

**North Central Region 4-H Volunteers Documenting Their
Contributions and Volunteer Development
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Study Need and Background

In the United States, 4-H youth development programs are delivered primarily through volunteers ensuring that millions of young people have the opportunity to participate in 4-H programs. These volunteers are critical partners to the overall success and impact of 4-H. As partners with 4-H, Extension recognizes that the volunteer/organization relationship is mutually beneficial. On the one hand, the volunteer experience provides the individual volunteer with an opportunity to help others through a formalized role and to experience personal growth and development. At the same time, many organizations benefit from and rely upon corps of volunteers to deliver on their mission. Volunteerism is defined and characterized by Snyder and Omoto (2008) as the “active role of the individual in choosing to volunteer and in charting the course of his or her volunteer action such that it reflects processes of choice, active decision making, and the influence of personal values and motivations.” For Extension 4-H Youth Development programs, volunteers make it possible for land grant universities to deliver on the youth development mandate.

In the 12 states that comprise the region known as the North Central Region of Extension 4-H Youth Development programs, the 2008 total number of adult volunteers was the highest of the four regions in the United States according to the CREES 2008 Annual Report. The 2007 Corporation for National and Community Service study, which tracks volunteer rates and trends (CNCS, April 2007), documented that the nation’s Midwest region had the highest average volunteer rate for adults (32.2 percent), college students (31.8 percent) and Baby Boomers (36.9 percent). According to the 2007 CNCS report, volunteer rates are at an “historic high” in the first decade of the 21st century. As the climate strengthens for volunteerism, this regional strength for volunteerism provides the backdrop for 4-H youth development and suggests an opportunity to strengthen the climate for volunteerism within the Extension organizations in the north central region. According to the vision statement of the National Framework for 4-H Volunteerism (2008, p. 2), “Quality volunteer systems connect young people with caring adults leading to positive outcomes for youth.” The North Central Region 4-H Volunteer Specialists continue to work cooperatively to increase the quality of the volunteer systems in each state by sharing resources and building the knowledge of the fields of youth development and volunteerism.

In 2008, the North Central Region 4-H Volunteer Specialists identified the need to better understand the contributions made by, and the consequences of volunteering for the region’s adult 4-H volunteers. A study was conducted in 2008 with two main purposes: to document volunteers contributions to Extension through 4-H volunteering and to better understand the consequences of volunteering by asking the volunteers themselves to report on personal benefits and outcomes for the youth they work with. The Volunteer Process Model (Snyder and Omoto, 2008) provides a useful framework for the second purpose of the study. Snyder and Omoto provide a view of volunteerism as a process that unfolds over time. The model, and their review of volunteerism research, provides a context and a framework for understanding the data collected in 2008 in the North Central Region. According to Snyder and Omoto, the third stage of the volunteerism process includes the psychological and behavioral features relating to the consequences of volunteering. This research that informs this stage of the volunteerism process includes the impact of volunteer service on attitudes and behaviors of volunteers, the beneficiaries of their volunteer services, and people who make up their social networks.

As a cooperative effort, this team developed one survey tool to gather state and regional data. The goals for this descriptive survey were to identify:

- Demographic information for current 4-H volunteers,
- Ways in which adults volunteer within 4-H,

- The time and personal resources volunteers provide,
- The influence the 4-H volunteer experience has on volunteers and
- Volunteer reports of outcomes for youth.

Study Methods

In the spirit of collaboration, resource economy and collective wisdom, North Central Region specialists worked together to develop the study parameters, survey instrument and data collection. These states included Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Besides efficiency, this allowed for regional comparisons and future replication of the study.

The process began with designing a survey that could be used in all states to gather information on the following items:

- Types of volunteer roles,
- Length of volunteer service,
- Time spent volunteering for 4-H,
- Youth contact by the volunteer,
- Other contributions the volunteer made,
- The survey participant's demographic information.

Specialists worked together to develop the items and piloted the survey at the 2007 North Central Region Volunteer Forum in Wisconsin. Changes were made based on the pilot study. The survey instrument was administered primarily online using Zoomerang™, a commercial, web-based survey tool. Michigan State University acted as the lead state, hosting the online site and compiling the data. Data were shared with each state and aggregated for all of the North Central Region states that participated in data collection. Data will be reported to various stakeholders and staff for future decision making.

Sampling

Sampling strategies varied by state and are explained in Appendix 1. Generally, each state drew a random sample of approximately 800 from a complete volunteer list or smaller sample of volunteers. Non-responders received follow-up invitations to complete the survey, generally 3 times per state. Data were collected from spring through summer 2008. Ohio data were collected in fall 2008. The results reported here are not representative of all enrolled volunteers across the eleven of the twelve participating states and need to be interpreted with caution when drawing conclusions about North Central Region 4-H volunteers.

Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics. In addition, qualitative data gathered in two open-ended items were coded by hand by three individuals. Coding reliability was addressed through a four-step procedure:

- 1) A preliminary set of codes were drafted based on partial coding of the responses of Minnesota study respondents,
- 2) All responses contained in the data sets of Minnesota and Wisconsin were coded by two of the authors based on the preliminary codes,
- 3) The codes were revised and finalized by the authors/coders,
- 4) All qualitative responses were coded based on the final coding by three coders, including the two original authors and a graduate student specializing in data analysis.

Statistical analyses were completed to investigate relationships between characteristics of respondents and their roles and tenure as 4-H volunteers. Cross tabulations were conducted on

selected variables and Pearson's chi-square tests were performed to test for significant relationships among selected characteristics and responses from the survey participants.

Study Results

The survey was sent to over 9,000 volunteers across the region, determined through a random sampling process that was stratified proportionate to geographic locations. The response rate of useable surveys was 37 percent, with 3,330 surveys returned. The regional partners believe the response rate for this online survey study is adequate to meet the goal to provide insight into the roles and contributions of 4-H volunteers in the Midwest region. While data are reported at the regional level, it is important to note that sampling frame differences existed across the 11 participating states. Each state should be able to generalize its own data based on the state's sample characteristics.

The remaining pages of this report contain a summary of the initial findings from this study. Additional work is still being done to explore differences and similarities between individual states and the overall implications of this study from the larger lens of volunteer training and support.

