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Title of Study: Juggling Multiple Roles: An Examination of Role Conflict

Phase II: RSVP Program Survey Report

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Juggling Multiple Roles: Phase II RSVP Program Survey

Overview

The findings in this report represent research conducted under a two-phased research project focused on how older adult volunteers juggle multiple life roles in addition to their formal volunteering through the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Older adult volunteer perspectives were gathered via a survey of current RSVP volunteers drawn from 55 sites around the country in Phase I of this research. To complement older volunteer survey findings, a second survey was administered to all 55 of the Phase I volunteer survey sites. These sites represent a range of RSVP programs serving a mix of rural, urban, and suburban locations. Key findings from the first phase survey include the following points which served as the basis for the construction of the Phase II survey and its focus on caregivers and workers:

- Caregivers who also volunteer for RSVP have more role conflict compared to non-caregivers
- Workers reported more role conflict compared to non-workers
- Workers volunteer fewer hours per month with RSVP compared to non-workers
- Volunteers who completed the survey identified numerous role enhancements connected with their volunteer work that benefit their other roles including learning new skills and information that can be applied to working and caregiving, along with creating new social connections and friendship.
- Several themes from the Phase I survey responses underscore programmatic features of RSVP volunteer assignments that facilitate participation in other life roles including: flexible scheduling, volunteer assignments that put them into contact with others, and opportunities to learn and do something new through volunteer work.

Research Questions

Research questions that guided the Phase II survey development were as follows:

- 1) What role enhancement strategies have older adult volunteers employed to combat role conflict?
- 2) What strategies have RSVP programs employed to assist older volunteers in managing role conflict?
- 3) Based on study findings from Phase I, what recommendations do RSVP program directors have for addressing role conflict within older adult volunteering?

Methods

A 17-question online survey was developed and distributed via e-mail to the program sites that served as Phase I volunteer survey distribution sites. The Phase II survey sample included current RSVP program directors and/or program coordinators who participated in survey distribution efforts for the Phase I volunteer survey. There were a total of 55 program contacts within the internal contact database maintained by the program PI. Contacts within this database represented RSVP programs from 27 different states serving a range of 80 to 1,800 older adult volunteers each year with the majority serving rural and suburban areas. The majority of the contacts were program directors and the remaining were program coordination staff. Survey distribution included an e-mail invitation letter with a link to the survey and informed consent information.

The survey contained two components. The first component consisted of a program profile form containing 10 questions that provided background information on the size, scope, host organization, and volunteer makeup of the participating programs represented among the

respondents. These data were used to provide contextual information about the qualitative responses collected via the questionnaire form. The questionnaire portion of the survey consisted of seven qualitative open-ended questions designed to collect information on how RSVP programs support volunteers who are also caregivers and workers. This portion of the instrument included two questions regarding program administrator perspectives on the types of strategies used by volunteers to manage volunteering, working, and caregiving, along with an area where additional comments could be provided. The survey questions were as follows: 1) What strategies have you seen volunteers use to juggle their RSVP volunteering and caregiving responsibilities? 2) What strategies have you seen working volunteers use to juggle their RSVP volunteering and working responsibilities?; 3) In what ways has your program supported those older adults who are caregiving and volunteering with RSVP simultaneously?; 4) In what ways has your program supported those older adults who are working and volunteering with RSVP simultaneously?

Two additional questions included “What advice would you give to other volunteer managers about supporting older adult volunteers who are also working?” and “What advice would you give to other volunteer managers about supporting older adult volunteers who are also caregivers?”

Quantitative program profile data were analyzed within the Qualtrics survey platform using descriptive statistics to describe the sample program characteristics. All write-in qualitative responses were organized in an Excel database by question and were analyzed using a basic inductive content analysis approach with two coders (the author and a second coder). Broadly, this approach entailed data preparation, close reading of the resulting text, category generation, placement of categories in relation to one another and category refinement. For this study, the

qualitative data gathered from write-in responses were first formatted and loaded into Excel for initial descriptive coding and code refinement. Once finalized, all coding took place in Excel and all responses were subject to multiple readings by the primary coder followed by the development of initial categories, or descriptive coding (close reading and category generation). Initial code generation resulted in 18 descriptive codes that were then condensed down to 13 final codes. Once established, each code was assigned a label and description within the codebook.

The code development process entailed developing an iterative sequence of codebooks that were refined after each test coding session (described below). This refinement entailed merging similar codes/themes into broader coding based on conceptual alignment. Data excerpting and code assignment were then undertaken with the data using the final codebook.

