REPORT ON AN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS SURVEY
FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF VOLUNTEERS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HISTORY

"Volunteer administrators need a professional level education to perfect a philosophy, a body of knowledge, and a discipline to apply skills effectively and ethically."[1] Previous to this study, the interest in specialized education for volunteer administrators was demonstrated by the convening of two national conferences (in 1970 and 1974) on education for volunteer administrators.

Since the National Learning Resource Center was instituted by the National Information Center on Volunteerism, Inc. in January of 1975, a National Alliance of Volunteerism has been formed by eleven major organizations in the volunteer field. This Alliance will address issues confronting volunteerism today. Two of the eleven issue-oriented Alliance task forces are concerned with education, training, and certification for volunteer administration. As a result of these task forces, the thrust toward specialized education has greatly accelerated.

Six national meetings on education for volunteer administrators have been convened between January and November, 1975. These meeting were held to discuss relevant issues, formulate goals, plan, implement, and evaluate the best actions possible to fill the education, training, and certification needs of individual volunteer administrators and the growing profession. It has been imperative that these goals be formulated from reliable data defining the real needs for education, training, and certification in the field today.

In the voluntary sector, only intuitive and fragmentary information has been available concerning the educational needs and goals of volunteer leaders. This shortage of objective, reliable data forces goal formulations to be based on unverified theories and disputed beliefs. Thus, the leadership of the volunteer movement and educators of volunteer administrators have suffered a greatly reduced ability to plan for the future.[2]

Absence of data stifled other early efforts to address the issue of education for volunteer administrators. The participants in a conference on College Curricula for the Leadership of Human Service Volunteer Programs, convened in

Boulder, Colorado by the National Information Center on Volunteerism
in November, 1970 identified major implementary issues regarding such
college curricula. Among these issues were: (1) What kind of college would
be best? (2) From what kind of content area should the curriculum be derived?
(3) Should there be more specific courses and curricular content? (4) How
can continuing responsibility in the area of education be provided?

The task forces formed to address each issue reported the following: the
creation of new schools or departments was not appropriate. Educational
programs on volunteer management should be developed from existing curricula
which could be used as a starting point to develop an interdisciplinary set of
courses based on the needs of the volunteer administrator. Planning for these
courses must be done with the volunteer administrator, not for her/him. This
conference could conceive of no perfect models without further research. The
charge of continuing responsibility for this effort in education could not be
dealt with because the effort was not yet identified, nor was an on-going
vehicle to receive that responsibility available.[3] This 1970 conference
identified specific areas where lack of research data inhibited the planning
and thus the implementation of curricula for volunteer administrators.

Since that conference, several researches have been conducted. In 1973, the
National Student Volunteer Program conducted a training needs assessment for
student volunteer program directors and advisors. That assessment indicated
that the top priority learning needs for the group studied were: (1) how to
be a trainer; (2) how-to-set program objectives and manage a program in
accordance with program objectives; and (3) how to raise funds.[4]

Dr. Robert Wilson, University of Michigan, conducted a study of practicing
volunteer administrators which explored many phases of attitudes towards
volunteerism. The need for preparatory and on-going education for volunteer
administrators was clearly expressed.[5]

October, 1974 brought the convening of a conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan
entitled, The First National Conference on Education for Voluntary Action.
Again, the participants in the workshops indicated a need for research data.

The research priorities were ranked as follow:

(1) Comprehensive information on current volunteer administrators.

(2) Data on current and projected career opportunities

(3) Listings of available learning resources.

(4) Educational alternatives.[6]

Since this renewed call for research in the area of education for volunteer administrators, Dr. Charles M. Unkovic has conducted a demonstration study in Florida to assess higher educational opportunities in volunteerism. He con- cluded that most efforts in this area were inadequate. "A search of the literature does not suggest that there has been any concentrated effort . . . to a systematic approach to the overall problem . . . (and) indicates scant information describing any attempts at any types of structural educational endeavors."[7]

Taken separately or collectively, these research undertakings do not answer the need for data concerning the education of volunteer administrators. Lack of verified theories has led to the airing of disputed beliefs. In Volunteer Service News, February, 1974, the Washington State Office of Voluntary Action took a position against the pursuit and encouragement of the development of specialized degree curricula in volunteer administration.[8]

In an editorial response, the Spring, 1974 Volunteers for Social Justice, published by NICOV, stated that although the editor endorsed the need for a creative variety of continuing educational opportunity models, he believes that the alternative for specialized degree programs in volunteer administration should remain and be expanded.

