

**Volunteer Management  
Capacity in America's  
Charities and Congregations**

**A BRIEFING REPORT**

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# Executive Summary

## Major Findings from the Volunteer Management Capacity Study

Volunteers can boost the quality of services in charities and congregations while reducing costs. However, these organizations are not always fully equipped to make the most of their volunteers. In order to better understand the current state of volunteer management capacity, The UPS Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the USA Freedom Corps organized the first national study of volunteer management capacity. Conducted by the Urban Institute, the study draws on representative samples of charities and congregations. The study highlights the potential for charities and congregations to use more volunteers, some challenges in doing so, and capacity-building options to reduce the hurdles. Such efforts could go a long way toward meeting President Bush's Call to Service and his mandate that national and community service programs become engines of volunteer mobilization.

**The Use of Volunteers.** Many charities and congregational social service outreach programs use volunteers, and these volunteers play an important role in their operations. A large majority of organizations report that they are prepared to take on additional volunteers.

- *Four in Five Charities Use Volunteers.* Of the approximately 215,000 charities that filed Form 990 or 990EZ with the IRS in 2000 (required of those charities with over \$25,000 in annual gross receipts), an estimated 174,000 organizations use volunteers. One in three congregations manage volunteers in social service outreach programs. Of an estimated 380,000 congregations in the United States, 129,000 manage volunteers in such programs.
- *Volunteers Offer Benefits Associated with Investments in Management.* A large majority of charities report their volunteers are beneficial to their operations in a number of ways. Further, the study concludes that investments in volunteer management and benefits derived from volunteers feed on each other, with investments bringing benefits and benefits justifying greater investments.
- *Charities and Congregations Are Ready to Take on More Volunteers.* More than nine in ten organizations are ready to take on more volunteers at their present capacity, with a median of 20 new volunteers. Without any capacity enhancements, charities could take on an estimated 3.4 million new volunteers and congregational social service outreach activities could take on an estimated 2.5 million new volunteers.

**Challenges to Mobilization of Volunteers.** The greatest challenges that charities and congregations face is an inability to dedicate staff resources to and adopt best practices in volunteer management.

- *Devoting Substantial Staff Time Spent on Volunteer Management is a Best Practice.* The percentage of time a paid staff volunteer coordinator devotes to volunteer management is positively related to the capacity of organizations to take on additional volunteers. The best prepared and most effective volunteer programs are those with paid staff members who dedicate a substantial portion of their time to management of volunteers. This study demonstrated that, as staff time spent on volunteer management increased,

adoption of volunteer management practices increased as well. Moreover, investments in volunteer management and benefits derived from volunteers feed on each other, with investments bringing benefits and these benefits justify greater investments

- *However, Staff Time Spent in Volunteer Management is Low.* Three out of five charities and only one out of three congregations with social service outreach activities reported having a paid staff person who worked on volunteer coordination. However, among these paid volunteer coordinators, one in three have not received any training in volunteer management, and half spend less than 30 percent of their time on volunteer coordination.
- *Most Volunteer Management Practices Have Not Been Adopted to a Large Degree.* Less than half of charities and congregations that manage volunteers have adopted most volunteer management practices advocated by the field. For example, only about one-third of charities say they have adopted to a large degree the practice of formally recognizing the efforts of their volunteers.
- *Capacity-Building Options for the Future.* Despite the willingness of charities and congregations to take on volunteers, challenges prevent them from meeting their full potential. A number of actions might improve the ability of charities to work effectively with and take on new volunteers.
- *Increasing Volunteerism During the Workday.* The most prominent challenge to implementing volunteer programs among charities and congregations is

recruiting volunteers during the workday, reported as a big problem by 25 percent of charities and 34 percent of congregational social service outreach programs. This suggests that groups interested in promoting volunteerism should explore ways to create more flexible workdays for potential volunteers who have regular jobs.

- *External Support of Full-Time Volunteer Managers.* The most popular capacity-building option among both charities and congregations with social service outreach activities is the addition of a one-year, full-time volunteer with a living stipend (like an AmeriCorps member), with responsibility for volunteer recruitment and management. AmeriCorps members could be particularly useful in charities that are challenged in recruiting enough and the right kinds of volunteers, but also in those that do not have time or money to train and supervise volunteers.
- *Supporting Intermediaries that Recruit and Match Volunteers.* Many charities and congregations struggle with finding a sufficient number of volunteers. Roughly 40 percent report that more information about potential volunteers in the community would greatly help their volunteer program, highlighting the important role that volunteer centers and other community information resources could play in linking people who want to volunteer with organizations that need them.
- *Developing Avenues to Help Train Staff.* Training staff on how to work with volunteers could address a range of challenges, including recruiting volunteers during the workday.

# Introduction

In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush issued a call to service, urging all Americans to spend 4,000 hours serving others over the course of their lives. To help develop and strengthen volunteer opportunities, the president created the USA Freedom Corps. The mission of the USA Freedom Corps is to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility in the United States. As a component of the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation for National and Community Service directs programs that provide service opportunities and facilitate volunteerism. At the heart of these efforts is the belief that our nation's interests are best served when its citizens are engaged in providing service to their communities.

Because a 1998 UPS study indicated that volunteers do not always feel their volunteer experiences make best use of their skills and interests, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the UPS Foundation, and the USA Freedom Corps organized the first national study of volunteer management capacity to better understand the scope of issues confronting our charities and congregational social service outreach activities. The study, conducted by the Urban Institute in fall 2003, is based on a representative sample of 1,753 charities, drawn from the more than 200,000 charities that filed their annual paperwork with the IRS in 2000. It also includes information from 541 congregations, representing the 380,000 congregations (of all faiths) identified by American Church Lists. Because the organizations interviewed reflect the characteristics of these populations of charities and congregations, the results can be used to describe current overall conditions in these organizations.

As a companion to this study, the USA Freedom Corps and the Corporation for National and Community Service partnered with the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2002 and again in 2003 to add questions about volunteering to the Current Population Survey (CPS) for the month of September. The CPS results provide context for some of the findings in the volunteer management capacity study. The 2003 CPS survey indicates that an estimated 63.8 million Americans (28.8 percent of the United States population) volunteered through an organization in the 12 months preceding the interview, up 4 million (6.8 percent) from the 59.8 million Americans who volunteered in 2002. Because of that growth and the continuing focus on increasing volunteering and civic participation among Americans, volunteer management capacity issues acquire greater significance.

We expect these studies to stimulate activity regarding the capacity of charities and congregations to work with volunteers, including strengthening volunteer management practices and raising awareness among private and public funding organizations regarding unmet needs. Through such efforts, we can help Americans, charities, and congregations answer President Bush's Call to Service and his mandate that national and community service programs optimize program design and serve as engines of volunteer mobilization.

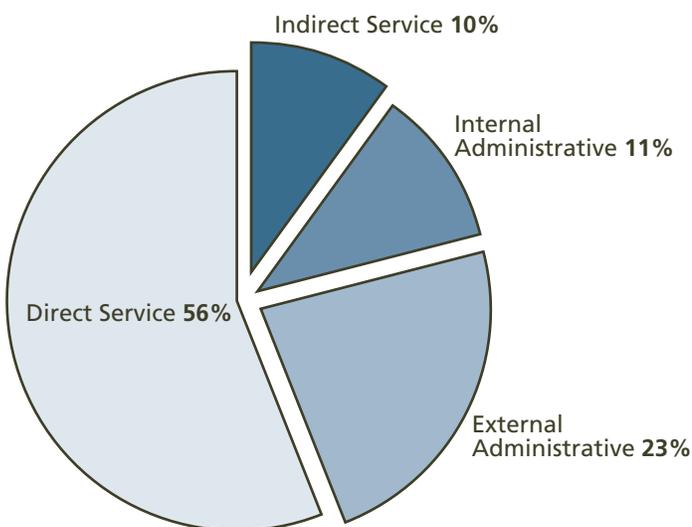
# Volunteering in Charities and Congregations

## Key Finding: Most Charities and Many Congregations Involve Volunteers in Their Operations.

**Four in Five Charities Use Volunteers.** Before undertaking this study, we did not know the proportion of public charities in the United States that involve volunteers in their operations. In 2000, approximately 215,000 charities filed Form 990 or 990EZ with the IRS, the form required of those charities with more than \$25,000 in annual gross receipts. We learned that 81 percent of these charities—or an estimated 174,000 organizations—use volunteers in one way or another. Many of these charities are run completely by volunteers. Our estimates do not include the roughly 400,000 small registered charities that do not file annual paperwork with the IRS, virtually all of which are run by volunteers.