To increase reliability of the qualitative data findings drawn from the Phase II survey, a second coder was used to establish the clarity of coding categories generated and check the extent to which coding was stable from one coder to the next (Creswell, 2013). The secondary coder was first given a rough draft of the project codebook along with a set of raw data to code. Both coders then came together to discuss the resulting excerpts and coding. Two rounds of this trial run coding were performed before the codebook was solidified and the final round of coding was conducted using Excel.

The second coder used for the project, a graduate student in social work, completed an orientation to the project, its theoretical framework, and hypotheses. Additional training and guidance on qualitative research was provided including background reading on the coding process and an overview of the codebook. During trial coding sessions, both coders periodically communicated about the codebook and made refinements and reductions to the codes and

definitions as needed. Test exercises yielded an overlap across code applications/excerpts of 64% on the first test code and 84% on the final test code session. When the final coding was completed an overlap rate of 66% was noted before consensus. After coding was completed independently by each coder, the two sets of coding were compared. A consensus process was undertaken where the author reviewed both code sets and determined, with input from the second coder, the final code applications for all excerpts in the individual data sets. In some instances, the primary coding was retained, in others the primary code set was removed and the secondary code set was retained, and for others a new code set was retained with relevant codes from both coders.

Results

A total of 21 completed surveys were returned with an additional five incomplete surveys

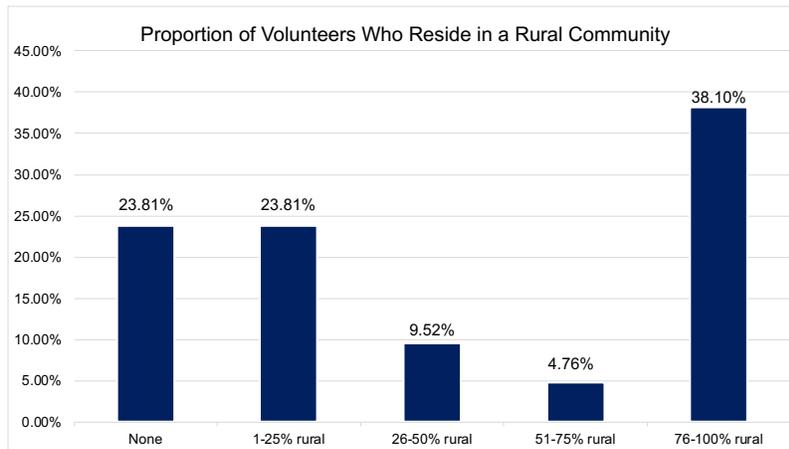


Figure 1. Rural Volunteers Served

returned but not included in the final data analysis, representing an 38% response rate. A survey was considered incomplete if it did not contain at least one open-ended question response.

Participating RSVP programs

had been in operation for an

average of 35 years (SD = 14) at the time of the survey, with a range of 3-47 years overall.

Respondents had been employed with their RSVP program for an average of 7.5 years (SD = 7) with a range of 1-29 years of experience across the sample. The sample consisted of 17 program directors, three program coordinators, and one office manager. The programs served an average

of 438 volunteers (SD = 197.84), with a range of 85 to 900 through an average of 73 program sites (SD =56.82). Programs from 14 different states were represented among the sample including Ohio, Alabama, Florida, New Jersey, Montana, New York, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, Washington, Ohio, Michigan and Massachusetts.

Programs primarily served rural and suburban areas with 66.66% reporting that they primarily served rural areas of their state, 52.38% serving suburban areas, and 28.57% primarily serving metropolitan areas. A total of 42.86% of the programs surveyed reported that more than half of their volunteers resided in rural areas and an additional 47.62% of programs surveyed reported that 25% or less of their volunteers resided in urban areas (see Figure 1).

The majority of programs served non-white volunteer populations but only a third of the

