

California Agency Volunteer Needs Assessment Survey (CAVNA)

The California Agency Volunteer Needs Assessment Survey (CAVNA) was conducted in order to assess the use of selected volunteer management best practices by California agencies located near participating volunteer centers. Volunteer Centers that helped administer the survey are interested in improving their reach as a resource for their local agencies. Research has shown that that focus on the following three volunteer management practices could significantly build capacity for agencies to recruit more volunteers and retain them longer:

- Creating focused job descriptions for each volunteer position in order to increase the likelihood of an appropriate match of volunteers with opportunities. Creating focused job descriptions also helps agencies define and refine their volunteer needs.
- Implementing formal, written volunteer policies and procedures. This helps agencies become more informed about volunteer management requirements, as well as being more attentive to volunteer needs.
- Ongoing public volunteer recognition events that focus attention on volunteers and express appreciation for the services they perform.

Results from the CAVNA survey indicate, in general, that agencies have more difficulty recruiting volunteers than they have retaining them. This might have been predicted since, in general, CAVNA survey participants reported less focus on creating targeted job descriptions to facilitate the recruitment process than on scheduling regular recognition events once volunteers have been recruited. Only a small percentage of participants reported that online volunteer-agency matching resources had helped them find volunteers, and the majority of responders expressed the wish that local volunteer centers had more resources to help with recruitment efforts.

Summary of CAVNA Survey Results (297 responders)

A. General Questions

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 high, 64% of responders awarded a "10" to the statement, "Volunteer labor is critical to the success of my organization." A total of 95% rated this statement as 5 or above.
2. On the same scale, 3% gave a 10 to the statement, "It is easy for us to recruit volunteers," and a total of 63% rated this statement as 5 or above.
3. Again, using the 10-high rating scale, 15% of responders gave a 10 to the statement, "Our volunteers tend to come back year after year." A total of 81% rated this statement as 5 or above.
4. The statement, "Increased access to volunteer resources would significantly increase my organization's capacity to fulfill its mission," received a 9 or above from 54% of responders, and 38% rated it between 5 and 8.
5. Types of Participating Organizations:

Social Services	21%
Education	17%

Youth Services	14%
Health Services	13%
Senior Services	10%
Performing Arts and/or Arts Education	7%
Literacy	5%
Employment Services	4%
Faith-Based/Religious Services	3%
Animal Services	2%
Courts/Legal Services	2%
Environmental Services	2%
Family Planning	1%
Immigrant Services	1%

6. Participation by Zip Code:

The following 143 Zip Codes were represented in the study (NOTE: Please read from right to left. The number next to the 5 digit Zip Code designates how many times that Zip Code occurred.)

90013	90064	91011	91016	91024	91105	91107-2	91301	91321
91322	91343	91350	91351	91355-2	91390	91702	91724	91754
91775	91950	92008	92101	92104	92507	92701	93010	93301
93401-3	93611	93636	93638	93662	93670	93706	93710-2	93720-3
93721-4	93726-3	94087	94102	94105	94110	94501-2	94513	94518
94519-3	94520-8	94521-3	94523-4	94526-3	94538	94541-2	94545	94546
94550-2	94553-2	94563	94564	94565-5	94566	94568	94577	94583-2
94591	94595-2	94596-4	94597-3	94598-3	94602-3	94607	94609-2	94610
94611	94612-4	94618-2	94621	94702-3	94705-2	94710-2	94801	94802
94803	94805	94928-3	94951	94952-5	94953	95005-2	95006	95010
95060	95060-11	95061	95062-2	95065	95076-11	95204	95401-6	95402-3
95403-9	95404-6	95405-3	95407-2	95425	95431	95437	95446	95462
95476-2	95482	95492-2	95501-6	95502-4	95503-3	95521	95531-3	95540
95573	95603-3	95604	95613	95618	95628	95650-3	95658	95660-2
95661	95678-6	95746-2	95747-2	95759	95765	95814-4	95815-2	95816-3
95820	95821-2	95822	95825-2	95826	95827-3	95834	95841	

In addition, various participants remarked that their organizations covered all of the San Francisco Bay Area, Contra Costa County, Alameda County, Solano County, and/or San Diego County areas.

