PENN STATE
1855
Cooperative
Extension

ProgramEvaluation
Pennsylvania Example #26: Needs Assessment

A Needs Assessment Strategy for Volunteer Development: Phase I: What do Extension Staff who Work with Volunteers Need?

LEADER

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RATIONALE

Volunteers serve a very important role in reaching Cooperative Extension goals. As the needs of communities change in 21st century society, so too do the needs of volunteers and the extension educators, county extension directors, program assistants and other staff who work with the volunteers.

To augment the capacity of staff to train, manage and empower volunteers, the Central Region created a new position, a Volunteer Development Educator. Her task is to learn about the challenges that the staff currently face, the materials and activities which have value to them as well as those that do not, and their levels of expertise with various delivery methods and educational technology applications.

To learn about these challenges and resources, the Volunteer Development Educator chose a two phased strategy.

- First, she will conduct a needs assessment among all the staff who work directly with volunteers in the Region. You can view this needs assessment below.

- Second, she will conduct another needs assessment currently under development, among the Extension volunteers themselves.

BENEFITS OF A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR STAFF WHO TRAIN VOLUNTEERS

The information provided by the staff will be used to guide development activities with the goal of making high quality, current, relevant, and easily accessible resources and training available to those who work with volunteers. Specifically, the information will be used to set priorities: to select topics for training and to select resources that address the current situations of staff (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995).

However, the needs assessment will not only benefit the Volunteer Development Educator! In the process of completing the needs assessment, staff are likely to become aware of the skills in which they are proficient (a supportive experience) and aware of the skills in which they need more training (a learning experience).

NEEDS ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Data collection method
A web survey is characterized by its ease of distribution through email and efficiency in data collection and it thus became a good fit for this project. The target audience, the staff, all have access to a computer at the extension office.   Research has shown that web surveys can produce a greater response rate among educators in Pennsylvania (Kiernan et al., 2005). Further, SurveyMonkey software facilitates survey development and revision.

Sampling
Because the number of educators amounts to just over 100, no sampling took place.

Questions
The questions in the needs assessment consist primarily of quantitative questions. These questions allow the Volunteer Development Educator to measure needs identified in the literature and to obtain a quantitative number that represents the prevalence of each need. The questions also consist of open-ended or qualitative questions. These questions allow the staff who work with volunteers to provide more in-depth information about the needs they have already identified as well as identify other needs relevant to their special context.

RESOURCES

Johnson D.E., Meiller, L.R., Miller, L.C. and G.F. Summers. (1987) Needs Assessment: Theory and Methods. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

Kiernan, N. E., Kiernan, M. Oyler, M.A. and C. Gilles. (2005) Is a Web Survey as Effective as a Mail Survey? American Journal of Evaluation 26:2: 245-252

Needs Assessment for Women in Ag http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf-ex/PAEX23.pdf

Witkin, B. R. and J. W. Altschuld. (1995). *Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

For further information about the needs assessment, please contact Debra Burrows (dcb3@psu.edu**).**

Working with Extension Volunteers (Part 1)

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.

1. How many volunteers are currently enrolled in the program(s)in which you work?

- ⃝ None
- ⃝ Less than 25
- ⃝ Between 26 and 50
- ⃝ Between 51 and 100
- ⃝ Between 101 and 150
- ⃝ Between 151 and 200
- ⃝ Between 201 and 250
- ⃝ Between 251 and 300
- ⃝ More than 300

2. Of the total number of volunteers you indicated in the previous question, how many are consistently and actively participating? Consistent and active participation is indicated by regular attendance at scheduled activities as well as acceptance and completion of assigned volunteer duties and responsibilities.

- ⃝ None
- ⃝ Less than 25
- ⃝ Between 26 and 50
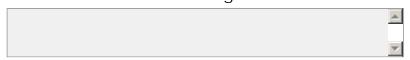- ⃝ Between 51 and 100
- ⃝ Between 101 and 150
- ⃝ Between 151 and 200
- ⃝ Between 201 and 250
- ⃝ Between 251 and 300
- ⃝ More than 300

3. Programs need active and consistently participating volunteers to accomplish goals. How would you describe the situation with regard to volunteers in your program?