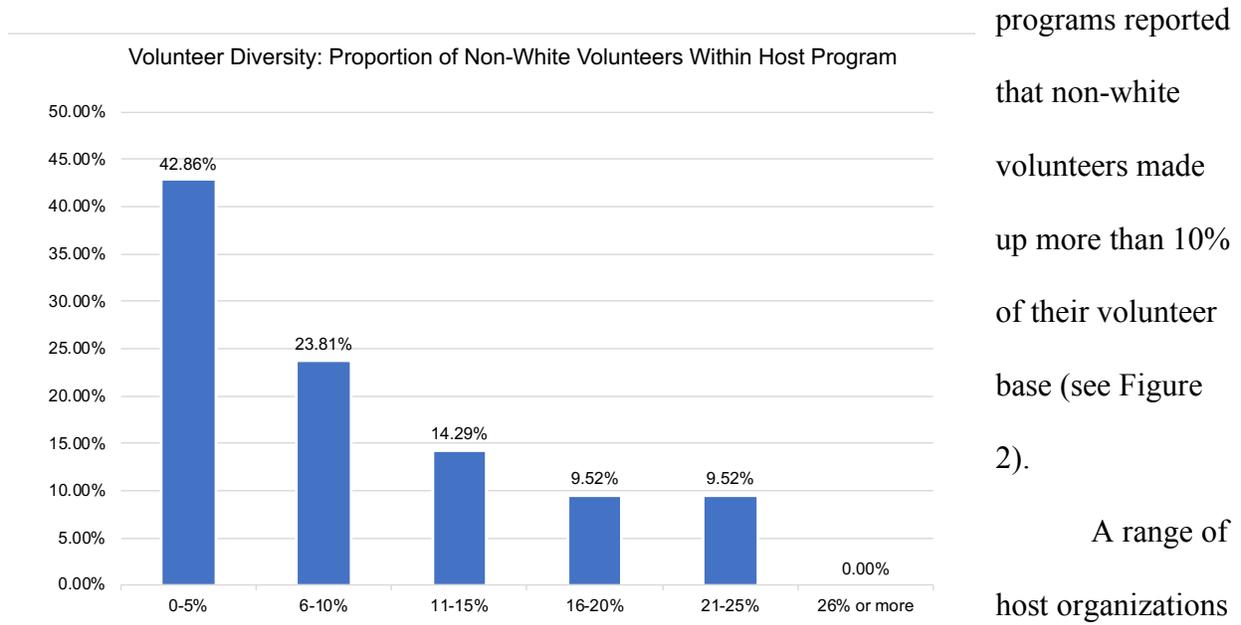


Figure 2. Program Diversity

respondents including private non-profits (28.57%), government-based organizations (14.29%), area agencies on aging (19.05%), and a college/university host setting (19.05%). Other

programs reported that non-white volunteers made up more than 10% of their volunteer base (see Figure 2).

A range of host organizations were reported by

organizations identified through write-ins included national non-profit, public non-profit, city government, and a regional government council.

The programs represented a range of RSVP program focal areas with the most frequently cited being volunteer opportunities that focus on supporting healthy futures, education, community priorities, economic opportunity, and veterans and military (see Figure 3). These focal areas are developed by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the RSVP program sponsor, to guide and standardize RSVP activities nationally.

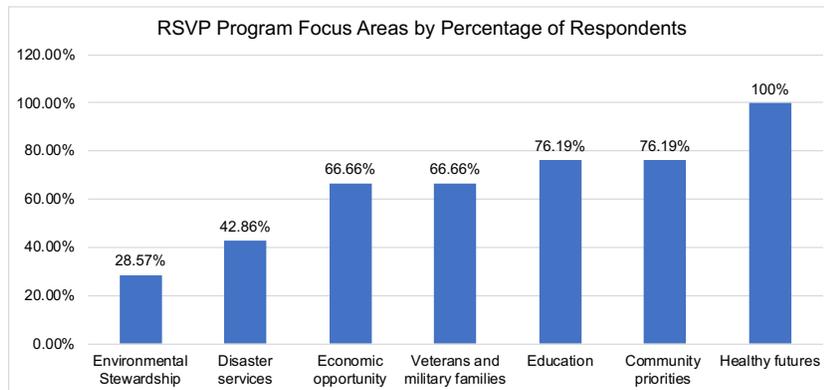


Figure 3. Program Focal Areas

Qualitative Findings

The resulting qualitative data from the survey yielded information about the strategies employed by both programs and volunteers to address and avoid role conflict. The responses provided were analyzed by the target group of volunteers referenced in the responses (caregivers and workers).

Strategies used by caregivers. A total of 17 programs (81%) responded to the caregiver role enhancement strategies question. As reported by RSVP programs, volunteers who are also caregivers juggle multiple responsibilities in addition to their volunteer work by making care arrangements for their care recipient and participating in volunteer work alongside their care

recipient when possible. These unique strategies used by caregivers focused on the need for respite for such individuals and the creative ways that respite can be addressed in conjunction with the volunteer experience.

Respite care. Caregivers make time for volunteering by arranging for care for their care recipient through family members, friends, or through adult day programs:

“If they can afford a paid sitter, they use that as a way to get out of the house and volunteer.” ID #2

“Some [volunteers] have arranged alternate care in order to participate in trainings or actual volunteering.” ID #4

Inclusion of care recipient in volunteer work. Three of the 17 programs that responded reported that their caregiver volunteers bring care recipients with them during volunteer assignments:

“Bringing them [care recipient] with them.” ID #1

“I always say - bring that person along and we would love to have them join us. Make them feel welcome and give them an appropriate task.” ID #3

“...one of our volunteers takes her husband with her to a food distribution. He sits there in a wheelchair and watches while she works. She says they both enjoy getting out.” ID #21

Strategies used by working volunteers. All survey respondents responded to the worker strategies question. Strategies utilized by workers to juggle responsibilities focused largely on scheduling and flexible arrangements that allowed such individuals to remain in both the worker and volunteer roles despite time constraints. Such arrangements used by working volunteers included engaging in volunteer activity during the off-work hours, like nights and weekends, along with seeking out one-time and intermittent volunteer assignments.

