

**A CYNICAL PUBLIC LOVES THEIR GOVERNMENT:
AN OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT VOLUNTEERS
AND PEOPLE WHO MANAGE THEM**

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The scope and diversity of volunteer activity in the nonprofit sector in the United States has been well-documented. The biennial surveys of *Giving and Volunteering* commissioned and analyzed by the Independent Sector organization have yielded a comprehensive portrait. By contrast, volunteering for government and the programs that sponsor and house this effort have received much less attention. Little research is available to indicate the size of this sector, the number of volunteers involved, the characteristics of the paid staff who coordinate activities, or the nature of the public-sector programs in which volunteers participate. Systematic study of volunteer involvement in the public sector has been undertaken only rarely, in no small part because of the monumental task of ascertaining those governmental agencies that enlist volunteers.

The present research addresses this issue. It reports the results of the first study intended to locate volunteer programs within federal, state and local government departments and agencies and to examine these programs systematically. This article reviews the size and scope of government-based volunteer programs. It then describes a the marketing study undertaken to identify and survey a sample of managers of government volunteer programs. The next section describes the survey methodology implemented to ascertain information about these programs from the employees who manage them. Finally, results from the survey are presented, with

special reference to the kinds of programs in which citizens donate their time, the managerial preparation and practices of the employees responsible for these programs, and the challenges and limitations they face.

The research aims to enhance understanding of an area that, heretofore, remained largely unknown: citizen volunteering to government agencies. The study demonstrates that thousands of government employees are managing hundreds of thousands of volunteers. Citizens may be cynical about government, but they also seem more than willing to lend a hand.

The Scope of Volunteer Involvement in Government

Few people consider volunteers in the context of government organizations. Most of the research and interest in volunteers is concentrated on the nonprofit sector. Yet, national surveys of the American public show that each year, more than 23 million people volunteer to a government organization at the federal, state, or local level (Brudney, 1990).

About 25 to 30 percent of all volunteer labor appears to be directed to government. According to the Nonprofit Almanac 1996-97, in 1991, 26.6 percent of volunteers donated their time to a government organization, with most of this effort assisting local governments (21.5%) and much less going to the federal government (2.3%) or the states (2.8%) (Hodgkinson et.al; 1996, 105). In a 1994 survey, the percentage of volunteers assisting government (26.1%) was virtually identical (Hodgkinson, et.al; 1996, 28-29). This figure is consistent with previous surveys conducted by the Gallup Organization for Independent Sector, although it represents a

slight decrease from the estimates derived from the 1989 survey and the 1987 administration (27.7% and 28.9%, respectively) of the percentage of volunteers assisting government. With respect to hours volunteered, too, the results are comparable: in 1991, 25.3 percent of the volunteer hours, with an assigned dollar value of \$55.1 billion, went to government organizations; in 1989, the respective figures were 26.2 percent and \$43.9 billion, and in 1987, 22.7 percent and \$34.0 billion (Hodgkinson *et.al.*: 1996, 105).

Volunteers to government provide services in a wide array of domains, spanning the gamut from 'a' (ambulance) to 'z' (zoos), including firefighting, emergency medical services, library, youth, education, parks and recreation, transportation, judicial and legal affairs, and culture and the arts. In 1982, the International City-County Management Association (ICMA) estimated that over half of cities with populations of at least 4,500 used volunteers in at least one service domain: By 1985, that figure had swelled to more than 70 percent (72.6%) (Brudney, 1995, 664). In county government as well, the involvement of volunteers is extensive. In a 1996 survey sponsored by the National Association of Counties (NACo) 98 percent of responding counties reported that they involve volunteers in some capacity as service-providers or non-paid advisory board members. Approximately 20 percent of those responding said that they use more than 500 volunteers in government operations (Lane and Schultz, 1997, 4). The study concluded, "*Volunteerism in county government is on the rise...NACo's survey indicates at least a 20% increase in volunteer programs in several service areas including services to the aging,*

children/youth services, parks and recreation, and crime/corrections” (Lane and Schultz, 1997, 5; emphasis in original).