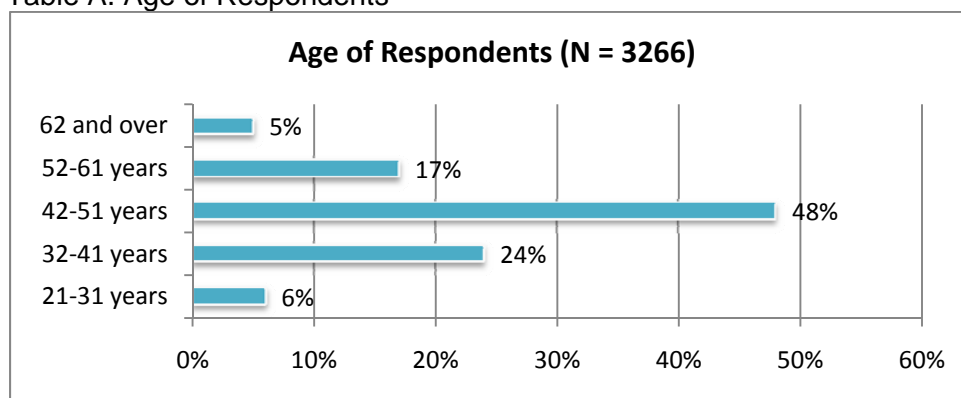
Key Survey Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported they were 4-H members as youth, while just over one-third were not 4-H members as youth. Survey respondents were 85 percent female and 15 percent male. While 45 percent of the respondents reported living on a farm or ranch, 27 percent declared that they lived in rural areas, 13 percent in small towns and 15 percent were in towns over 10,000, suburbs or central-city residents.

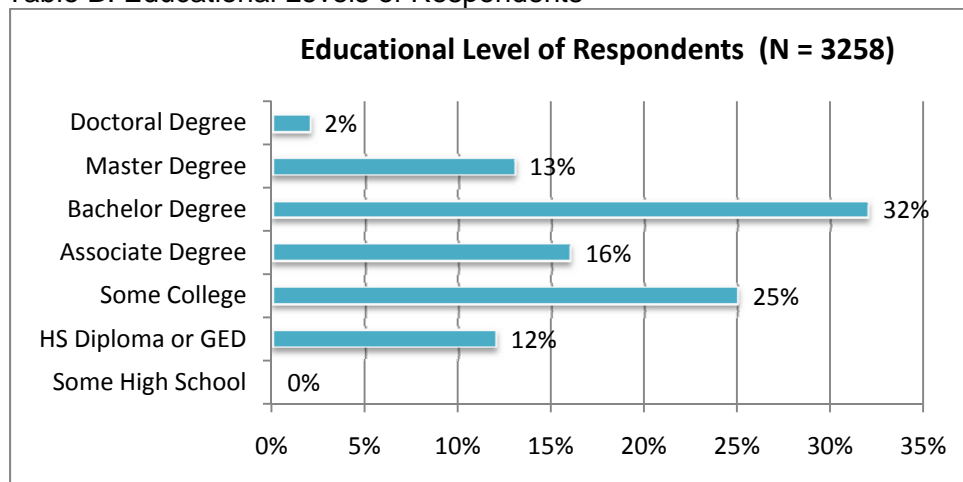
The largest numbers of respondents (48 percent) were between the ages of 42 and 51 years, while another 24 percent of the respondents were between the ages of 32 and 41 years. An overview of respondents' ages is presented in Table A.

Table A. Age of Respondents



Respondents were asked to report their educational background. Twelve percent revealed that they had a high school diploma or GED (general education diploma), 25 percent had some college experience, 32 percent had earned a bachelor's degree, 16 percent earned an associate degree, and 15 percent reported that they held either a master's or doctoral degree (Table B).

Table B. Educational Levels of Respondents



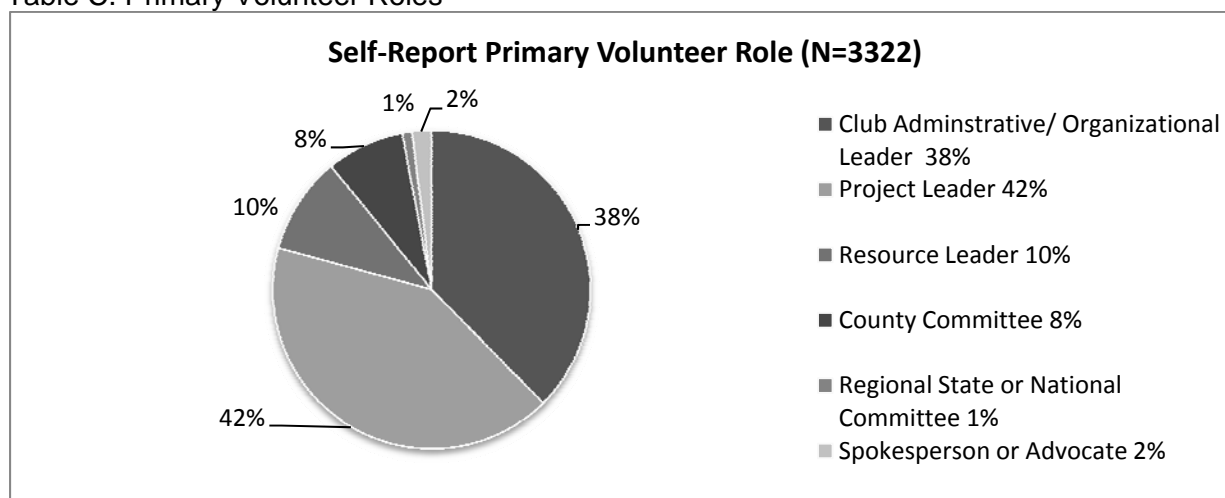
The following survey results are grouped and summarized according to volunteers' reports of:

- Volunteer roles filled,
- Length of service,
- Youth reached,
- Personal contributions,
- Reflections on the impact or contributions of their service.

Roles of 4-H Volunteers (Table C)

The North Central Region 4-H volunteer survey respondents reported serving in a variety of key roles. Table C identifies the primary volunteer roles the respondents reported. Serving as a project leader was the primary role for 42 percent of the respondents, while 38 percent indicated that their primary role was as an organizational administrator or club leader. When asked to describe all of their 4-H volunteer roles, the data suggest that, on average, this group of 4-H volunteers served in two roles.