**Figure 1.** Volunteers perform a variety of tasks in charities. We asked what tasks most of their volunteers perform, and then we coded tasks into four categories:

- direct service, such as mentoring and tutoring;
- external administrative, such as fundraising;
- internal administrative, such as filing and copying; and
- indirect service, such as planting trees.



### Congregations Manage Volunteers in Social Outreach.

We learned that an estimated 83 percent of the nation's 380,000 congregations have some kind of social service, community development, or neighborhood organizing project. Although most congregations have social service outreach programs, most are involved as partners or sponsors and therefore do not manage volunteers themselves. However, one in three congregations—an estimated 129,000 such organizations—have responsibility for managing volunteers in social service outreach activities. These congregations are the subject of our study.

**Size of Congregations Matters.** Larger congregations are more likely than smaller ones to have social service outreach activities, and they also are more likely to manage volunteers in them. Two-thirds of congregations with more than 500 active participants have responsibility for managing volunteers in social service outreach.

### Charities Exhibit Range in “Scope of Volunteer Use.”

Based on the numbers of volunteers and the numbers of hours these volunteers spend with an organization in a typical week, we divided charities into four categories of “scope of volunteer use.” Four in ten are categorized as “few volunteers, few hours”; three in ten have “many volunteers, many hours”; two in ten have “many volunteers, few hours”; and the remaining one in ten have “few volunteers, many hours.” Many volunteers is defined as at least 50 over the course of a year, and many hours is defined as at least 50 hours contributed collectively by volunteers in a typical week.

# Investments in Paid Staff for Managing Volunteers

**Key Finding: Most Charities and Congregations Are Unable to Invest Substantial Staff Resources in Volunteer Management.**

**Charities Are More Likely to Have a Paid Staff Volunteer Coordinator.** We asked respondents if their charity or congregational social service outreach activity has a paid staff person whose responsibility includes management of volunteers. Three out of five charities (62 percent) report that they have such a person. Roughly a third (37 percent) of congregations that manage volunteers in social service outreach activities say that a staff person has responsibility for this management.

**Paid Staff Coordinators Spend Little Time Managing Volunteers.** The presence of a paid staff coordinator does not mean the staffer spends much time on volunteer administration, or that he or she is trained in the field. We asked organizations with paid staff coordinators how much work time this coordinator devotes to volunteer management. We learned that the median paid staff volunteer coordinator in charities spends 30 percent of his or her time on this task. The median is the same among paid coordinators of congregational social service outreach activities.

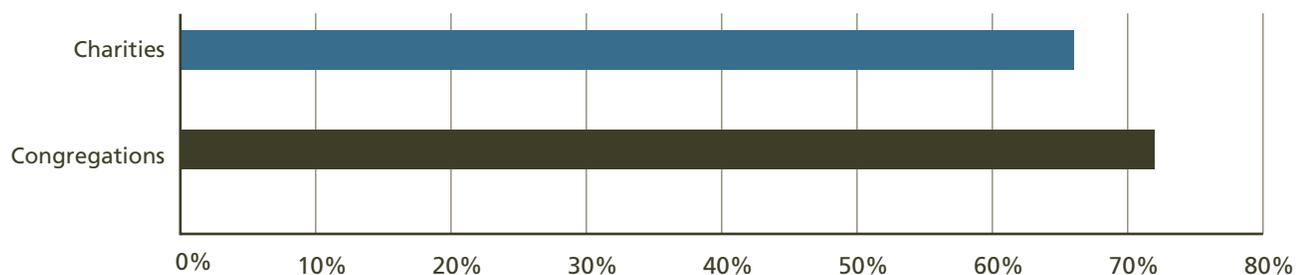
**Full-Time Volunteer Managers Are Rare.** Of charities with a paid staff volunteer manager, only one in eight have someone who devotes 100 percent of his or her time to volunteer management. Only one congregation

in our study said it has a full-time volunteer coordinator for its social service outreach activities!

**Most Volunteer Managers Have at Least a Minimum Level of Training.** If organizations reported that they have a paid staff member who dedicates time to managing volunteers, we asked if this person has any formal training in volunteer administration, such as coursework, workshops, or attendance at conferences that focus on volunteer management. We learned that paid staff volunteer coordinators in 66 percent of charities and 72 percent of congregational social service outreach activities pass this minimum threshold for training in volunteer administration.

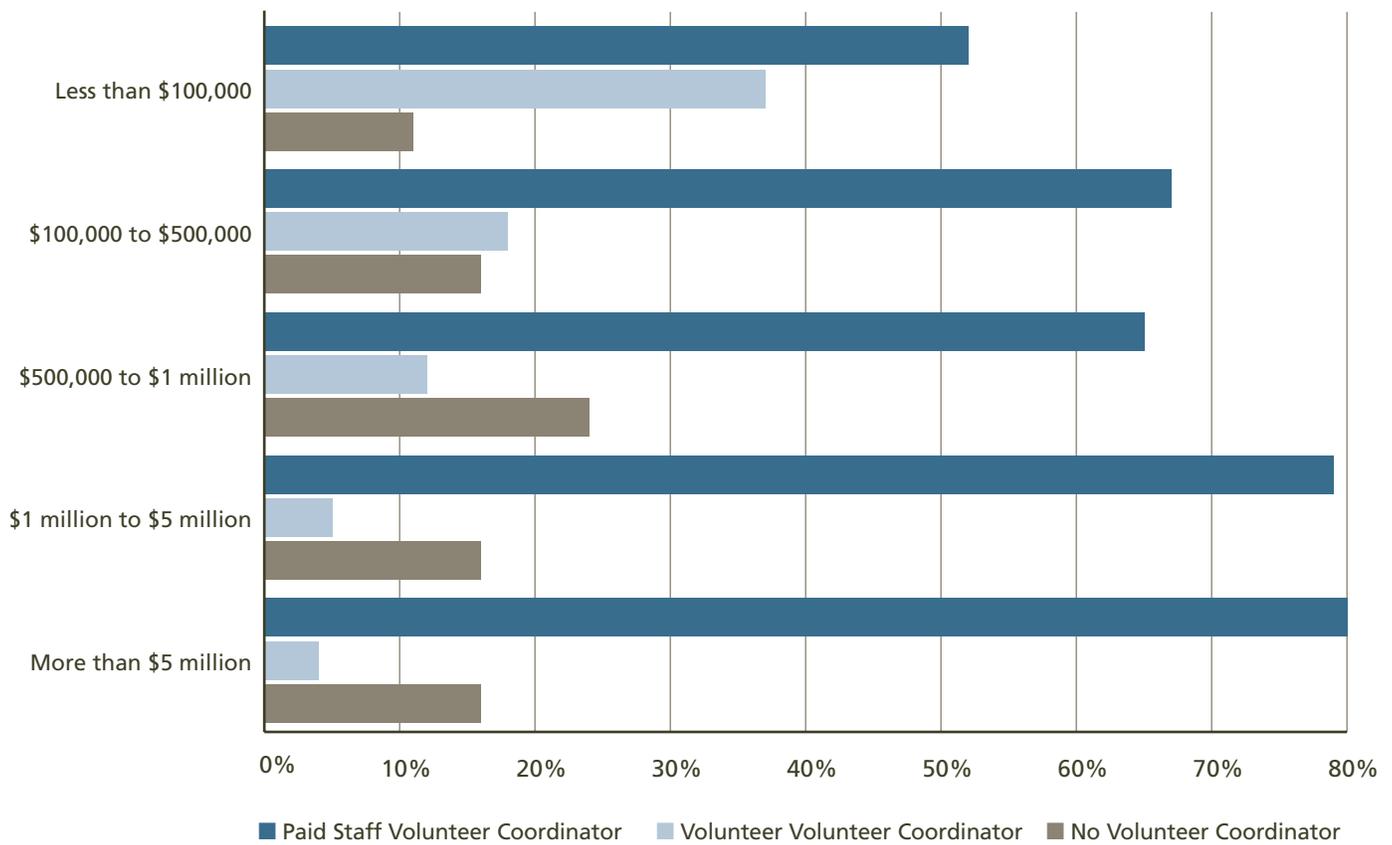
**Larger Charities Are More Likely to Assign Paid Staff to Volunteer Administration.** As indicated in figure 3, the likelihood that a charity has a paid staff volunteer coordinator increases with the size of the organization. However, the use of volunteers by smallest charities (under \$100,000 annual expenditures) to coordinate other volunteers makes them the least likely to be without any kind of volunteer coordinator. In addition to larger charities, paid staff coordinators are more likely to be found in charities that involve volunteers primarily in direct service and internal administration.

