

Workforce Development Research Project

Volunteerism: Readiness for Employment and Volunteer Matching

Volunteerism as a Means of Workforce Readiness

Existing research and participant feedback identifies the value volunteering has on preparing old adults for workforce re-entry. Volunteering provides an opportunity for hands-on learning and application of skills that can be translated into one's professional career.

Volunteerism Benefits

- ❖ A tool for professional and personal development
- ❖ Increase of skills and knowledge
- ❖ Health and cognition benefits, improves engagement, socialization, and well-being
- ❖ Increases one's sense of value in society
- ❖ Provides opportunities for intergenerational connection
- ❖ Prepares one for future employment
- ❖ Fosters sense of meaning and purpose

Elements of Volunteerism that Preps Individuals for Employment

Applied Practice	Research confirms the importance of hands-on learning and training for older adults. Volunteering offers a valuable means to retain existing skills and knowledge through practical application, while also developing new skills and knowledge.
Easing Transition	An evolving job market makes it challenging for older adults to secure stable employment. Having recent, relevant volunteer experience makes candidates more attractive to employers and eases the transition to permanent employment by providing exposure to new settings, and new technologies, and supporting adaptability in work environments.
Mentoring and Coaching	Mentorship and coaching is a positive aspect of volunteer experience and future work re-entry. Mentorship and coaching allows individuals to learn and be guided in an intimate setting. This can help one feel more comfortable and confident with volunteering and future employment.

Volunteer Matching

For participants to fully engage and benefit from their volunteer work, it is key that their volunteer placement matches their interests, skills, and future professional and personal goals.

Benefits of Volunteer Matching

- ❖ Enhances one's ability to meaningfully engage with their volunteer experience and environment
- ❖ Generates higher levels of motivation and satisfaction from participants
- ❖ Increases job readiness
- ❖ Optimizes knowledge transfer and skill development
- ❖ Recognizes older adults' previous work experiences, skills, and knowledge

Strategies for Matching Participants to Volunteer Opportunities

<p>Volunteer Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Conducting a volunteer needs assessment with participating organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Allows for strategic planning to address needs, including future volunteer opportunities ❖ Offers a clear understanding of volunteer roles, skills, and oversight needed ❖ Defines volunteer roles to set volunteer and program expectation
<p>Screening Surveys & Assessment</p>	<p>Information for matching can be collected through many means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Discussions with volunteers and organizations that identify characteristics of the volunteer and the expected role ❖ Pre-screening for volunteer skill set ❖ Surveys inquiring about skills, previous experience, interests, goals, and available time ❖ Match-fit assessment identifying characteristics of the role, such as flexibility, incentives, training requirements, and alignment with individuals' interests, goals, experience and time commitment
<p>Outlining Benefits</p>	<p>Highlighting the benefits of a volunteer placement helps manage expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ask organizations to outline benefits of the role that are specific to the field and could relate to one's earlier life experiences ❖ Gauge participants level of interest with existing benefits ❖ Promote volunteer flexibility, which is often a significant benefit for many volunteers

Volunteer Appreciation

All organizations should incorporate some form of volunteer acknowledgement and appreciation. Recognition and appreciation is a motivating factor for many and increases the likelihood of satisfaction.

- ❖ Provide volunteer appreciation receptions or lunches
- ❖ Offer frequent volunteer goodies and expressions of gratitude
- ❖ Commend volunteer performance and commitment through authentic compliments

Resources

- [Butrica, B. A. \(2022\). Workforce Programs Serving Older Workers and Other Populations with Employment Barriers.](#)
- [Deutsch, J., Allison-Clark, K., & Yañez, A. \(2021\). A Research Evidence Scan of Key Strategies Related to WIOA. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Research Portfolio. Mathematica.](#)
- [Hong, S. I., & Morrow-Howell, N. \(2013\). Increasing older adults' benefits from institutional capacity of volunteer programs. Social Work Research, 37\(2\), 99-108.](#)
- [Mutchler, J. E., Burr, J. A., & Caro, F. G. \(2003\). From paid worker to volunteer: Leaving the paid workforce and volunteering in later life. Social forces, 81\(4\), 1267-1293.](#)
- [Twenge, J. M. \(2010\). A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. Journal of business and Psychology, 25, 201-210.](#)

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