Table C. Primary Volunteer Roles



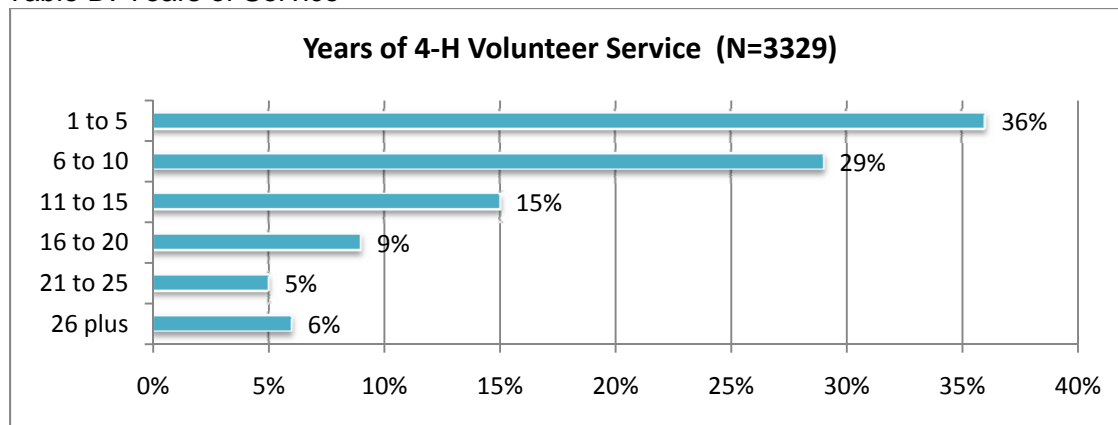
When asked to report the 4-H venue in which they provided service, the primary settings were within the 4-H community club (90 percent) and with local, regional or state fairs (59 percent). An additional 41 percent indicated they serve in 4-H organizational management roles on committees, boards and councils. Those volunteering with after-school or school programs

equaled 11 percent and an additional 6 percent volunteered at the regional or state level in an advisory or planning role.

Length of Service (Table D)

On average, 4-H North Central Region adult volunteers surveyed have served approximately 8 years in 4-H. As demonstrated in Table D, 65 percent of the volunteers were in their roles for 10 years or less. In contrast, 11 percent reported serving as a 4-H volunteer for at least 21 years. This group of volunteers illustrated that this region of 4-H included a substantial core of long-term volunteers and a growing population of shorter-term volunteers.

Table D. Years of Service



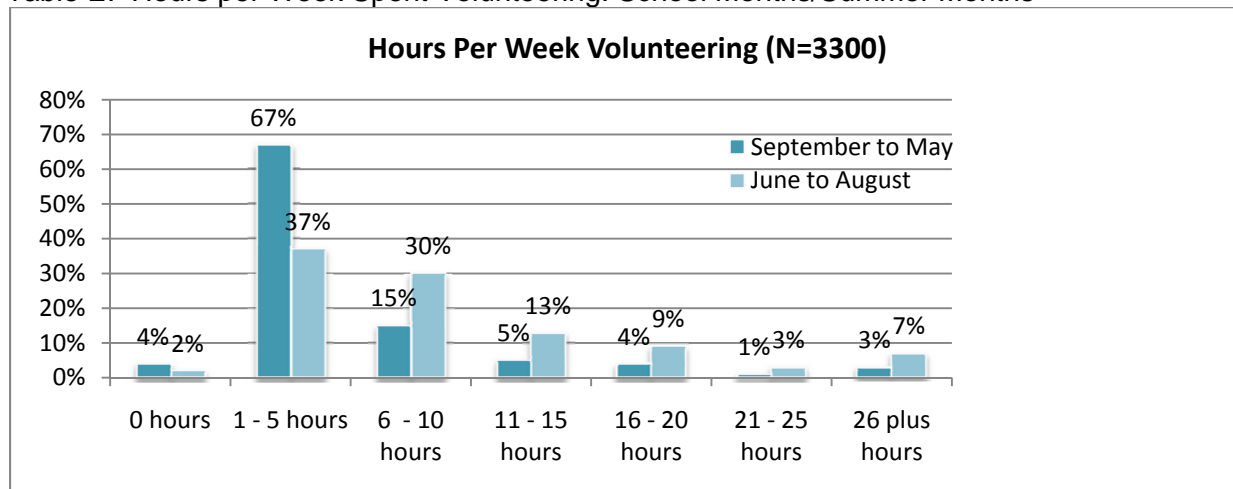
Time Spent Volunteering (Table E)

When asked how many months per year the volunteers spent volunteering for 4-H, 60 percent of the respondents reported they volunteer 10 to 12 months out of the calendar year. Eleven percent of the respondents reported they volunteer 1 to 3 months, 13 percent volunteered 4 to 6 months and 15 percent volunteered 7 to 9 months per year.

Respondents were asked to estimate the number of hours per week that they volunteered from September to May (nine-month school year) and then from June to August (summer months). Responses to the survey indicated that the time North Central Region volunteers spent in 4-H varies from the school year to the summer months. During the school year, 67 percent reported that they volunteer 1 to 5 hours per week or a median of 1 hour per week during the school year.

During the summer months, 37 percent of the survey participants reported volunteering 1 to 5 hours per week, 30 percent reported volunteering 6 to 10 hours and 7 percent reported volunteering as many as 26 hours per week. In the summer, the median number of hours served per week was 6. Thus, among this group of volunteers, there was an increase in hours volunteered during the summer. Data are illustrated in Table E.

