

Evaluation of AmeriCorps State Programs in New York: Volunteer Generation

New York State
Office of National and Community Service
&
The Center for Human Services Research

Overview of Presentation

- Evaluation Overview
- Methods
- Results
- Recommendations

Evaluation Overview

- Fulfills CNCS evaluation requirement for all 42 AmeriCorps State programs in NY
- Center for Human Services Research chosen by State Commission as independent evaluator
- 3-year process (2006-2009)
 - Project design
 - Data collection (10/07 – 11/08)
 - Data analysis and reporting

Project Design

- Focus on common activity/goal (volunteerism)
- Development of MIS
 - Literature review
 - Evaluation Workgroup
 - Data entry forms
 - Automated reports
- Regional trainings (Fall 2007, Spring 2008)
- TA and ongoing tracking of data

MIS Data Collection

- Data collected in three major areas:
 - Continuous volunteers (N=1,205)
 - Episodic volunteers (N=17,782)
 - Program information (31 out of 42)
- Data entry across programs was inconsistent
 - A few programs did not use the MIS
 - Some programs entered a limited sample of activities
 - Some programs entered comprehensive information

MIS Participation

- Substantial amount of data – problem is that they are not representative of statewide effort
- Many volunteers did not answer all questions
- Why ???
 - Program staff overburdened with paperwork
 - Volunteers not motivated to provide information
 - Some programs not motivated?
 - Capturing volunteer effort is difficult

Telephone Interview

- Goals
 - Fill in gaps, and explore areas not included in MIS
 - Provide comparison/validation for MIS
 - Offer each program opportunity to be heard
- Design informed by
 - Literature review
 - Lessons learned from MIS
 - Feedback from State
 - Feedback from pilot tests with program directors

Telephone Interview

- Retrospective interview, focused on 2007-08
- Administered January 2009 – March 2009
- Responses generally provided by program directors
- 100% response rate

Telephone Interview Sections

- Program Overview
- Volunteer Participation
- Episodic and Continuous Volunteer Roles, Impact, and Challenges
- Continuous Volunteers: Experiences and Attitudes
- Utility and Challenges of MIS Data Collection

Telephone Interview: Strengths and Limitations

■ Strengths

- Ability to gather information about each AmeriCorps state program
- Ability to more in-depth information
- Unique insights from perspective of PD

■ Limitations

- Missing direct feedback from volunteers, members and sub-sites
- Responses at times generalizations