- ⃝ We have more active and consistently participating volunteers than we need.
- ⃝ We have a sufficient number of active and consistently participating volunteers.
- ⃝ We do not have enough active and consistently participating volunteers.

4. If you indicated that your program did not have enough active and consistently participating volunteers in the previous question, please tell us what you believe to be the reasons for this shortage of volunteers.

5. If you indicated that your program did not have a sufficient number of volunteers, please indicate how you would utilize additional volunteers if they were available.
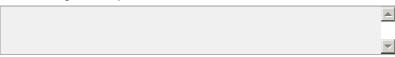
6. In what activities within your program do you believe volunteers are most successful? Please be as specific as possible.

7. What, if any, is the single most significant obstacle you face in working with volunteers?

8. What, in your opinion, is needed to overcome this obstacle?

9. How often do you find yourself completing tasks that could or should be completed by volunteers?

  ∈ Never   ∈ Occasionally   ∈ Frequently

10. If you answered "occasionally" or "frequently" to the previous question, please indicate the reason or reasons you find yourself completing tasks that could be accomplished by volunteers. Please check all that apply.

∈ I have not had time to train a volunteer or volunteers to do these tasks.

∈ None of our volunteers offered to handle these tasks.

∈ These tasks have not been handled satisfactorily by volunteers in the past.

∈ If I want it done right, I need to take care of it myself.

∈ Our volunteers are overworked and I didn't want to ask anyone.

∈ I'm not sure volunteers would be able to handle these tasks.

∈ These tasks have always been staff responsibilities.

Other (please specify)

11. On average across an entire year, what percentage of your time is spent on activities directly related to volunteers? Please consider all volunteer-focused activities such as recruitent, training, supervision, problem solving, recognition, etc.

ȷn 0%	ȷn 35%	ȷn 70%
ȷn 5%	ȷn 40%	ȷn 75%
ȷn 10%	ȷn 45%	ȷn 80%
ȷn 15%	ȷn 50%	ȷn 85%
ȷn 20%	ȷn 55%	ȷn 90%
ȷn 25%	ȷn 60%	ȷn 95%
ȷn 30%	ȷn 65%	ȷn 100%

12. When working with volunteers, how do you spend your time?

	too much time	just about the right amount of time	too little time	N/A
Answering questions in person	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Answering questions on the phone	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Answering questions via e-mail	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Conducting volunteer needs assessments	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Contacting volunteers about upcoming training activities	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Delivering volunteer training	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Developing materials for volunteers to use	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Developing volunteer training sessions	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Evaluating volunteers	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Helping volunteers become comfortable with change	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Helping volunteers develop their skills and talents	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Mediating disputes between volunteers	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Obtaining input and feedback from volunteers	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Organizing and assigning volunteer responsibilities	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Preparing and distributing volunteer newsletters	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Recognizing and thanking volunteers	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Recruiting volunteers	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Scheduling times and locations for volunteer training	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Working with advisory boards	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒
Working with program committees	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒	j⌒

Other (please specify)

[ ]

13. While volunteers provide many benefits, there can also be challenges to working with volunteers. What are some of the challenges you face when working with volunteers in your county or counties? Please check all that apply.

- ⊝ Budget constraints
- ⊝ Communication between staff and volunteers
- ⊝ Conducting volunteer recognition activities
- ⊝ Delivering enough volunteer training
- ⊝ Developing materials for volunteer training
- ⊝ Empowering Program Committee and Extension Board members
- ⊝ Evaluating volunteers
- ⊝ Finding times that are convenient for volunteers to participate in training

- ⊝ Having enough current and useful materials to make available to volunteers
- ⊝ Mediating disputes between volunteers and/or parents
- ⊝ Planning/moving beyond traditional programs
- ⊝ Time constraints
- ⊝ Volunteer participation in training sessions/volunteer development activities
- ⊝ Volunteer reluctance to participating in training
- ⊝ Volunteer resistance to change
- ⊝ Volunteer turnover

Other (please specify)

14. If your county provides a newsletter for volunteers, how often is that newsletter...

	rarely	occasionally	about half the time	usually	almost always	N/A
cost effective to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to develop	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as current as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as comprehensive as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as useful as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
developed using an easily updated template	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as interesting to volunteers as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as professional in quality as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
similar in quality to those from other similar organizations	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