7. The types of services provided by volunteers ran the gamut, from basic administrative services all the way to performing highly skilled functions such as giving legal advice and/or preparing income tax returns. Most responders depended on volunteers to perform basic clerical/administrative tasks, staff special events, assist with fundraising, and/or serve as board members.

8. Of responding organizations, 28% employed a full-time volunteer coordinator, 17% employed a half-time volunteer coordinator, 5% employed a quarter-time volunteer coordinator, and 33% had no volunteer coordinator on staff. In the written comments, some participants noted that they had a volunteer who acted as

volunteer coordinator; that acting as volunteer coordinator was part of one staff member's job responsibilities; or that a board member assisted with volunteer coordination.

9. The question about how many volunteers served at each organization each year offered "100-or-more" as the highest number category, and some responders pointed that their organization uses thousands of volunteers each year, so "100-or-more" was not a representative category for them. That said, 42% responded that they use 100-or-more volunteers per year, 21% used from 40-to-99 volunteers each year, and 37% used from one-to-39.

10. The same difficulty arose with regard to the question about the annual number of hours that volunteers serve. Fifty-five percent responded that volunteers contribute 41-or-more hours each year with the caveat that "more than 41" could be hundreds or even thousands of hours.

B. Volunteer Recruitment

11. Only 19% of responders felt that local volunteer centers had been "very helpful" in assisting with volunteer recruitment efforts. Thirty-five percent responded that local volunteer centers had been "fairly helpful." Twenty-eight percent responded that local volunteer centers had "not been very helpful," and 11% reported that they had never contacted a volunteer center. Eight percent of responders wrote specific comments reporting, among other things, that 1) they had not made a significant effort to work with a local volunteer center, or 2) their efforts to work with a volunteer center had not met with much success.

12. With regard to volunteer recruitment strategies used within the past year (responders were asked to check all that apply), the top three favorites were 1) organizational websites, 2) social and professional networking, and 3) newsletters. Next in line were local volunteer centers, brochures, festivals, print media, college campuses, and online volunteer matching resources. Recruitments, flyers, churches, schools, and word-of-mouth were mentioned frequently in written comments.

13. The top three most successful volunteer recruitment strategies were reported to be: 1) organizational websites, 2) social and professional networking, and 3) print media. Following these were online matching resources, newsletters, local volunteer centers, festivals, college campuses, and brochures.

14. Forty-two percent of participating organizations reported that they had never used an online volunteer-agency matching website. Nineteen percent reported that they had accessed an online volunteer-agency matching website just once or twice in the past year. Less than 2% reported that they used online volunteer-agency matching resources every day.

15. When asked which online volunteer-agency matching resources they have used, participants mentioned Volunteer Match.org (58 times), Volunteer Center of Contra Costa County (17), Craig's List (16), Volunteer Centers of California (13), idealist.org (11), and Hands On Sacramento (10). Participants also mentioned the Volunteer Center of Fresno, Volunteer Center of the East Bay, and the Volunteer Center of San Francisco. Volunteer.org was mentioned six times.

16. Twenty-three percent of participants reported that they found online matching

resources “not very helpful;” 23% reported that online matching resources were “fairly helpful;” and only 12% reported that they were “very helpful.” Thirty-six percent of participants reported that they have never accessed an online volunteer-agency matching resource.

C. Volunteer Retention

17. Forty-seven percent of participants describe their volunteer turnover rate as medium; 37% described it as low; and 9% described it as high. In the written comments, some people wrote that they didn’t know how to assess their volunteer turnover rate since they had no basis for comparison.

18. Twenty-five percent of participants reported that they wrote focused job descriptions for each volunteer position that was offered by their organization. Twenty-three percent reported that they used a standardized job description template and filled in the blanks for different volunteer positions. Thirty-four percent hardly ever used volunteer job descriptions, and 12% never used volunteer job descriptions at all.

19. Eighty-six percent of responders reported that volunteers received some kind of orientation or training at their organizations. Five percent reported that volunteers did not receive any kind of orientation or training at all. It was clear from written comments that there were many different kinds and degrees of orientation and training being offered. Some organizations offered very rigorous, standardized training to new volunteers, some offered informal oversight and mentorship, others had less formal training that varied greatly based on the level of skill that was required from each volunteer.

