

Boomers and Babies: Engaging Boomer-age Volunteers in Early Care and Education Phase 3, Year 2 Evaluation



prepared for:



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September 15, 2012

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Engaging Baby Boomers in Early Childhood Phase 3 Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Boomers and Babies is a cross-generational program supporting efforts by early childhood care and education organizations to engage baby boomer age volunteers in activities that are known to contribute to children's school readiness. OCF is in the middle of a three-year implementation phase that builds on a pilot period and will expand the reach of the project across the state.

Phase 1

In the Spring of 2008, The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF) contracted with Oregon State University (OSU) to conduct a study identifying the opportunities and barriers to engaging baby boomer volunteers in early childhood settings. This study, *Boomers and Babies: Engaging Boomer-age Volunteers in Oregon's System of Early Care and Education* was released in July, 2008 as Phase 1 of the Boomers and Babies initiative (Pratt, MacTavish, Rennekamp, & Bowman, 2008). The study offered findings from early care and learning professionals, boomer-age volunteers, and volunteer placement agencies from across Oregon.

Phase 2

In October 2008, The Oregon Community Foundation in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, Knowledge Learning Corporation, and Juan Young Trust West funded three pilot projects aimed at integrating boomer-age volunteers into early childhood programs. This collaboration was part of the Community Experience Partnership, a national initiative of The Atlantic Philanthropies, involving 32 community foundations located across the United States. These foundations are working to find new ways to engage the rapidly growing older adult population in activities that serve others, improve quality of life, and address community needs. The Oregon Community Foundation is one of nine community foundations in the "Community Solutions" track implementing initiatives focused on engaging older adults in specific community issues.

The objectives of the Boomers and Babies Phase 2 pilot initiative were as follows:

- Strengthen early childhood programs – and in particular, their ability to impact children's positive growth and development – through baby boomer volunteerism
- Bring more caring adults into children's lives in meaningful ways
- Support tangible increases in the capacity of early childhood organizations to serve young children and families
- Raise awareness of early childhood as an attractive volunteer arena for older adults
- Create meaningful opportunities for boomers to use their experience and skills to give back to their communities

- Educate the early childhood field about how to use volunteers effectively
- Learn more about engaging boomers

The results of the Phase 2 pilot year are outlined in *Boomers and Babies: Pilot Project Evaluation* (Rennekamp & Sektnan, 2009).

Phase 3

Year One (2010-2011)

In 2010, two of the pilot programs received funding to carry on project implementation through March 2012. These organizations, Adelante Mujeres in Forest Grove and the Family Nurturing Center in Medford, solidified their programs and formed partnerships with other organizations in their communities to promote boomer volunteerism in early childhood settings. Oregon State University continued to evaluate the progress of these two sites, along with the major successes and challenges experienced by the organizations during Phase 3 of the initiative. A summary of the accomplishments for the first year of Phase 3 are year are outlined in *Boomers and Babies: Engaging Boomer-age Volunteers in Early Care and Education Phase 3 Evaluation* (Manoogian, Nott, Rennekamp, & Sektnan, 2011).

Learning Community

In addition to the funding of pilot grants, the final phase of Boomers and Babies included the creation of a statewide Learning Community of early childhood education organizations. The Learning Community met over the course of a year to develop and hone volunteer management skills of staff, specifically focusing on recruiting and retaining boomer-age volunteers. Sixteen early care and learning organizations serving at-risk children birth to age five throughout Oregon were selected to participate.

Each organization received a \$5,000 grant and assessed its readiness and capacity to successfully recruit, integrate, and use boomer-age volunteers in their organizations. The primary tool used for assessment and planning was the “Volunteer Management Audit” by Energize, Inc. Partners also received guidance from the Boomers and Babies Core Project Team in the form of ongoing consultation; access to resources relevant to boomer volunteer management; and two all-day convenings for training, technical assistance, and opportunities to learn from other Learning Community participants. Participants developed an action plan for involving boomer volunteers in their early childhood programs. The Learning Community continues to share resources among the members.

Year Two (2011-2012)

In 2011, members of the Learning Community were invited to submit proposals to initiate a volunteer program targeting boomer age volunteers. In addition to the two pilot programs, five early childhood organizations were selected to receive up to two years of funding to develop and launch extensive boomer volunteer programs focusing on direct service with children. One of these funded projects was a

partnership between two organizations. For this report, the organizations reported their accomplishments separately. Therefore, six new grant sites are referred to throughout the report. Additional financial support was provided by the PGE Foundation, Knowledge Universe, the Juan Young Trust West, and several OCF Donor Advised Funds. The goal of this expansion is to demonstrate that boomer volunteerism strengthens early childhood organizations and improves children’s readiness for school, as well as explore how to better attract boomers to these volunteer opportunities.