**Figure 2.** Percentage of paid staff coordinators with any level of training in volunteer administration



We divided charities into size groups depending on how much total money they say they spent in a year. This figure is taken from Forms 990 reported to the IRS in 2000 by charities in the study.

**Figure 3.** Type of volunteer coordinator by size of charity



We divided charities into size groups depending on how much total money they say they spent in a year. This figure is taken from Forms 990 reported to the IRS in 2000 by charities in the study.

**Use of Staff to Manage Volunteers Lags Behind Use of Staff for Fundraising.** A comparison with other national research on public charities<sup>1</sup> indicates that the professionalization of volunteer management lags behind the professionalization of fundraising. A little more than half (55 percent) of charities across the United States report that they employ a staff member or consultant whose primary responsibility is fund development or fundraising. In the current research, we learned that 39 percent of charities have a paid staff person who spends at least half of his or her time managing volunteers.

**Organizations Build Volunteer Programs on Minimal Resources.** Taken together, the findings regarding paid staff support for management of volunteers point

to low professionalization and capitalization of volunteer administration in the United States. The fact that many coordinators are getting some training suggests that many are interested in learning about how to manage volunteers. However, the small amount of time spent on volunteer administration suggests that charities and congregations do not have the resources to allocate to volunteer management or that they devote their organizational resources primarily to other efforts.

<sup>1</sup>Mark Hager, Patrick Rooney, and Tom Pollak, "How Fundraising is Carried Out in U.S. Nonprofit Organizations," *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 2002.

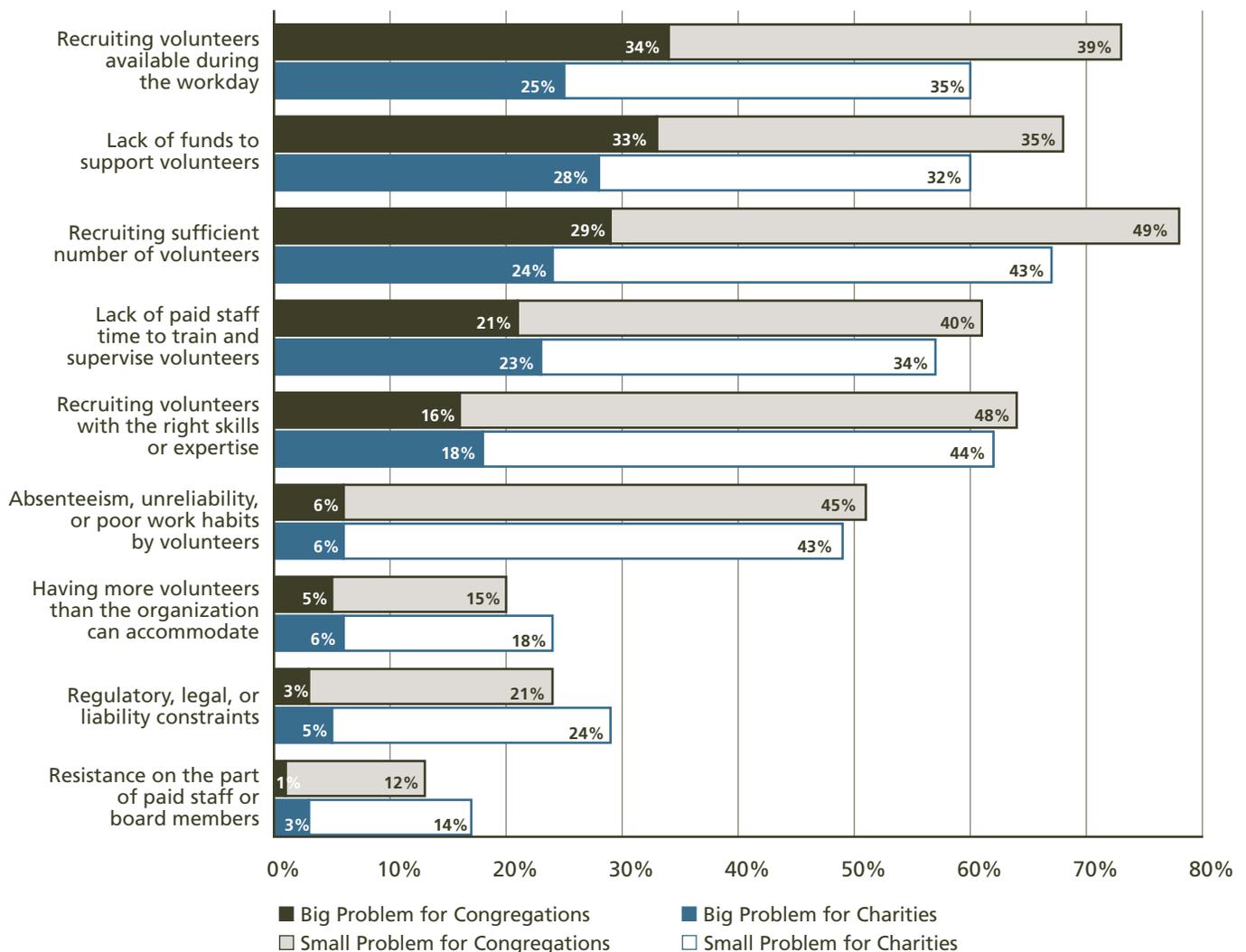
# Challenges in Volunteer Management

**Key Finding: Although Challenges to Volunteer Management Are Common, They Are Not Reported by an Overwhelming Number of Charities or Congregations.**

**An Array of Potential Challenges.** We asked both charities and congregations whether nine common challenges were a big problem, a small problem, or not a problem for their recruitment and management of volunteers. Figure 4 shows the percentage of each group that claimed a particular challenge as a problem.

**Difficulty Recruiting Volunteers for Workday Assignments.** The most common “big” challenges are related to volunteer recruitment. The most common recruiting problem across charities and congregations is recruiting volunteers who are available during the workday. Because many volunteers have jobs and can volun-

**Figure 4.** Percentage of charities and congregational social service outreach activities that cite various challenges as a big problem in their volunteer programs



teer only during their off hours, charities and congregations often find themselves short of help at times when they need it the most. However, despite the comparatively larger number of respondents who noted this challenge, only one-quarter of charities and one-third of congregations claim this issue as a big problem.

**Small Charities and Congregations Report More Recruiting Challenges.** To the extent that recruiting is a challenge, it is more of a challenge for smaller charities and congregations. Larger organizations, which generally have greater investments in volunteer management, are less likely to say that recruiting sufficient numbers of volunteers or recruiting volunteers during the workday is a big problem.

**Some Challenges Not So Challenging.** Poor work habits of volunteers, regulatory constraints on volunteer involvement, and indifference of board or staff toward volunteers are not commonly seen as problems or are seen only as small problems by both charities and congregational social service outreach activities.

**Time Spent by Paid Staff in Volunteer Administration Helps Address Recruiting Problems.** Recruiting volunteers with the right kinds of skills is a big problem for 18 percent and a small problem for 44 percent of charities. However, the greater the percentage of time a paid staff person spends on volunteer administration, the less likely a charity is to report problems with recruiting.

**Charities with Recruiting Challenges More Likely to Try a Range of Recruiting Methods.** We asked charities if they recruit volunteers by speaking before groups, by Internet, by printed materials, by special events, or by several other popular methods. We learned that organizations that say they have challenges in recruiting volunteers are the same ones that use these methods. Charities that have fewer challenges (or needs) in recruiting volunteers have less reason to try a range of recruiting strategies.

## Challenges Index

To compare the overall degree of management challenges with other organizational characteristics, we created a *Challenges Index* from eight of the nine challenges in figure 4. We excluded the challenge of “too many volunteers” because we believe it to be different from the other kinds of challenges considered.

Each of the eight challenges contributes a value of 0 to the Index if a charity or congregation feels it is not a problem. A challenge contributes a value of 1 if an organization feels it is a small problem, and a value of 2 if an organization feels it is a big problem. So, for example, if a respondent feels none of the challenges is a problem for his or her organization, the Index value for this organization would be 0 (0+0+0+0+0+0+0+0). This was the case for 9 percent of charities and 5 percent of congregations. However, if a respondent answered that all eight challenges were a big problem for his or her organization, the Index value for that organization would take on the maximum value of 16 (2+2+2+2+2+2+2+2). This was the case for less than 1 percent of charities and congregations.