Surveys of the US population, cities, and counties, thus, indicate that volunteering to government is widespread. Although it does not match the magnitude of volunteering to the nonprofit sector, it does effect public services, organizations, and operations, clients, and employees. Yet, the activity remains largely unknown. As Lane and Schultz (1997, 3) observe, “There is relatively little research or written material on volunteer programs in local government” (Lane and Schultz, 1997, 3).

Only a handful of studies have examined the leadership and organizational support of volunteer programs in the public sector, or the characteristics, procedures, and practices of those endeavors (Brudney, 1995, 1990). A primary obstacle to accumulating such knowledge has been the lack of a systematic sample of government organizations using volunteers in a service-delivery capacity. To address this lacuna, the present research undertook the first systematic marketing study to identify government agencies with volunteers and to survey a representative sample of these programs. The next section describes the structure and results of the marketing study. The sections following elaborate the methodology and findings of the survey of government-based volunteer programs.

Identifying Government Volunteer Programs

Marketing activities are those things which direct the flow of goods and/or services from the producer to the consumer or user. (Boone and Kurtz, 1992 and Kotler, 1983) Market research is the process of gathering information to be use in

market decision making. (Boone/Kurtz, 1992 and Bradburn, 1986) It allows the organization to match the needs of the market with products and services provided.

The Points of Light Foundation, a training and technical assistance organization, has served the nonprofit and volunteer sector for over 10 years. Its primary market is nonprofit organizations. They provide such services as an annual training conference, books and manuals on nonprofit and volunteer management and administration, training institutes, consulting services, and program model development.

In 1996, the Director of Training and Technical Services for the Points of Light Foundation authorized an exploratory marketing survey of government volunteer program managers in order to serve new market segments. The primary goal of the research was to identify the names and location of government based volunteer program managers in order to increase their attendance at the annual conference in 1997. Previously the number of such individuals attending the conference had been small. No business can survive without identifying new markets. (Kotler, 1983) Government based volunteer program managers are a market segment different from those historically served by the Points of Light Foundation.. It was thought that if they could be identified, they might respond to new marketing strategies. (Kotler, 1983)

Market research can be done by an organization internally or by an outside research firm. Organizations select outside firms for two reasons; the firm selected to do the research has special knowledge or expertise of the market being researched; and the information about the market does not exist within the organization authorizing the research. (Boone/Kurtz, 1992) Macduff/Bunt Associates was selected

due to their experience in survey research and knowledge of government volunteer programs.

There are five steps in market research: define research objectives, develop the information source, collect the information, analyze the information, and present the findings. (Boone/Kurtz, 1992; Kotler, 1983) The market research for this project was designed using this five step method.

1) Defining the objectives

Sometimes marketing objectives are exploratory. The purpose of the research is to shed light on a problem or suggest a hypothesis.(Kotler, 1983). As indicated earlier there are few large scale studies of government volunteer program managers. The Points of Light was especially interested in identifying government volunteer program managers in federal departments, agencies or commissions. The instructions to the researcher were to identify at least 50 people in the federal government who managed volunteers.

2) Develop the information source

Developing the information source meant locating volunteer program managers working within large government bureaucracies. The information source had to be someone who could provide names and addresses for individuals who might work anywhere in the United States. They might not have the title volunteer program manager; the program might not be called "volunteer"; and it was unlikely there was a directory of either programs or the individuals who provided support to the program. Some sample populations are difficult or impossible to reach. This is one of them.

Initial efforts to locate volunteer programs and their staff in government began with the WEB Yellow Pages. There are comprehensive listings of federal government departments, agencies, and programs, with phone numbers. For one week three researchers phoned agencies likely to have volunteer programs.

The senior researcher with the project knew, for example, that the Internal Revenue Service, which is part of the US Department of the Treasury, has 80,000+ volunteers with staff, in every state. At every phone number listed for IRS in Washington, DC, the researchers were assured that there were no volunteers in the Internal Revenue Service (usually accompanied by laughter). The Director of Volunteers at the White House assured one researcher that while she had 1400+ volunteers working at the President's home, she knew there were few others in government, because there was a law prohibiting it.

