

Barriers to Effective Volunteer Management

22 January 2008

All figures, including percentages, are estimates. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding or because multiple responses are allowed.

Background

Why is volunteer management important?

Volunteers are leaving 1

The former volunteerism rate has been rising*. When former volunteers were asked why they stopped volunteering, the top reasons they gave included “burnout” and “lack of training” (volunteer management-related reasons)

IPCs are concerned 2

One of the top issues IPCs face is lack of commitment or retaining interest of volunteers**

Code of Governance 3

It is a best practice guideline for all charities and IPCs^ that there “should be documented human resource policies ... for paid staff and volunteers”

*NVPC Individual Giving Surveys 2002, 2004, 2006

**NVPC Institutions of a Public Character Survey, 2005-2006

^Basic tier is applicable to all charities and IPCs. HR policies could cover recruitment, training, development, appraisal and disciplinary actions.

What happens when there is poor volunteer management?

Two stories:

- “For purpose of helping some departments in my company to do corporate volunteering, I have emailed to 3 VWOs ... Out of the 3, only 1 responded. And that one VWO who finally responded was after me following up with 3 phone calls.”
 - Corporate volunteer
- “Lack of time to do this portfolio. Many a times, this is a portfolio shoved unto social workers or youth workers or counsellor. Multitasking can lead to lack of depth.”
 - Volunteer coordinator

Research design

- NVPC had carried out an earlier study on volunteerism and fundraising in IPCs (2005-2006). This 2007 study follows up the earlier study, to ascertain barriers in effective volunteer management in IPCs.
- **Target respondents:**
 - Respondents from IPC study (2005-2006) who are Executive Director level or equivalent. These respondents must also have engaged volunteers.
- **Methodology:**
 - Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing from 14 May – 3 June 2007.
- **Limitations of study**
 - List of respondents taken from IPC study (2005-2006) who agreed to make known their identities to NVPC. The response for this study is not the universe of Executive Director level or equivalent who engaged volunteers.
 - Some data from IPC study (2005-2006) was used in 2007 study. In such cases, there is a time lag of over one and a half years. Data affected by this lag (a minority) is indicated accordingly.

*The research was carried out by ACNielsen Research Singapore

Sample

Good response rate with the highest in Social Services and Health. There were 121 respondents, with most in top management.

	Database	Achieved responses	Response Rate
SECTOR	N	N	%
Social Services	96	68	71
Health	37	28	76
Arts and Heritage	26	11	42
Community, Youth and Sports	22	9	41
Others	10	5	50
Total	191	121	63

DESIGNATIONS	%
Board related positions	19
Top Management	74
Others	7
Total	100%

Findings

Barriers to effective volunteer management

No designated volunteer coordinator

1

No formal training for those who work with volunteers*

2

Don't see volunteer management as important**

3

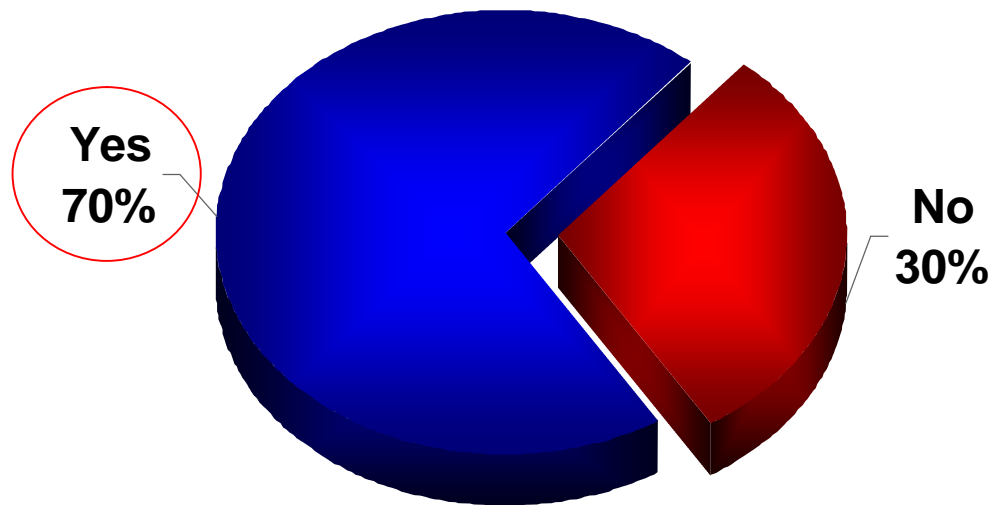
* Usefulness of formal volunteer management training for non management staff is based on anecdotal evidence outside this survey.