The median *Challenges Index* value for both charities and congregations is 5. This means half of charities and congregations scored 5 or less on the Index, and the other half scored 5 or more. This relatively low value reinforces our observations that charities and congregations generally report low levels of challenges in their recruitment and management of volunteers.

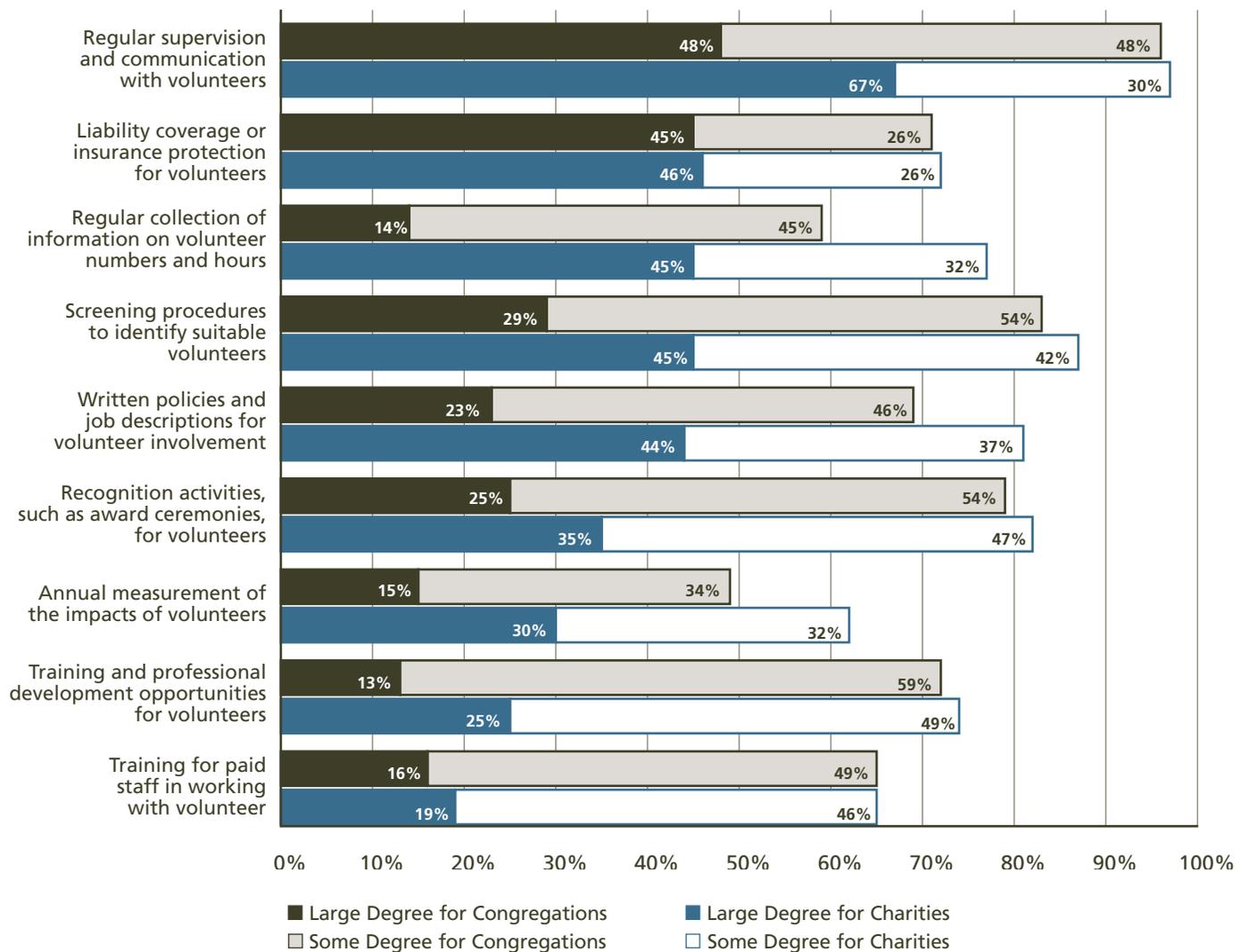
# Volunteer Management Practices

**Key Finding: Charities and Congregations Are Receptive to Best Practices in Volunteer Management, but Such Practices Have Not Taken Hold to a Large Extent.**

**Few Volunteer Management Practices Adopted to a Large Degree.** We presented survey respondents with nine volunteer management practices that the literature identifies as best practices. We asked whether they have adopted these practices to a large degree, to some degree, or not at all. Figure 5 shows the percentage of charities

and congregations that say they have adopted a particular practice to a large degree. Except for the common practice among charities of regularly supervising and communicating with their volunteers, none of these tasks are practiced to a large degree by a majority of charities or congregations.

**Figure 5.** Management tasks that organizations say they practice to a large degree



**Many Practices Adopted to Some Degree.** When we consider those charities and congregations that say they have adopted these practices to some degree, however, we get a different picture. Except for the uncommon practice of outcome measurement among congregations, all nine items are practiced by a majority of charities and congregations at least to some degree. For example, although only 25 percent of charities say they offer training and professional development opportunities for volunteers to a large degree, another 49 percent say that they offer these opportunities to some degree. This leaves only 26 percent of charities that say that they offer no such opportunities.

**Larger Charities Invest More in Volunteer Management.** Adoption of best practices is more common in larger charities, which are those with greater organizational capacity to adopt this broad array of practices. Moreover, adoption of best practices is most common in those charities that have a paid staff person with responsibility for managing volunteers. This points to consistent investment by some charities in both staff and structure for better management of volunteers.

**Lower Adoption among Congregations.** The adoption of volunteer management practices has made fewer inroads among congregations that manage volunteers in social service outreach activities. Just as congregations

display lower levels of commitment of staff resources for volunteer management when compared with charities, congregations have adopted recommended volunteer management practices to a much lesser degree than have charities. Furthermore, fewer congregations indicate that they have adopted many of the practices to a large degree.

**Large Congregations Better Prepared Than Smaller Congregations.** However, as with charities, we find that larger congregations are better prepared to manage volunteers than are their smaller counterparts. The largest congregations are the ones with the greatest scope of volunteer use, greatest likelihood to have a paid staff coordinator, and greater overall adoption of recommended management practices.

**Staff Time Spent Managing Volunteers Related to Adoption of Management Practices.** Because staff time allocated to volunteer management and adoption of management practices are both indications of investment in volunteers, we expect the two to be associated. They are. As staff time spent on volunteer management increases, adoption of volunteer management practices increases as well. We also found positive and significant relationships between the percentage of staff time devoted to volunteer management and each of the individual volunteer management practices.

## Management Index

Just as we constructed an Index measure of overall level of challenges faced by charities and congregations, we constructed a *Management Index* to measure the overall scope of volunteer management. We constructed the Index in a way similar to how we created the Challenges Index. For each of the nine items in figure 5, no adoption contributes a value of 0, some degree of adoption contributes a value of 1, and a large degree of adoption contributes a value of 2. So, the Index ranges from a value of 0 to 18. The median charity has a value of 10, while the median congregation has a value of 8.

# Benefits Volunteers Bring to Charities

**Key Finding: Most Charities Claim Volunteers Greatly Increase The Quality and Level of Service and Public Support for the Organization while Reducing Costs.**

**Benefits of Volunteers Cited by Nine in Ten Charities.** We asked charities about the extent to which volunteers provide certain kinds of benefits to their organization and whether benefits are provided to a great or moderate extent. The results are presented in figure 6 below. We learned that charities are generally enthusiastic about the benefits volunteers provide. A majority of charities cited five of the six items as beneficial to a great extent. When including those charities that claimed benefits at only a moderate level, more than 90 percent of respondents cited these five items. Fewer charities benefit from specialized skills, such as pro bono legal, financial, management, or computer expertise.