The initial methodology chosen to identify the government volunteer managers was not working. The time constraints to produce results from the research necessitated an unconventional approach. The senior researcher is also a trainer and consultant for volunteer and nonprofit programs. Her network of friends, colleagues, current and former clients is extensive. The researcher "worked" her network. She called people who could give her names and addresses of government volunteer program managers.

For example, the former Director of New York City Mayor's Volunteer Office provided lists of city and state volunteer program managers in the New York area and near her current residence in Oregon; the volunteer coordinator for the US Army Corps of Engineers in Walla Walla is the national information coordinator for all the people in

her position; she provided the names of 368 volunteer coordinators with the US Army Corps of Engineers; a former member of the National Museum Association provided a directory of US museums with volunteer programs; a librarian offered a directory of volunteer program managers in libraries and in libraries for the visually impaired and disabled; and a former ARNOVA colleague provided the names of over 700 volunteer program managers in public schools across the United States.

The outpouring of names was staggering. The deadline date for names to be delivered to the Points of Light arrived and 3000 names and locations were forwarded. The names continued to stream, with a final tally of 4870.

The numbers reported to the researchers were larger than expected. 368 volunteer coordinators for the US Army Corps of Engineers; 310 volunteer coordinators with the National Park Service, with 90,000 + volunteers annually; 700+ volunteer coordinators in public schools; 170+ volunteer managers in federal prisons; 80,000 + volunteers with the Internal Revenue's Taxpayer Information and Education Service; and 150 state volunteer coordinators for volunteer firefighters.

Everyone on the research team knew there were more names and more levels of government than could be contacted in the time frame specified. In some cases there were barriers to obtaining information. One government support organization elected not to share their list of 700+ volunteer program managers; city and municipal volunteer program managers are not identified by the National League of Cities; the closure of state volunteer centers made locating state government volunteer programs almost impossible (Washington State, for example, has over 40,000 volunteers per year volunteering for state agencies [Winans, 1991]).

As the number of government volunteer program managers grew it seemed clear that the next step was to survey these people and map more precisely the face of volunteerism within government. The Points of Light Foundation and Dr. Jeffrey Brudney were asked to participate in a survey of volunteer program managers in government organizations, departments and agencies.

Survey Methodology

As explained above, the marketing study located 4,800 volunteer programs across government agencies with an identified staff person as (paid) program manager. The programs encompass a wide range of government departments and service domains in which volunteers perform a variety of tasks. To learn more about these volunteer programs, the researchers selected a random sample of 500 for administration of a mail survey. The findings below pertain to this group.

The survey questionnaires were mailed (first-class) in late July 1997 with the request that recipients complete and return them by the end of August (August 29). The researchers took several steps consistent with Dillman's (1978) well-accepted recommendations to improve response rate: the questionnaire was assembled as an attractive booklet, printed on colored paper with large type (double-spaced) and ample room to facilitate response. A cover-letter described the purpose and importance of the survey, provided contact information for the researchers, and explained how interested respondents could obtain a copy of the results when available. The mailing included a pre-addressed envelope with commemorative stamp for return of the

completed questionnaire. In mid-August (August 14), the researchers mailed a reminder postcard to all respondents.

Table 1 summarizes the responses to the survey mailing. While the potential sample consisted of 500 names selected at random from the marketing study, as in any survey, the effective sample is smaller. First, the US Postal Service returned ten surveys as "undeliverable". Second, the cover-letter had specified that the survey pertained to government-based volunteer programs, and five respondents reported that their organization was a private, non-profit organization. Another five questionnaires were returned with annotations stating that the organization does not have a volunteer program or does not use volunteers. Four more recipients indicated that the position of volunteer director or coordinator was vacant. One of them said the position had been eliminated. Finally, one blank questionnaire was returned without written comment. Additional members of the sample could have had the same or similar problems, but these were the only problematic surveys returned to us. Excluding these recipients decreases the potential sample to its effective size of 475 coordinators of the government-based volunteer programs. From this group we received useable questionnaires from 188, for a response rate of 39.6%, quite an acceptable return for a survey administered through the mail.