Table E. Hours per Week Spent Volunteering: School Months/Summer Months



Hours Planning and In Direct Contact with Youth (Table F)

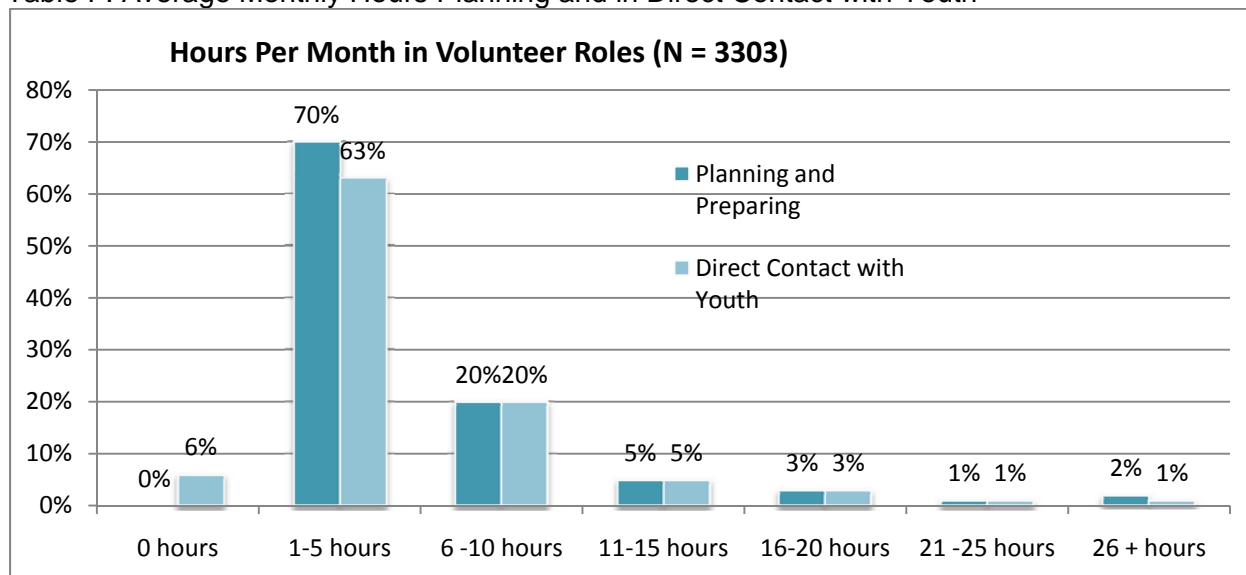
Overall, 70 percent of the volunteers declared they spent 1 to 5 hours per month planning and preparing for their volunteer service roles, with an additional 20 percent spending 6 to 10 hours. The median response was 4 hours spent in planning and preparing.

In response to a question about the number of hours spent volunteering on 4-H councils, boards, and/or committees, 48 percent of the respondents estimated spending 1 to 5 hours, with an additional 44 percent spending no time in these roles. The median response was 1 hour spent in these roles.

Volunteering to support local, regional or state fairs consumed 1 to 10 hours by 35 percent of the volunteers, 11 to 25 hours for 24 percent of the volunteers and 16 percent of the volunteers reported spending over 46 hours with fair events and activities. The median amount of time spent on fairs was 17 hours.

While 63 percent of the participants stated they spent 1 to 5 hours in direct contact with youth, 20 percent reported spending 6 to 10 hours and 6 percent reported spending no direct time with youth.

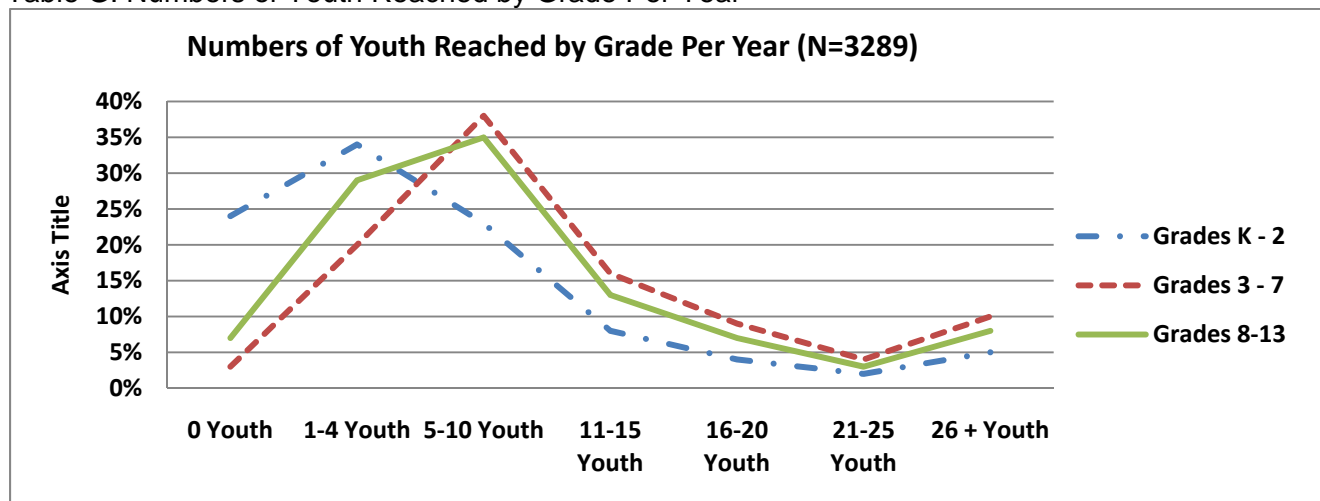
Table F. Average Monthly Hours Planning and in Direct Contact with Youth



Youth Reached (Table G)

Volunteers were asked to estimate the actual number of youth in a variety of grade groupings with whom they had contact during a 4-H year. Most of the volunteers spent their time with small groups of youth (1 to 10), regardless of grade range. However, volunteers reported volunteering with 4-H groups containing as many as 26 or more young people. The following table shows the percentage of youth reached by grade within the various group sizes. Volunteers working with smaller groups of youth also tend to work with younger children. Larger groups (>26), while less commonly reported, tend to be more balanced across grade levels represented.