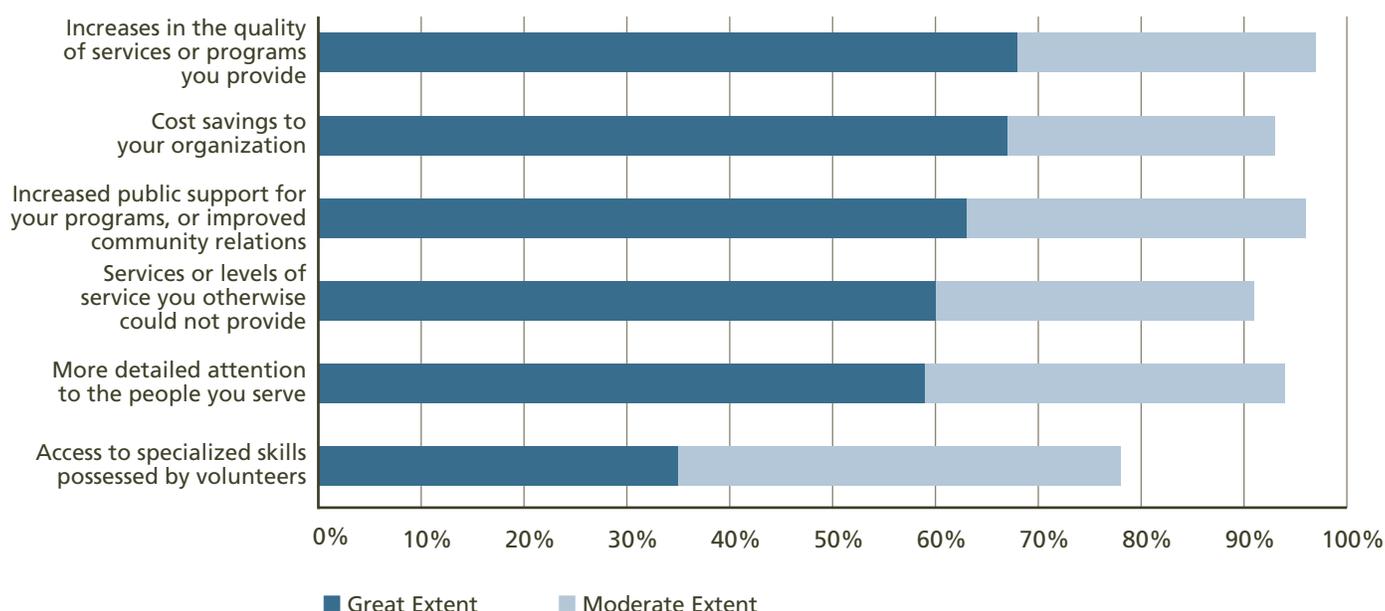
**A Measure of Volunteer Benefit.** Charities with different characteristics are more likely to cite greater benefits from their volunteers. For example, smaller charities are more likely to claim higher levels of benefits from their

volunteers. To compare the level of benefits that volunteers bring to charities with other organizational characteristics presented in this brief, we computed a Benefits Index that we report in the following pages.

## Benefits Index

We constructed a *Benefits Index* in the same way that we built indexes described previously. For each of the six items above, a response of 'not at all' adds 0 to the Index. A response of 'moderate extent' contributes a value of 1, and a response of 'great extent' contributes a value of 2. The Benefits Index ranges from a minimum value of 0 to a maximum value of 12, with a median value of 9.

**Figure 6.** Percentage of charities that feel volunteers are beneficial to their operations



# Investments in Volunteer Management

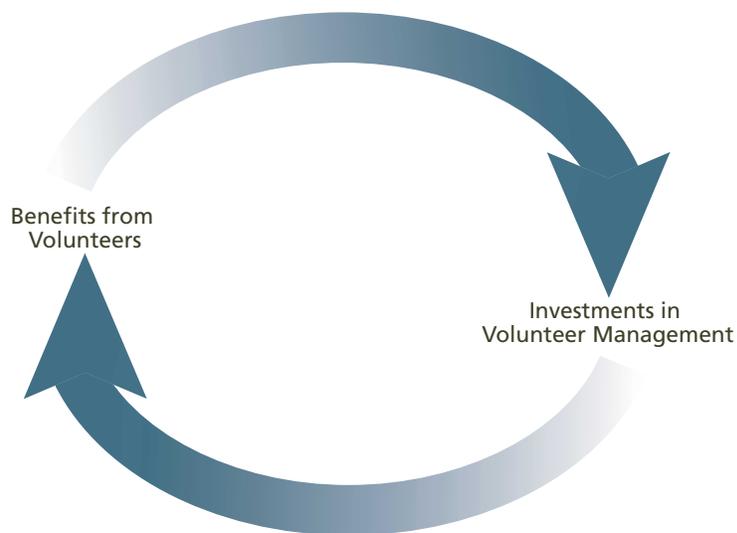
**Key Finding: Investment in Volunteer Management and Greater Benefits from Volunteers Form a Positive Feedback Loop.**

## Charities Invest in Volunteers in a Variety of Ways.

Thus far, we have discussed investments in paid staff and in volunteer management practices. Hiring someone who has training in volunteer management also demonstrates a greater investment in volunteer management. To derive an overall assessment of investment in volunteer management, we combined these three items into a single measure, describe below.

**Investments and Benefits Vary Together.** We expect that the charities that invest in volunteers will be those that say they derive greatest benefits from volunteers. A comparison of the investments measure and the benefits index bears out this expectation. A Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.37 indicates a moderate positive relationship between investment in volunteer management and the perceived benefits of volunteers. We conclude that the belief that volunteers are beneficial leads charities to invest in their management of volunteers, and that investing in the management of volunteers leads them to value the benefits of their volunteers more.

Figure 7.



## A Measure of Investment in Volunteer Management.

We described a Management Index based on the range of volunteer management practices that charities had put into place in their organizations. Our measure of *Investment* in volunteer management adds to the Management Index a measure of the amount of work time a paid staff person spends on volunteer management, and whether this person has formal training in volunteer administration. Specifically:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{INVESTMENT} = & (\text{Proportion of time spent by paid staffer on volunteer management} \times 4) \\ & + (1 \text{ if staffer has formal training in volunteer administration}) \\ & + (\text{Management Index}). \end{aligned}$$

If a charity has a paid staff person who spends 100 percent of his or her time on volunteer coordination, the charity receives a value of 4 on the first part of the equation. If the staffer has training such as coursework, workshops, or attendance at conferences that focus on volunteer management, the sum grows to 5. If this same charity has adopted all nine volunteer management practices to a large degree, it would score the maximum value of 23 (4+1+18). The median charity scored 11 on this measure.

# Charities with Ties to Religious Organizations

**Key Finding: Charities that Collaborate or Partner with Religious Organizations Report Greater Benefits from Volunteers Than Charities that Do Not Have Such a Collaboration.**

**Three in Ten Charities Tied to a Religious Organization.** The 2002 and 2003 Current Population Surveys indicate that people commonly volunteer in religious organizations. We asked charities if they were currently collaborating or partnering with a religious organization. About 29 percent said that they were.

**Charities That Partner with Religious Organizations Have Greater Scope of Volunteer Use.** We wanted to know if the charities with ties to religious organizations differed in important ways from the 71 percent that did not report this kind of tie. We found that those organizations that partner with religious organizations are more likely to use a large number of volunteers contributing many hours of service than are those organizations without this type of collaboration.

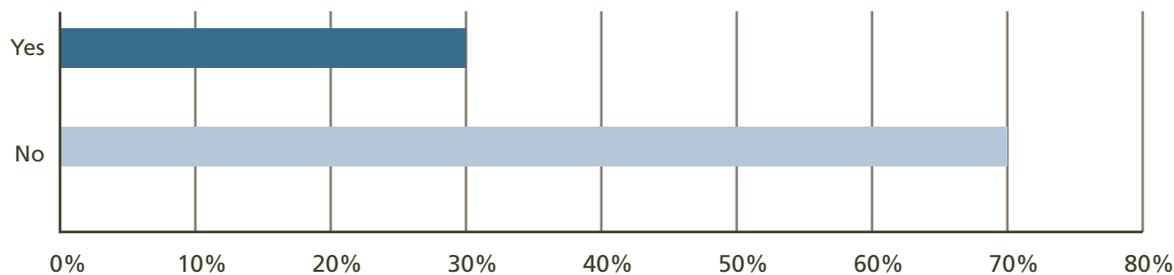
**Religious Ties and the Benefits of Volunteers.** To see if charities with religious ties value their volunteers more, we tested the difference in average (mean) values for the Benefits Index. That is, we wanted to know if the higher average benefits from volunteers reported by charities with ties to religious organizations was statistically significant. We found that it is. Charities with ties to religious organizations claim greater levels of benefit from their volunteers than do charities without these ties.

**Religious Ties and Investment in Volunteer Management.** Next, we considered whether the two groups of charities differ in terms of the investments they have made in the development of their volunteer management programs. Based on average values on the Investments Measure we learned that charities with ties to religious organizations have invested more in volunteer management than charities that do not collaborate with religious organizations.

**Volunteer Management Challenges Greater among Those with Religious Ties.** Adoption of volunteer management practices does not necessarily mean that organizations report fewer challenges in recruiting and managing volunteers. Indeed, although charities with ties to religious organizations have greater investment in volunteer management, they also report more challenges. However, we expect that their adoption of a greater number and variety of management practices gives them greater potential for overcoming these challenges.

