



Zooming for a Cause

A Conversation About Engaging Older Adults with Virtual Volunteering

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Meet the Team



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Join by Web



- 1 Go to **PollEv.com**
- 2 Enter **JENNIFERCRIPT555**
- 3 Respond to activity

Join by Text



- 1 Text **JENNIFERCRIPT555** to **37607**
- 2 Text in your message

🌐 Respond at [PollEv.com/jennifercrit555](https://poll-ev.com/jennifercrit555)

📱 Text **JENNIFERCIT555** to **37607** once to join, then **A, B, C, D, or E**

Which ACS program do you represent?

RSVP

A

SCP

B

FGP

C

SDP

D

A mix of more than one program

E

🌐 When poll is active, respond at **PollEv.com/jennifercrit555**

📱 Text **JENNIFERCRIPT555** to **37607** once to join

How would you describe your experience with virtual volunteering strategies?

Basic awareness/Haven't used it yet

Beginner/Used it some but not much

Intermediate/A little more experience

Expert/Lots of experience

Total Results: 0

What is one thing you think of when you hear the term "Virtual Volunteering"?

Join by Web



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Join by Text



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Total Results: 0

Background



There are positive health and well-being outcomes experienced by older adults who volunteer

The COVID-19 pandemic increased health and isolation risks & significantly impacted traditional on-site volunteering

Little is known about the position of virtual volunteerism in a post-pandemic world

Defining Virtual Volunteering

Volunteer work that is undertaken using internet-based technologies.

Virtual volunteering includes activities and job assignments that can be conducted completely off-site or can be used part of the time to supplement on-site and face-to-face volunteering.



PURE VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer positions built to be online
Cannot be done in-person, or were not
built to be done in-person

THE PIVOT

Traditional in-person volunteer work that
moves to virtual. Many health and wellness
programs pivoted to adapt to COVID.

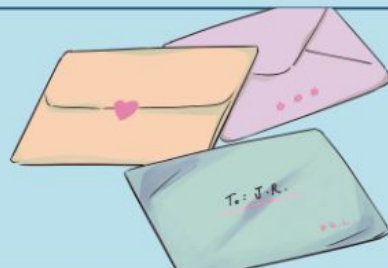


HYBRID VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer positions that blend virtual and
in-person work - possibly for training,
special events, or due to the variety of
work.

VIRTUAL MANAGEMENT

Using technology - such as web portals or smart
phone apps - to manage a large number of
volunteers. This is popular in ecology
volunteering and emergency disaster response.



REMOTE VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering off-site without a digital
platform. Think letter writing campaigns
or friendly phone call programs.

What we know about Virtual Volunteering



<https://www.inc.com/jason-aten/why-your-virtual-meetings-are-so-bad-how-to-make-them-better.html>

Older Adults & Tech

Pre-Covid & During Covid



73%

Adults 65+ using
the internet in
2019

In a 2021 study, online social engagement was the most promising way to mitigate the mental health effects of social isolation among older adults

1/2 of older adults
surveyed

adopted new technology since the beginning of the pandemic

Virtual Volunteering



On the rise since
the Covid-19
Pandemic



Geographically
inclusive



Great for
volunteers with
limited time,
disability,
and/or home-
based
obligations



A strategic tool
for enhancing
volunteer
experiences
and building
program
capacity

Research Aim

- To examine the use of VV among older adult volunteers
- Describe the benefits, opportunities, and challenges of VV from both volunteer and host program/site perspectives



Programmatic Perspective Questions

- How and to what extent are volunteer sites engaged in virtual volunteerism?
- What are the types of job assignments and host sites that lend themselves to virtual volunteering?
- What are the challenges at the host site level in developing and deploying virtual volunteering?



Volunteer Perspective Questions:

- What are the challenges and opportunities of virtual volunteer assignments?
- What are the benefits of virtual volunteering from the volunteer perspective?
- What is the participation gap between those volunteers who desire virtual volunteering and those who are able to access those opportunities?



Project Description

Year One: Environmental Scan

Environmental scan of virtual volunteer (VV) practices and other practices that increase accessibility in the volunteer sector (Literature Review)

Secondary data analysis of job postings via VolunteerMatch (3,000+ Listings)



Year One: Semi-Structured Interviews



RSVP program
directors



Thought leaders
in volunteerism



Thought leaders
in technology

Year One RSVP Interview Recruitment Process



AmeriCorps generates list of sites using virtual volunteering currently (based on work plan)



Research team will recruit sites in each ACS geographic region



ACS staff list generated by research team prior to outreach.