Telephone Interview Results

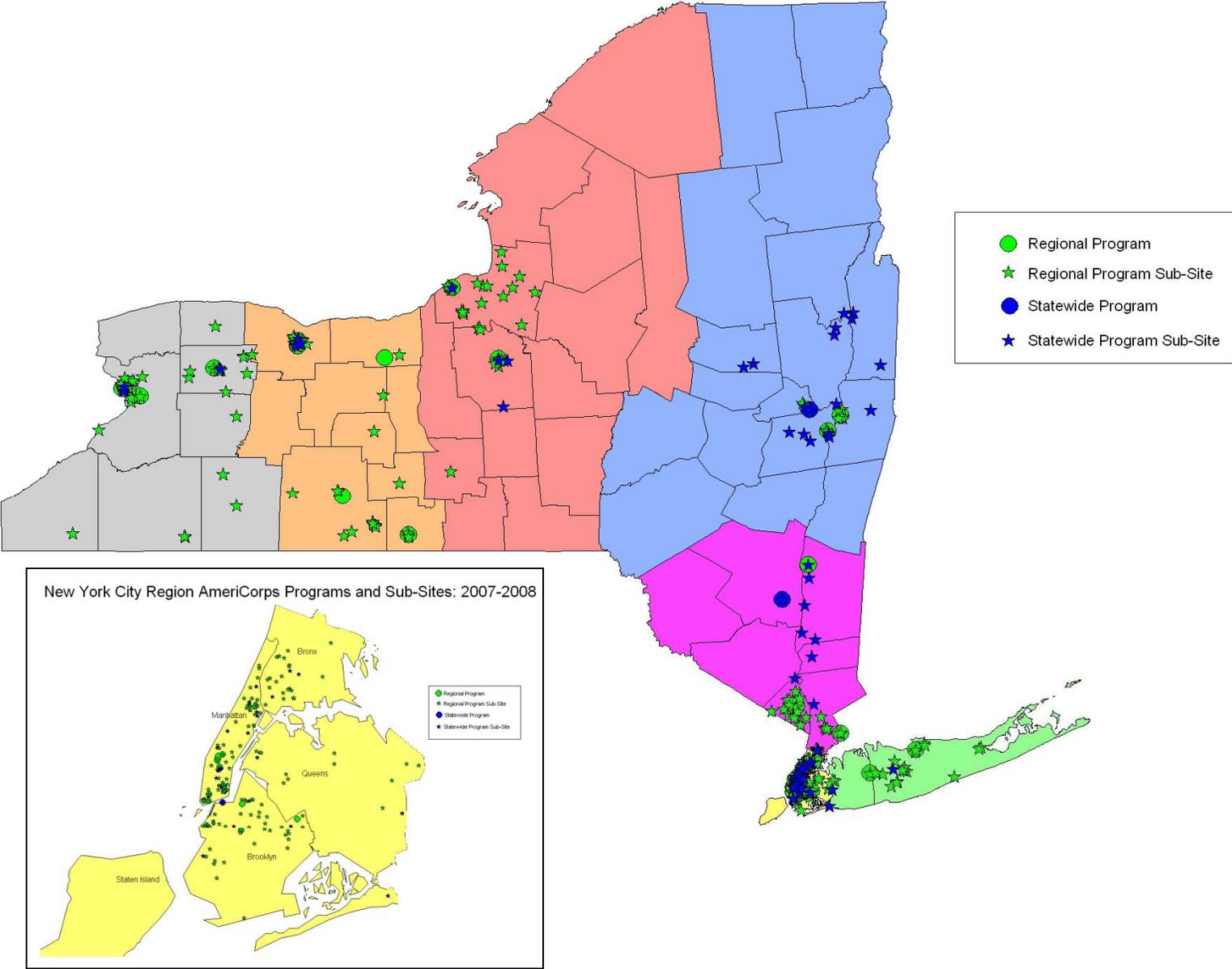
- Overview of Programs and Volunteerism
- Volunteer Practices
- Program Practices
- Volunteer Impacts
- Volunteers and Members or Staff
- Program Challenges
- Feedback on MIS

Program Overview

- Programs distributed through out each of 7 regions and statewide
- 79% of programs had multiple sub-sites
- An average of 13 sub-sites per program
- Remainder located at program (21%)

Region	Programs
NYC	41%
Statewide	17%
Buffalo	12%
Rochester	10%
Yonkers	7%
Albany	5%
Long Island	5%
Syracuse	5%

New York State AmeriCorps Programs and Sub-Sites: 2007-2008



Program Types

- Most related to Education
- Half of the programs provide services in multiple areas
- Other half focused on single services areas

Program Type	Examples	Frequency
Education	Literacy, preschool, schools	21
Work with special populations	Disabled and elderly	9
Recreation	After-school activities and sports	9
Public safety	Homeland securities, justice system, and legal services	6
Counseling	Social, emotional and nutritional	6
Environmental	Parks, gardens, conservation	5
Food banks	Distribution and delivery	4
Health	Medical, prevention, enrollment for public health insurance	3
Job training	Job skills, linkages to programs & support around attending	3
Emergency services	Emergency room and crisis intervention	3
Substance abuse	Mentoring, education and support	2
Tax preparation	Free tax preparation services	1
Technology support	Network installation and maintenance	1

How Many Volunteers?

	Continuous Volunteers	Episodic Volunteers
Programs Reporting	33	36
Median	49	232
Sum	4,061	30,422

■ Continuous Volunteers

- Range 7 to 1300
- Only 1 program above 400
- 10 programs fewer than 20

■ Episodic Volunteers

- 38 programs used yet missing accurate #s for 2
- Range 1 to 9860
- 7 programs 1000 or above
- 6 programs 20 or below

Volunteers & Population Density

- Continuous Volunteers
 - Rochester most actively engaged
 - Yonkers least actively engaged
- Episodic Volunteers
 - Buffalo & NYC most actively engaged
 - Least actively engaged are Albany & Yonkers

Region	Continuous Volunteer per 100,000 populations ¹	Episodic Volunteer per 100,000 populations ¹
Albany	13.69	11.03
Buffalo	39.30	509.03
NYC	14.04	208.65
Long Island	11.96	75.37
Rochester	109.53	95.70
Syracuse	12.76	40.50
Yonkers	3.56	22.15
NY State	21.04	164.96

¹ Based on 2007 Census County Population Estimates
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Volunteers Per Agency & Sub-Sites