** Most important factor that will help improve volunteer management is “funding for volunteer management staff”, which NVPC plans to address through a pilot funding programme.

Designated volunteer coordinator

7 in 10 organisations have officially designated the role of a volunteer manager / coordinator.

Officially designated the role of a
volunteer manager / coordinator



Base: All respondents N=121
There is no refused, don't know in this group

Q2: May we know if you have officially designated the role of a volunteer manager or coordinator (ie, someone who managed or coordinated volunteers) to anyone? [SA]

Source: Q2

Other staff who work with volunteers

About 9 in 10 organisations have other staff who were not designated volunteer manager / coordinator working with volunteers.



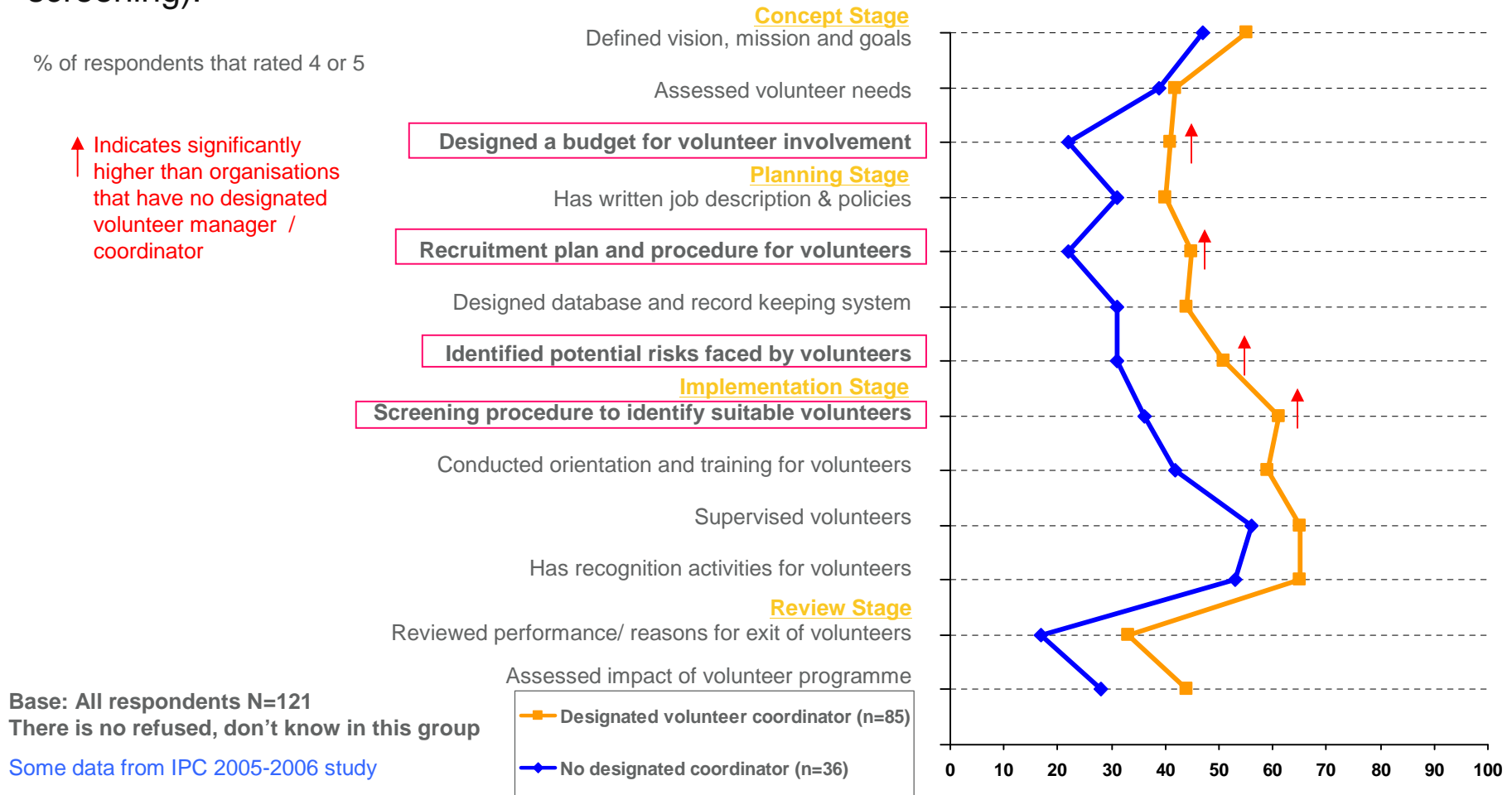
Base: All respondents N=121
There is no refused, don't know in this group