Project Sites

Following is a brief description of the Boomers and Babies funded organizations and an overview of the primary focus of the volunteer activities for each. Of the pilot grants funded in 2008, two organizations continued with funding through May 2012. Of the five new projects funded in 2011, one project involves two organizations in separate locations. These two sites reported their accomplishments separately and therefore, throughout the report, six new grant sites are being reported, for a total of eight Boomers and Babies projects.

Boomers and Babies Project Sites
<i>Pilot Grants (2008-2012)</i>
Adelante Mujeres – A child development program serving bilingual and monolingual immigrant children and their families in Forest Grove. At Adelante, volunteers are “Reading Pals”, who come weekly to the early childhood classrooms and read to preschool children in English.
Family Nurturing Center – Jackson County’s Children’s Relief Nursery collaborates with other agencies serving young children and families to create a county-wide “Circle of Caring” project which includes support of home-based child care programs, services for high-risk parents and children, and programs for young children with special needs. Most volunteers are placed in therapeutic classrooms, where they engage in reading, play, and other activities with the high-need children served by the program. Through the Child Care Resource Network (CCRN), volunteers make regular visits to family child care provider homes to read with the children in care. Through Child Development Services (CDS), volunteers serve preschool-age special needs children in classrooms.
<i>New Project Grants (2011-2013)</i>
Family Building Blocks/Family Development Center - Family Building Blocks, Marion and Polk County’s relief nursery, will collaborate with another relief nursery, Family Development Center in Roseburg, which participated in the Boomers & Babies Learning Community. Together they will create a Boomer Volunteer Toolkit that will eventually be available to all relief nurseries in the state to assist them with effective boomer volunteer engagement. These organizations will also increase the number of boomer volunteers involved in their organizations. <i>Although this is one funded project, the two organizations report their accomplishments separately and are listed individually in the report.</i>
Gladstone School District 115 - The Gladstone Center for Children and Families, a partnership between the Gladstone School District and several early childhood non-profit agencies including Head Start, Healthy Start, John Wetten Elementary, and the Family Stepping Stones Relief Nursery, will be developing a center-wide volunteer program to streamline and coordinate the engagement of boomer volunteers. Volunteers will support learning directly in the classrooms and "activity zones" as well as provide necessary administration assistance to the center.

NeighborImpact - NeighborImpact, the Community Action Agency providing emergency, housing, and early care and education services for Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson counties, will engage boomer volunteers to assist with Story Time, School Readiness, Social-Emotional Development and Math Kits in Head Start classrooms and in-home child care settings. Bilingual volunteers will work directly with ESL children. The Education Service District and the Deschutes County Library will work together to identify the children with needs and provide volunteer training. *Partial Support for the NeighborImpact project comes from the PGE Foundation.*

Umatilla-Morrow County Head Start Inc. - Umatilla-Morrow County Head Start (UMCHS) will expand and sustain a culture of volunteerism across the seven rural counties it serves. Boomer volunteers will work in each of UMCHS's 17 classrooms as well as be trained to do home visits for families, as part of the agency's parenting education Hub project. There will be a focused effort on engaging retired Hispanic community members as volunteers and on long-term volunteer retention.

Volunteers of America Oregon - The Family Relief Nursery at Volunteers of America Oregon (VOA) will expand its volunteer program to effectively engage boomer volunteers to work directly in the classrooms as well as provide administrative capacity to the organization. Viewed as a pilot program for VOA, its strategies will eventually be implemented in other VOA programs to expand the impact of older adult volunteers throughout the wider organization.

METHODOLOGY

The Phase 3 Boomers and Babies evaluation used a variety of evaluation methods and data sources. The following section outlines each of these methods and data sources.

Six-Month and Year-End Reports

Boomers and Babies projects completed a six-month report in December 2011 and a final, year-end report in June 2012. These reports were completed online using SurveyMonkey[®]. The reports included, but were not limited to, the following topics:

- programming and volunteer numbers
- recruitment and training
- volunteer management and support
- organizational change
- unexpected outcomes
- obstacles encountered
- benefits to children in program
- impact on community

Administrative Staff Interviews and Survey

Administrative staff includes the executive director and volunteer coordinator at each project site. At the end of the project year, telephone interviews were conducted with the executive director and volunteer coordinator at each pilot and new grant site. Interview questions addressed recruitment strategies, roles of boomer age volunteers, training of volunteers, and attitudes of staff towards volunteers. Barriers and challenges to project implementation, lessons learned, and volunteers' impact on the organization were also discussed. After the

interview, administrative staff were asked to complete a survey. Survey topics included:

- program's organizational infrastructure for supporting boomer volunteers
- extent to which volunteers were integrated into their organization or program
- extent to which they experienced particular barriers to integrating boomers into their program
- extent to which they viewed volunteers as directly impacting children in their program
- likelihood that they would continue to utilize boomer volunteers and sustain the volunteer coordinator position after the funding for the initiative ends

A total of 16 executive directors and volunteer coordinators participated in the interview and survey. Fifteen of the administrative staff were female, with one male volunteer coordinator. Fifteen were White, with one of mixed race. Eighty-eight percent of administrative staff held a bachelor's or graduate degree, with the remaining two having some college credit. Administrative staff had worked between 9 months and 22 years at their organization. Forty-three percent had worked at the organization for five years or less.

Teacher Survey

An online survey was used to capture the early childhood teacher's perceptions of integrating boomer volunteers into their classroom. The executive director of each new project grant was sent a link for the survey to forward to their teachers. A total of 41 teachers from the six new project sites responded to the survey. Of those responding to the demographic questions, all 32 were female. Twenty-six of the teachers were White (81%), four were Hispanic/Latino (13%), and two Native American (6%). Fifty-three percent of the teachers held a bachelor's or graduate degree, with the remaining having an associate's degree (34%) or some college credit (13%). Teachers ranged in ages from 26 to 66 with an average age of 40 years old. Nine of the teachers (35%) fell within the boomer range with birth years between 1946 and 1964. Teachers had worked between 6 months and 29 years at their organization, with an average of seven years. Sixty percent had worked at the organization for five years or less.

The survey asked teachers to rate the:

- overall organization's infrastructure for supporting boomer volunteers
- integration of volunteers into their particular classroom
- barriers to integrating boomers into their classroom
- perceptions of volunteers since the project began
- impact on the organization's ability to serve children

Boomer Volunteer Focus Groups and Survey

Two focus groups were conducted with boomer volunteers who were recruited as part of the Boomers and Babies initiative. Each of the two organizations arranged for their boomer-age volunteers to participate in the focus group. The group was

held at the organization site, with a snack or light meal being provided for participants. In addition, organizations arranged for incentives in the form of gift cards that were available should a participant wish to be compensated for their time.

Each focus group began with an introduction to describe the purpose, assure confidentiality, and briefly review informed consent procedures approved by the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. At the beginning of the focus group, boomers were asked to complete a volunteer survey. The survey asked participants to rate the:

- program's organizational infrastructure for supporting boomer volunteers
- their integration into the organization or program
- likelihood that they would continue to volunteer in the future
- barriers to volunteering in an early childhood setting

After completing the survey, participants were asked to comment on a range of questions regarding their experience as a volunteer. The questions focused on the following topics:

- time spent volunteering
- recruitment process
- motivation for volunteering
- attitude of staff towards volunteers
- integration of volunteers into the organization/program
- barriers or challenges to volunteering
- advice for other programs looking to integrate boomer volunteers

Across the two sites, a total of 21 volunteers participated in the focus group. Eight of the focus group participants were from Umatilla-Morrow Head Start and 13 from Family Building Blocks. Ninety percent of boomer volunteer participants (17) were female. Seventeen of the volunteers were White (90%) and two of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity (10%). Twelve of the boomer volunteers (63%) held a bachelor's or graduate degree, with two having an associate's degree (11%), four having some college (21%), and one had a high school diploma or GED (5%). The majority of volunteers also reported being retired or not working (74%). Volunteers ranged from age 48 to 69 years, with 62% being born before 1955.

Of the 19 volunteers who reported on their marital status, 17 (90%) were married and two were divorced. Only 10 volunteers reported their household income, of these volunteers the majority (6) reported incomes in the \$60,000-80,000 range. Two participants reported income over \$100,000 and two reported income under \$40,000. Sixty-three percent of the boomer volunteers indicated they had been or are employed in a job that focused on children, such as a school teacher, director of a local non-profit, school principal or administrator, university instructor, or nanny.

Interview participants had volunteered with their organization for varying lengths of time. Three participants had volunteered for 3-6 months, five for 1-2 years, five for 3-4 years, and five for more than five years. Of the volunteers interviewed, one reported volunteering daily, eight indicated they volunteered two or more times per week, five indicated they volunteered once per week, six volunteered once or twice a month, and two boomers indicated volunteering sporadically. When volunteering, boomers indicated various lengths of time they volunteered during each visit to the organization. The amount of time per visit ranged from 1 to 8 hours, with the majority (67%) volunteering 2-3 hours per visit. The total time per month that boomer participants volunteered ranged from 1 to 128 with an average of 20 hours a month.

Half of focus group participants (52%) volunteered in the early childhood classroom. Examples of classroom tasks included interacting with children one-on-one, assisting teacher with activities as needed, cleaning up after snack or an activity, or facilitating an activity with the children, such as music or craft project. In addition to volunteering in the classroom, some participants volunteered regularly in administrative roles such being a board member or helping to plan fundraising events. Boomers also volunteered for other programs through these organizations, such as SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) and CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocate).

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data consisted of interview transcripts, administrative reports, and open-ended answers to survey questions. All data were repeatedly read and analyzed with subsequent distinctions made according to whether respondent was a boomer volunteer, teacher, or administrative staff member. As outlined by Berg (2007), key codes were identified and later used for coding with the aid of MAXQDA, a software for qualitative data analysis. Pseudonyms were used for names of volunteers, staff members, and children. In some cases, proper pronouns that distinguished gender also were altered to protect confidentiality.

FINDINGS

This Phase 3 evaluation explored three overarching objectives for the funded projects: **increasing organizational capacity to support boomer volunteers, engaging boomer volunteers in meaningful service, and impacting positive outcomes for children.** The following sections explore the grantees progress in each of these objectives during the second year of Phase 3.

1. Organizational Capacity

For early childhood programs to be strengthened through baby boomer volunteerism, organizations must address capacity issues related to volunteer

involvement. In the Boomers and Babies study (Phase 1) & pilot project evaluation (Phase 2) conducted by OSU, both early childhood professionals and boomers indicated that successful integration of boomer-age volunteers would hinge on the ability of the early childhood agency to recruit, train, place, and supervise volunteers. During the past year, OSU evaluated the organizational capacity of funded organizations to integrate boomer volunteers into their early childhood programs.

Key indicators of successful integration of boomer volunteers in relation to organizational capacity include:

- Increased volunteerism
- Utilization of effective recruitment strategies
- Increased coordination of volunteers
- Integration of boomer volunteers into organization

1.1 Increase in Volunteerism

A key objective for each project site was to bring more caring adults into children's lives in meaningful ways. The eight sites were successful in increasing the number of boomer age adults volunteering within their organizations. Tables 1-3 display the number of volunteers, hours volunteered, and children served for the combined pilot and new grant sites.

Prior to this initiative, the eight organizations had a combined total of 169 boomer volunteers. During the past year, a total of 400 new boomer volunteers were recruited by the organizations. Forty-seven percent of newly recruited boomers volunteer in reoccurring roles whereas 53% volunteer in episodic roles. Reoccurring roles are roles in which a person volunteers on a regular basis, such as working in the classroom or in administrative functions. Episodic roles are usually limited-duration or one-time roles, such as facility maintenance, building book shelves, providing transportation for field trips, or volunteering at a fundraising or specific event. Adding boomers recruited previously, the organizations had a total of 584 boomers currently volunteering at their organization at the end of the program year. Fifty-five percent of all boomers volunteered in reoccurring roles, whereas 45% volunteered in episodic roles.

In addition to boomer volunteers, organizations recruited 981 non-boomer volunteers during the program year for a total of 1,818 non-boomer volunteers at their organizations. In total, organizations recruited 1,381 boomer and non-boomer volunteers in the 2011-2012 program year, for a total of 2,402 current volunteers.

Table 1 displays the number of volunteers for boomer, non-boomer, and all volunteers. See Appendix 1 for a summary of volunteers at each site.

Table 1: Number of Volunteers

	Pilot Grants	New Grants	Total
Number of Volunteers			
Boomer Volunteers			
Number of Boomer volunteers before the project started	8	161	169
Number of NEW Boomer volunteers recruited this year	107	293	400
<i>in RECURRING volunteer roles</i>	41%	49%	47%
<i>in EPISODIC volunteer roles</i>	59%	51%	53%
Total number of ALL Boomer volunteers	173	411	584
<i>in RECURRING volunteer roles</i>	64%	52%	55%
<i>in EPISODIC volunteer roles</i>	36%	48%	45%
Non-Boomer Volunteers			
Number of Non-Boomer volunteers before the project started	5	1,132	1,137
Number of NEW Non-Boomer volunteers recruited this year	248	733	981
Total number of Non-Boomer volunteers	391	1,427	1,818
All Volunteers			
Total number of volunteers recruited this year	355	1,026	1,381
Total number of volunteers	564	1,838	2,402

Note: Pilot Grant results from April 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012, New Grant results from June 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012.