Region	Continuous Volunteer Per Agency	Episodic Volunteers Per Agency
Albany	7.03	5.67
Buffalo	9.57	123.97
NYC	6.80	100.96
Long Island	15.71	99.05
Rochester	29.15	22.81
Syracuse	5.73	18.19
Yonkers	1.98	12.29

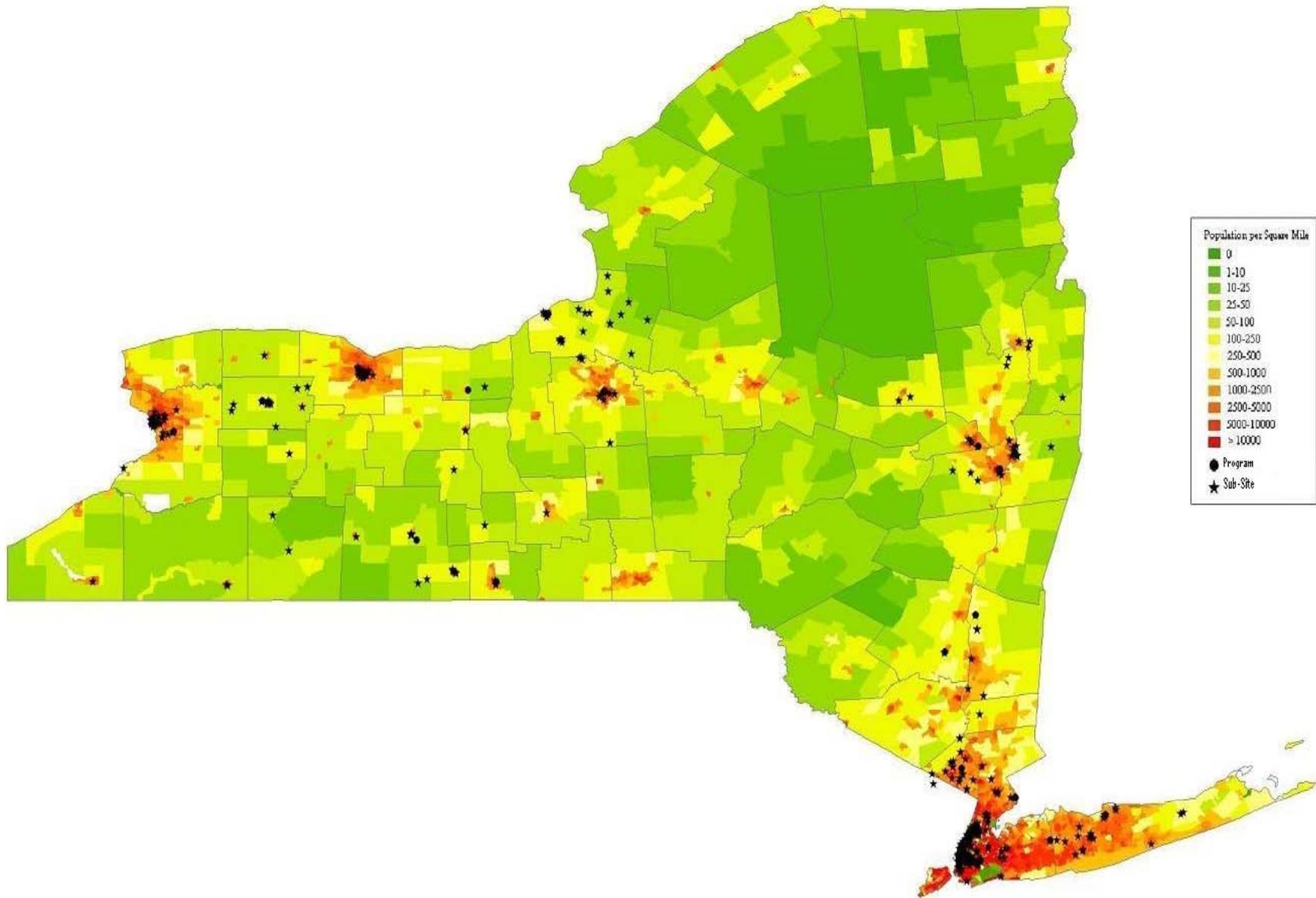
■ Continuous Volunteers

- Rochester & L.I. most actively engaged
- Least actively engaged Yonkers

■ Episodic Volunteers

- Buffalo , NYC, & L.I. most actively engaged
- Least actively engaged are Albany & Yonkers