15. The recruiting materials that you currently have for volunteers are...

	rarely	occasionally	about half the time	usually	almost always	N/A
cost effective to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to develop	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as current as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as comprehensive as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as useful as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
developed using an easily updated template	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
consistent with other counties' materials	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as interesting to volunteers as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as professional in quality as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
similar in quality to those from other similar organizations	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

16. The orientation materials that you currently have for volunteers are...

	rarely	occasionally	about half the time	usually	almost always	N/A
cost effective to distribute	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
labor intensive to develop	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
labor intensive to distribute	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
as current as you would like	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
as comprehensive as you would like	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
as useful as you would like	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
consistent with other counties' materials	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
developed using an easily updated template	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
as interesting to volunteers as you would like	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
as professional in quality as you would like	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩
similar in quality to those from other similar organizations	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩	j∩

17. The leadership materials that you currently have for volunteers are...

	rarely	occasionally	about half the time	usually	almost always	N/A
cost effective to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to develop	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as current as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as comprehensive as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as useful as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
consistent with other counties' materials	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
developed using an easily updated template	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as interesting to volunteers as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as professional in quality as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
similar in quality to those from other similar organizations	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

18. In your opinion, which leadership materials are the most useful? Which are the least useful?

Most useful

Least useful

19. Does your county have a web site or web page focused specifically on volunteers?

jn Yes   jn No   jn I'm not sure.

20. Listed below are some characteristics which may be desirable in video tapes used for educational purposes. Please rate the video tapes that are currently available in your county for use with volunteers on each of the characteristics listed below.

	not at all	somewhat	moderately	substantially	N/A
cost effective to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
labor intensive to distribute	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as current as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as comprehensive as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as useful as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as interesting to volunteers as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
as professional in quality as you would like	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
consistent with other counties' materials	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
similar in quality to those from other similar organizations	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

21. Besides face-to-face annual training sessions/meetings at the county, regional, and state levels, please indicate which of the following additional volunteer training resources would be of interest to you in the next two years.

€ A variety of asynchronous online learning modules. "An asynchronous course is one in which the instruction is delivered at one time and the work can be done at a different time. In asynchronous classes, students and teachers use e-mail, listservs or other technologies which allow them to communicate without having to be in the same place at the same time." Quote from the Ohio Learning Network.

€ Templates of standardized training curricula and materials that can be easily customized to individual counties

€ Podcasts focused on current volunteer issues

€ A regional "Frequently Asked Questions" website focused on volunteer topics

€ A regional volunteer blog

€ None of the above

Other (please specify)

[text box]

22. While it is generally accepted that volunteers can benefit from participating in training opportunities, it is also evident that volunteers possess various degrees of skills and knowledge. Therefore some volunteers stand to benefit more from receiving training in some topics than in others. Please indicate the extent to which you believe each of the topics listed below would be beneficial to volunteers in your county or counties.

	not beneficial to any	beneficial to a few	beneficial to many	beneficial to all
Identifying and planning service learning projects	∈	∈	∈	∈
Developing age-appropriate activities	∈	∈	∈	∈
Using presentation technologies	∈	∈	∈	∈
Planning club meetings	∈	∈	∈	∈
Stages of youth development	∈	∈	∈	∈
Youth development	∈	∈	∈	∈
Risk management/liability	∈	∈	∈	∈
Teen leader development	∈	∈	∈	∈
Meeting facilitation	∈	∈	∈	∈
4-H philosophy and mission	∈	∈	∈	∈
Using communication technologies	∈	∈	∈	∈
Helping youth with ethics and citizenship development	∈	∈	∈	∈
Developing public speaking and presentation skills	∈	∈	∈	∈
Learning theory	∈	∈	∈	∈
After school programming	∈	∈	∈	∈
Conflict resolution	∈	∈	∈	∈
4-H history	∈	∈	∈	∈
Debating	∈	∈	∈	∈
Marketing basics	∈	∈	∈	∈
Master gardener project ideas	∈	∈	∈	∈
Forest stewardship project ideas	∈	∈	∈	∈
Recruiting neighbors & friends as volunteers	∈	∈	∈	∈
Chaperone responsibilities	∈	∈	∈	∈
4-H project-specific topics	∈	∈	∈	∈