Note: This page focuses on charities that collaborate with religious organizations, which are often congregations. However, these religious organizations are not the congregational social service outreach activities that we report elsewhere throughout this document.

**Figure 8.** Percentage of charities that collaborate or partner with a religious organization



# Capacity to Take On More Volunteers

**Key Finding: Most Charities and Congregational Social Service Outreach Activities Are Ready to Take On a Substantial Number of New Volunteers, Even Without Additional Support.**

## Charities and Congregations Are Ready and Willing.

We asked respondents how many additional volunteers their organization could absorb and utilize effectively, given their present capacity to manage or work with volunteers and given unlimited availability of volunteers. Fully 91 percent of charities and 96 percent of congregational social service outreach programs said they could currently take on at least some additional volunteers at present capacity.

## Demand for Volunteers among Charities Is High.

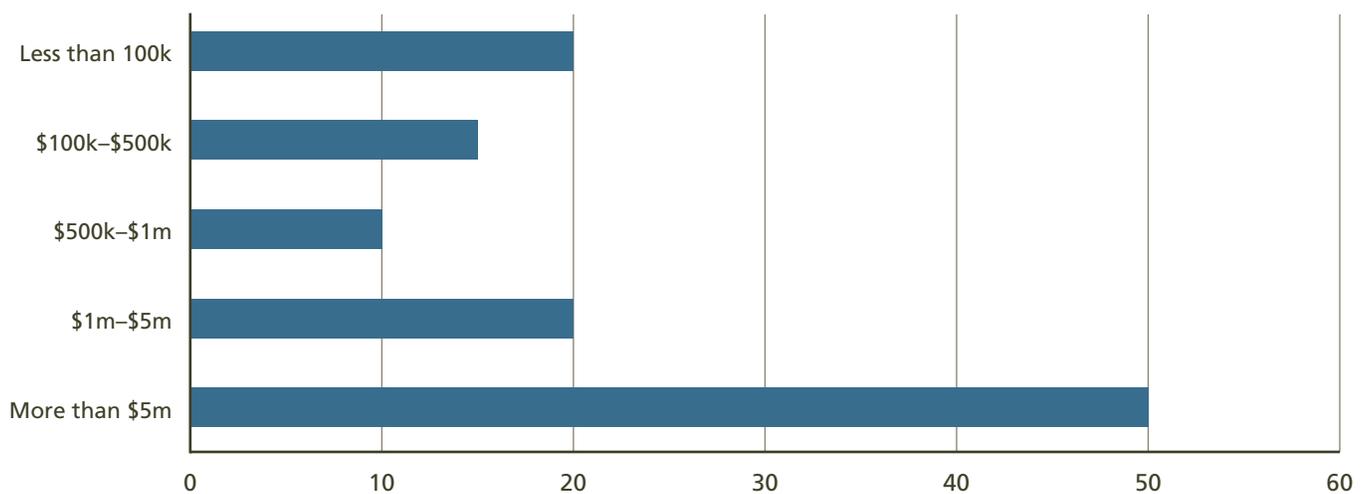
The typical (median) charity that uses volunteers reports that it could currently take on an additional 20 volunteers. If this estimate is accurate, it indicates that the number of volunteers has not begun to approach the demands and capacities of charities and congregations. With 174,000 charities (with more than \$25,000 in annual receipts) each demanding 20 volunteers, overall unfilled demand exceeds 3.4 million volunteers. This

does not include the demands of the more than 400,000 small charities that are run primarily by volunteers.

**Largest Charities Boast Greatest Readiness.** Figure 9 indicates that the size of the charity does not always dictate how many volunteers it feels it is ready to absorb. The median demand among the smallest charities is 20 volunteers, and the median is lower for charities with annual expenditures between \$100,000 and \$500,000 and between \$500,000 and \$1 million. However, the median charity with expenditures greater than \$5 million is ready and willing to take on 50 additional volunteers.

**Capacity to Take On Volunteers Tied to Scope of Volunteer Use.** Not surprisingly, the reported capacity of charities and congregations to take on more volunteers is greatest for charities that report a large scope of volunteer use. Charities with low-scope volunteer use are the most likely to respond that they can take on few volunteers.

**Figure 9.** Median number of volunteers charities say they could take on, by size



Size categories for charities are based on total expenditures in a year.

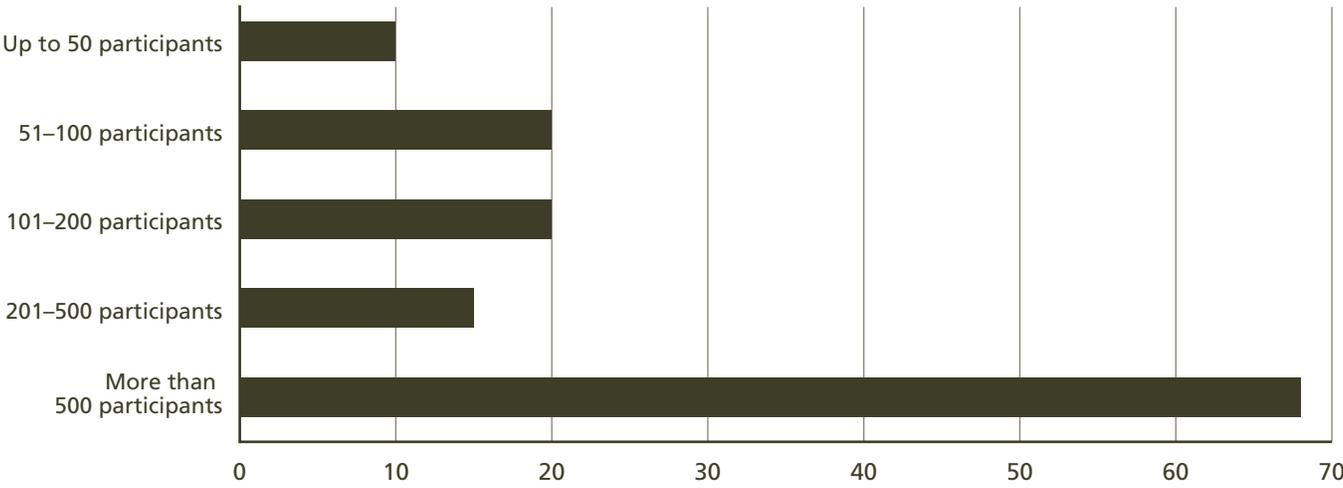
**Congregations Also Indicate High Level of Readiness and Demand.** The median congregational social service outreach program also says it could take on 20 additional volunteers. With an estimated 129,000 congregations managing volunteers in social service outreach activities, 20 volunteers apiece results in an estimated demand for 2.5 million volunteers. This demand is for congregational social service outreach activities alone, and does not include other volunteer opportunities in congregations, such as teaching religious classes to the membership and ushering during services.

**Largest Congregations Also Best Prepared.** As with charities, the relationship between size and the capacity to absorb new volunteers is not clear until one considers the demands of the largest congregations. Large congregations, which are the ones that have made the greatest investments in volunteer management and currently manage the largest number of volunteers, are ready to take on the most volunteers. The median congregation

with more than 500 active participants says it is ready to absorb a median of 68 additional volunteers into its social service outreach activities.

**Capacity to Take on Volunteers Related to Level of Staff Supports.** We expect that the organizations that have many volunteer management practices in place (and therefore score highly on the Management Index) will be the ones that say they can absorb a lot of volunteers. However, we find a moderately low level of association between the Management Index and the raw number of volunteers that charities and congregations say they are ready for. On the other hand, we observe that the percentage of time a paid staff volunteer coordinator devotes to volunteer management is related to the demand and capacity to take on more volunteers. The more time a paid staffer devotes to volunteer management, the greater the number of volunteers the charity says it can accommodate at present capacity.

**Figure 10.** Median number of volunteers congregational social service outreach activities say they could take on, by size



Size categories for congregations are based on the number of people who reportedly participate in the religious life of the congregations, including adults and children, and including people who are not formal members of the congregation.