Volunteering during off-work hours. Program staff described volunteer assignments in which working volunteers participate outside of traditional working hours such as:

“Offering volunteer opportunities that are in the evening or weekend.” ID #19

“We have volunteers who try to schedule their volunteer work for a time when they would not normally work, i.e., weekends, late afternoons/weekends.” ID #6

“We have a number of non-profits who need volunteers to deliver their marketing posters around town - that can be done over lunch hours or after work - when people may be off work, but the retail businesses are still open.” ID #4

Making short-term or intermittent volunteer assignment commitments. Program staff

described how working volunteers tend to look for short-term and intermittent volunteer assignments that do not require large amounts of time or a longer-term commitment to the program:

“Other working volunteers will schedule...once a week or once a month, so it is not too much to juggle.” ID #25

“Opting for the more flexible shifts like short-term opportunities.” ID #12

“Other volunteers, with varying work schedules, sign on to be substitute readers in our schools. They come in when we have someone out sick if they have off work. It's a lower commitment volunteer position.” ID #10

“We also have volunteers who offer to fill in for other volunteers (on call) as long as they are not working on that day. This leaves the volunteer feeling good about volunteering without jeopardizing either position. There are others in our cadre of volunteers who will volunteer for special occasions when they cannot commit to days during the week because of their work schedule.” ID #6

Overlapping strategies for both caregivers and workers. Overlapping strategies that were noted in responses for both caregivers and workers included flexible and accommodating arrangements, using personal organizational and time management skills, utilizing breaks from volunteering, and seeking out volunteer work that was either meaningful or could provide respite to the individual.

Seeking flexible/accommodating volunteer experiences. Responses suggest that both caregiving volunteers and working volunteers seek out flexibility and assignment accommodations that allow them to schedule their limited time appropriately as follows:

“Utilizing flexibility in the times for volunteering. Picking volunteer opportunities that are more accommodating for the volunteer's needs.” ID #1

“These volunteers also seek flexibility in their volunteering schedule...” ID #22

Responses also noted creative arrangements such as job-sharing and team-based service that provide individual volunteers with flexibility:

“Job-sharing their volunteer position.” ID #11

“If possible, working volunteers can encourage their co-workers to assist with their volunteer tasks, or with the support of their supervisor, maybe develop a service team that can alternate days they help. We have banks and local utility companies that serve as a team.” ID #25

Using time management and organizational skills. In order to successfully manage multiple responsibilities that come with caregiving and working, volunteers use time management techniques that include scheduling volunteering around caregiving responsibilities and work shifts and schedules. These techniques, while used by the volunteer also involve communication and facilitation on behalf of the volunteer organization, whether that is supported through training or through organizational policies, that allow the volunteer to have flexibility in their scheduling. This flexibility was further explored via a subsequent survey question about program practices. Example responses that illustrate this theme include:

“By using some form of time-management and making sure activities do not overlap.” ID #15

“I have seen volunteers switch their volunteer shifts/days in order to still help the organization.” ID #6

“Other working volunteers will schedule their volunteer time during their lunch break...” ID #25

“Some change their volunteer sites and/or schedule in order to accommodate caring for grandchildren before/after school, etc.” ID #4

For some caregivers, this time management is contingent upon alternate and respite care arrangements as exemplified in these responses:

“Some try to schedule volunteering for when they will not have caregiving responsibilities, such as when the person is at appointments or with other family members.” ID #19

“We have volunteers who fit their volunteering into times when they have someone else that can provide care - or they adjust their volunteering to meet the needs of the person they are providing care.” ID #14

One of the responding programs discussed how their respective programs facilitate this time management approach through orientation training content and the configuration of volunteer roles:

“One of the points we go over in our orientation and training is to be sure that whatever position the volunteer takes on, they do not over commit themselves and to be sure they are able to handle the work load. Volunteering is not fun and rewarding when it is too stressful.” ID #9

Taking a break from volunteering. An additional strategy used by both workers and caregivers is to take a break from volunteering when caregiving and work responsibilities are most demanding. This break can be intermittent or for some, involve a complete cessation in volunteering altogether:

“Some [volunteers] stop completely and go inactive.” ID #4

“I also have one volunteer that has asked for an extended leave of absence from her volunteer position until she is no longer a full-time caregiver. I know she will be back as soon as she is able.” ID #5

“These volunteers...take breaks when their responsibilities require it.” ID #22

“My experience has been that the assignment is the first thing a volunteer will give up to juggle responsibilities.” ID #24

“Most of the working volunteers I have encountered in the past year scaled back their volunteering with RSVP once they returned to part-time work. The few who returned to full-time work ended their RSVP volunteering.” ID #4

Meaningful volunteer work/volunteering as respite. As noted in the Phase I volunteer survey research findings, older adults seek out volunteer opportunities that provide personal meaning as well as opportunities that can provide a sense of respite or a break from work or caregiving. In this manner, volunteering served a personal fulfillment purpose for the individual:

“Some volunteers who are caregivers often want to conduct volunteer work that has little to do with caregiving.” ID #8

“They [caregiving volunteers] also try to.. do something for themselves.” ID #15

“As mentioned above, some of the volunteers choose volunteer opportunities that they enjoy themselves, such as quilting classes or teaching exercise classes.” ID #9

“Finding an opportunity that is not like their job, but one that feeds their passion or provides an enjoyable break from work.” ID #1

“Our volunteers choose opportunities that fit their lives, including their interests...” ID #22

How programs support caregivers. The unique strategies that RSVP programs use to support caregivers entail offering volunteer opportunities that allow for the inclusion of the care recipient, demonstrating care and empathy with volunteers, and providing referrals to caregiver resources and supports where appropriate.

Inclusion of care recipient. As noted above, being able to integrate the care recipient in some fashion into the volunteer experience was a key strategy used by caregiving volunteers to help them manage their caregiving responsibilities. Programs discussed the types of volunteer opportunities that have been developed, or could be developed, to facilitate the inclusion of care recipients in the volunteer assignment thus reducing the burden of care or the need to obtain respite care:

“We allow for flexibility, and depending on the volunteer opportunity, we allow for volunteers to bring their loved one with them and find a way for them to participate as well. For example, the volunteer might be assembling packages for veterans and the loved one would be helping by tracking names and holding items until needed.” ID #1

“We provide opportunities for all ranges of volunteers. Therefore, if someone brings an older adult [care recipient], we have a volunteer project that they are able to perform, even if they are just a greeter. The job is meaningful and very important.” ID #3

“Some of our caregiving volunteers will bring along their care recipient while they volunteer-providing them with a day out and a social interaction, which lets them feel like they are useful.” ID #25

“Sometimes volunteer managers can arrange a volunteer opportunity where the caregiver can take the individual who is receiving care to the volunteer site. Such as having a caregiver take their individual to a Community Center. The individual might enjoy a game of cards, puzzle or other activities, while the care giver might assist a community "food bank" in the same area. This gives both a chance to socialize and be apart, but the confidence that is needed the caregiver is there.” ID #15

Caring/understanding/patience. When discussing how to best support caregiving volunteers, a majority of the program responses (10 of the 17 provided) identified an intentional focus on providing a more personal and caring approach in staff interactions with caregivers:

“Most of the time a phone call or a card in the mail goes a long way in supporting someone.” ID #2

“As volunteer coordinator, I maintain contact via occasional emails and phone calls to let the volunteer know they are thought of by our organization during their time of caregiving. Thinking of you cards and notes are sent to the caregiving volunteer, likewise the person the volunteer is caring for, as appropriate.” ID #4

“Volunteer managers must be patient and understanding. Sending cards once in a while to let the volunteer know they are on your mind.” ID #5

“We recognize they [caregiving volunteers] need us to care, be flexible, be understanding and supportive of their ability to volunteer - but they still want to be socially engaged in the community and with organizations like stations and RSVP.” ID #14

“I always inquire about the grandchildren when volunteers are also caregivers for their grandchildren.” ID #4

“Our staff works with the volunteer to try and figure out a best course of action for the volunteer's life. We would rather be supportive than demanding in a time of crisis...” ID #8

Referrals to supports and resources. Six programs of the 21 that provided information on the strategies they use to support caregivers discussed connecting volunteers who were known to be caregivers with resources and supports that could assist them in their caregiving. For some programs, this entailed in-house connections and supports provided by the RSVP host site and for others these referrals and connections were made with external organizations:

“Perhaps the way that we best support the caretakers is by sharing information about resources available in the community.” ID #1

“... we have volunteers that as part of the Healthy Futures performance measure, serve as respite volunteers so that other volunteers can be supported and provided some relief.” ID #9

“We provide a volunteer caring companion for respite care. We offer caregiving support groups at our agency.” ID #12