Table 1
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO SURVEY

TOTAL QUESTIONNAIRES MAILED	500
Undeliverable	10
Non Profit Organization	5
No Volunteers / Volunteer Programs	5
No Volunteer Coordinator (Position Vacant / Eliminated)	4
Blank (No Comments)	1
EFFECTIVE SAMPLE SIZE	475
Useable Returns	188
RESPONSE RATE	39.6%

Table 2 displays the composition of the sample by the organizations surveyed. The sample includes coordinators of government-based volunteer programs spanning 15 different types of organizations, a very broad mix. Six different organizations each yielded approximately ten percent or more of the sample: the National Park Service (14.9%), National Association of Partners in Education (volunteer coordinators in public schools) (13.8%), Army Corps of Engineers (11.7%), American Library Association (11.2%), the 4-H Program of the Department of Agriculture (9.6%), and the American Association of Museum Volunteers (9.0%). Three organizations each constitute roughly five percent of the sample: the Cooperative Extension Service other than 4-H (6.9%), the Forest Service (4.8%), and the Veteran's Administration (4.3%). The National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (3.2%),

Bureau of Prisons (2.7%), firefighters (2.7%), Internal Revenue Service (2.1%), city-municipal governments (2.1%), and the Small Business Administration (1.1%) round out the sample. Because respondents were selected by simple random sampling procedures (all units have an equal chance of selection), rather than stratified by organization, different numbers of respondents appear from the various agencies.

Table 2
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SAMPLE

Organization	Percent
National Park Service - Department of Interior	14.9
National Association of Partners in Education	13.8
Army Corps of Engineers - Department of Interior	11.7
American Library Association	11.2
4-H - Department of Agriculture	9.6
American Association for Museum Volunteers	9.0
Cooperative Extension Service - Department of Agriculture	6.9
Forest Service - Department of Agriculture	4.8
Veteran's Administration	4.3
National Library Services - Blind and Physically Handicapped	3.2
Bureau of Prisons	2.7
Firefighter Volunteers	2.7
Internal Revenue Service	2.1
City / Municipal Governments	2.1
Small Business Administration	1.1
Total	100.
N = 188 (No missing data)	

Findings

4. Analyze the Information

Table 3 presents demographic and other characteristics of the sample of government-based volunteer coordinators. About two-thirds are women (65.6%). Most are middle-aged, with the bulk falling between the ages of 35 and 44 (28.6%) and 45 and 54 (38.4%). They appear to be relatively well-paid, although it should be

noted that nearly all of them have job duties in addition to managing volunteers (see below). Table 3 shows that only about one-fifth (21.1%) report incomes less than \$30,000. and that a comparable proportion earns \$50,000. or more (23.3%). Just over half the sample (55.6%) earn between \$30,000 and \$49,999. Between \$30,000. and \$39,999. (30.6%) and between \$40,000. and \$49,999. (25.0%).

Table 3
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Gender	Percent
Female	65.7
Male	34.4
Total N = 186 (Missing 2)	
Age	Percent
18 - 24 Years	1.1
24 - 34 Years	15.7
35 - 44 Years	28.6
45 - 54 Years	38.4
55 - 65 Years	14.6
65 Years and Older	1.6
Total N = 185 (Missing 3)	
Income	Percent
No Salary	0.6
\$10,000 - 14,999	2.8
\$15,000 - 19,999	2.2
\$20,000 - 24,999	8.3
\$25,000 - 29,999	7.2
\$30,000 - 39,999	30.6
\$40,000 - 49,999	25.0
\$50,000 - 59,999	13.9
\$60,000 +	9.4
Total N = 185 (Missing 8)	