# Capacity-Building Options

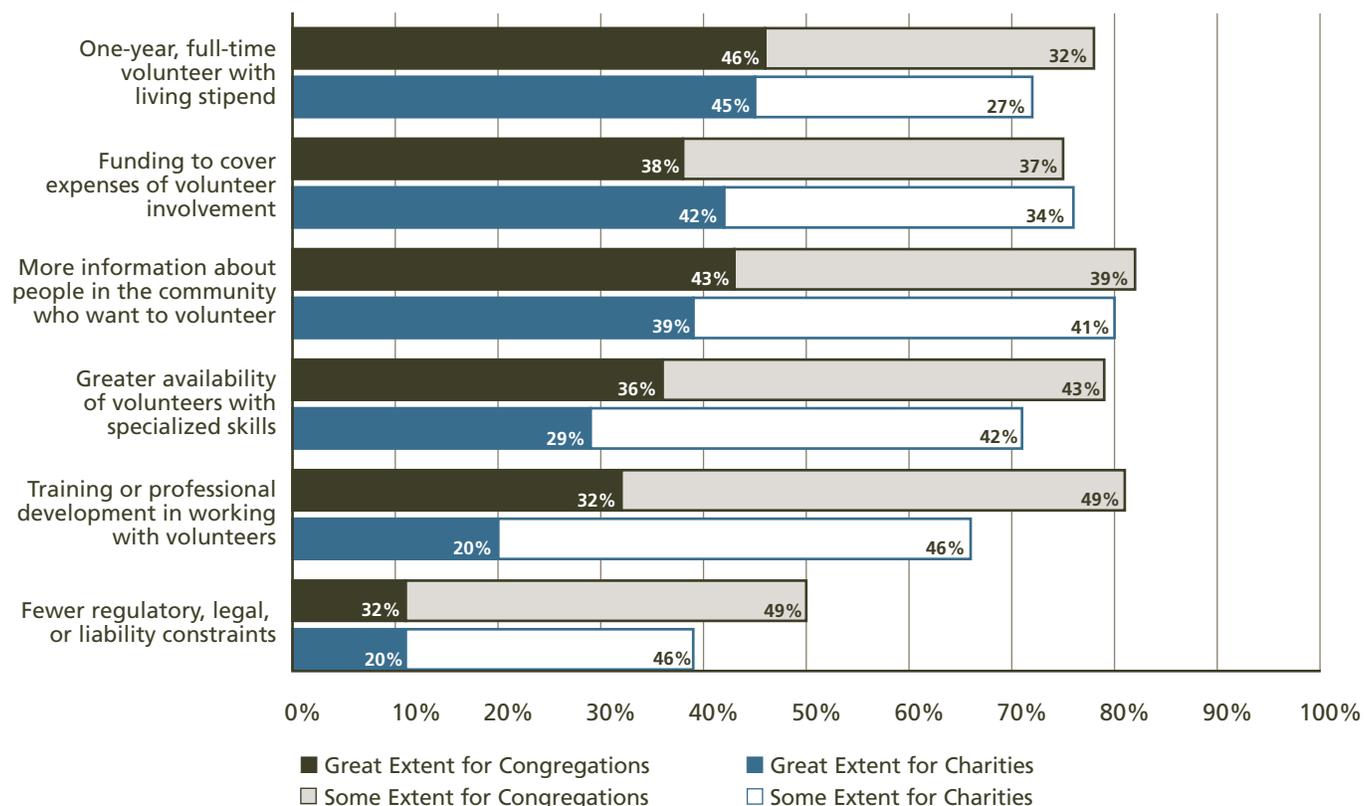
**Key Finding: Charities and Congregations Are Supportive of a Range of Options for Increasing Their Capacity to Recruit and Manage Volunteers. Particularly Popular Is a Full-Time Stipended Volunteer Who Assists with Volunteer Management.**

**Widespread Support for Range of Proposals.** Despite the apparent readiness of charities and congregations to take on new volunteers, they are nonetheless supportive of a range of capacity-building options for increasing the capacity of organizations to recruit and more effectively manage volunteers. Charities and congregational social service outreach programs have very similar responses to these proposals. An exception is that congregational social service outreach activities are substantially more likely to say that training for staff in how to work with volunteers would be a great boost to their volunteer management.

**Stipended Volunteers Could Provide Important Support.** We expected that charities and congregations

would report that money would be the most welcome support for their volunteer programs. However, we found this not to be the case. The most popular option, supported as potentially helpful to a large degree by 45 percent of charities and 46 percent of congregational social service outreach programs, was the addition of a one-year, full-time volunteer with a living stipend who has responsibility for volunteer recruitment and management. Although we did not mention AmeriCorps members in our interviews, this program fits the description. Volunteers of this type would be attractive to both charities and congregations and could bolster many of their efforts to better recruit and manage volunteers.

**Figure 11.** Factors that organizations say would be helpful in supporting their volunteer programs



**Many Organizations Simply Need Connections to Potential Volunteers.** Two in five charities and congregational social service outreach programs say that information about people in the community who want to volunteer would be helpful to a great extent. This capacity-building option points to the value of community volunteer centers and other umbrella resources, and potential efforts to increase their ability to match volunteers with organizations that need them.

Are the challenges that organizations face in recruitment and management of volunteers related to the kinds of capacity-building and policy options they would support? We measured the association between the categories of these two variables, and we found statistically significant relationships between each challenge and support for each option. So, to assess which relationships were strong enough to warrant policy attention, we took special note of the ones where the measure of association (Gamma) was at least 0.35. The following table shows the results.

Charities that report problems in...	Are more likely to support...
Recruiting sufficient numbers of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full-time stipended volunteer with responsibility for volunteer management</li> <li>• More information about people who want to volunteer</li> </ul>
Recruiting volunteers with the right skills or expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full-time stipended volunteer with responsibility for volunteer management</li> <li>• Greater availability of volunteers with specialized skills</li> </ul>
Recruiting volunteers available during the workday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding to cover expenses of volunteer involvement</li> <li>• Training or professional development for staff in working with volunteers</li> <li>• A full-time stipended volunteer with responsibility for volunteer management</li> <li>• More information about people who want to volunteer</li> </ul>
Sufficient paid staff time to train and supervise volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding to cover expenses of volunteer involvement</li> <li>• Training or professional development for staff in working with volunteers</li> <li>• Greater availability of volunteers with specialized skills</li> <li>• A full-time stipended volunteer with responsibility for volunteer management</li> </ul>
Sufficient funding to support volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding to cover expenses of volunteer involvement</li> <li>• Training or professional development for staff in working with volunteers</li> <li>• Greater availability of volunteers with specialized skills</li> <li>• A full-time stipended volunteer with responsibility for volunteer management</li> <li>• More information about people who want to volunteer</li> </ul>
Absenteeism, unreliability, or poor work habits of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training or professional development for staff in working with volunteers</li> </ul>

# Conclusions and Implications

**Volunteers Provide Substantial Benefits to Charities and Congregations.** In 2003, approximately 63.8 million Americans volunteered in or through an organization, while thousands of charities and congregational social service programs engaged and managed these volunteers. Charities and congregations report that these volunteers are important to their operations, and that volunteers do a good job in providing services. At least six in ten charities indicate that their volunteers provide substantial cost savings and greatly increase the quality of services or programs provided, public support for their programs, and the level of services they can provide. Only six percent of charities and congregational social service outreach programs report that absenteeism, unreliability, or poor work habits are a big problem among their volunteers.

**Volunteers Are a Valuable Financial Resource.** A volunteer's time is an important resource for many charities and congregations, especially those that do not have the money to hire labor to carry out certain tasks. Volunteer time is comparable to a monetary donation. Independent Sector, a national advocate for the nonprofit sector, computes annually an equivalent average hourly wage for a volunteer's time. The calculation is derived from the average hourly wage of nonagricultural workers plus 12 percent for fringe benefits. By this calculation, the typical 2002 volunteer value was \$16.54 per hour. To estimate the value charities themselves place on volunteers, the volunteer management capacity study asked charities to place a dollar value on an hour of their typical volunteer's time. The median charity estimated that an hour of its typical volunteer's time is worth \$20. The two in five charities that report that their volunteers work a total of 50 or more hours in a typical week receive a benefit of at least \$1,000 a week or \$52,000 a year from their volunteers. Volunteers are a true financial resource for most charities.

**Investment in Volunteer Managers Is Important in Effective Recruitment and Mobilization of Volunteers.** The volunteer management capacity study provides a portrait of a functioning sector of community organizations that offer community services or goods

with limited resources. Few are able to hire a full-time volunteer coordinator, so most rely either on staff members who spend part of their time on volunteer management or on volunteers themselves to manage other volunteers. One in three paid staff volunteer managers have not received any training, including having attended a workshop on volunteer management. The median paid volunteer coordinator in a charity or congregation spends only 30 percent of his or her time managing volunteers. However, the study indicates that those with paid staff members who dedicate a substantial portion of their time to management of volunteers experience fewer recruitment challenges and demonstrate greater adoption of volunteer management practices. Funders and organizations that invest in staff volunteer coordinators and training will produce charities and congregations with a greater capacity to their use of volunteers. This report finds that investments in volunteer management and benefits derived from volunteers feed on each other, with investments bringing benefits and these benefits justifying greater investments. We conclude that the value that volunteers provide to organizations they serve should make the effective management of volunteers a key priority.

