

Volunteer Management in East Central Iowa

Trends, Challenges and Opportunities



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Methodology.

In January 2011, United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI) conducted an online survey of nonprofits and faith-based organizations in East Central Iowa. The purpose of the survey was to better understand the challenges and opportunities these organizations face in engaging and managing volunteers. A total of 89 individuals, each representing unique organizations, began the survey (63 completed it). Over half of the respondents represent Health/Human Service organizations, and the majority (63%) provide services in Linn County, with 46% of respondents solely providing services in Linn. 36% provide services in the UWECI service area or beyond (Linn, Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Jones and Washington counties). Respondents fill a variety of roles in their organizations, although close to half are volunteer managers. Nearly half (46%) of the organizations who responded to the survey are small, with between one and 10 paid employees; 22% have between 11 – 25 employees; 20% have more than 100.

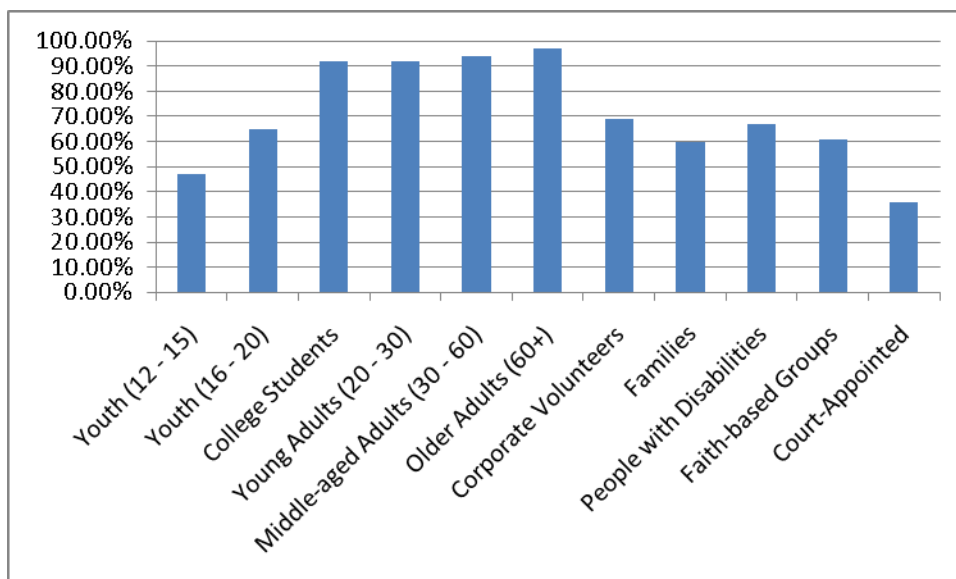
Highlights & Opportunities:

- ✓ Volunteers play a **significant role** in Eastern Iowa nonprofits
- ✓ Most organizations **have capacity** for more volunteers
- ✓ Needed **training**:
 - Recruitment – particularly skilled volunteers
 - How to measure impact

Volunteering in East Central Iowa.

Survey respondents provide volunteer opportunities for an array of individuals and groups. Close to all respondents have volunteer opportunities for those ages 20 years and older. Nearly 60% have opportunities for families; close to half have opportunities for youth. 61% have opportunities for faith-based groups; 67% have opportunities for those with disabilities; 70% have opportunities for corporate volunteers. Only 36% have opportunities for those with court-appointed service obligations.

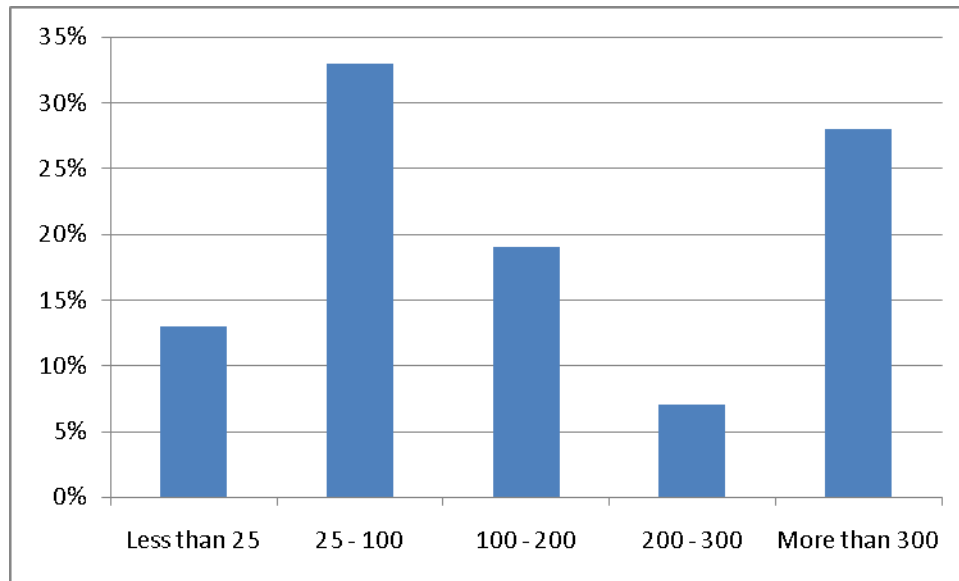
Does your organization provide volunteer opportunities for the following groups of people?



Organizations vary in the number of volunteers they utilize annually: 33% responded that they utilize between 25 and 100 volunteers each year; 20% between 100 and 200; 28% stated that

they utilize over 300 each year (note that this does not indicate how many individuals volunteer one time, or on a consistent basis). The survey results also indicate variety in the number of volunteer positions at each organization: some have only one or two, others have upwards of 15 different positions.

Approximately how many volunteers does your organization utilize annually?



The most common type of volunteer opportunity at these organizations are long-term traditional opportunities (mentors, tutors, etc). Episodic/event-based opportunities, board & committee positions, and both short and long-term skilled opportunities represent less than half of the opportunities at most organizations. 36% of respondents do not offer any long-term skilled opportunities (loaned executives, no cost medical services, etc).

Management Capacity

Most of the organizations surveyed (62%) reported that they have the capacity to manage more than their current number of volunteers. These organizations responded that they need anywhere between 5 additional volunteers and "as many as possible." 18 organizations reported the exact number of volunteers they currently need, totaling 1,019 additional volunteers.

Although 39% of respondents stated they have not turned away volunteers, of those who have, the primary reasons were "not enough volunteer projects," and "right skill sets not available." Less-cited reasons included a lack of management to oversee work, lack of organizational infrastructure (e.g., lack of space), and failure to pass a background check.

The majority of respondents stated their organization has a staff position whose responsibility is to manage volunteers (38% are full-time; 25% are part-time). However, many noted that volunteer management is not always that staff member's primary responsibility. 25% of respondents stated that staff using volunteers are responsible for managing them.

Strategic Planning Efforts. There is some variety among organizations regarding how the volunteer manager is involved in strategic planning. The majority of respondents (47%) stated that a volunteer manager is included in all strategic planning efforts to help identify volunteer needs of the organization. 26% stated that a volunteer manager is informed of the

volunteer needs by other staff. 23% of respondents stated that the volunteer manager is part of a committee that discusses volunteer needs; 21% stated that the volunteer manager is solely responsible for assessing the volunteer needs of the organization.

Training. Many respondents indicated they are interested in receiving training. The most popular training topics include: Volunteer Recruitment, Tracking Volunteer Impact & Data, and Retention and Appreciation.

Are you interested in training on the following topics?

	Yes	No
Volunteer Program Planning	27	25
Writing Effective Volunteer Job Descriptions	26	29
Volunteer Recruitment	41	16
CorridorVolunteers.org	21	29
Orientation and Training of Volunteers	23	27
Retention and Appreciation	36	18
Evaluation Volunteers	30	21
Tracking Volunteer Data and Impact	38	15
Working with Problem Volunteers	25	27
Staff and Volunteer Relations	25	28
Building or Strengthening Your Board	29	24
Volunteer Managers Roundtable	25	28
Other: fundraising	1	

Budget. More than half (52%) of respondents stated they do not have a budget dedicated to volunteer efforts. Of those that do, only 14% have money dedicated to training both staff and volunteers. 25% have a budget dedicated to training staff, but not volunteers.

Recruitment & Retention

Recruitment. Although most organizations stated that they could use more volunteers, UWECL's survey indicates that organizations gain most of their volunteers through passive methods. The top recruitment methods were through word of mouth, friends, previous events with the organization, and the organization website. Nearly all respondents utilize CorridorVolunteers.org; 40% use Volunteermatch.org (only a handful use 1-800-volunteer.org and ServeNet.org).

Organizations are nearly evenly split regarding their skill-based recruiting efforts. 56% of respondents assess their needs before recruiting volunteers; 44% fill open opportunities with available volunteers, and do not assess the skills needed by the organization before recruiting volunteers.

Survey respondents indicated that the volunteers most needed by their organizations are also the hardest to recruit. Half of respondents indicated that fundraising skills are most needed by their organizations, followed by marketing (27%) and technical assistance (23%).

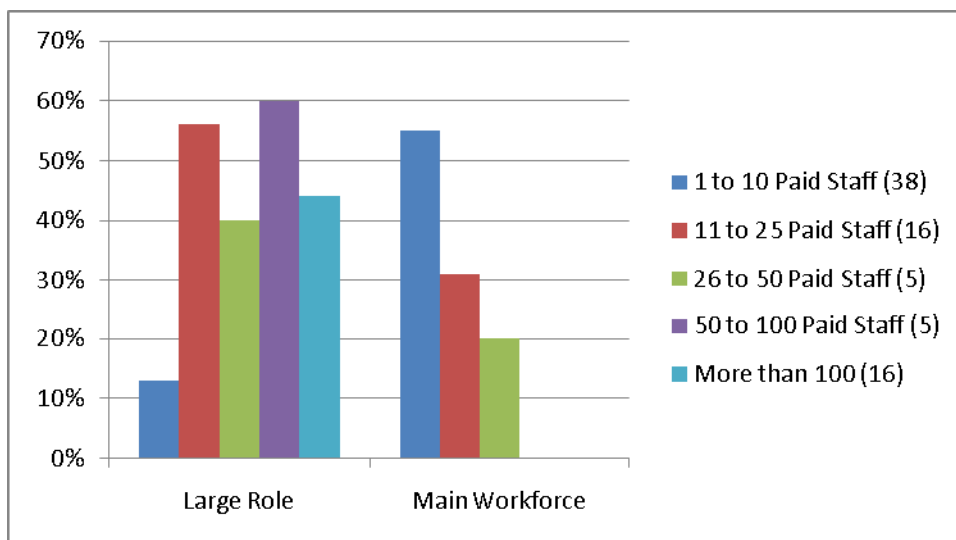
Retention. Local organizations are doing well at retaining volunteers: 64% of respondents retain over half of their volunteers after one year of service, and 36% indicated that more

than 75% of their volunteers are retained. 10% of organizations stated that they retain less than 25% of their volunteers.

The Importance and Value of Volunteers.

United Way's survey results substantiate the significant role that volunteers play in Eastern Iowa nonprofits. Only 1% indicated that volunteers are not used by their organization. Further, volunteers are important, regardless of the size of the organization: 56% of respondents with 11 to 25 paid staff members reported that volunteers play a large role at their organization, as did 60% of respondents with 50 to 100 paid staff, and 44% of respondents with more than 100 paid staff members. More than half (55%) of respondents whose organizations have less than 10 paid staff report that volunteers are their main workforce. See the Appendix for more information regarding similarities and differences in volunteer use and management across different sizes of organizations.

Which of the following best describes how your organization relies on volunteers?



The majority of respondents (66%) view their volunteers as an extension of paid staff, and close to 70% stated that volunteers help deliver programs. A majority (66%) also stated that volunteers work on projects that staff do not have time to initiate. 37% of respondents stated that volunteers bring skills not available among paid staff.

Measuring Impact. UWECI's survey results indicate that nonprofits lack the capacity or expertise to measure volunteer impact. Close to half of survey respondents (49%) stated they do not measure the impact of volunteers' efforts on their mission. The most common measurements of volunteer involvement include the number of volunteers and the number of hours they serve.

Most organizations (65%) use a paper-based system to track data, and many (57%) use a spreadsheet program. 34% of respondents use a database program designed to meet their needs. Of those who utilize volunteer management software, 32% use Volunteer Works, Raiser's Edge, or Donor Perfect.

Evaluating Volunteer Performance & Satisfaction. Over half of respondents meet one-on-one with volunteers; 37% utilize surveys. 13% do not evaluate volunteer performance.

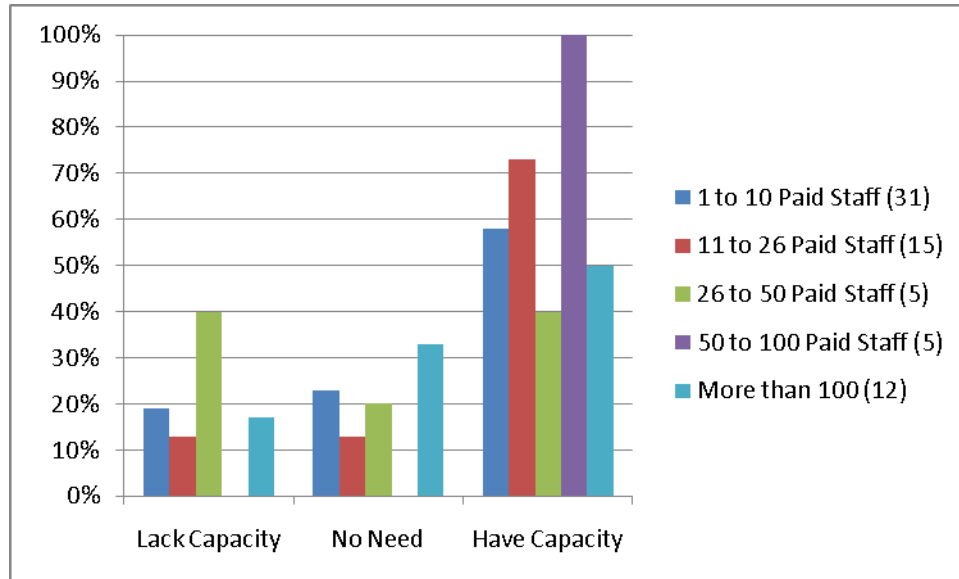
Barriers

The largest reported barrier to involvement, noted by 42% of respondents, was that volunteer availability and interest does not match volunteer opportunities available. 34% of respondents also noted a lack of volunteer marketing or a recruitment strategy; 31% stated that staff do not have time to manage volunteers; 30% indicated staff does not have time to develop meaningful volunteer positions. 30% also indicated there is a lack of financial resources to support volunteers. Only 7% indicated they believe they lack information on best practices for a volunteer manager.

Appendix: Examining Similarities and Differences by Size of Organization

Capacity. Regardless of size, the majority of organizations could manage more volunteers.

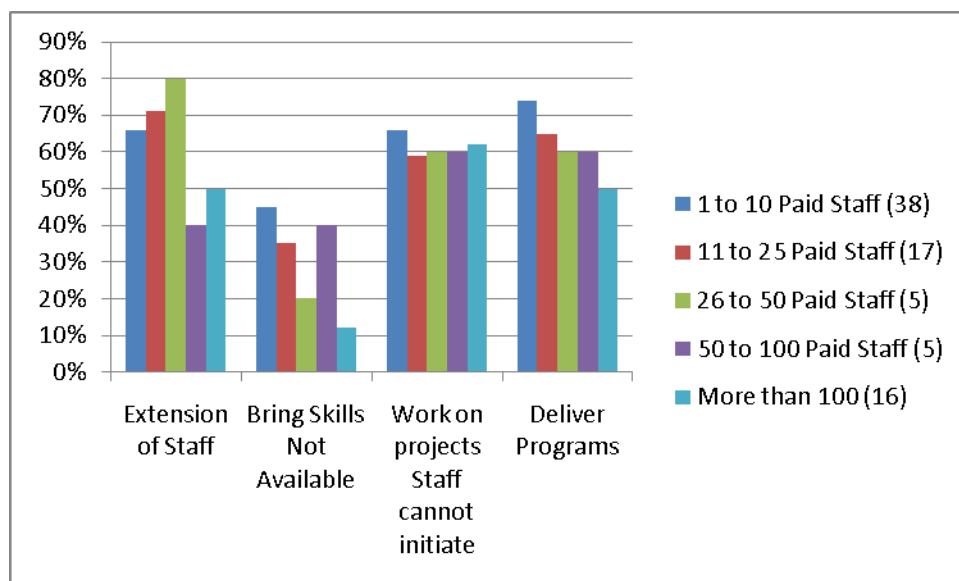
Figure 1. How would you describe the capacity of your volunteer program?



(Answer choices: We would benefit from more volunteers, but do not have the capacity to manage them; We don't need additional volunteers; We have the capacity to manage more than our current number of volunteers)

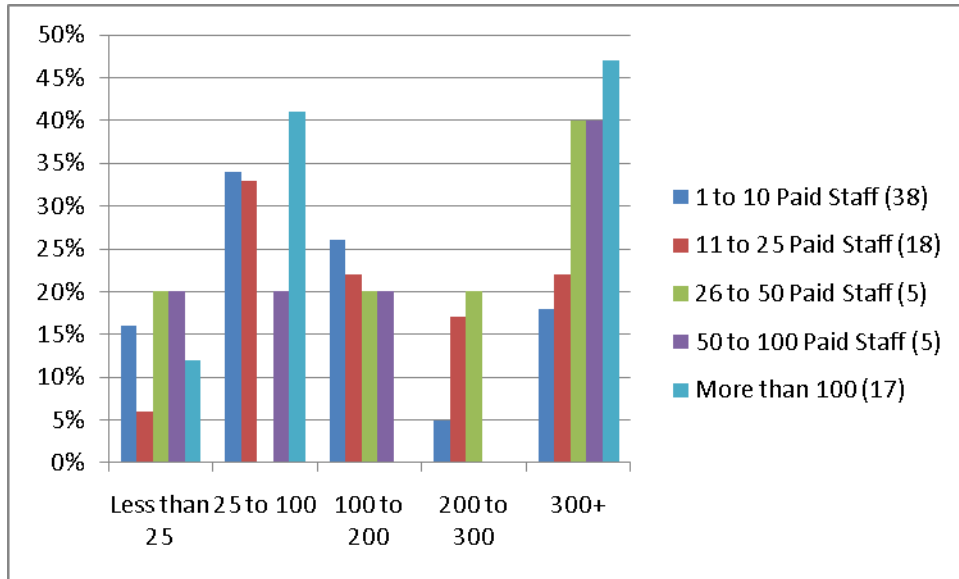
Utilization of Volunteers. Smaller organizations are more likely to see volunteers as an extension of staff. Regardless of size, agencies use volunteers to deliver programs and work on projects. Organizations do not seem focused on recruiting volunteers who have skills not available among staff. This is an area of opportunity.

Figure 2. How are volunteers used at your organization? Select all that apply:



Size of Volunteer Programs. There is variety, but organizations with more staff tend to utilize more volunteers annually than smaller agencies.

Figure 3. Approximately how many volunteers does your organization utilize annually?



Volunteer Management Staffing. Larger organizations are more likely to have a volunteer manager on staff full time. Smaller agencies are more likely to have a part-time volunteer manager, or have staff members responsible for their own volunteers.

Figure 4. Does your organization have a position responsible for managing volunteers?