Table 4 looks more closely at the background and preparation of the respondents for managing a volunteer program. As other empirical studies have found, directors of volunteer programs rarely have that charge as their only job obligation. The table indicates that 95 percent of these employees have duties in addition to managing volunteers (94.7). In fact, by their own estimation, the average amount of time they are managing volunteers amounts to only about one-third of their work time (mean=32.3%; standard deviation = 30.0). Just one-quarter of these volunteer coordinators said that they "consider my primary career field to be working with volunteers" (26.5%), and their prior job experience tends to confirm an alternative career preferences. For more than half, the present job constitutes their first experience as a volunteer coordinator (that is, Table 4 shows that a minority, 45.5 percent, had prior experience in such a position), even though they have had long experience in the organization (mean = 13.3 years, standard deviation = 8.9) and in government service (mean= 16.2 years, standard deviation = 8.6). Moreover, prior to assuming their present job in volunteer administration, only about 30 percent (29.6%) had acquired education and/or training in volunteer administration.

Table 4
BACKGROUND IN VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

Characteristic	Percent of Respondents
Have Duties in Addition to Managing Volunteers	94.7
Prior Experience as a Volunteer Coordinator	45.5
Prior Education and/or Training in Volunteer Administration	29.6
Consider Primary Career Field to Be Working With	26.5

Volunteers	
N's range from 185 to 187	

Table 5 turns from the volunteer coordinators per se to the characteristics of the programs they manage in the public sector. While this type of information is sometimes available in case-study and other small-sample research, few studies have been able to assemble data concerning the structure and functions of volunteer programs across a comparatively large, well-defined sample. Table 5 shows the characteristics of the government-based volunteer programs, according to the responses of their managers.

Table 5
CHARACTERISTICS OF GOVERNMENT VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

Characteristic	Percent of Programs
Recognition Activities	91.0
Formal Record Keeping on Volunteers	79.8
Basic Volunteer Training	78.7
Written Policies for Volunteer Program	78.2
Active Outreach to Recruit Volunteers	76.1
Official Support for Volunteer Program	74.5
Job Descriptions for Volunteers	72.3
Continued Volunteer Training	62.8
Liability Insurance Coverage for Volunteers	62.2
Orientation for New Volunteers	55.9
Training for Staff who Work with Volunteers	53.7
Reimbursement for Work Expenses	48.9
Budget for Volunteer Program	47.9
Volunteers Manage other Volunteers	39.4
Newsletter for Volunteers	37.2
Evaluations of Volunteers	30.3
N = 188 (No missing data)	

Several volunteer program characteristics occur with substantial frequency. First, almost all of these programs have recognition activities for volunteers (91%). Since volunteer recognition is extolled in the professional literature as well as the popular media, this finding was not unexpected. Other characteristics are also common to these volunteer programs, according to the reports of the coordinators. About 80 percent of the programs offer basic training for volunteers (78.2%), practice active outreach to recruit new volunteers (76.1%), and claim they have the support of high-level officials (74.5%).

What is surprising about the findings in Table 5 is the great attention apparently accorded to formal record keeping for volunteers (79.8%) and job descriptions for volunteer positions (72.3%) by these programs -- factors whose absence is more often decried than their presence observed. Of course, formal-record keeping is open to a variety of interpretations (the survey questionnaire specifically mentioned the number of hours contributed), and the questionnaire could not probe the depth or detail of job descriptions, yet the incidence of these characteristics across more than 70 percent of the programs, according to the volunteer coordinators, is noteworthy.

By contrast, some highly-recommended features are encountered comparatively infrequently in the sample of government-based volunteer programs, thus, raising possible red flags. For example, only about six in ten programs offer on-going or in-service training for volunteers (62.8%) as opposed to basic training, and perhaps more important, carry liability insurance coverage for nonpaid workers (62.2%). Somewhat fewer, about one-half, boast characteristics that one would expect

in a well-managed volunteer program such as orientation for new volunteers (55.9%), training for employees who work with them (53.7%), and reimbursement for the work related expenses of volunteers (48.9%). About the same number have a dedicated budget for the volunteer program (47.9).