“...being sure to listen to their needs and situation and to provide referrals for services that they might need in the community, such as caregiver respite.” ID #22

“Our program makes sure that RSVP volunteers are aware of the services of [agency name redacted]. When a volunteer calls to reduce service hours due to caring for a loved one, we...transfer them to [agency name redacted] so that they may work with a caseworker to receive caregiver services.” ID #24

“[agency name redacted] held a caregiver symposium in late October-a panel of experts spoke about the many issues facing caregivers, and all those in attendance came away with printed resources and a wealth of knowledge gained from the discussions. We are very fortunate to be sponsored by the local Office for the Aging, and encouraged all our volunteers to participate in this program, along with a caregiver resource program at [agency name redacted], which offers monthly support group meetings and other resources for Caregivers.” ID #25

In addition to the responses above, one respondent expressed a desire to offer respite directly for caregivers:

“I would love to be able to offer respite services for our volunteers, but we don't have that ability yet.” ID #2

How programs support workers. The two primary strategies noted for supporting working volunteers were offering volunteer opportunities during off-work hours, such as nights and weekends, along with offering intermittent and one-time volunteer opportunities for this cohort. One additional strategy focused on hours of operation and leveraging electronic communication to extend reach to working volunteers.

Volunteer opportunities during off-work hours. The following responses illustrate the use of off-hours volunteer opportunities to support and engage working volunteers:

“We offer a limited number of recurring volunteer activities that occur during night or weekend hours to accommodate working volunteers, most prominently is our free income tax assistance program during tax season. We have 3 - 5 special events at businesses or libraries on Saturday or after 5:00 to help people who can't make it during normal business hours. Probably the biggest ways we have supported working volunteers is through our telephone reassurance program (Tele-Chek) where they can make reassurance calls to home bound individuals on weekends and through our SWAT Team (Senior Workers Available Today) where we offer volunteer assistance for special events and fund raisers that typically take place at nights and on weekends.” ID #2

“We also have a list of outside agencies that need volunteers on evenings and weekends. Most of these volunteer stations are listed in 'other community priorities'. They give volunteers working full-time a chance to volunteer.” ID #10

“We offer projects after working hours or on weekends that are family friendly to encourage all ages to attend. This allows for participants with various abilities to be active no matter what physical or mental limitations they may have.” ID #3

“We work with [volunteer] stations to encourage them to have one-time volunteer opportunities, or weekend and evening volunteer opportunities.” ID #14

Short-term or intermittent volunteer assignments. The provision of short-term or intermittent volunteer assignments was a strategy most frequently cited by programs as supporting working volunteers. Some examples of such volunteer opportunities included offering assignments with a low weekly time commitment or offering assignments for special events and programming that do not require a long-term commitment:

“We offer special event opportunities that still meet a community need, such as monthly fresh produce distributions to people in need. However, volunteers can sign up to serve at 1 or multiple distributions. This allows for much flexibility to the volunteer.” ID #19

“Breaking longer commitment opportunities into shorter chunks of time is a great strategy for attracting the working volunteer.” ID #12

“Currently, we find that volunteers are interested in short, one-time events that offer obvious community impact. For example, having volunteers assist local sheriff’s deputies with scheduled prescription drug take-back days, or assisting veterans in the local VA Hospital by accompanying them to entertainment events. It is hoped that brief, episodic activities will encourage volunteers to offer more service hours.” ID #24

“We also offer a number of events that the volunteers can participate in that are only 1-day events that are broken down into hour increments with 2 hours or 4 hours being the most popular.” ID #15

“Many of our signature opportunities can be done in 1-2 hours per week. This enables volunteers who are still working part-time to participate in our programs.” ID #10

“For example, one man who is working and volunteering has one special project he does each year. He is active a few times a year, but his main focus is this one project.” ID #1

Extended program hours and online communications. Responses that discussed office hours-related themes discussed intentionally maintaining extended hours of operation along with leveraging electronic communications to provide an avenue for connecting with volunteers outside of traditional office hours. It should be noted that while these strategies may also support caregivers, they were not specifically discussed within the caregiver volunteer question responses. Examples of such responses:

“For example, we run a Tax Counseling for the Elderly program and provide the training on Saturdays...” ID #26

“We also offer volunteer information sessions on weeknights to accommodate working volunteers. In addition, we also allow volunteers to enroll online using our new volunteer management system.” ID #19

“We have office hours from 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. and we don't close at lunch.” ID #14

“We communicate by email to mitigate the problem of not being able to reach folks during our office hours.” ID #11

Overlapping strategies for supporting caregivers and workers. RSVP programs surveyed identified cross-cutting strategies that were used to support both caregivers and workers. These strategies included making accommodations and creating flexibility within the volunteer assignments and offering breaks from volunteering to support working and caregiving.