The National Center for Voluntary Action, during a series of workshops conducted in the Spring of 1975, administered workshop evaluations which identified learning needs of volunteer administrators as well as significant demographic information. In response to this data, eight workshops were developed to meet the eight highest indicated learning needs. (The following are listed in random order.)

(1) Information systems.

(2) How to make the government work for you.

(3) Board development for board and staff.

(4) Planning and conducting a workshop.

(5) Developing administrative skills in personnel management and fiscal cont

(6) The organization process.

(7) Recruiting and retaining low income volunteers.

(8) Guidelines for a curriculum in volunteer administration.[9]

This list of priority learning needs supports the data presented in this study.

In January of 1975, the National Information Center on Volunteerism responded to
this urgent need for data regarding the educational needs, goals, and modalities
for implementing educational opportunities in volunteer administration by creating
the National Learning Resource Center. The function of this Center is to facilitate
information exchange, conduct research in the area of education and training
modalities, and develop education and training packages to address the needs
indicated by this research.   These data answer the demand for research from
which goals can be formulated, plans developed, and implementation, evaluation,
and follow-up begun. (NOTE: Archival information on research data, conference
reports, articles, etc., is available from the Problem-Solving Information
Retrieval Library (PIRL), NICOV, Box 4179, Boulder, Colorado 80302.)

METHODOLOGY

Developing and Testing the Instrument

The survey questions were written by the National Learning Resource Center staff. The proposed survey was then sent for review to the National Center for Voluntary Action and the Project for Service Learning of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. The instrument was pre-tested on 72 attendees at the University of Colorado Volunteer Management Certificate Program's advanced workshop. Since the instrument worked very well, these 72 responses were included in the survey data.

A double postcard survey was developed by the NLRC staff that would increase the available data on the two most vital questions (learning needs and preferred modalities). The postcard survey asked the same two questions on needs and modalities as did the full eleven-page survey. This follow-up effort was necessary due to low survey returns. Further details are presented in the section Survey Response and Survey Follow-up Process.

Choosing the Sample

A random sample of the closest approximation of the entire population of volunteer coordinators was considered the most desirable sample. Therefore, a list of Voluntary Action Centers and Volunteer Bureaus was compiled, numbering approximatel 250. Each of these agencies was mailed a request for the address lists of directors, coordinators, and supervisors of volunteer programs in their area. Approximately 100 local mailing lists of directors were received from over 30 states representing both urban and rural areas.

Next, 500 addresses were chosen at random from the lists received. An 11-page survey entitled, Educational Needs Survey for the Leadership of Volunteer Programs was mailed with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, program description, and cover letter to each of these 500 addresses.

Survey Response and Survey Follow-up Process

Only 40 of these 500 surveys were returned within the eight weeks allotted. (Ten

was due probably to the extensive length of the survey; however, motivation might also have been a factor. Ten full surveys were administered at a conference of volunteer leadership in Pennsylvania. All ten of these surveys were returned to the researcher.

Eight weeks after the first surveys were mailed, a follow-up process began. This process consisted of two mailings. Two hundred and twenty-five full, 11-page surveys with self-addressed, stamped envelopes, program descriptions, and cover letters, and 225 double postcard, abridged surveys were mailed to the 450 volunteer administrators who had not returned the first survey.

Of these 225 follow-up full surveys, 53 were returned. Sixty-two of the 225 follow-up postcard surveys were returned. At the same time as these 450 follow-up surveys were mailed, 275 additional postcard surveys were mailed to addresses chosen at random from the 100 mailing lists. The original 500 addresses chosen from the lists had been removed. Therefore, these 275 postcard survey recipients were receiving the survey for the first time. Seventy-seven of these postcards were returned. No follow-up was attempted on the 198 unreturned surveys.

