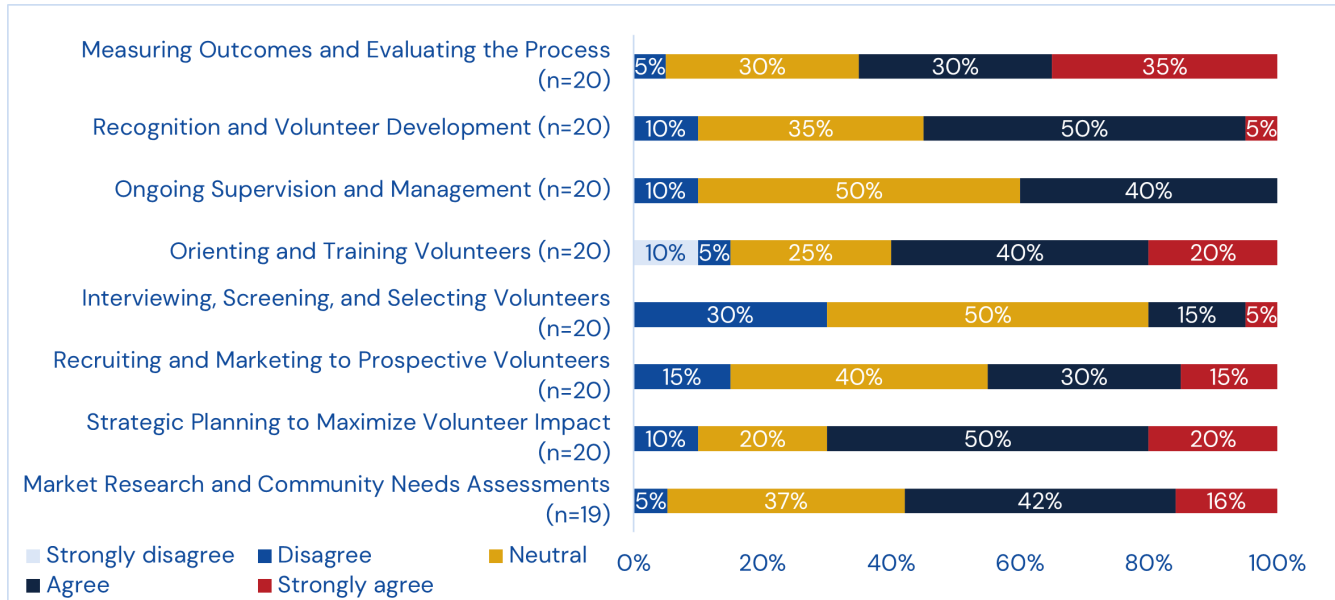


Source: Volunteer Management Training & Capacity Building Survey collected in January 2023.

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 Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact (70 percent), Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process (65 percent), and Orienting and Training Volunteers (60 percent). Alternatively, the

topics in which respondents noted the lowest needs were Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers (20 percent) and Ongoing Supervision and Management (40 percent).

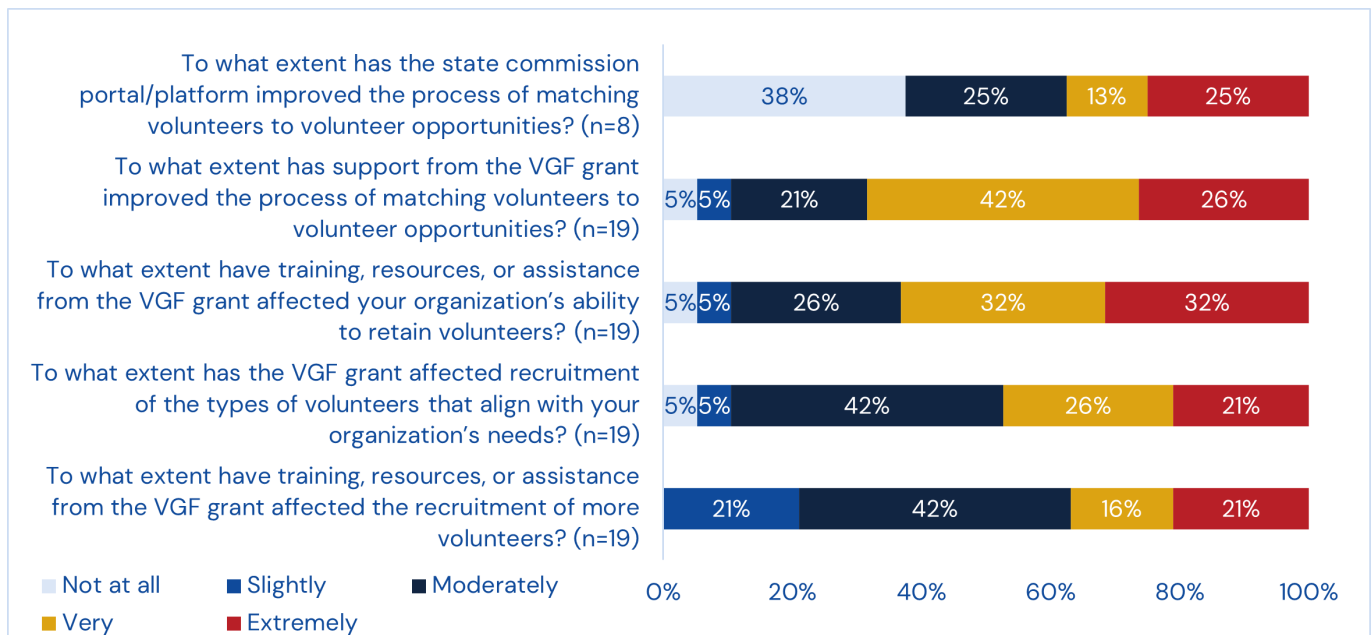
EXHIBIT 11.—Agreement with organizational need for additional training by topic



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

Lastly, survey respondents shared their perspectives on the effect of the VGF grant on various volunteer outcomes, presented in exhibit 12. As reported by survey respondents, the outcomes with the largest effect were improving the process of matching volunteers to volunteer opportunities and recruiting the types of volunteers that aligned with organizational needs (68 percent and 64 percent, respectively).

EXHIBIT 12.—Effect of VGF grant on volunteer outcomes



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

Conclusion

Overall, through Massachusetts Service Alliance's key initiatives, Service Enterprise training, mini-grants (COVID-19 and Youth Development), and regional trainings/conferences, Massachusetts Service Alliance was able to successfully support organizations' volunteer management, recruitment, and retention across the state. While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted Massachusetts Service Alliance's and volunteer organization's services, organizations were able to pivot to continue to provide training and volunteers amidst the pandemic. When faced with challenges around recruiting organizations for Service Enterprise training, Massachusetts Service Alliance identified that their new COVID-19 mini-grant could reach new nonprofit organizations across the state that they previously had been unlikely to serve. Training and services provided to nonprofit organizations emphasized intentionality in volunteer recruitment and recognition, supporting positive outcomes for participants. While Service Enterprise participants largely appreciated and valued their experiences, several voiced the desire for more collaboration opportunities with other organizations and increased emphasis of DEI within the curriculum. Massachusetts Service Alliance was already aware of this request and was working with AL!VE to identify ways to update the curriculum, as well as finding methods to incorporate diversity and inclusion through coaching or supplemental regional/state trainings provided by Massachusetts Service Alliance.

Acknowledgements

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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).

About the Office of Research and Evaluation

The [AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation](#) assists AmeriCorps and its partners in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and insights about AmeriCorps programs and civic life in America.

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