Assignment accommodation/schedule flexibility. In discussing the approaches to supporting both groups of volunteers, program discussed various accommodations or modifications made to existing volunteer opportunities in order to support caregivers and workers. One such approach was to offer the opportunity to work from home for both caregivers and workers:

“We work with our stations to find volunteer opportunities that can be done from an individual’s home. The Red Cross has volunteer positions that use phones and email to contact veterans and their families - it can be done from a person’s home. RSVP utilizes a volunteer to input volunteer hours. We have a volunteer who does much of the work from their home - and comes in for about five hours to actually input the final information into the computer database. We are flexible with the deadline for when that needs to happen. She typically has about two weeks when it can be inputted, so she can fit it into her schedule.” ID #14

“If there is something that the volunteer might be able to do from home, such as hand work, encourage this.” ID #15

Across both groups of volunteers, programs articulated an approach to retaining volunteers as one that is generally “flexible” in nature. One element of being flexible entails a focus on flexible and creative scheduling as illustrated by these responses:

“Be flexible when scheduling volunteers who work. Overlap volunteer shift times in order to maintain that flexibility without leaving your organization in a position of having no volunteer available during that specific time when they cannot be there.” ID #6

“Every effort is made to offer volunteer opportunities when these seniors are available to serve. One example is a volunteer in [location redacted] who works mornings and volunteers teaching water aerobics in the afternoon and evenings at the local senior center. This is a benefit to both her and the seniors she serves.” ID #9

“We design the assignments around their work schedule.” ID #7

“...making sure that the caregiver has the ability to volunteer on their schedule, which means that both the work-site and RSVP are flexible with the caregivers schedule.” ID #15

Two of the respondents discussed how this flexible approach is driven by the changing nature of the volunteer pool in general:

“This is also an education piece for stations, encouraging them to think outside the box, as the volunteer who is able and willing to make a weekly, ongoing commitment is dwindling.” ID #19

“...less and less people are going to always be available on Tuesday afternoon from 1:00 to 4:00, how can we change the way we recruit, schedule volunteers?” ID #14

Breaks from volunteering. Four of the responding programs described instances where volunteers had been granted a leave of absence or expressed an ongoing commitment to providing breaks and leaves to volunteers, as illustrated by the following three quotes:

“We make it clear from the beginning that this is not a job, so if someone needs to take a day, or a week, off all they have to do is say so.” ID #2

“...if a volunteer feels they need to step away from their volunteer work for a time - we allow for leaves of absence as well.” ID #8

“It's also important that we provide them the space to come in and out of volunteering as their responsibilities increase and decrease.” ID #22

Suggestions from RSVP programs. When queried about how to best address role conflict and support working and caregiving volunteers, the advice offered by programs generally focused on fostering the strategies noted above. In particular, respondents encouraged programs and staff to foster a flexible mindset about volunteer scheduling and assignments such as:

“There's no "one size fits all" opportunity. Try to come up with a solution that fits the volunteer and the need.” ID #2

“To try to be as flexible as possible, while still serving the client(s) and fulfilling program requirements.” ID #10

“I would suggest that they review the work schedule of any potential volunteer and see if it matches with the specific needs of your community partners. Don't set your volunteers up for frustration and failure by asking them to change their work schedule to meet the needs of the volunteer station. It has to be a comfortable fit.” ID #25

“Flexibility-look for volunteer opportunities that can be done from someone's home, find short-term, one-time volunteer experiences.” ID #14

Program staff need to assist volunteers in connecting with meaningful and personally restorative opportunities:

“Have a large range of opportunities available so that all ages find meaningful and challenging opportunities. Some of my younger volunteers have reported that the greatest rewards they have had has been volunteering next to a Korean War veteran and hearing the stories.” ID #3

“Providing volunteer opportunities for both people [caregiver and care recipient], if possible, provides a temporary relief for volunteers.” ID #1

For caregivers in particular, adopting a caring and personalized approach will help to support such individuals and may result in a stronger commitment by the volunteer to the program:

“Be patient, understanding.” ID #13

“It's very difficult and to try to support the older adult any way you can.” ID #10

“Be supportive to both the volunteer and their family. This support will help build care and trust, and will likely result in the volunteer giving more time once they are able.” ID #8 (referring to supporting caregivers)

“I always say treat the volunteer as you would like to be treated, as you would like your parent or loved one to be treated.” ID #3

In addition, supporting caregivers in particular entails becoming familiar with the available supports and resources for this group. This knowledge will likely increase the ability of a program to refer caregivers for support when the time arises:

“Know your community resources - such as area agencies on aging - that can provide essential services to the volunteer and their family.” ID #22

“Be aware of what services are available and where you can refer volunteers to receive support.” ID #24

“Providing information about resources is very beneficial.” ID #1

Discussion

One of the theoretical anchors for this study is the concept of role conflict in which an individual’s resources are outstripped by the demands of multiple life roles. Using this frame, role conflict reduction strategies are used by older volunteers and volunteer programs to protect and foster individual resources such as time and energy. Findings from this Phase II study demonstrate that both older adult volunteers and RSVP programs actively employ strategies that have the potential to assist older adults in juggling their multiple life role demands.