A total of 838 people received surveys. Three hundred and twelve people returned the survey. Therefore, the total return was 37 percent. This is an acceptable survey return. Whenever survey returns are less than 100 percent, which is nearly always the case, some bias is introduced into the data through the self-selectivity of the respondents. Moreover, due to the homogeneity of the respondents, if any subgroup were un-, under-, or over-represented, indications are that the results would not have been skewed. (See survey results, page 14)

The sample of 312 is considered a fairly large representation of the total estimated population of 60,000 volunteer administrators, in fact the sample represents .5 percent of the total estimated population. (60,000 does not include volunteer administrators in the religious sector, nor does the sample.) Finally, from available, alphabetical mailing provided by VACs, the sample was drawn in a random manner. It is hoped that in future studies, time and resources will permit more rigorous sampling procedures, however; for purposes of this study, this sample is adequate.

DATA RESULTS

Demographic Information

N = 173 for all demographic data

Age:

    27% of volunteer directors are between 21 and 30 years of age.

    25% of volunteer directors are between 31 and 40 years of age.

    22% of volunteer directors are between 41 and 50 years of age.

    14% of volunteer directors are between 51 and 60 years of age.

    4% of volunteer directors are over 60 years of age.

    8% blank.

The mean age of volunteer directors is 36.

Ethnic Background:

    74% of volunteer directors are Non-Minority.

    3% of volunteer directors are Black.

    1.8% of volunteer directors are Chicano.

    1.8% of volunteer directors are Jewish.

    .6% of volunteer directors are American Indian.

    .6% of volunteer directors are Oriental.

    13% other and blank

Sex:

    74% of volunteer directors are women.

    26% of volunteer directors are men.

Geographic Area of Employment:

    72% of volunteer directors work in agencies serving an urban area.

    28% of volunteer directors work in agencies serving a rural area.

Human Service Area Served:

    28% of volunteer directors serve the health and hospitals system.

    21% of volunteer directors serve the community service system.

    18% of volunteer directors serve the criminal justice system.

    15% of volunteer directors serve the educational system.

Level of Education:

  5% of volunteer directors have 12 years of education.

15% of volunteer directors have 13-14 years of education.

43% of volunteer directors have 15-16 years of education.

24% of volunteer directors have 17-18 years of education.

  7% of volunteer directors have 19 or more years of education.

  6% blank.

Area of Education:

30% of volunteer directors have majored in social sciences.

18% of volunteer directors have majored in humanities.

  4% of volunteer directors have majored in business administration.

  4% of volunteer directors have majored in technical studies.

  2% of volunteer directors have majored in physical sciences.

13% other.

29% blank.

Number of Years in Volunteer Leadership:

56% of volunteer directors have been in roles as leaders of volunteers for 0-5 years.

22% of volunteer directors have been in roles as leaders of volunteers for 6-11 years.

11% of volunteer directors have been in roles as leaders of volunteers for 12-17 years.

  4% of volunteer directors have been in roles as leaders of volunteers for 18-23 years.

  7% of volunteer directors have been in roles as leaders of volunteers for more than 23 years.

The average number of years a volunteer director has been in the role as leader of volunteers is 7.2 years.

Yearly Salary: (All salaries for part-time work were converted to full-time
                 salary equivalents.)

    11% of volunteer directors are volunteers ($0 per year).

    5% of volunteer directors receive $ 5,001 - 7,000 per year.

    14% of volunteer directors receive $ 7,001 - 9,000 per year.

    29% of volunteer directors receive $ 9,001 - 11,000 per year.

    12% of volunteer directors receive $11,001 - 13,000 per year.

    9% of volunteer directors receive $13,001 - 15,000 per year.

    1% of volunteer directors receive $15,001 - 17,000 per year.

    4% of volunteer directors receive $17,001 - 19,000 per year.