Finally, about 40 percent of the programs (39.4%) place volunteers in positions of responsibility for managing other volunteers, an ambitious feature that works to develop the confidence and skills of volunteers and strengthen the program. Still fewer publish a newsletter for volunteers (37.2%), though it is an inexpensive way to disseminate information and link these part-time workers to the program. Studies have found that volunteer programs often overlook the evaluation function, in no small measure because the process can be time-consuming and potentially threatening and anomalous to not only volunteer, but also paid staff. The present study offers no exception. By the accounts of the volunteer coordinators, an annual or other evaluation of volunteers is the characteristic that occurs with the lowest frequency across the sample of government programs (30.3%).

Table 6 describes the most important benefits that the volunteer managers perceive emanating from their programs. Again, such data have rarely been ascertained across a sizable sample of volunteer programs in the nonprofit or government sectors. Providing additional services and programs (80.9%), cost-savings to government (78.7%), and increases in the level of services (76.6%) top the list of perceived benefits of these volunteer programs, noted by three-fourths of the coordinators or more. Fewer, but still a substantial proportion, feel that their program realizes more subtle advantages from volunteer involvement, such as the infusion of

specialized skills possessed by volunteers (69.7%) and increased public support generated by them (69.1%). Approximately 60 percent of the coordinators see the advantages of improved service or program quality (61.7%), increased client or citizen satisfaction (60.1%), and expansion of the kinds of services or programs offered by the department or agency (59.0%); about the same number report that their program benefits from feedback or suggestions provided by volunteers on how to improve services (60.1%).

TABLE 6
MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF USING
VOLUNTEERS

Benefits	Percent
Provide Additional Services	80.9
Cost Savings to Government	78.7
Increase in Level of Services Provided	76.6
Volunteers Possess Specialized Skills	69.7
Increased Public Support for Programs	69.1
Improved Quality of Service	61.7
Increased Client Satisfaction	60.1
Feedback from Volunteers to Improve Service	59.0
Expansion of Kinds of Service Offered	47.9
More Detailed Attention to Clients	37.2
Volunteers Work During Emergencies/Peaks	
N = 188 (No missing data)	

Less than one-half of the volunteer coordinators feel that their programs achieve two other potential benefits of volunteer involvement. The first is more detailed attention to clients, noted by 47.9 percent, a much lower figure than might have been anticipated given the widespread acknowledgment of this advantage in the literature. The benefit cited least often, by 37.2 percent, is that volunteers expand services by providing assistance during emergencies and peak load periods (37.2%).

An explanation for this finding may be that most of the organizations in the sample offer human and social services on a continuous basis (for example, schools, libraries, Cooperative Extension and 4-H) and are not subject to the peaks and emergencies common to other service domains, such as fire-fighting (2.7% of sample), emergency medical, law enforcement, and transportation.

Any option for the delivery of public services will have benefits as well as liabilities. Table 7 examines the problems occasioned by volunteer involvement. The most striking aspect of this data is that according to the volunteer coordinators, the perceived advantages of the method (Table 6) far outweigh the disadvantages shown in the table. In general, the former are cited with much greater frequency than the latter. In fact, with only two exceptions, each benefit is realized by more volunteer programs than any of the problems attributed to the technique. The first of the exceptions is revealing. As virtually all research in this area has established, the largest "problem" with volunteers is that there never seems to be enough of them. Almost two-thirds of the volunteer coordinators in the present study (63.8%) cited recruitment ("getting enough people to volunteer") as a problem. Hardly a criticism of volunteer programs, it endorses greater use of volunteers to assist the agency.

Table 7
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEMS WITH VOLUNTEER
INVOLVEMENT

Problems	Percent of Programs
Getting Enough People to Volunteer	63.8
Lack of Paid Staff Time to Train and Supervise Volunteers	56.9
Lack of Funds for Reimbursement of Expenses	29.8
Lack of Adequate Funds for Volunteer Program	26.6
Unreliability of Volunteers in Meeting Commitments	25.5
Absenteeism by Volunteers	23.9
Misconceptions about Number of Paid Staff Needed	23.4
Lack of Supervisory Support for Volunteer Program	21.3
High Turnover of Volunteers	20.7
Poor Work by Volunteers	18.1
Union Objections to Volunteer Involvement	11.2
Poor Working Relationships between Volunteers and Staff	10.6
Providing Liability Insurance Coverage	08.5
Lack of Official Support for Volunteer Program	08.0
N = 188 (No missing data)	