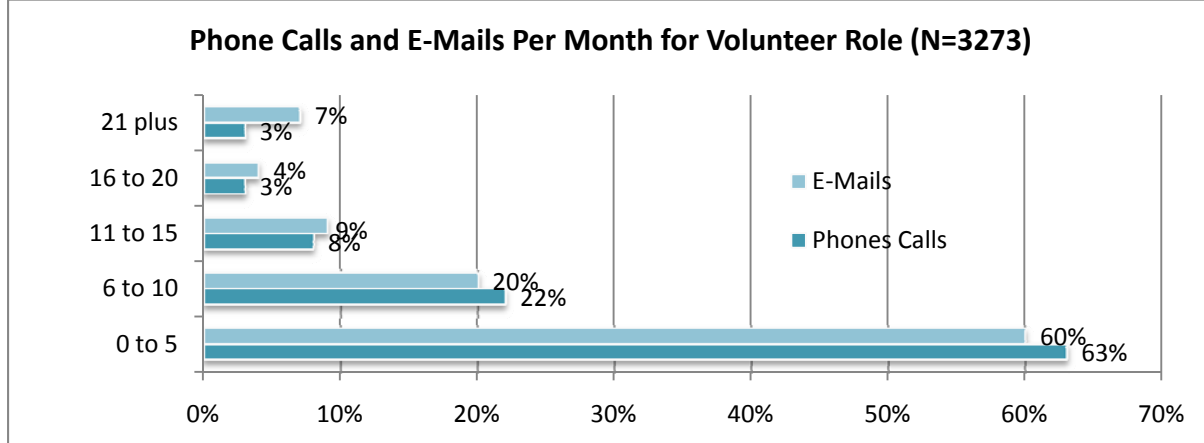
Table G. Numbers of Youth Reached by Grade Per Year



Other Types of Contributions (Tables H and I)

North Central Region volunteers contributed to the 4-H program in multiple ways besides direct service. These methods included making telephone calls, sending e-mails, traveling in personal vehicles, spending money for program supplies and donations. As can be seen in Table H, 36 percent made 6 or more phone calls per month, and 40 percent sent 6 or more e-mails per month. 4-H-related e-mail communications were reported in the “21 plus per month” category more frequently than 4-H-related phone calls made by volunteers. The median number of telephone calls and e-mails per month was 4 and 5, respectively.

Table H. Monthly Phone Calls and E-Mails Made by 4-H Volunteers



While 21 percent of the volunteers spent \$26 to \$50 on non-reimbursed supplies, 2 percent reported spending over \$500. The median contribution was \$26 for non-reimbursed supplies. Most notable is that over two thirds of the volunteers made additional financial contributions to 4-H.

Volunteers traveled a median of 11 miles per month for their 4-H service roles. Table I outlines the miles traveled for 4-H volunteer-related activities.

Table I. Number of Miles Volunteers Traveled Monthly for 4-H

Number of Miles Traveled Monthly for 4-H Volunteering (N=3269)			
0-10 miles	23%	76-150 miles	9%
11-25 miles	29%	151-250 miles	3%
26-50 miles	23%	More than 250 miles	2%
51-75 miles	11%		

Volunteering Beyond 4-H (Table J)

Of the survey participants, 8 percent responded that they performed community service only for 4-H. Ninety-two percent of the volunteers reported volunteering beyond 4-H in such roles as faith-based organizations (62 percent), educational or other youth-serving organization (48 percent), and sport, hobby, cultural or arts group (38 percent). Table J outlines how volunteers contributed their time and talents in addition to their service with 4-H.

Table J. Volunteering in the Community

All Volunteer Roles (N = 7977)	
Faith-based organization	62%
Educational or other youth-serving organization	48%
Sport, hobby, cultural or arts group	38%
Social or community-service group	31%
Civic, political or professional organization	28%
Environmental or animal-care organization	11%
Hospital or other health-care organization	9%
4-H is my only volunteer activity	8%
Other	6%
Public-safety organization	5%

The relationship between volunteer roles and the number of months that volunteers served during the program year was investigated. The six primary roles of administrative/organizational leader, county committee member, regional/state/national committee member, resource volunteer and spokesperson/advocate were, as expected, significantly related to the number of months of service per program year that the volunteers in the sample provided. In addition, and as shown in Tables K and L, the respondents' reports of their primary 4-H volunteer role and their gender demonstrated a significant relationship between gender and volunteer role in this sample of respondents. A significant relationship also existed between respondents' age and their primary 4-H volunteer role.

Table K. 4-H Volunteer Role and Gender of Respondent

	Admin/Org Leader	County Committee Member	Project Leader	Reg/State/Nat Committee Member	Resource Volunteer	Spokes person/ Advocate	Total
Female	1,123/ 42%	193/ 7%	1,090/ 40%	14/ .5%	240/ 9%	43/ 2%	2,703/ 100%
Male	121/ 25%	49/ 10%	232/ 48%	6/ 1%	62/ 13%	15/ 3%	485/ 100%
Total	1,244/ 39%	242/ 8%	1,322/ 42%	20/ 1%	302/ 10%	58/ 2%	3,188/ 100%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	54.486 ^a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	55.586	5	.000
N of Valid Cases	3188		

a. 1 cells (8.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.04.

Table L. 4-H Volunteer Role and Age of Respondent

	Admin/Org Leader	County Committee Member	Project Leader	Reg/State/Nat Committee Member	Resource Volunteer	Spokes person/ Advocate	Total
19-20 years	2/ 13%	0/ 0%	11/ 73%	0/ 0%	2/ 13%	0/ 0%	15/ 100%
21 – 31 years	39/ 20%	23/ 12%	93/ 48%	1/ .5%	30/ 16%	6/ 3%	192/ 100%
32 – 41 years	302/ 40%	55/ 7%	323/ 43%	4/ .5%	60/ 8%	9/ 1%	753/ 100%
42 – 51 years	651/ 42%	105/ 7%	623/ 40%	12/ 1%	127/ 8%	25/ 2%	1,543/ 100%
52 – 61 years	190/ 35%	45/ 8%	229/ 42%	2/ .5%	63/ 12%	13/ 2%	542/ 100%
62 and older	59/ 40%	14/ 10%	49/ 33%	1/ 1%	20/ 14%	5/ 3%	148/ 100%
Total	1,243/ 39%	242/ 8%	1,328/ 42%	20/ .6%	302/ 10%	58/ 2%	3,193/ 100%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	69.729 ^a	25	.000
Likelihood Ratio	72.254	25	.000
N of Valid Cases	3193		

a. 10 cells (27.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.