    3% of volunteer directors receive $19,001 - 21,000 per year.

    12% Blank

Arithmetic mean is $9,675.00

Titles:

    27% of volunteer directors have the title, Coordinator of Volunteer Servic

    18% of volunteer directors have the title, Executive or Program Director.

    18% of volunteer directors have the title, Director of Volunteer Services.

    28% of volunteer directors have "other" programmatic titles such as
      "social worker", "child protection worker", "project manager", etc.

Participation in Educational Opportunities for Volunteer Administrators:

    75% of volunteer directors have participated in educational opportunities*
for volunteer leadership. (85% of these thought the educational opportunit
worthwhile, 4% of these thought the educational opportunities were not
worthwhile, 11% did not evaluate the educational opportunities.)

    15% of volunteer directors have not participated in educational opportunit

    10% did not respond.

    *Educational opportunities include any education and training events
     available to the leadership of volunteers.

Degree Preference:

    41% of volunteer directors would prefer a generic degree in administration

    32% of volunteer directors would prefer a specialized degree in volunteer
     management.

    27% did not indicate a preference.

The national scope and representativeness of the survey sample allows a demographic profile of the population of volunteer directors to be drawn from this survey.

The average volunteer leader is a 36-year-old, white woman employed by the human service area of health and hospitals in an urban setting. She has completed 16 years of education, with a major in the social sciences. Having been a leader of volunteers for just over seven years, she now has the title of Coordinator of Volunteer Services and receives an annual salary of $9,675. She has previously participated in educational opportunities for volunteer directors which she considered worthwhile. However, if she decides to attend graduate school she would prefer a generic degree in administration to a specialized degree in volunteer administration.

Educational Needs, Goals and Preferred Learning Modalities

The survey concentrated on determing the top priority educational needs, the top priority learning goals and the preferred learning modalities of volunteer directors. Presented below are the percentages of the total response which assigned "top priority" to specific needs, goals, and modalities. The question on educational needs was open ended. The questions on goals and modalities were multiple choice.

EDUCATION NEEDS	% Response "Top Priority"
Training Volunteers	18
Management, Administration, and Supervision	18
Recruiting	16
Volunteer & Program Evaluation	10
Motivation & Retention of Volunteers	4
Staff/Volunteer Relations	3
Fund Raising	2
Other	15
Blank	14

LEARNING GOALS	% Response "Top Priority"
Knowledge itself, to do a better job	45
Gain a more challenging & responsible position	15
Gain status & respect at agency	9
Graduate credit towards an M.A.	8
Gain a better-paying position	6
Undergraduate credit towards an A.A. or B.A.	5
Certification or credentialing credit	5
Other	7

PREFERRED LEARNING MODALITIES	% Response "Top Priority"
1-day workshop within driving distance of home	15
Accessible, cheap or free information services, on demand	14
Courses at university & college extension & continuing education divisions	9
Courses at experimental education institutions with competency credit for past experience	9
Training teams coming into my community	8
Courses at adult and continuing education divisions in community and junior colleges	7
Consultants to assist my learning	7
Media packages for unsupervised, individual study	6
Courses at experimental institutions with experiential learning	6
Individual, independent study units experiential mainly at home	6
Small local conferences every 2 weeks	5
Training tours	3
1-day workshop requiring travel	3

NLRC Learning Need Priorities and Their NCVA Study Counterparts

NICOV/NLRC Data Categories	Roughly Corresponding NCVA Data Categories
Training Volunteers	... Planning and Conducting a workshop
	Board Development for Board and Staff
Management, Administration and Supervision	Developing Administrative Skills in Personnel Management and Fiscal Contro
Volunteer & Program Evaluation	Information Systems
	The Organization Process
Recruiting	Recruiting and Retaining Low Income Volunteers
Motivation	
Retention of Volunteers	
Staff/Volunteer Relations	
Fund Raising	(See discussion page 14)
	How To make the Government Work For You

The NLRC categories above are roughly prioritized (greatest to least needs). The NCVA categories have all been designated top priority needs, with no further prioritizing within these 7 categories.