The first set of criticisms of volunteer programs point to lack of organizational capacity to support this service option. This finding is ironic given that public (and other) agencies conceive and implement volunteer programs to help, rather than diminish, existing capacity. Yet, over 55 percent of the volunteer coordinators (56.9%) say that their programs lack paid staff time to properly train and supervise volunteers; it is the only other disadvantage (besides volunteer recruitment) cited with greater frequency than any of the perceived benefits of these programs. Two other resource capacity issues are cited by approximately one-half this total: lack of funds for

reimbursement of volunteers' expenses (29.8%) and a general lack of adequate funding for the volunteer program (26.6%). Providing liability insurance coverage for the volunteers appears to be a relatively minor issue, noted as a problem by 8.5 percent of the program coordinators.

The next set of problems center on the presumed liabilities of volunteers as workers. While, regrettably, these problems do occur, the incidence cannot justify popular stereotypes: about one-quarter to one-fifth of the volunteer coordinators report such problems as the unreliability of volunteers in meeting work commitments (25.5%), absenteeism (23.9%), turnover (20.7%), or poor work by volunteers (18.1%).

The final set of criticisms pertain to complications occasioned by having volunteers in the workplace and touch on relationships among important groups in the organization and its environment. According to the volunteer coordinators, these types of problems generally occur less often than the work behavior issues noted above. The most common problem involving work relationships is a perceived lack of support from department heads and supervisors for the volunteer program, cited by 21.3 percent of the coordinators. The other relationship issues are not as prominent: union objections to the volunteer program (cited by 11.2%), poor working relationships or mistrust between volunteers and paid staff (10.6%), and lack of support from top elected/appointed officials for the volunteer program (8.0%). Yet another party or constituency affected by volunteer involvement is the general public, which both supports these public agencies and is served by them. The data in Table 7 indicate that volunteer managers do worry that the use of this service option can lead to misconceptions about the number of paid staff needed by the agency (23.4%).

The goal of an effective volunteer program is to realize as many of the benefits (Table 6) and avoid as many of the pitfalls (Table 7) described here as possible. One item on the survey asked the volunteer coordinators to indicate which of several educational resources might be most useful to them in organizing and managing a volunteer program. Table 8 shows their responses.

Table 8
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES THAT WOULD BE
USEFUL TO VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Resources	Percent
Regional Training on Volunteer Management & Administration	60.1
General Books on Volunteer Management	49.1
National Conferences on Volunteer Management	46.3
Internet Training for Government Volunteer Coordinators	44.7
Manuals on Government-Based Volunteer Programs	41.0
Books on Government-Based Volunteer Programs	34.6
Membership Programs for Volunteer Management Professionals	31.9
Correspondence Courses on Volunteer Management	31.4
N = 188 (No missing data)	

The most popular resources would be regional training on volunteer management and administration (60.1%), followed by books on volunteer management (49.5%) and national conferences on volunteer management and administration (46.3%). The next three resources (by frequency of response) referred specifically to volunteers in the context of the public agencies: internet training for

government volunteer coordinators (44.7%), manuals on government-based volunteer program management (41.0%), and books on the same topic (34.6%). Fewer of these volunteer coordinators would find useful membership programs for volunteer management professionals (31.9%) or correspondence courses on volunteer management (31.4%).

5. Presenting the Findings

The research reported in this paper and additional information gleaned from the survey is being presented, via this paper, at the 1997 Association for Research on Nonprofit Organization and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) Annual Convention and to the Points of Light Foundation. The authors intend to revise and submit the paper to academic journals so the information might have wider dissemination. The availability of such a large sample of government volunteer managers also offer the opportunity for further study.

The depth and scope of volunteering for government is huge, much larger than commonly acknowledge. This is an area of voluntarism crying out for attention from academic researchers, especially in partnership with practitioners. It is hoped that the presentation of this paper might entice others to undertake research in this area.

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