Previous research indicates that when individuals highly identify with their volunteer role, they are more likely to contribute more in that role, and to have longer tenure in service in that role (Grube & Piliavin, 2000; Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999; Martino, Snyder, & Omoto, 1998). The 4-H volunteers who were involved in 4-H as youth members could be expected to have a high level of role identity with the 4-H program when the program is associated with their childhood and youth. Does this lead to a longer tenure of service as 4-H adult volunteers? In the group of respondents surveyed in this study, there was a significant relationship between their status as 4-H members as youth and their length of service as a 4-H volunteer (Table M). Volunteers in this sample who were 4-H members as youth reported longer tenures of volunteer service in 4-H.

Table M. 4-H Member Status and Years of Volunteer Service

Prior member	1 – 5 years service	6 – 10 years service	11 – 15 years service	16-20 years service	21 – 25 years service	26 + years service	Total
No	491/44%	317/29%	158/14%	70/6%	33/3%	41/4%	1,110/100%
Yes	668/33%	583/29%	327/16%	197/10%	111/5%	152/8%	2,038/100%
Total	1,159	900	485	267	144	193	3,148/100%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	62.939 ^a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	64.867	5	.000
N of Valid Cases	3148		

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 50.78.

Volunteer Personal Reflections of Benefits and Impact (Tables N and O)

Volunteers were asked how the 4-H volunteer experience influenced them in their personal life. The qualitative responses fell into 4 main areas:

- 4-H provided adult volunteers with the opportunity to be involved with youth and youth learning,
- 4-H provided adults with opportunities for personal growth,
- 4-H volunteering provided opportunities for contributing to the 4-H mission and giving back to the organization,
- 4-H provided adults with social benefits including building social capital and community.

Overall, the benefit most often listed by respondents was that the 4-H volunteer experience contributed to the respondents’ ability to become a better person. The examples of “becoming a better person” included increased self confidence, improved social skills, increased community connections, learning new subject matter and having a creative outlet within which to learn. Other frequently cited influences included the opportunity to be with and to help youth learn and grow. Below is a synopsis of the influences 4-H has made on the respondents’ personal life.

Table N. 4-H Volunteer Experience Influence on Life of Respondent

Primary Response		Number of coded responses	Percentage of total coded responses
Involvement with youth	The opportunity to be with youth, learn about youth	381	11%
	Helping youth grow and develop, build teams	345	10%
	Helping youth learn, providing opportunities to youth	333	10%
	Being with one's own children	163	5%
Personal growth	Gaining planning, organizational, public speaking, leadership skills	257	7%
	Becoming a better person, including self confidence, social skills, community connections, learning new subject matter/having a creative outlet	440	13%
	Various other personal growth benefits	500	14%
4-H mission and sense of obligation	Paying back/paying forward 4-H's impact on volunteer as youth, improve 4-H	237	7%
	Increasing personal friendships, work with different people, sense of belonging	288	8%
	Experiencing a positive family activity, have fun	153	4%
Negative influence		47	1%
Other influences		307	9%
Total coded responses		3,451	100%

Selected comments from respondents:

How has your 4-H volunteer experience influenced your life?

- “4-H taught me as a youth to volunteer. Leadership, scholarship, & service were always a part of my 4-H experience. That is what my club tries to do now. Our club is 90 years old and we try to instill service into many of the club opportunities that we do.”
- “It has given me the confidence to work with youth to, in turn, give them confidence to set and achieve their goals. I love to see youth develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments and that makes me want to provide more opportunities for growth for them. Quite a cycle. IT ALSO MAKES ME WORK HARDER TO SEE ALL YOUTH BE ACCEPTED FOR WHO THEY ARE.”
- “It has taught me many valuable skills in management, communications, goal setting, leadership, working with groups and many other valuable skills. It has given me confidence in myself. It was also key in helping me make my decision in what I wanted to do as an adult. I have gained many friendships due to all the activities I have been involved in.”

- “I've really grown in confidence of my ability to lead. I've found I really enjoy being a role model for children other than my own. I've discovered talents and interests I didn't know I had. 4-H is such a great "family" organization; we've made a lot of close friends.”
- “It has influenced my life by making me a better communicator. It has also opened my eyes to the great diversity of not only 4-H program, but of all those involved in it. My life is truly blessed by being part of 4-H.”

Respondents were asked to describe the impact they believe they had on youth through their 4-H volunteer role. Responses fell into two categories - the action the adult *provided*, or what they believed *youth gained*. Respondents most often reported that they provided opportunities, exploration, a positive environment and teaching to youth. Those respondents who reported impacts directly for youth most often reported that youth gained leadership skills, self confidence, and other skills such as problem solving and social skills as a result of the volunteers' efforts.

Table O. 4-H Volunteer Impact on Youth

Adult volunteer approaches or action provided	Response	Number of coded responses	Percentage of total coded responses
	Serving as a positive role model to youth	337	10%
	Providing opportunities, exploration, positive environment, and teaching	576	17%
	Offering motivation, support and encouragement	249	7%
	General helping, listening or “being there”	278	8%
Youth gains because of adult volunteer contributions			
	Leadership skills, organizational planning, record keeping	228	7%
	Self confidence, accountability, responsibility	411	12%
	Ability to do their best job, to try hard, finish, reach goals, be part of team	198	6%
	Learn new skills, behaviors, problem solving skills, social skills, make friends	380	11%
	Excitement about learning; fun, learn new content, mastery of a topic	243	7%
	Develop community connections; provide service to others; active citizenship	209	6%
Other impact		274	8%
Negative impact		12	<1%
Total Responses		3,395	100%

Specific comments from respondents:

Describe the impact you believe you have had on youth through your 4-H volunteer role.

- “I have had the joy of watching club youth develop into caring, giving, accomplished youth who have and are still serving their communities and their families. As a leader for 20 years I have seen many a youth grow up and become an active member of their communities.”
- “Being a club leader, I see how the kids model me and I try to be a good role model. Many kids who don't have a lot of self esteem have the opportunity through 4-H to be really good at something that they are not offered anywhere else. In school you are recognized by your athletic ability or your academics. In 4-H you can be Grand Champion with any of your projects - there is a level playing field per say. I help the kids in any way that I can.”