The survey results indicate that:

1. The top educational needs of volunteer directors are to develop their skills, knowledge, and attitudes in (a) the training of volunteers; (b) the management, administration, and supervision of volunteers and volunteer programs; and (c) the recruitment of volunteers.

2. The top priority learning goal of volunteer directors is, "the knowledge itself, upgrading my skills, and sensitivities so I can do a better job."

3. The preferred modalities of volunteer directors are (a) one-day workshops within driving distance of home and (b) accessible cheap or free information services on demand.

Re-analyzing the survey data for 34 separate respondent characteristics revealed that the top priority learning needs,top priority learning goals, and preferred learning modalities are essentially the same for each of the 34 sub-samples as for the total sample.   (See Appendix)

DISCUSSION

Both the NICOV study and the National Center for Voluntary Action workshop evaluations indicate that the training of volunteers, accessible information, recruitment of volunteers, and administrative and management skills are in the top eight learning needs of volunteer administrators.

Neither of these studies indicated a high priority for grantsmanship/fundraising as a learning need. In the case of the NCVA work, it is thought that this low priority is due to the fact that the workshops which were evaluated to produce this data had just provided the respondents with 1 1/2 days of fundraising information. The low priority attributed to fundraising in the NICOV study contradicts the NICOV workshop evaluations where fundraising has scored an average of 7.4 on a scale of 1.0 - 8.0 for usefulness(least-most)to the participant.

The low priority of "certification or credentialing credit" as a learning goal does not seem to support the energy currently being expended in the field to certify volunteer administrators. Perhaps certification is an attempt to respond to the field's interest and enthusiasm for becoming more professional. However, if increased professionalization in the field of volunteer administration is truly a goal toward which the field is striving, then by this data, the typical volunteer administrator would probably understand "being more professional" as having more knowledge to upgrade skills and sensitivities in order to do a better job. It would have little, if anything, to do with certification or credentials.

The indication of a high priority need for "accessible, cheap, or free information services on demand" illustrates a definite interface between education and information systems. Developing educational opportunities in volunteer leadership is dependent on information systems for the delivery of current relevant data. Effective utilization of that data could produce further information for dissemination by these information systems. Public accessibility to information systems could also allow individuals to embark on self-education processes.

The NCVA workshop evaluations indicated an interest in curricula for volunteer administration. The 1970 Boulder conference on volunteer administration asked what kind of colleges and what curricular content were best. This study clearly shows that there is a distinct body of knowledge which volunteer administrators need to learn. In addition, the study shows that a tremendous proportion of the people currently in the roles of volunteer administrators are disillusioned with traditional education. The rate of "top priority" response to traditional educational institutions and traditional correspondence courses as preferred modalities for learning was so low that these categories were dropped from the study.

According to this study, 75% of volunteer administrators take advantage of education opportunities. If educational experiences can be made available to the whole field, then 75% of an estimated 60,000 people, or 45,500 people, can be expected to participate in education/training experiences for volunteer administrators over the next few years. In order to educate/train this number of people most effectively and efficiently, the contents, levels, and modalities of future educational opportunities should be determined from the learning needs, goals, and preferred modalities indicated by this study. The field has neither the time, money, or energy to offer hit-or-miss education/training to its professionals.

SUMMARY

The steady growth in the number of directors of volunteer programs, the number
of educational institutions, and the number of professional organizations involved
in the education and training of directors of volunteer programs accentuates the
need for coordinated planning at local, regional, and national levels. Planning
could not occur in the past because the data base describing who the volunteer
directors are, what they need to know, how they can learn best, and their goals
for learning was not available.

The National Learning Resource Center of the National Information Center on
Volunteerism has developed this data base through administration of a survey
designed to determine the educational needs, learning goals, and preferred learning
modalities of volunteer directors.