Year One Volunteer Station Surveys



- Survey of The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) program station staff
- Scope the use of virtual volunteering within RSVP
 - Identify site-level opportunities and challenges

Year One RSVP Survey Recruitment Process



Invite issued via ACS grantee sites



Online survey invitation and link provided

Timeline



Years Two and Three

Expand interviewing and survey work into SCP and FGP



Anticipated Research Deliverables



A compendium of volunteer placement opportunities best positioned to be configured virtually



Recommendations that programs can put into place to increase access to virtual volunteer opportunities across digital disparities



Technical reports and manuscripts detailing findings

Questions?



A large, dense pile of unsorted puzzle pieces in various colors and patterns, including blues, yellows, oranges, greens, and reds. The pieces are scattered across the entire frame, creating a complex, textured background. A white horizontal bar is overlaid in the center, containing the text "What are we learning?".

What are we learning?

Benefits



For Organizations:

- Reduce the risk of Covid-19
- Access a new cohort of volunteers
- Reach rural areas
- Create “off hours” opportunities
- Expand programming



For Volunteers:

- Learn new tech skills
- Mentor others in tech
- Stay connected while traveling
- No commuting!
 - Save time
 - Not weather-dependent

“So being able to continue your volunteer work to know that you could go and stay all summer with the grandkids, help out your own children, and things like that but still do volunteering, and keep some of your regular routine...That is something that people really enjoy.”

“...when we work with our young adults and adults returning back to citizenship...they are more likely to accept being virtual because they are hustling. They're trying to find a job and go to interviews and stuff like that. So if there is an opportunity to have flexible meeting times...they have this timeframe to meet with you”

“If on our webinars we leave 5 min at the top, there's full blown conversations. They are a community themselves and they're states apart. People who never would have interacted otherwise, really coming together, so that social aspect, it's still there as well.”

Challenges



For Organizations:

- Capacity – funds, staff, partnerships
- Having to forge their own path
- Not all volunteer tasks can move online
- Different roles = different challenges



For Volunteers:

- Tech literacy & access vary for volunteers & beneficiaries
- Cost of tech & internet
- Attitudes & hesitancy
- Privacy & security concerns
- Virtual fatigue

“But does home have Internet access? Does home have computers? Everybody's got a cell phone. And now facetime kind of thing. But you know how's that working?”

“...There's a wide scope of understanding in terms of tech savviness and people self-identify. ‘Oh, sure I can...do remote-friendly visiting, and you come to find out that...there's some...skills that are lacking.’”

Opportunities



For Organizations:

- "Push through hesitation" with VV
- Opportunity to be more intentional post-pandemic
- VV viewed as an ongoing strategy, part of a hybrid volunteer workforce model