New York State Population Density, 2000 Census With AmeriCorps Programs and Sub-Sites from 2007-2008



Volunteer Practices: Continuous Activity Types

- Most common is improved academic performance
- Closely followed by
 - Recreation
 - Environmental clean-up, restoration, or beautification
 - And administration or program operations assistance

Activity	Percent
Improve Academic Performance (Including Mentoring Or Tutoring)	60.6
Recreation (Such As Picnic, Field-Trip)	54.5
Environmental Clean-Up, Restoration, Or Beautification	54.4
Administrative Or Program Operations Assistance	51.5
Provide Companionship Or Basic Assistance	48.5
Develop General Skills To Promote Productive, Independent Functioning	45.5
Other	36.4
Develop Professional/Job Skills	33.3
AmeriCorps Member Development Or Volunteer Recruitment	33.3
Charity/Fund Raising (Such As Bake Sale, Blood Drive)	33.3
Coaching (Non-Academic)	27.3
Emergency Preparedness Or Violence Prevention	24.2
Improve Access To Or Quality Of Health Care	18.2
Build, Repair, Or Help Locate Better Living Conditions	12.1

Volunteer Practices: Episodic Activity Types

Activity	Percent
Environmental Clean-Up, Restoration, Or Beautification	71.1
Recreation (Such As Picnic, Field-Trip)	60.5
Improve Academic Performance (Including Mentoring and Tutoring)	39.5
Other	39.5
Charity/Fund Raising (Such As Bake Sale, Blood Drive)	34.2
Provide Companionship Or Basic Assistance	31.6
Administrative Or Program Operations Assistance	28.9
Develop General Skills To Promote Productive, Independent Functioning	26.3
Build, Repair, Or Help Locate Better Living Conditions	23.7
Coaching (Non-Academic)	21.1
Develop Professional/Job Skills	18.4
AmeriCorps Member Development Or Volunteer Recruitment	18.4
Emergency Preparedness Or Violence Prevention	18.4
Improve Access To Or Quality Of Health Care	18.4

- Most common is environmental clean-up, restoration, or beautification
- Followed by
 - Recreation
 - Improving academic performance

Program Practices: Recruiting

Strategies Used	# of Programs Used	# of Programs Indicated as successful
Individual networking	33	28
Information technology	21	6
Establishing relationships with institutions	18	9
Use of leaflets or flyers	15	4
Use of media	11	N/A
Phone calls	8	4
Attending events such as fairs or conferences	7	4
Use of mandated volunteer programs	3	3
Providing incentives	2	1
Mailings	2	N/A
Presentations	1	1

Program Practices: Orientation and/or Training

- Orientation and/or training offered by close to 90% of programs
- Covered content specific info related to
 - Volunteer responsibilities
 - Program and project overviews
 - General volunteer requirements and expectations
- Ranged from 2 hrs to 2 weeks

In reference to Continuous Volunteers only

Program Practices: Supervision & Oversight

- Supervision provided by 85% of programs ¹
- Varied across programs ¹
 - On-going, at least three times a month, or as needed
- Oversight of volunteer initiative
 - Most often designated full time staff
 - Often took place at sub-site or multiple individuals were responsible