**Volunteerism Could Benefit from a Workday That is More Volunteer-Friendly and Flexible.** Although we note that charities and congregations are not overwhelmed by problems in recruiting and managing volunteers, they nonetheless report a variety of challenges in implementing their volunteer programs. The most prominent challenge, recruiting volunteers during the workday, was reported among 25 percent of charities and 34 percent of congregational social service outreach programs. According to estimates from the 2002 CPS, 1.3 million non-volunteering Americans would volunteer if their employers ran a volunteering program and 69.1 million non-volunteering Americans would be motivated to volunteer if they had more time.

Although we cannot say how many people in the latter group would consider volunteering if their place of work promoted time for volunteering, the data suggest that groups interested in promoting volunteerism should explore ways to create more flexible workdays for

potential volunteers with regular jobs. Although some research suggests that corporate volunteer programs enhance business goals (i.e., company image and staff morale), a 2001 survey of 65 Fortune 500 corporate volunteer programs indicates that less than one in five provide employees with paid leave for participating in company-sponsored volunteer activities.<sup>2</sup> If more corporations supported volunteerism during the workday, they would find a nonprofit sector eager to make use of their employees.

**Partnerships with Religious Organizations Linked to Greater Benefits.** According to the CPS, more Americans volunteer through religious organizations than through any other type of organization. The volunteer management capacity study reports that one in three charities partner with religious organizations, but these organizations report greater benefits from their volunteers than do charities without these partnerships. Because religious partners have the potential to provide access to a pool of volunteers, charities that partner with religious organizations also are more likely to report a large number of volunteers per year who collectively contribute more than 50 hours a week.

**National Service Members Could Play Key Roles in Leveraging Volunteerism.** Although many organizations have made efforts to implement volunteer management practices, many of these practices have not taken hold to a great degree. One factor that inhibits the adoption of volunteer management practices is the availability of staff and financial resources for developing their volunteer programs. When asked what would be helpful in developing volunteer management capacity, many charities and congregational social service programs solidly supported the use of a full-time stipended volunteer who could assist with their volunteer program. Although AmeriCorps was not specifically mentioned in the interview, the program fits that description. After being trained in volunteer management practices, AmeriCorps members can be placed in organizations where they can help address a number of volunteer management challenges. We found that AmeriCorps-type volunteers could be particularly useful in charities that are challenged in

recruiting enough and the right kinds of volunteers, as well as in those charities that do not have time or money to train and supervise volunteers.

**Intermediaries Have an Important Role to Play in Bridging the Gap between Volunteers and Volunteer Opportunities.** Although some charities and congregations have more volunteers than they can accommodate, we do not find this a widespread concern among these organizations. We find that over nine in ten organizations are ready to take on a median of 20 more volunteers at their present capacity. However, many organizations struggle with finding a sufficient number of volunteers. Roughly 40 percent report that more information about potential volunteers in the community would greatly help their volunteer program. On the other hand, estimates from the 2002 CPS survey indicate that 6.3 million non-volunteering Americans would volunteer if they had more information about volunteer opportunities. Taken together, these findings highlight the important role that volunteer centers and other community information resources could play in linking people who want to volunteer with organizations that need them.

**Training Staff on How to Work with Volunteers Could Address Range of Challenges.** Charities that said that they have challenges recruiting individuals to volunteer during the workday, as well as those that lack paid staff time to train and supervise volunteers, those that lack adequate funds for supporting volunteers, or those that have problems with absenteeism, unreliability, or poor work habits of volunteers, are more likely to say they could benefit from training or professional development for staff on how to work with volunteers. This suggests that efforts to provide avenues for such training could pay dividends in improved volunteer management.

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<sup>2</sup>LBJ Associates, *Corporate Volunteerism: Innovative Practices for the 21st Century*, 2001.

Kathryn Troy, *Corporate Volunteerism: How Families Make a Difference*, New York: Conference Board, 1997.

Dwight Burlingame and Dennis Young, ed., *Corporate Philanthropy at the Crossroads*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

## Next Steps

This briefing report on volunteer management capacity in America's charities and congregational social outreach programs provides a glimpse of some of the challenges and opportunities that organizations face to effectively manage volunteers. The sponsors of this research invite an ongoing dialogue about the implications of these findings. Our goal is to examine these results thoughtfully with many volunteer managers, nonprofit and congregational leaders, funders, and others and formulate specific recommendations that can be shared and implemented widely.

We encourage this briefing report to be shared broadly and invite comments about the findings and recommendations for action.

## About The Project Sponsors

The volunteer management capacity survey project was launched by the USA Freedom Corps. The project was supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service and The UPS Foundation. The research was conducted by the Urban Institute.

 **The Corporation for National and Community Service.** The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through the Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs. Working with national and community nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies, the Corporation engages Americans in meeting critical needs in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security, and other areas while fostering the habits of good citizenship. The Corporation and its programs are a key part of USA Freedom Corps, the White House initiative to help all Americans answer the President's Call to Service. For more information, visit [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org).

 **The USA Freedom Corps.** The USA Freedom Corps, a White House office and coordinating council, was created by President Bush to foster a culture of service, citizenship and responsibility in America. The USA Freedom Corps is working to help every American answer the call to volunteer service by strengthening and expanding service opportunities to protect our homeland, support our

Comments submitted will be shared with the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation for National and Community Service and The UPS Foundation.

Comments and recommendations received through this online forum, and through additional meetings with nonprofit, congregational and volunteer leaders throughout the country, will be released formally in a report at the National Conference on Community Volunteerism and National Service, June 6-8, 2004, in Kansas City. The goal of this report is to share effective practices and recommendations widely among programs engaging volunteers, funders, policymakers and leaders.

communities and extend American compassion around the world. For more information, please visit [www.usafreedomcorps.gov](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov) or call 1-877-USA-CORPS.



**The UPS Foundation.** Founded in 1951 and based in Atlanta, Ga., The UPS Foundation identifies specific areas where its support will clearly impact social issues. The Foundation's major initiatives currently include programs that support increased nationwide volunteerism, family and workplace literacy and hunger relief. In 2003, The UPS Foundation donated more than US\$38 million to charitable organizations worldwide.

UPS is the world's largest package delivery company and a global leader in supply chain services, offering an extensive range of options for synchronizing the movement of goods, information and funds. Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., UPS serves more than 200 countries and territories worldwide. UPS's stock trades on the New York Stock Exchange (UPS), and the company can be found on the Web at [UPS.com](http://UPS.com).

 **The Urban Institute.** The Urban Institute ([www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org)) is a nonprofit nonpartisan policy research and educational organization established to examine the social, economic, and governance problems facing the nation. It provides information and analysis to public and private decision-makers to help them address these challenges and strives to raise citizen understanding of the issues and tradeoffs in policymaking.

# Methodology

The volunteer management capacity study is based on surveys of separate populations of U.S. charities and congregations. A sample of 2,993 charities was drawn within expenditure and subsector strata from 214,995 charities that filed Form 990 with the IRS in 2000. A sample of 1,003 congregations was drawn within denominational strata, including an oversample of non-Judeo-Christian congregations, from 382,231 entities provided by American Church Lists in August 2003.

From August to November 2003, the Urban Institute and Princeton Survey Research Associates called organizations to verify their existence, check mailing addresses, and obtain the name of an appropriate contact; they then completed precalls with 80 percent of charities and 72 percent of congregations. After contact, they mailed a letter that explained the motivations of the study and invited participation, and then called each organization up to 30 times to collect study information. Interviews

averaging 20 minutes were conducted with organizational representatives familiar with volunteer management. In the final weeks of the study, interviewers offered \$50 donations to organizations that were reluctant to participate; 11 percent of interviews were completed with an incentive. Adjusting for sampled organizations that were defunct or could not be verified as “working organizations,” our response rate was 69 percent for both the charity and congregation samples.

Responding charities were weighted to represent the expenditure and subsector strata from which they were sampled. Responding congregations were weighted to represent their denominational categories. Weights were further adjusted to account for charities and congregations unreachable in the precall. Because these weights help ensure that our samples reflect the characteristics of the working populations from which they were drawn, the results of the study reported in this brief are based on the weighted responses.

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