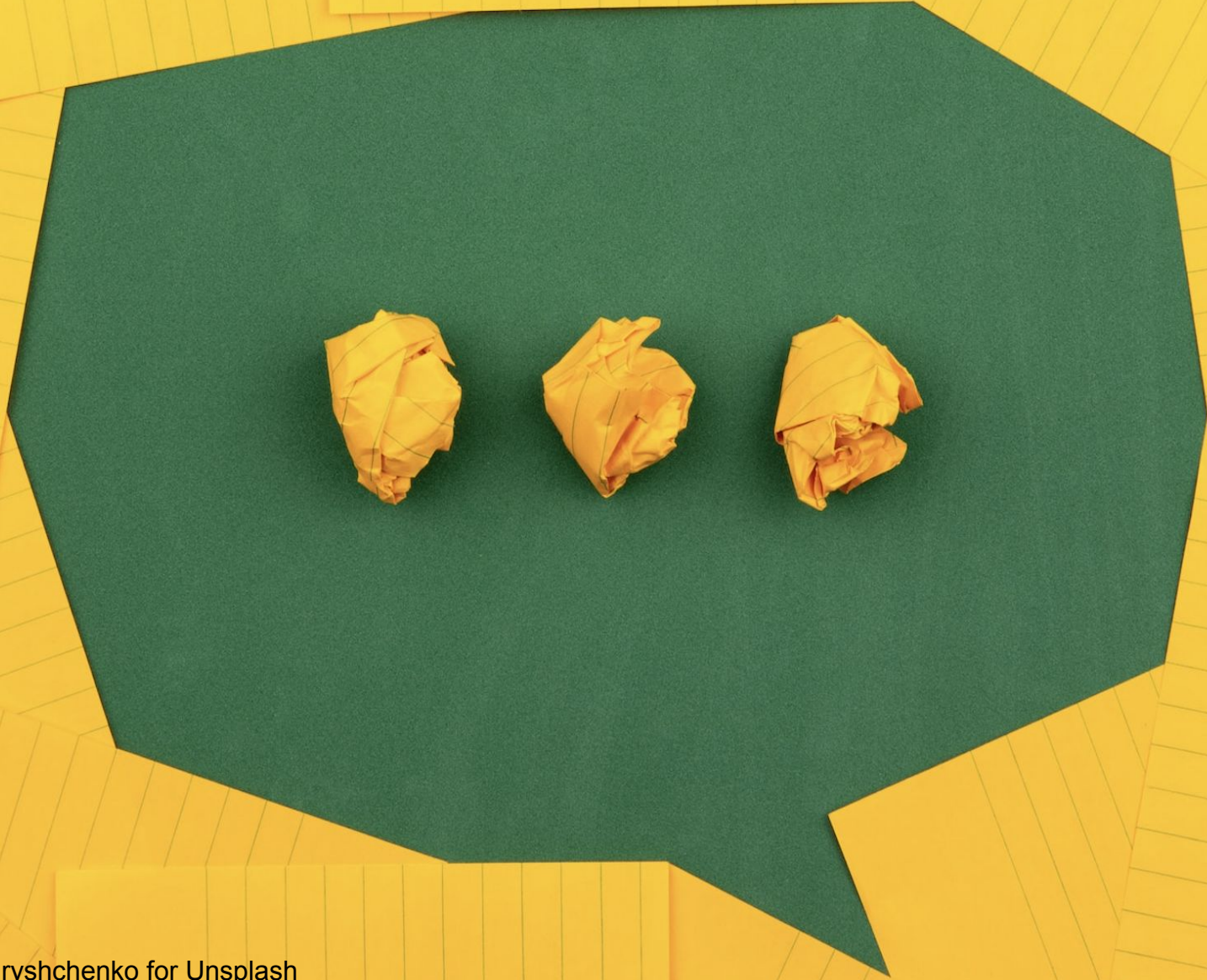
For Volunteers:

- Potential for transferability of skills across domains
 - i.e. Use of tech skills to access healthcare; socialize

“Because we have figured out so many ways and places that online education has been useful to our network, it’s [virtual volunteering] never going to go completely away...I can decide one week to stay in my pajamas and the next week to come be with my friends.”

“The pandemic eroded any remaining resistance that many staff members had saying, ‘Well, how can a volunteer get work done if they are not in the cubby next to me?’ Well, now you're working from your dining room table and you're getting stuff done so you can trust volunteers to do the same so I feel like the pandemic eroded that.”

Small Group Table Discussion



Discussion Q's

1) In what ways are you using virtual volunteering (VV) in your program?

- Does VV look different now versus at the height of the pandemic?

2) Why do you offer VV opportunities?

3) What challenges have we not discussed yet? OR Is there a challenge mentioned that you want to echo?

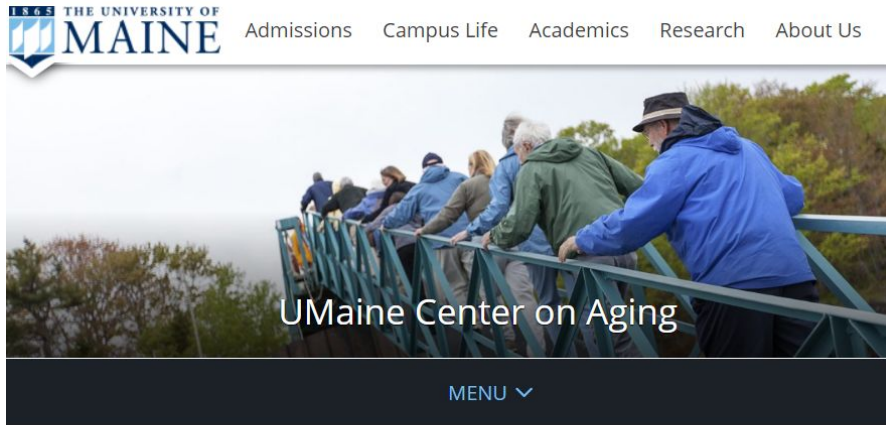
4) What is one question you have about VV that you'd like to pose to others?

5) What advice do you have for those who want to develop/maintain a VV program?

Large Group Share Out/Discussion



Connect with us!



Older Adult Virtual Volunteering Study



mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/vvstudy