Boomers and Babies organizations had a total of 47,413 hours volunteered by all boomer and non-boomer volunteers during the past year. The 400 boomers recruited in the last year volunteered a total of 5,128 hours. On average, 55% of the total hours were spent with children in the classroom (2,797 hours) and 40% of the total hours with children in literacy activities (2,032 hours). Combining newly recruited volunteers with other boomer volunteers, a total of 14,318 hours were volunteered at the pilot and newly funded organizations this past year. Forty-eight percent of those total hours were with children in the classroom and 31% with children in literacy activities. It is noteworthy that just under a third (30%) of the total volunteer hours were completed by boomer volunteers. Table 2 displays the number of hours volunteered by newly recruited boomer, all boomer, and non-boomer volunteers. For the number of volunteer hours for each organization, see Appendix 2.

Table 2: Volunteer Hours

	Pilot Grants	New Grants	Total
Volunteer Hours			
Newly Recruited Boomer Volunteers			
Hours volunteered by NEW Boomers recruited this year	1,255	3,873	5,128
Hours spent with children in the classroom	762	2035	2,797
Hours spent with children in literacy activities	368	1664	2,032

All Boomer Volunteers			
Hours volunteered by ALL Boomer volunteers	5,680	8,638	14,318
Hours spent with children in the classroom	3,827	4,435	8,262
Hours spent with children in literacy activities	1,854	2,654	4,508
All Volunteers			
Hours volunteered by Non-Boomer volunteers	3,196	29,899	33,095
Hours volunteered by ALL Boomer volunteers*	5,680*	8,638*	14,318*
Total Hours by all volunteers	8,876	38,537	47,413

Note: Pilot Grant results from April 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012, New Grant results from June 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012.

*row repeated in table for clarity of presentation

Boomer volunteers served children both directly and indirectly through their volunteer work with the Boomers and Babies organizations. Direct service includes direct contact with children, such as in classroom settings. Indirect service includes serving children in other ways, such as creating learning kits or providing playground maintenance. Newly recruited boomer volunteers served 783 children directly and 2,706 children indirectly in the past year. Since one child could be served both directly and indirectly, this number represents a duplicated total of 3,489 children. All boomer volunteers served 1,907 children directly and 4,241 children indirectly in the past year, for a duplicated total of 6,148 children. Table 3 displays the number of children served by pilot and new grant sites. For children served by each organization, see Appendix 2.

Table 3: Children Served by Volunteers

	Pilot Grants	New Grants	Total
Children Served by Volunteers			
Newly Recruited Boomer Volunteers			
Children served by NEW Boomer volunteers <i>directly</i>	76	707	783
Children served by NEW Boomer volunteers <i>indirectly</i>	324	2,382	2,706
Total Children Served by New Boomer volunteers*	400*	3,089*	3,489*
All Boomer Volunteers			
Children served by ALL Boomer volunteers <i>directly</i>	500	1,407	1,907
Children served by ALL Boomer volunteers <i>indirectly</i>	1,094	3,147	4,241
Total Children Served by ALL Boomer volunteers*	1,594*	4,554*	6,148*

Note: Pilot Grant results from April 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012, New Grant results from June 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012.

*Number may be duplicated because a child could be served both directly and indirectly

In summary, pilot grant sites went from eight boomer volunteers when the project started in 2008 to 173 current volunteers at the end of the grant period in 2012. New grant sites started this year with 161 boomer volunteers and ended the year with a total of 411 volunteers.

During the 2011-2012 program year, 400 newly recruited boomer volunteers contributed over 5,128 hours of service, impacting 783 children directly and 2,706

children indirectly. Based on the value of volunteer time determined by the Independent Sector¹, the estimated dollar value of this service is over \$96,000. Combining the newly recruited boomers with those previously recruited, 584 boomer volunteers contributed over 14,318 hours of service during the year, impacting 1,907 children directly and 4,241 children indirectly. This service is valued at nearly \$270,000 and is equivalent to almost seven full-time positions.

1.1.1 Volunteer Roles

Volunteer roles were expanded at many sites, allowing for both consistent volunteer experiences over time as well as episodic volunteer experiences. Many volunteers fill multiple roles and serve in several different ways with the organizations. Table 4 displays the number of boomer volunteers who have served in each of the following roles during the past year. For volunteer roles by each organization, see Appendix 3.

Table 4: Volunteer Roles

	Number of Volunteers
Volunteer Roles	
Read to children	204
Assist in classrooms	177
Lead enrichment activities with the children	157
Facility maintenance (painting, yard work, etc.)	109
Prepare learning activities for classrooms	103
Serve on organization's board	60
Organize volunteer activities	40
Work in office	29
Mentor other volunteers	24
Provide training for program staff	19
Drive bus	2
Other	211

The highest number of volunteers were in roles that had direct contact with children, including reading to the children, assisting in the classroom, and leading enrichment activities for the children. In addition to the roles in the table, many volunteers filled other roles specific to the services offered at the organizations. Some examples include:

- Representing agency at community events
- Advocating in community

¹ The Independent Sector (http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time) is a national organization that collects data about volunteers and their work in many organizations. The volunteer time value is derived from an average, production wage, plus benefits for the most recent year available at this time. Calculations based on the 2010 valuation of \$18.85 per hour for Oregon, which is the most recent value available.

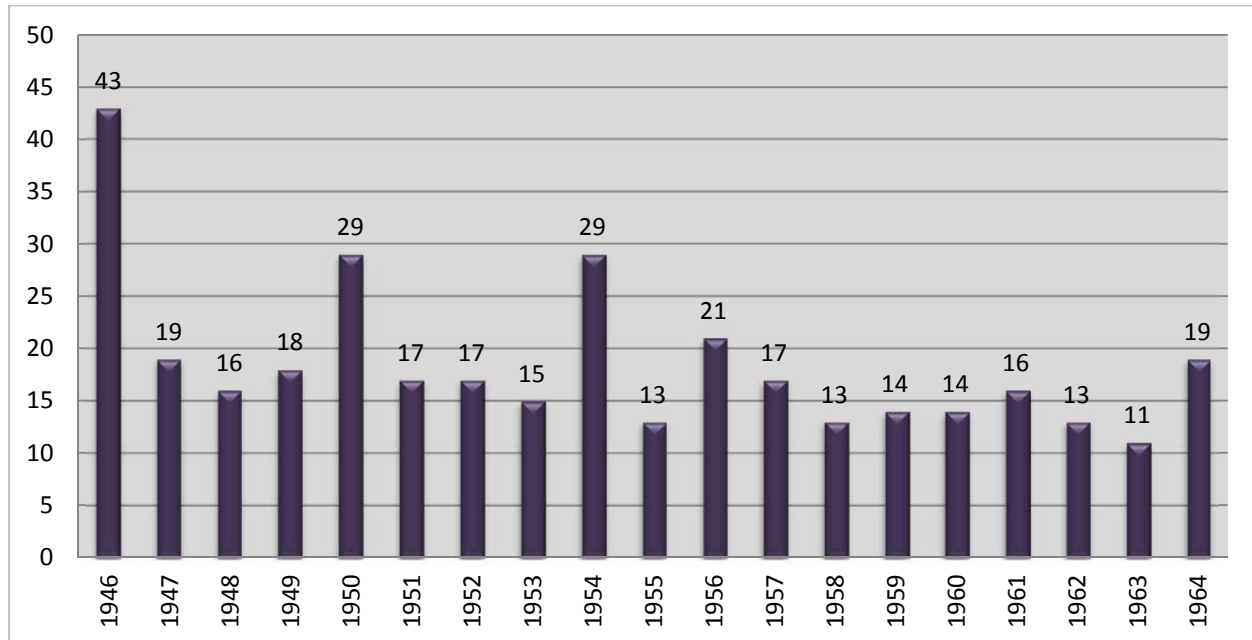
- Helping with family nights
- Organizing and staffing the clothing closet
- Making items for classroom and children (blankets, stockings, wooden whistles)
- Coordinating and training volunteers
- Assisting with grant proposals
- Helping with facility maintenance (landscaping, playground, painting, cleaning)
- Developing resource libraries for teachers and families
- Assisting with marketing and recruitment (website, photography, videography)
- Coordinating or volunteering at fundraising events
- Reaching out to community to recruit volunteers or resources

1.1.2 Demographics of Volunteers

Due to new requests made by the National Evaluation team, several demographic items were added to the final report collected from the sites. However, since these were added after organizations had already begun collecting information about boomer volunteers, information on demographics is not available for all volunteers. Therefore, the following demographic results represent a smaller, sub-sample of the total number of volunteers.

Of 452 boomer volunteers for which gender information was reported, 80% (393) were female and 20% (89) were male. Of 367 boomer volunteers whose race was known, 94% were reported as White/Caucasian, 1% were Hispanic/Latino, and under 1% were reported as Black, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or of mixed race. In addition to English, seventeen boomer volunteers spoke Spanish (4%), two used sign language (<1%), and three spoke other languages (<1%), one of which was German.

Age was reported for 354 boomer volunteers. More than half (57%) were born between 1946 and 1954 and are therefore on the older end of the age range for the boomer generation. Figure 1 displays the number of volunteers born in each year from 1946 to 1964.

Figure 1: Number of Boomer Volunteers Born in Baby Boomer Years

Of the 280 boomer volunteers whose education level was known, the majority (55%) had some a college or graduate degree. Sixteen percent had some college credit, 9% had a high school diploma or GED, and 1% had less than a high school education, see Table 5.

Table 5: Education of Boomer Volunteers, $n = 280$

	Number of Volunteers	Percentage
Education		
Less than High School	3	1%
High School Diploma or GED	44	9%
Some College	78	16%
College Graduate	107	22%
Graduate Degree	48	10%

Employment status was reported for 278 boomer volunteers, see

Table 6. The majority of volunteers (42%) were reported as still working full or part time, with 35% being retired, 12% being unemployed but seeking work, and 11% unemployed and not seeking work.

Table 6: Employment Status of Boomer Volunteers, n = 278

	Number of Volunteers	Percentage
Employment Status		
Employed full-time	72	26%
Employed part-time	44	16%
Retired	97	35%
Unemployed, but seeking work	34	12%
Unemployed and not seeking work	31	11%

In summary, the following demographic information was gathered about boomer volunteers:

- 80% were female
- 94% were White/Caucasian
- 55% had a college or graduate degree
- 42% were working full or part time
- 55% were in the older boomer age range (58-66 years old)
- 5% spoke an additional language

1.2 Utilization of Effective Recruitment Strategies

Perspectives on the recruitment process were gathered from administrative staff and boomer volunteers. The following sections discuss recruitment from each of these perspectives.

1.2.1 Administrative Staff Perspective on Recruitment

Administrative staff were asked to describe the recruitment strategies and their effectiveness in recruiting boomer-age volunteers. Ninety-four percent of administrators agreed (slightly, mostly, or completely) that their organization used effective recruitment strategies. Also, 94% of administrative staff agreed with their organization's ability to work with other community partners to recruit volunteers.

Table 7: Recruitment Strategies, Administrative Staff Perception

2012	Administrative Staff	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Recruitment Strategies		
Organization utilizes effective recruitment strategies	4.94	0.90
Organization works with other community partners to identify and recruit volunteers	4.94	1.03

* Response categories ranged from 1 = *Completely Disagree* to 6 = *Completely Agree* for Administrative Staff, N = 14.

Using Effective Recruitment Strategies

Most programs reported positive outcomes regarding their recruitment efforts, although they were quick to identify strategies that worked more effectively than others. Perceptions of recruitment processes within their programs were influenced by whether the organization was a pilot site or a newly funded site. More established programs were well on their way to meeting the number of volunteers that they had previously identified in their program goals, and reported great success in exceeding expectations in part due to the popularity of episodic volunteer opportunities. As one administrator shared, *“I think we’re very well positioned to recruit boomer volunteers. We’ve had a lot of success in it.”* Newer programs often were still in the process of evaluating which strategies were the most fruitful in garnering volunteers.

The strategies that programs reported using to identify and recruit volunteers were varied, and developed over time. On the final report, administrative staff were asked to report on whether their organization used a selection of recruitment strategies, see Table 8.

Table 8: Recruitment Strategies

	Number of Sites
Recruitment Strategies	
Word of mouth	8
Information in community partner newsletters	7
Recruitment event	7
Newspaper articles	5
Newspaper ads	4
Other	7

All of the organizations said they used “word of mouth” as a recruitment strategy with staff, advisory board members, and boomer volunteers sharing information with potential recruits within their circles of influence. About half of the organizations used newspaper articles or ads in their recruitment efforts. Other strategies that programs reported utilizing over the last year included:

- staging as well as speaking at special events (i.e. volunteer fairs)
- creating “lunch and learn” opportunities
- participating in regular community meetings or speaking at specific service-club meetings as a guest
- communication through flyers, emails, brochures, and newspapers
- program websites
- community partner referrals
- tours of the facility

Administrative staff were also asked to report which of these strategies proved the most effective in recruiting boomer-age volunteers. By far, the most effective

method cited was word-of-mouth and informal networking with others. As one administrator suggested, *“just ask, and ask a friend to invite a friend, and those two things are magic.”* Another shared how *“one volunteer recruited a friend to volunteer to replace her when she had to leave. We are encouraging volunteers to give informational tours with their friends or to invite friends to shadow them once in the classroom.”*

One volunteer coordinator shared how her efforts have focused on a number of recruitment strategies and she was beginning to evaluate the most effective method. She explained:

Well, immediately I would have said we were pretty successful. We had a good response to several of the methods that we use, but clearly I think we've learned that word-of-mouth and direct [contact with] volunteers are much better, more effective methods than our brochures, our announcements at various events, and so forth.