Strategies employed by caregivers focused on preserving the personal resources of time and energy, factors that can limit involvement in volunteering. These strategies dovetail with findings from Phase I in which caregivers discussed time constraints and the physical demands of caregiving as potential barriers to volunteer engagement. Strategies such as reconfiguring volunteer opportunities to include care recipients and offering caregiver support referral allow caregivers to obtain respite and potentially maintain their energy and protect their time. For workers, the primary source of conflict noted in the Phase I results was time, a key target for role conflict strategies identified by the current study such as intermittent volunteering and volunteering during off-work hours. In this regard, Phase II program survey results reveal a high level of overlap between the perceptions of the older volunteers with regard to their sources of conflict and the conflict reduction strategies identified by programs for these groups of volunteers.

Phase I survey findings have highlighted that older adult volunteers are increasingly occupying multiple life roles creating the opportunity for conflict among roles. Phase I data collection efforts confirm that holding multiple life roles, and the experience of role conflict, can impact the volunteer experience (Crittenden, 2019). Yet volunteer programs and policies have been slow to respond to this societal shift in role occupancy (Gonzales, Matz-Costa, & Morrow-Howell, 2015). Responses from this survey provide some guidance to bridge this gap and demonstrate that within the RSVP program network, potentially replicable strategies for addressing role conflict have been developed.

Study findings further support the growing body of literature around strategies that programs and organizations utilize to facilitate formal volunteer participation. In line with the work of Pettigrew, Jongenelis, Jackson, and Newton (2018), two key implications arise from the Phase II study. First, at the core of the responses provided is a recognition that older adult volunteers are occupying additional life roles beyond formal volunteering. This recognition is an essential element to building support strategies. Second, a flexibility mindset or approach on behalf of the volunteer program is a cornerstone principle of older adult volunteer support. This flexibility entails approaches like scheduling, job sharing, one-time and intermittent volunteering, and the ability to volunteer from home.

Findings also underscore the need for volunteer assistance that moves beyond the boundaries of volunteer management and provides support for the volunteer's overall health and well-being (Gonzales, et al., 2015; Pettigrew, et al., 2018). Of note are volunteer management staff in this study who framed their role as one of connector and conduit through which caregiver support can be provided. Staff within such programs view their role as one that requires a familiarity with caregiving resources, whether in-house or external, in order to provide referral

and support when needed. Responses also discuss the need to listen and provide a caring and patient approach with volunteers who are known to be caregivers.

As the cadre of baby boomer and older adults continues to grow in the U.S., volunteer programs will be increasingly engaging this group in community service. As prior research has demonstrated, supports and infrastructure provided by such programs can facilitate volunteering for older adults (Tang, Morrow-Howell, & Hong, 2009). However, program staff need to increasingly respond to the changing nature of older adult volunteer engagement. Volunteers need flexibility and need the ability to engage with volunteering as is appropriate for their schedule and energy. Such flexibility in scheduling requires creativity on the part of program staff and is also likely to increase staff time and effort and recruitment needs as fewer volunteers make less intensive volunteer commitments. In addition, recommendations around supporting caregivers through a more personalized and caring approach are also likely to increase the staff time and effort needed for such a level of engagement. Fostering a familiarity with local support and caregiver resources also increases the role scope of existing volunteer management staff and this too has training and support implications for staff and programs in the field.

Limitations

One key limitation inherent in the Phase II study design is its reliance on program staff perspectives of volunteer role conflict reduction strategies. Integration of volunteer perspectives directly through an additional survey or inclusion of a question addressing this topic in the Phase I research would have provided a more direct avenue for collecting and verifying this information. In addition, it should be noted that the nature of the sample has likely yielded responses from programs that are actively using role reduction strategies or those staff who could

adequately identify such strategies for the survey. As such, the sample population should not be considered representative of all volunteer programs.

Future Directions

Given the findings and limitations noted, further research into the use of role reduction strategies by older adult volunteers is warranted to gain a more in-depth and accurate picture of the strategies described by program directors.

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