Q5: Do other staff who are not designated volunteer manager/ coordinator (eg, programme staff) work with volunteers? [SA]

Source: Q5

Implementation of volunteer management system

Organisations which have designated volunteer coordinators generally implement volunteer management practices to a greater extent (significantly higher in some areas eg recruitment, screening).



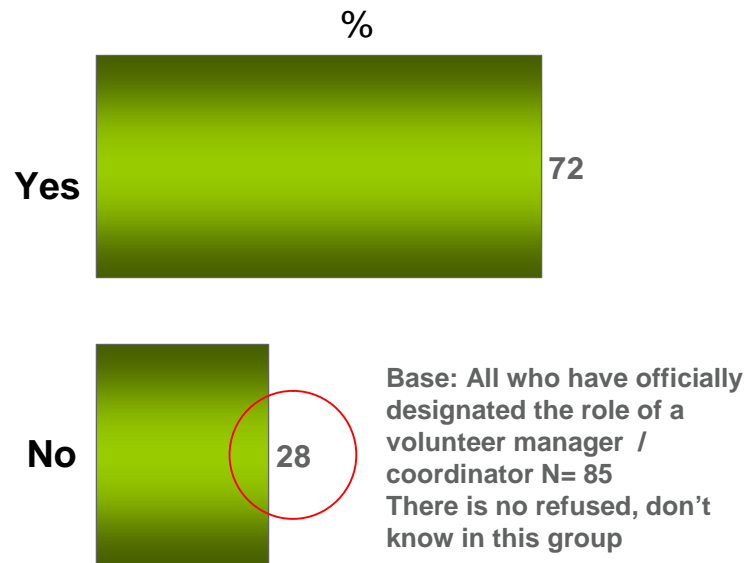
QD9: Below is a list of volunteer management practices. Please rate the extent of implementation of these activities by your organisation on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 being “not implemented at all” to 5 being “fully implemented”). Has your organisation: [SA]
 Q2: May we know if you have officially designated the role of a volunteer manager or coordinator (ie, someone who managed or coordinated volunteers) to anyone? [SA]

Source: D9, Q2

Formal training: staff

Among organisations which have officially designated the role of a volunteer manager / coordinator to someone:

Does volunteer manager / coordinator undergo training in volunteer administration?



Among organisations which have other staff who were not designated volunteer manager / coordinator working with volunteers:

Do other staff that work with volunteers undergo training in volunteer administration?