Meeting topics for Cloverbuds	∈	∈	∈	∈
Developing communication skills	∈	∈	∈	∈
Healthy vs unhealthy competition	∈	∈	∈	∈
Club leader responsibilities	∈	∈	∈	∈
Mentoring volunteers	∈	∈	∈	∈
Fundraising	∈	∈	∈	∈
Things every Program Development Committee and Extension Board member should know	∈	∈	∈	∈
Recruiting volunteers	∈	∈	∈	∈
Team building	∈	∈	∈	∈

Other (please specify)

[   ]

23. At the current time, how does communication between volunteers and staff occur in the counties in which you work? Please check all that apply.

∈ 4-H leader meetings   ∈ Face-to-face contact   ∈ Telephone

∈ Blog   ∈ Grapevine   ∈ U.S. Mail

∈ County office website   ∈ Meetings

∈ e-mail   ∈ Newsletter

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Staff Professional Development and Support (Part 2)

24. What is your current position? If you hold more than one position, please mark the position to which you devote the majority of your time.

- Educator
- Program Assistant
- County Extension Director
- Program Aide
- Coordinator

Other (please specify)

[   ]

25. How long have you held the position you marked in the previous question?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- more than 20 years

26. Please indicate the number of counties in which you currently have reponsibilities.

[   ]

27. Please list all degrees your currently hold and indicate both degree and discipline. For example: B.S. in Biology. If you also hold any additional work-related certificates or licenses, such as teacher certification, a pesticide license, etc., please list all of those as well using the spaces marked "other".

Undergraduate [   ]

Graduate [   ]

Doctoral [   ]

Certificate [   ]

License [   ]

Other [   ]

Other [   ]

Other [   ]

28. Think about where and how you obtained the knowledge and skills you currently utilize to manage and coordinate volunteers. For each source that applies, please indicate how valuable it has been to you in obtaining that knowledge and skill.

	not valuable	minimally valuable	moderately valuable	very valuable	not applicable
College or University credit courses	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Professional development training	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Completed the CVA (Certified in Volunteer Admininstration) credentialing process	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
On-the-job training	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
From a mentor	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Self-taught	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Other	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn

29. Please indicate your level of knowledge of each of the following areas.

	Very knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Minimally knowledgeable	No knowledge
Volunteer management theory	jn	jn	jn	jn
Volunteer management practices	jn	jn	jn	jn
Volunteer management research	jn	jn	jn	jn

30. Please mark all of the potential training topics which you feel would be beneficial to you.

- Adult learning principals
- Collaborative learning
- Delegating responsibility
- Developing innovative programs
- Empowering Program Committee and Extension Board members
- Engaging and motivating volunteers
- Engaging Program Committee and Extension Board members
- Establishing standards and expectations for volunteers

- Evaluating volunteers
- Healthy vs unhealthy competition
- Helping volunteers serve as role models
- Helping youth with ethics and citizenship development
- Innovative approaches to volunteer recognition
- Leadership Development
- Mediating disputes between volunteers and/or parents
- Mobilizing volunteers

- Overcoming cultural barriers
- Overcoming volunteer resistance to change
- Preparing volunteers to serve as effective Program Development Committee and Extension Board members
- Recruiting volunteers
- Responding to demographic changes
- Supervising volunteers
- Team building
- Teen leader development

Other (please specify)

31. What can the region do to assist you in working with volunteers?

32. Please describe your information technology/communication skills;

	Never use and/or don't know how to use	Rarely use and/or have only basic skill level	Use and/or possess intermediate skill level	Usually use and/or have comfortable skill level	Use regularly and/or possess expert skill level	Would like to develop more skills in this area
Accounting software such as Quickbooks	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Blogging	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Database applications	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Desktop conferencing such as Adobe Connect/Breeze, NetMeeting, etc.	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Desktop publishing applications	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Digital media	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
e-mail	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Internet2	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Online courses (course management systems)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Online surveys	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
PDA (personal digital assistant)	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Podcasting	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Presentation software such as Powerpoint	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Smartboard	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Spreadsheet applications	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Video conferencing	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Web navigation	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Web site maintenance	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Website design	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Word processing applications	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn