

VOLUNTEER FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Hi, everyone. Thank you for being with us today. My name is XX, and I'm with ICF, a research and evaluation organization working with AmeriCorps to understand the impacts of its Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) grant. Today, we will be asking about your experiences as a volunteer with [organization]—in particular how [organization] recruited you as a volunteer and how its staff currently engages with you as a volunteer. Your response will help AmeriCorps to improve its VGF grant program and how it supports the training provided to organizations that utilize volunteers.

This discussion is voluntary. You can decline to answer any questions. You can stop participating at any time. The information you share will remain private during and after the project. Neither your name nor any personal information about you will be shared beyond the ICF research team. We will maintain discussion data in secure areas. I would like to record the focus group to document information accurately. Only the ICF research team will have access to the recording.

(Confirm permission to record the session and, if confirmed, begin the recording.)

Before we begin, I want to check with you again that it is okay to record today's focus group discussion.

Let's begin with some brief introductions.

1. Please tell me how long you have been a volunteer with [organization] and what your role is as a volunteer.

Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

2. How did you hear about the volunteer opportunity?
 - a. Did you look for opportunities in your state's portal or platform?
 - b. Did you see an announcement on your local TV station or hear on the radio about volunteering in general?
 - c. Did you hear about opportunities through an event? Was it virtual or in-person?
3. What were you looking for with regard to a volunteer opportunity?
4. What were the various reasons that contributed to your decision to volunteer with [organization]?

Volunteer Management

5. When you first became a volunteer, what training did [organization] provide?
 - a. What were other onboarding activities?
6. What were your initial volunteer activities?
 - a. How often did you volunteer (e.g., hours/day per week)?
 - b. How have your volunteer activities changed, if at all?
 - c. To what extent did your volunteer activities align with what you were expecting?
 - i. Were you matched for a specific volunteer position based on your skill set?
 - ii. To what extent was your role clearly defined? How clearly defined is your role now?
7. When you first became a volunteer, who oversaw your volunteer activities?
 - a. How often did you meet with your volunteer manager?
 - b. How has this changed, if at all?
8. To what extent were you able to provide feedback to your volunteer manager about your experience as a volunteer?
 - a. How has this changed, if at all?
9. What mentorship opportunities, if any, did [organization] provide when you first started?
 - a. How as this changed, if at all?
10. To what extent have you developed relationships with others at [organization]?
 - a. How has [organization] promoted relationship building among volunteers or between volunteers and employees?
11. When you started with [organization], to what extent did [organization] provide professional and/or emotional support?
 - a. How has this changed, if at all?
12. What learning activities, if any, have been provided through [organization]?
 - a. *(Probe for examples.)*
13. To what extent has [organization] recognized contributions of volunteers?

- a. How has [organization] recognized your contributions?
14. How has COVID-19 impacted your volunteer duties?
- a. *(Probe for examples.)*
15. How has COVID-19 impacted how you engage with [organization]?
- a. *(Probe for examples.)*
16. What type of support has [organization] provided since the beginning of COVID-19?
- a. *(Probe for examples.)*
17. To what extent does [organization] promote diversity and inclusion among volunteers and employees?
- a. *(Probe for examples.)*
18. How would you describe your overall satisfaction with volunteering with [organization]?
19. How long do you plan to continue to volunteer with [organization]?
- a. *(If planning to stay):* What factors contribute to your decision to want to stay with [organization]?
 - b. *(If planning to leave in the near future):* What factors contribute to your decision to want to leave [organization]? What, if anything, could [organization] do to make you change your mind to stay?

Concluding Topics

20. What additional support do you need from [organization]?
21. In what ways could [organization] improve how it recruits volunteers?
22. In what ways could [organization] improve how it trains and/or supports volunteers?
23. What additional feedback or insights would you like to share with us regarding your experience volunteering with [organization]?