Q2: May we know if you have officially designated the role of a volunteer manager or coordinator (ie, someone who managed or coordinated volunteers) to anyone? [SA]

Q3: Is it a practice for one or more of these designated persons to have or to undergo formal training in volunteer administration, e.g. attending volunteer management courses or workshops? [SA]

Q5: Do other staff who are not designated volunteer manager/ coordinator (eg, programme staff) work with volunteers? [SA]

Q6: For these staff members (s) who work with volunteers, is it a practice that they have or undergo formal training in volunteer administration, such as attending volunteer management courses or workshops? [SA]

Source: Q2,Q3,Q5,Q6

Formal training: staff

Examples of the benefits of training

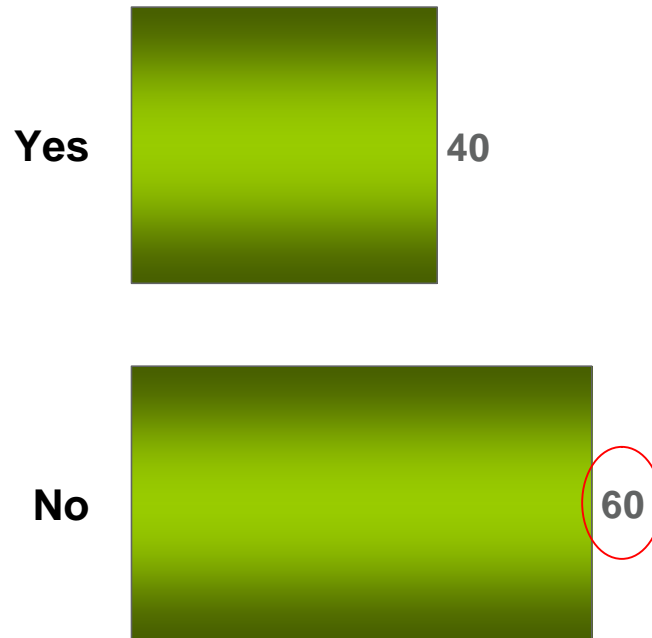
- “Before training, I did not know the purpose and vision of the volunteer department, the need to engage the whole organisation, the things to do to show appreciation for volunteers.”
- “After training, I will do more to show the organisation and volunteers their contributions. In this way, the value of the volunteer is established and a healthy and positive culture can be developed from there.”
 - Volunteer coordinator from a VWO

Formal training: top management

6 in 10 organisations have top management who did not undergo formal training in volunteer administration.

Top management undergo training

%



Base: All respondents N=121

There is no refused, don't know in this group

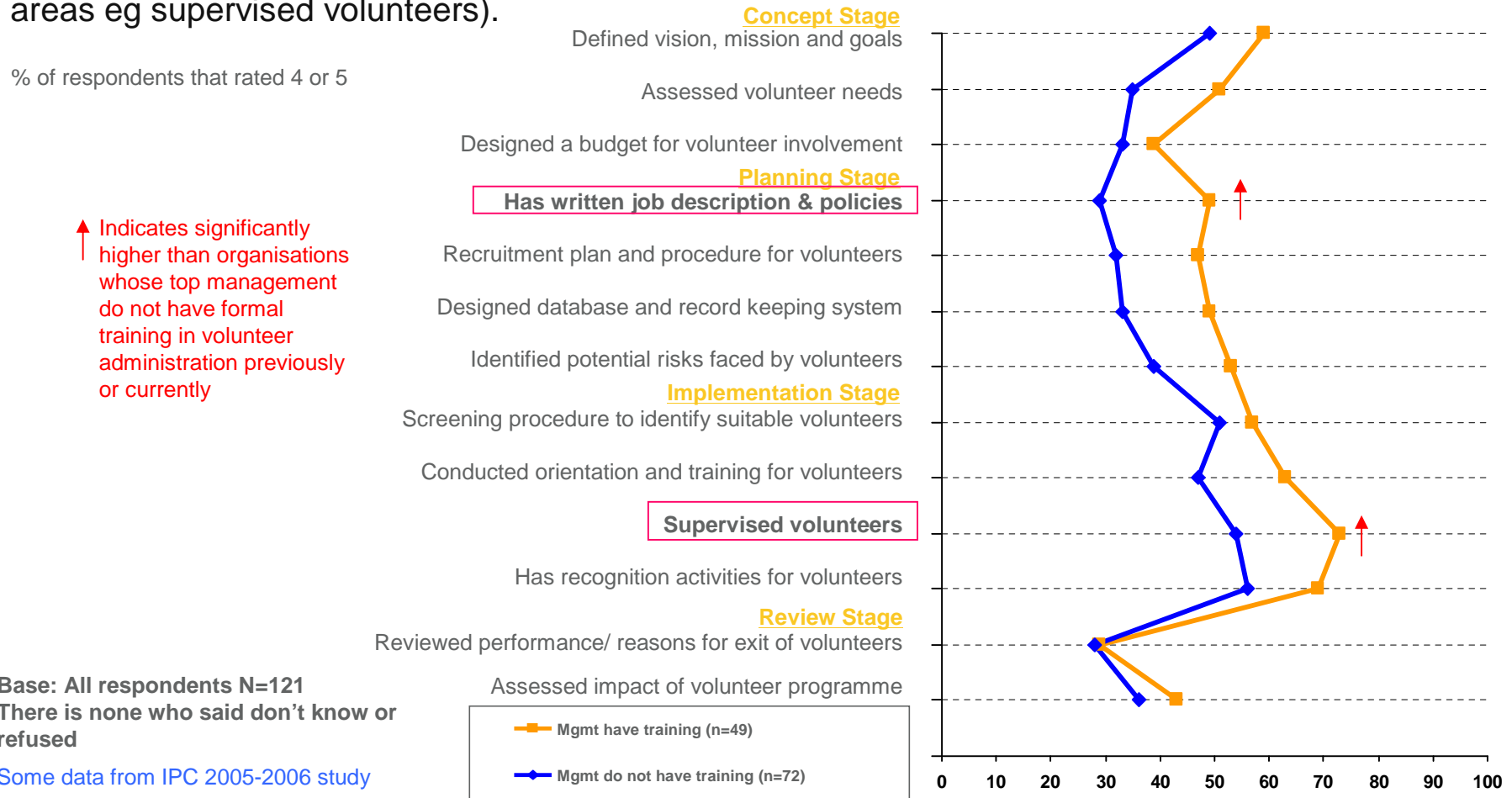
Q7: Do you have formal training in volunteer administration previously or currently, such as attending volunteer management courses, workshops or conferences? [SA]

Source: Q7

Implementation of volunteer management system

Organisations whose top management have formal training in volunteer administration