Conclusions and Implications:

This study provides an overview of the contributions of North Central 4-H volunteers. Volunteer development focuses on the needs and the motivations of volunteers by viewing the experience of the volunteer as unfolding over time. It involves improving their knowledge and competencies so that they can assume their service and leadership roles and grow as individuals. Volunteer management focuses on the organizational system for the utilization of volunteers to achieve organizational goals by individuals who manage and control programs, resources, and inputs. The volunteer delivery system is the unified, orderly process for the coordinating and overseeing the work of volunteers and their partnerships with staff at all levels of the total program including both volunteer development and volunteer management principles. The findings are reviewed for implications for volunteer delivery systems to support volunteers including both the personal growth and development of volunteer development strategies and management of the program and resources to ensure quality programs to youth.

Key Finding 1: A demanding 4-H volunteer role is often filled by those in their “peak” volunteer years. The majority of those responding were ages 32 – 51 years and these respondents most often reported their role as an organizational/administrative or project leader. The role most often filled by this age of volunteer is a traditional, central, youth-intense role in our organization.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are we supporting the individuals in this role that we depend so heavily upon to fulfill our mission? Are tools and resources in place for high quality, efficient youth development program delivery that keeps this role vibrant and with opportunities for renewal and growth for volunteers fulfilling these roles?

Implications for Volunteer Management: How do we deploy the training and tools and resources? How do we intentionally fill other, less central roles that are just as key to the mix of program offerings 4-H provides?

Key Finding 2: Respondents suggested that 4-H volunteers have completed more formal education than the general population. All respondents reported having a high school diploma, which differs from census data that indicate that only 80 percent of the adult population in the U.S. has completed high school. Nearly one-third of the respondents reported their educational level as having earned a bachelor's degree. As a comparison, 24 percent of U.S. residents reported having completed a bachelor's degree.

Implications for Volunteer Development: How are opportunities being provided that build on the commitment to education and learning? How can the organization build on these role models who have demonstrated commitment to learning?

Implication for Volunteer Management: Does the volunteer organization have a system to place volunteers in roles that maximize their educational needs and areas of expertise?

Key Finding 3: The respondents have committed to volunteer for the “long haul” with 4-H. Over one half of respondents reported that they have been in their volunteer role with 4-H for six years or longer at the time of the survey.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are long term volunteers provided new roles and opportunities that provide renewing experiences that meet their personal need for growth and development? How are long-term volunteers included in and brought along with organizational changes about which they may have strong opinions and feelings?

Implications for Volunteer Management: Does the organization have systems in place that provide volunteers opportunities to adjust roles and service as the individual volunteer’s needs change? Are there organizational evaluation processes in place that review the support systems and opportunities for short and long term volunteers and their contributions to the organizational mission?

Key Finding 4: There is a notable decline in the number of volunteers after 10 years of service. For North Central volunteers, the median was 8 years of service. The greatest number of respondents of this survey indicates that there are greater numbers volunteering for less than 10 year with the greatest number of those volunteers those serving 1-5 years. With a national trend moving toward short-term and episodic volunteering, this response provides an insight of an area of growth that local programs should address to increase the number of volunteers needed in the future.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are we providing valued opportunities for short term/episodic volunteers that are meeting volunteer and organizational needs? Are there orientation and training programs in place to meet short term/episodic volunteers?

Implications for Volunteer Management: Are there supports in place including role descriptions for short term/episodic volunteers? Is the organization insuring short term/episodic volunteers feel valued by an organization that has been historically supported by long term volunteers? Are there training and resources available for staff members to gain skills and confidence in building volunteer capacity for both short and long term volunteers and to intentionally engage in creating volunteer programs that are reflective of current trends in volunteerism?

Key Finding 5: Summer months were the months when volunteers in this group tended to be more actively involved in the programming. The volunteer time commitment reported by these respondents increased in the summer months to a median of six hours per week, suggesting that the organization more often involved volunteers in the summer.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are volunteers provided sufficient time and training for planning and preparations of the summer volunteer commitments? Are volunteers given sufficient time to do their volunteer service and still have personal and family time during the summer months? Are volunteers receiving recognition for the increased service provided during the summer months?

Implications for Volunteer Management: Is the organization recruiting and training sufficient volunteers to meet the increased demands of summer programming needs? Is there a staffing strategy in place to support the volunteers during peak programming demand times and prevent volunteer burnout?

Key Finding 6: Much of what volunteers in this study did for 4-H is “behind the scenes” of the direct contact with youth. The volunteer respondents reported that hours spent in planning are roughly equivalent to hours spent in direct service with youth.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are volunteers aware of the need for planning and the increased time requirement that accompanies youth programs? Do volunteers have the tools and training to be efficient in planning and preparing for activities and events?

Volunteer Management: Are there adequate tools developed and training time scheduled and provided to support volunteers in their planning and organizing service? Is the organization effectively communicating the contributions of volunteers done in planning and organizing of youth programs and the skills that volunteers gain through this service?

Key Finding 7: Volunteers gave more than time. Those surveyed reported mileage and supply contributions, with medians of 11 miles per month and \$26 per year.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are volunteers recognized for their contributions of time, money, and other resources given to 4-H? Are volunteers provided the tools to document all of the contributions they are making to 4-H for personal and professional needs?

Implications for Volunteer Management: Does the organization provide adequate risk management strategies such as insurance, training, etc. to protect volunteers with the variety of contributions they make to the organization? Does the organization have accounting tools in place to document all of the contributions volunteers make?

Key Finding 8: Volunteering for 4-H influenced the lives of those who volunteer. The main influence on the respondents was becoming a “better person” as illustrated through several examples of increased self confidence and other personal growth skills.

Implications for Volunteer Development: Are volunteers provided time to make personal reflections on their contributions and the impact they are making to the organization? Are volunteers provided the tools and time to reflect and document their personal growth as a result of volunteering for 4-H?

Implications for Volunteer Management: Does the organization engage volunteers in development and implementation of evaluation strategies for the organization and of the volunteer’s service? Does the organization effectively communicate the personal growth and organizational changes that have occurred as a result of volunteer service and contribution to stakeholders, including the volunteers?

Key Finding 9: Volunteers who responded to the survey believe that they make a difference for youth. The most often reported impact that volunteers believe they have had on youth was their role in helping youth to gain self confidence and learn new skills.