20. The most frequent volunteer recognition activities (76%) included thank you notes, cards, or letters (participants were asked to check “all that apply”). Sixty-two percent of participating organizations recognized their volunteers through “thank you” lunches or dinners. Forty-two percent offered award presentation events, 33% gave their volunteers gifts or gift certificates, and 30% recognized their volunteers through newsletters or print media feature articles, wall plaques, and/or certificates.

21. Forty-five percent of responders had scheduled either one or two volunteer recognition events during the past year. Eleven percent had scheduled six or more volunteer recognition events. Ten percent said they had not scheduled any volunteer recognition events at all.

22. With regard to the upcoming year, 42% of participants were planning either one or two volunteer recognition events. Eleven percent were planning six or more volunteer recognition events, and 9% weren’t planning any volunteer recognition events.

23. Forty-two percent of participating organizations had never attended, nor had they sent any staff members to attend a volunteer management training seminar. Twenty-one percent had staff participating in volunteer management training once every few years, and 19% had staff participating in volunteer management training more than once per year.

24. When asked what kinds of volunteer management training members of their organization had received, responders mentioned trainings in volunteer recruitment,

retention, recognition, case management, risk management, time management, and diversity, among others. Responders reported having attended management trainings offered by DOVIA, VCOR, the California Association of Nonprofits (CAN), various other conferences and seminars, local volunteer centers, local nonprofit resource agencies, brownbag lunches, and internal gatherings such as staff meetings.

D. Conclusion

25. There were 53 written comments at the end of the survey, most describing the many volunteer needs and characteristics that were unique to each organization. Numerous participants expressed the need for greater access to volunteer management resources and training. Some expressed frustration with online resources, since there is so much potential there, but the technology hasn't evolved enough to serve the variable needs and interests of widely diverse organizations. There were also numerous comments that expressed appreciation for their local volunteer centers, as well as gratitude for being asked to take the survey.

"We didn't know that resources to learn this information existed. Doing the survey gave us an indication of the kinds of things we need to do."

"A copy of this survey would be useful in targeting areas of improvement."

"Your survey was helpful to me in the thought-provoking questions you asked. This has given me several good ideas for follow-up...."

California Agency Volunteer Needs Assessment Survey (CAVNA)

A. General Questions:

1. Rate the following statement on a scale of 1-10, with 10 high: "Volunteer labor is critical to the success of my organization."
2. Rate the following statement on a scale of 1-10, with 10 high: "It is easy for us to recruit volunteers when we need them."
3. Rate the following statement on a scale of 1-10, with 10 high: "Our volunteers tend to come back year after year."
4. Rate the following statement on a scale of 1-10, with 10 high: "Increased access to volunteer resources would significantly increase my organization's capacity to fulfill its mission."
5. What kind of services does your organization provide? (Check all that apply.)
6. What is your organization's zip code?
7. Name the three most important functions (separated with commas) that volunteers perform for your organization.
8. Does your organization have a volunteer coordinator on staff...?
9. Approximately how many volunteers have worked at your organization in the past year?
10. In the past year approximately how many (combined) hours have volunteers contributed to your organization each week?
11. How helpful have volunteer centers/organizations been in providing volunteer resources for your organization?

B. Volunteer Recruitment

12. In the past year what kinds of volunteer recruitment strategies has your organization used? (Please check all that apply.)

13. Which volunteer recruitment strategies have been most successful for you? (Please check all that apply.)
14. How often in the past year has your organization accessed an online volunteer-agency matching website?
15. Which online volunteer-agency matching website or websites did you access? (Please separate multiple responses with commas.)
16. How helpful have online volunteer-agency matching resources been in connecting you with volunteers?

C. Volunteer Retention:

17. Generally speaking how would you describe your volunteer turnover rate?
18. How involved does your agency get in writing focused job descriptions for each volunteer position?
19. Do volunteers receive any kind of orientation or training at your organization?
20. In the past year what volunteer recognition activities has your organization been involved in? (Please check all that apply.)
21. How many volunteer recognition activities/events has your organization been involved in over the past year?
22. How many volunteer recognition activities/events does your organization have planned for the upcoming year?
23. How often have you or staff members or your organization attended a volunteer management training seminar?
24. If yes, what kind of training?

D. Conclusion:

25. Please any further feedbacks or comments that you think might be helpful to us. The more we know about the volunteer needs of your organization the better we can help you!

*If you have any questions or comments please contact grants@vcla.net