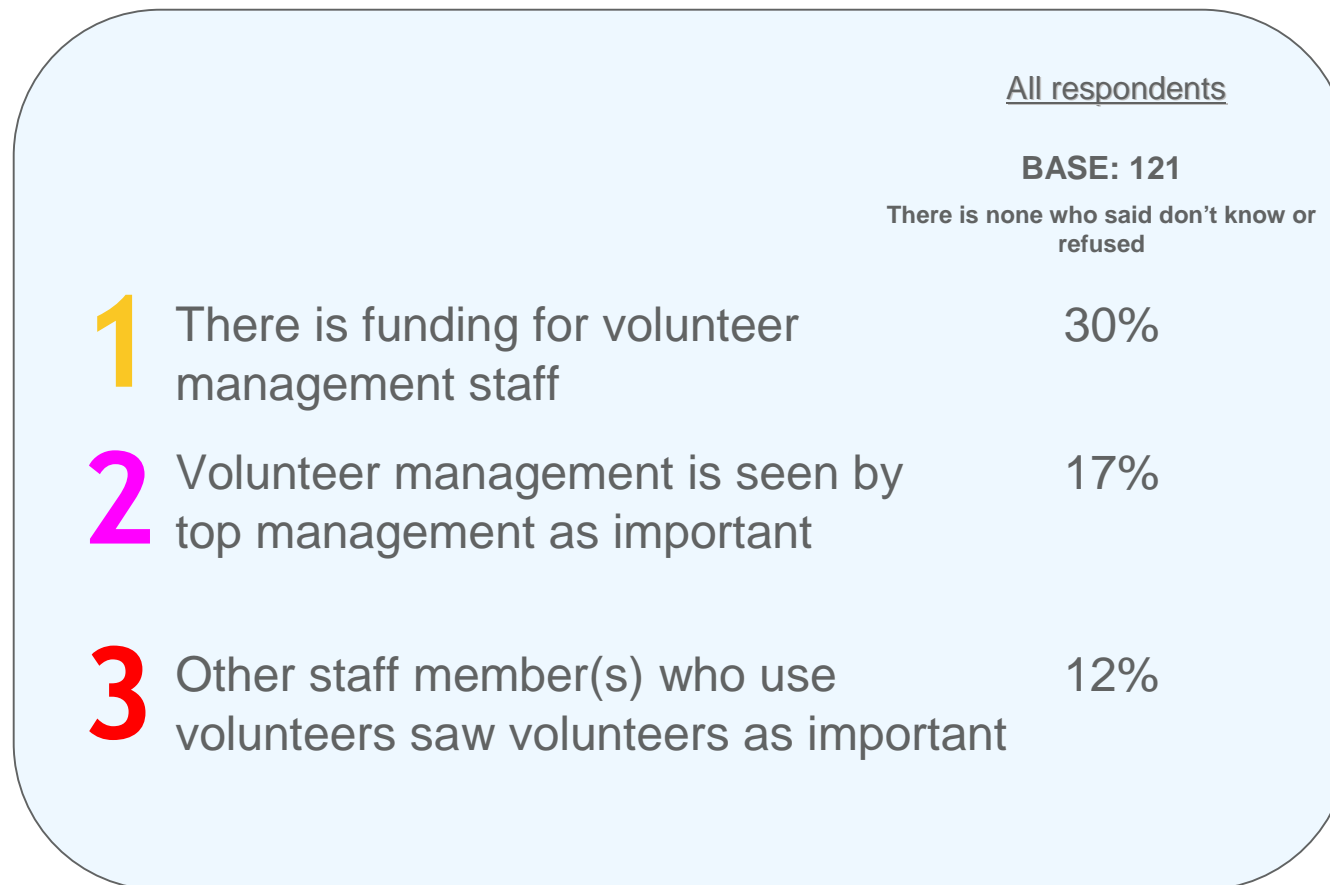
generally implement volunteer management practices to a greater extent (significantly higher in some areas eg supervised volunteers).



QD9: Below is a list of volunteer management practices. Please rate the extent of implementation of these activities by your organisation on a scale of 1 – 5 (1 being “not implemented at all” to 5 being “fully implemented”). Has your organisation: [SA]
 Q7: Do you have formal training in volunteer administration previously or currently, e.g. attending volunteer management courses or workshops? [SA]

Source: D9, Q7

Most important factors that will help improve volunteer management in respondent's organisation



Q10: From the showcard, which do you think is the most important in helping your organisation improve volunteer management? [SA]

Source: Q10

When senior management sees volunteer management as lower priority

The top suggestion to change the mindset of senior management who saw volunteer management as lower priority was **awareness building**, followed by **more exposure to volunteering / volunteers**.



Base: All respondents excluding those with no comments N=112

Q12: In the case of senior management who view volunteer management as lower priority, what do you suggest may be done to change their minds?

Source: Q12

Conclusion

Barriers to effective volunteer management

1
No designated
volunteer
coordinator

2
No formal
training for
those who
work with
volunteers

3
Don't see
volunteer
management
as important

Availability
(time and money)

Aptitude
(skill)

Attitude
(towards
volunteers,
volunteer
management)

Barrier breakers (3 "A"s)

Conclusion

What happens when there is excellent volunteer management? Two stories:

- “As it was our first volunteer project, [the VWO] gave valuable advice We were also impressed with the level of support from the VWO, with their COO and several staff and social workers who rendered their help.”
 - Corporate volunteer
 - The company strongly agreed that the activity met the objectives of the company and the employees benefited
- “My management ... understand the role of volunteers in the organisation ... They have also always given me support (eg manpower ... IT resources and a volunteer management budget) ... there is also much synergy in working together with the various departments on various collaborative projects, which supports the work of the respective departments.”
 - Volunteer coordinator from multi-service agency