Implications for Volunteer Development: What skills and knowledge are needed by volunteers to ensure they understand and implement quality positive youth development programs and work effectively with youth?

Implications for Volunteer Management: Is there training and on-going support for volunteers on effectively working with youth and positive youth development? Does the orientation for volunteers clearly state the mission of 4-H and the organizational philosophy of working with

youth? Are volunteers evaluated in an on-going basis to make sure they are working with youth in appropriate, effective and safe ways?

Volunteers are critical partners to the success of 4-H and are both beneficiaries of volunteer development strategies provided by Extension Educators and the primary providers of the 4-H youth development program, ensuring that millions of young people have the opportunity to participate in 4-H programs. Volunteer contributions are valued and appreciated. As new volunteers continue to serve and contribute to 4-H youth development programs, the organization has a responsibility to have the strongest and most vibrant volunteer support system in place to sustain this volunteer corps. This study has provided insights and direction for the future as to what volunteers need and believe about 4-H.

Appendix 1: State Sampling Methods

The Illinois sample was drawn from email addresses in its state 4-H data management system (DMS) program. The database contains the names and addresses of 10,774 4-H volunteers enrolled on long-form enrollment. From a total of 2236 email addresses, Illinois conducted a random stratified sample of the names so there were representatives from every county in the state who had email addresses on file. Initially, they drew 800 addresses for the original mailing list. The 135 invalid addresses were returned, after which they randomly selected new addresses to bring the sample to the required 800 addresses. Illinois repeated the invitation to participate in the survey one additional time. A total of 252 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 31.5 percent.

Indiana's sample came from the list of volunteers for whom county Extension offices have email addresses in their electronic databases. A deadline was set by which County Extension educators were asked to submit the list of volunteers for whom they had email addresses. Then a random sample was drawn of 800 individuals to send the electronic invitation. When an invalid address was identified, the next person on the random list was sent an invitation to keep the 800-sample size. Follow-up reminders were made according to the established protocol. A total of 258 responses were received for a response rate of 32 percent.

Iowa's sample was drawn from 1750 email addresses in its state Blue Ribbon Database. That database contains the names and addresses of 11,000 volunteers. Episodic volunteer addresses are not entered in the database; thus, the sample does not represent this group. Of the 800 email addresses to whom the message was sent, 237 were returned as undeliverable. To maintain the 800 volunteer sample, new addresses were randomly drawn as invalid addresses were returned. Invitations to participate in the study were sent 3 times over 6 weeks to the entire sample to encourage non-responders. A total of 302 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 38 percent.

Kansas created a randomized list of its counties and obtained their 800 email addresses from each county office. An invitation was sent to all 800 to participate in the study of which 200 invalid addresses were returned as undeliverable. Kansas sent out the invitation to participate to slightly more than 1000 useable addresses. One reminder email was sent out about five days after the invitation to participate. The total number of responses was 426 responses for 43 percent response rate.

The Michigan sample was drawn from email addresses in the Michigan 4-H Blue Ribbon database. A random sample of 800 email address was selected using a random number generating program. Of the 800 email addresses sent an invitation, 150 were returned. To maintain the 800-volunteer sample, new addresses were randomly drawn as the invalid addresses were returned. In addition, hard copies of the survey were provided to county educators. Volunteers who preferred to complete paper copies of the survey could do so. The hard copies were sent to the State 4-H Office and entered into the database. The total useable surveys returned were 442 for a response rate of 46.5 percent.

Minnesota selected a random sample of 1000 adult volunteers who provided email addresses in their online application from the Minnesota 4-H Plus database. Each email addressee was sent an electronic invitation to participate in the survey by the 4-H volunteer specialist. Of the 1000 email invitations sent, 84 of the email addresses were returned as undeliverable. Repeated invitations to participate in the study were sent three times over six weeks to the entire sample. A total of 373 respondents completed the survey from the sample for a response rate of 41 percent.

The Missouri sample was drawn from 6000 viable email addresses collected through the Blue Ribbon and volunteer-screening database. The database contains the names and addresses of 10,000 volunteers. Episodic volunteer addresses were not entered in the database; thus, the sample does not represent this group. Of the 800 email addresses sent an invitation, 177 were returned as undeliverable. To maintain the 800-volunteer sample, new addresses were randomly drawn as invalid addresses were returned. One repeat invitation was sent to participate in the study. A total of 215 respondents completed the survey for a response rate of 27 percent.

North Dakota selected a geographically-stratified random sample of all adult volunteers with an email address in the Blue Ribbon database. The initial sample size was 800 with 86 emails returned. An additional 150 names were drawn. A total of 2 reminder messages were sent to respondents. 216 responses were received for a response rate of 27 percent.

The Nebraska sample was randomly selected from all volunteers registered in the Nebraska 4-H Plus Data system. All those with email addresses were emailed, the rest were mailed hard copy. 346 were emailed and 454 were hard copy mailed. 230 surveys were returned for a response rate of 25.8 percent.

Ohio used an email distribution of the survey proportionate through a random sample that was geographically stratified. The total database included 23,168 volunteers as determined from the 2007 ES237 report and use of the Blue Ribbon database. A sample size of 800 was determined to provide a confidence rate of 95 percent and a 5 percent margin of error. Initially, a sample of 880 volunteers (each with an email address) was drawn. A total of 3 reminder messages were sent to non-respondents. The total usable surveys returned were 255 with a response rate of 31.9 percent.

Wisconsin selected a geographically-stratified random sample of all adult volunteers with an email address in the Blue Ribbon database. The total database included 13,538 volunteers as determined from the ES237 2007 report. A sample size of 770 was determined to provide a confidence rate of 95 percent and a 5 percent margin of error. The initial sample size was 880, with 125 emails returned. An additional 125 names were drawn. A total of 3 reminder messages were sent to respondents. The total usable surveys returned were 270 with a response rate of 37 percent.

Appendix 2: The survey instrument

The survey instrument was developed by the Volunteer Specialists of the North Central Region. It was tested for validity by participants of the 2007 North Central Region Volunteer Conference. The instrument is located at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/ncrvd/research/instruments.cfm>

Appendix 3: References

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