This data base demonstrated that volunteer directors' primary learning needs are
the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to train volunteers. Their top
priority learning goal is the knowledge itself, in order to do their jobs better,
and they prefer to learn through one-day workshops within driving distance of their
homes. The data base will be used by the National Alliance on Volunteerism's
Task Forces on Education and Training and Certification in their national planning
sessions. It will also be used to determine content level and modality of education
and training packages for volunteer directors which are being developed by the
National Information Center on Volunteerism.

This Educational Needs Survey is only one aspect of the National Learning Resource
Center's education project. The project has identified over 80 colleges offering
education/training for volunteer directors, has been active in the development of
sample curricula for volunteer administration, and soon will put into operation a
clearinghouse on education information for use by both colleges and learners.

Two follow-up models to this report would be particularly relevant. The first
would be a parallel study one or two years later to measure changes in the data
reported here. The second model would be a comparative study of the present
effectiveness of volunteer leaders and their education and training backgrounds
compared to the effectiveness of those same leaders three or four years later when
they have taken advantage of present and developing educational offerings.

NOTES

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(2) David Horton Smith, "The Relevance of Research and Information to Education for Voluntary Action Leadership", Report: First National Conference on Education for Voluntary Action. (NCVA, Washington, D.C., 1975), P.13-14.

(3) Judith Berry and Ivan Scheier, College Curricula for the Leadership of Human Service Volunteer Programs: A Report of a Conference. (NICOV, Boulder, Colorado, 1970).

(4) Ms. Jeanne Carney, National Student Volunteer Program, (personal communication, Washington, D.C.) November 7, 1975.

(5) Dr. Robert Wilson, "Brief Survey of Practiioner's Observations and Attitudes About Volunteerism in America," Report: First National Conference on Education for Voluntary Action, (NCVA, Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 18-33.

(6) Participants of the First National Conference on Education for Voluntary Action, "Recommendations for Educational Development from Participant Workshops," Report: First National Conference on Education for Voluntary Action, (NCVA, Washington, D.C., 1975).

(7) Dr. Charles Unkovic, "College Volunteer Courses: A Contemporary Dilemma", (paper presented at National Council of Crime and Delinquency Annual Conference, Tampa, Florida, 1974)

(8) "Position Statement on Education Opportunities for Volunteer Program Administration", Volunteer Service News, Vol. IV, No. ii (NCVA, Washington, D.C., February, 1974).

(9) Dr. Arlene Schindler, Lecture, (National Center for Voluntary Action, Summer Institute, Washington, D.C., July, 1975).

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Appendix A

RELATIVELY LARGE DEVIATIONS FROM THE NORM OF SPECIAL SUBGROUPS.

The study sample was divided into 34 sub-samples such as all respondents serving in rural areas or all respondents with 5-7 years experience in the leadership of volunteers. A complete printout of all responses made by each sub-sample was obtained and compared to the printout of all responses made by the entire sample. Reported here are all instances where the percentage of the sub-sample indicating a particular response differs by 10 percent or more from the percentage of the total sample indicating that response. Future study of this same population is likely to confirm these diviations.

However, the outstanding information obtained from this study is the high degree of homogeneity throughout the total sample. This homogeneity speaks to the autonomy of volunteer leadership as a profession rather than an appendage of many other professions.

University of Colorado Management Certificate Program Respondents

The sub-sample of all respondents enrolled in the University of Colorado Volunteer Management Certificate Program's advanced workshop indicated a lower priority need for education in the "recruitment" of volunteers (4%) and a higher priority need for education in the "management, administration and supervision" of volunteers and volunteer programs (28%), than the total sample (16% and 18% respectively). The percentage of the total sample indicating top priority for each choice will hereafter be referred to as the norm.

Area of Human Service

Respondents working in the service areas of Community Services (3%), and "other" areas of human services* (0%) all indicated a lower priority need for "recruitment" education than the norm (16%).

Respondents working in RSVP/Elderly programs indicated a higher priority learning need for education in "fundraising" (18%) than the norm of 2%.

Twenty-one percent of the respondents working in RSVP/Elderly programs assigned top priority to the learning goal of "status and respect" compared to the norm of 9%.

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*Includes recreation, economic, housing, and transportation systems.