Program Practices: Volunteer Retention

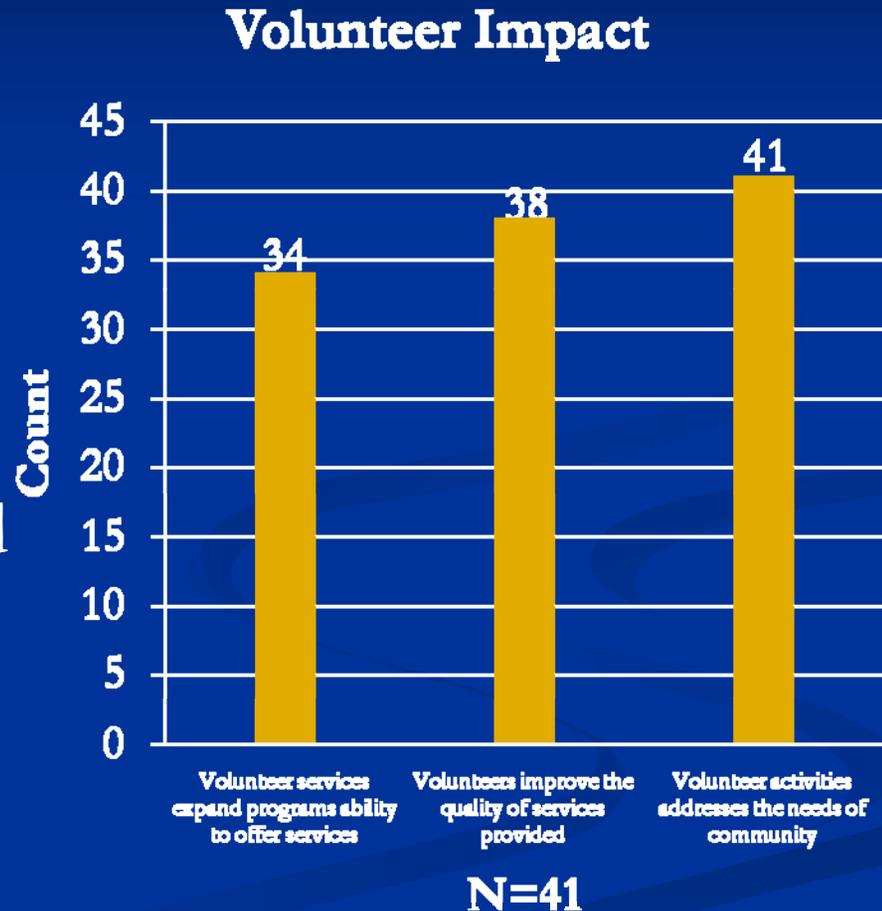
- Programs took steps to retain volunteers including:
 - Volunteer recognition mechanism in place
 - Tokens of appreciation/inexpensive gifts, Certificates, awards, plaques, Public verbal or written acknowledgement
 - Taking steps to improve volunteer experience
 - Soliciting feedback, Adding trainings, Providing educational/career development activities

Program Practices: Associations

- Potential gains from offering orientation and/or training
 - More likely that volunteers are highly reliable/reliable and highly respected
- Programs offering orientation and/or trainings more likely to
 - Take steps to improve the experience of volunteers

Volunteer Impacts: Expansion, Quality and Community Needs

- 83% of programs report volunteers expand their ability to offer services
- 93% report volunteers improve the quality of services that they offered
- 100% report volunteer activities address needs of local community

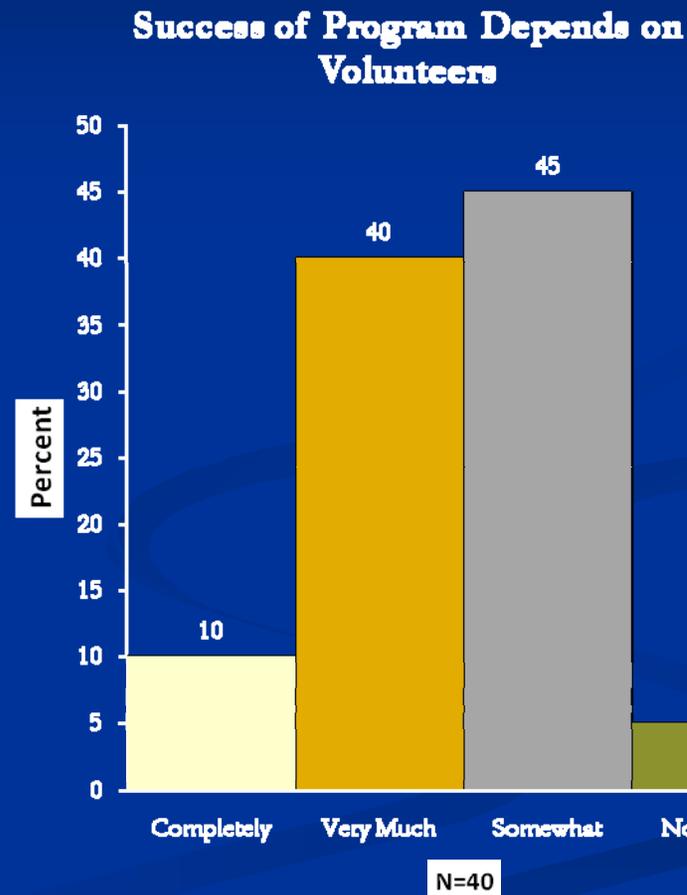


Volunteer Impacts: Other

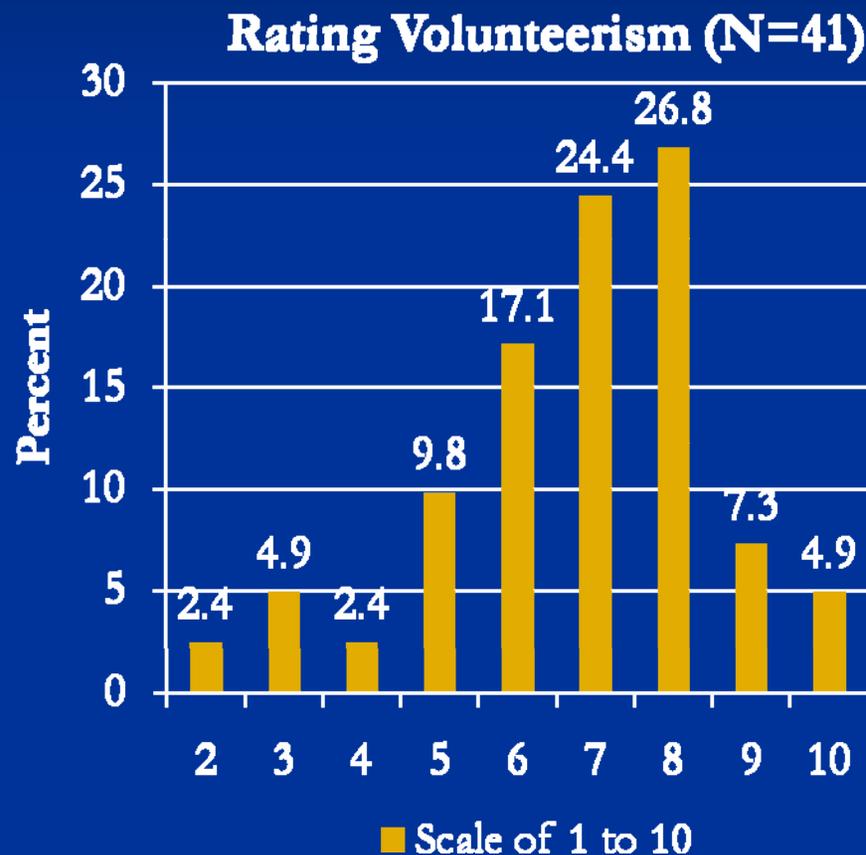
- Over 2/3 report other impacts
- Three areas:
 - Community, increasing connections and expanding resources
 - Increased publicity, program visibility and public awareness
 - Individual impacts, emotional, educational and physical

Volunteer Impacts: Success Depends on Volunteers

- Majority of programs depend 'very much' or 'somewhat' on volunteers
- Four indicate depend completely on volunteers
- Only two do not depend on volunteers at all



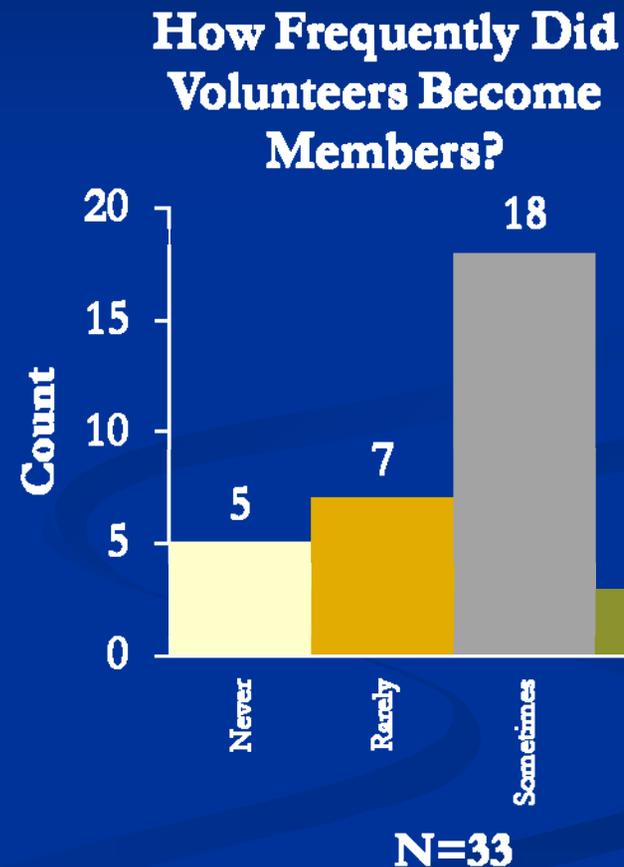
Volunteer as an Important Goal



- Scale of 1 to 10 where
 - 1 = Least important goal & 10 = Most important goal
- Program's rated Volunteerism a 7 on average.

Volunteers and Members

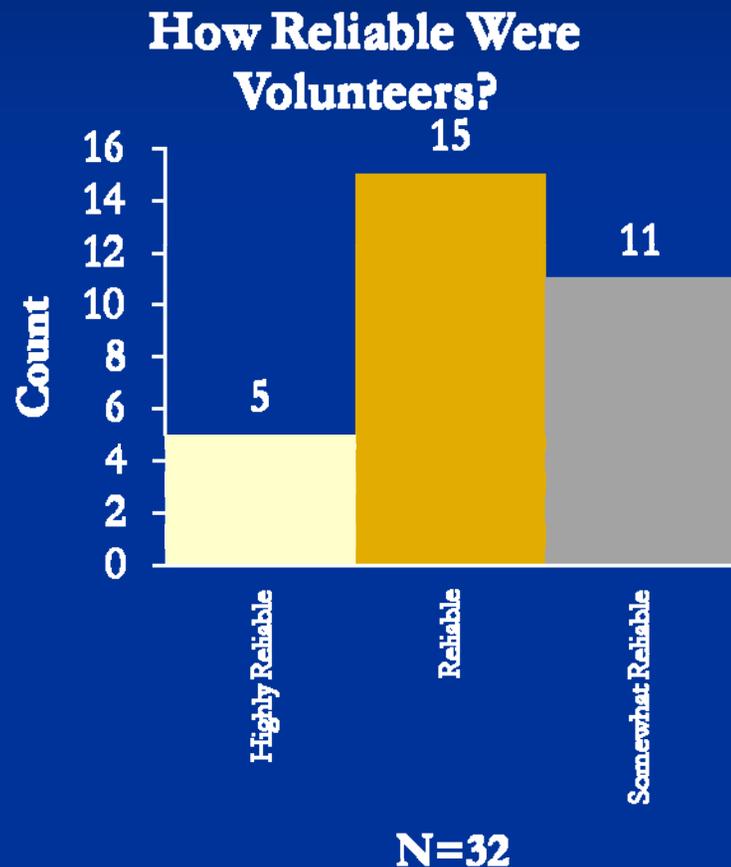
- Almost all programs (98%) report that members play a role recruiting volunteers
- Over half programs (55%) report volunteers become members sometimes¹



Interactions between Volunteers & Members/Staff

- Issues of note existed in over a 1/4 of programs
 - Related to supervision or administration, resources, skill level, & roles
- Yet volunteers were either highly respected (58%) or respected (39%)
- And the attitude towards/about volunteers was either positive (55%) or extremely positive (39%)

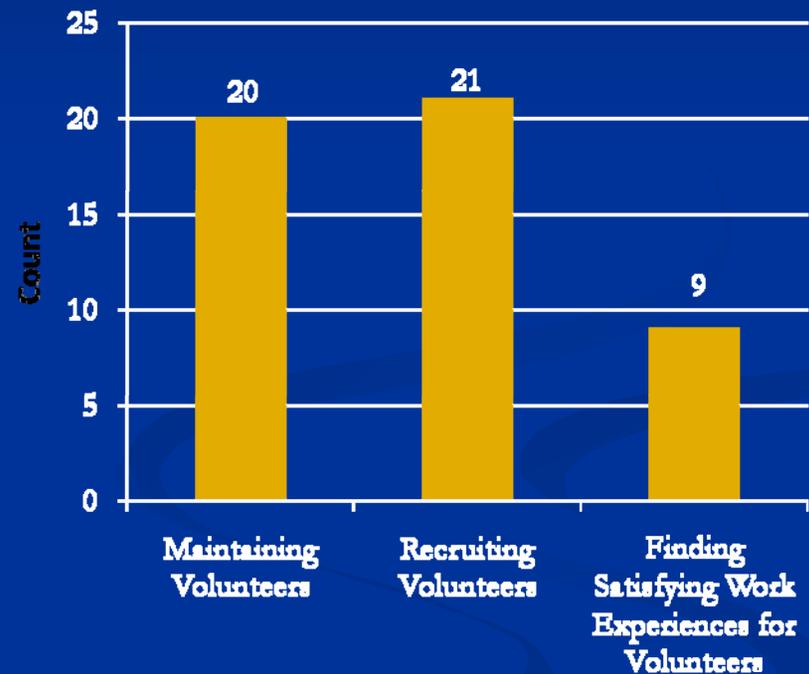
Volunteers' Ability



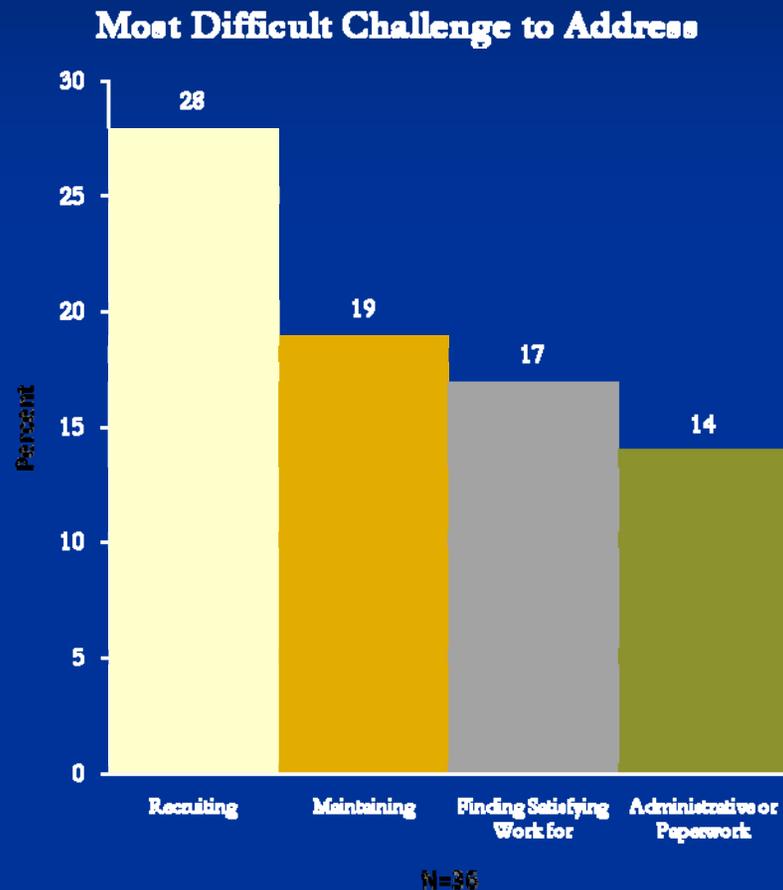
- Volunteers reliability
 - Reliable (47%),
 - Somewhat reliable (34%)
 - Or highly reliable (16%)
- 97% programs report volunteers successfully complete tasks

Program Challenges

- Over half the programs report challenges in
 - Recruiting volunteers
 - Maintaining volunteers
- ‘Other’ challenges mentioned
- Most frequent ‘Other’ is administrative issues



Most Difficult Challenges



- Recruiting- most difficult challenge to address
- Programs report that these challenges are most difficult due to:
 - Lack of resources
 - Problems with individual volunteers
 - Issues in school environments
 - Matching volunteers to settings or sites

Feedback on MIS: Impressions of Website

- Majority of responses were positive
 - Easy to use/user friendly (mentioned 18 times)
 - Good, simple, flexible, helpful, etc. (17 times)
- Yet some programs had negative impressions
 - Tedious, repetitive, confusing (11 times)
- What's useful and difficult about website?
 - Tracking information was useful
 - Thought to be confusing/unclear

Feedback on MIS: Data Collection

- Close to $\frac{3}{4}$ programs report data collection could have been made easier
 - Most frequently related to paperwork
- Suggestion to allow members and/or volunteers access to enter data online
- Concerns about duplicating efforts
 - Compatibility with existing systems

Recommendations: State Level

1. Offer state level and/or regional trainings on overall recruitment strategies and those targeted to specific population groups.
2. Organize regional and/or state-level events and activities.
3. Foster linkages with other state-level agencies and organizations to promote volunteerism.

Recommendations: State Level Cont.

4. Develop a data system that permits direct data entry by volunteers.
5. Initiate statewide publicity campaigns to promote volunteer recruitment.
6. Develop a template for a volunteer handbook.
7. Continue to support research around AmeriCorps volunteerism to ensure informed decision making.

Recommendations: Program Level

1. Provide formal orientations and trainings for continuous volunteers.
2. Recognize volunteers who successfully complete an assigned task.
3. Increase oversight at the sub-site level.

Recommendations: Program Level Cont.

4. Utilize members and volunteers who complete their service and report positive experiences as a potential marketing resource.
5. Conduct community surveys to help define effective recruitment strategies and develop service projects.

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