As one organization summarized recruiting by word-of mouth, *“The boomers that we have are our greatest source for new volunteers. Their commitment and experiences communicated to their friends and neighbors often result in many on-going benefits to us as a program.”*

All programs generally agreed that having a consistent volunteer coordinator who could devote singular attention to recruitment activities made a difference in organizations. Administrators commonly reported *“that never having the full focus of just a volunteer coordinator”* influenced previous attempts to bolster programs. Now, programs were able to increase outreach, public awareness, and recruitment of volunteers in the Boomers and Babies program.

Another strategy, bringing potential volunteers onto the site for tours, has been a highly effective technique. She explained that her agency's most successful strategy has been:

Engaging potential volunteers at our community tours. Many of the attendants at our monthly tours know little about [our program] and our work with children and families. These hour-long tours allow community members to learn about the challenging circumstances facing families in our community, gain understanding about how [we] support the strengthening of parent-child relationships, and challenges them to become involved through volunteerism. Guests receive a brochure, learn about the families we serve through a video presentation, are able to see the classrooms, clothing closet, and food pantry, and watch the classroom children get on the bus to return home. By the end of the tour, the majority of the tour attendants are excited to volunteer.

A volunteer coordinator talked about the importance of matching program size with recruitment effort as there are only a few spots available for classroom volunteers. Efforts were made at this site to increase the number of special projects and

engagement opportunities for new volunteers. The volunteer coordinator shared, *“We have been able to develop a number of special projects and special engagement opportunities that, while they aren’t consistently three hours once or twice a week in the classroom engagement opportunities, these are engagement opportunities particularly suited to boomers that we’ve been able to integrate.”*

Another strategy centered on specific program needs. As the volunteer coordinator pointed out, *“Unless it meets a program need, it’s not something we’re going to have the capacity or the ability to make time for.”* Sometimes the program needs warranted focused recruitment as described by a volunteer coordinator:

This summer we’re going to do a really huge push, because we really want Spanish-language volunteers on the ground on the first day of class. So we have a goal to really go after that intentionally, and the volunteers are telling us to go to the churches.

Administrators also highlighted how they particularly were successful in recruiting boomer volunteer help for particular projects. One administrator shared:

We continue to find that boomers are successful in short-term project positions where they can take on leadership positions and that utilize their diverse skills and have continued to develop opportunities that now include a Staff Clinical Consultant, a Music Curriculum Consultant, and additional special project consultants.

Another director pointed out how specific episodic volunteer opportunities have both increased the numbers of boomer volunteers at their site and the visibility of their program to the volunteers over time.

We’ve also more-than-doubled the number of boomer volunteers we expected to recruit in a six month period. This is in part thanks to more outreach and also thanks to more episodic volunteer opportunities, which allows volunteers to come periodically to get to know our organization.

Finally, one administrator stressed the importance of selectivity in recruitment efforts:

We have learned over the years that it’s better to be more selective in our recruitment, rather than doing some big, broad community network. Working with our children, we have to be very, very selective.

Using Community Partnerships to Recruit Boomer

All of the organizations reported that they had worked with a variety of community partners to identify and recruit new boomer volunteers. The types of organizations that Boomers and Babies sites worked often with included:

- libraries
- universities
- churches

- medical centers
- volunteer placement programs
- civic organizations
- local businesses

All but one of the organizations reported distributing boomer volunteer information in the newsletters of community partners. All of the organizations had signed Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with community partners regarding boomer volunteer recruitment and utilization. All of the grantees reported engaging other organizations in planning for boomer volunteer involvement within the community.

Through these partnerships, a wide variety of positive outcomes were evident. Community partner organizations provided volunteers, put Boomers and Babies program information in their media outlets, and staged special events aimed at recruiting volunteers. Partnerships also helped with child and family referrals, staffed special projects as needed, and, in some cases, provided financial support. Boomer volunteers who had previously worked professionally with young children also helped create stronger links with the communities (i.e., the schools). Finally, advisory board members and multi-agency teams provided ongoing support from the community and their connections with other agencies benefitted boomers and Babies programs. One program administrator shared the central role that partnerships take in creating programs like Boomers and Babies:

Probably just about every agency is a partner. That happens in rural communities. He gets a lot of referrals and . . . our partner agencies volunteer their time.

Reviewing the role of community partners in their organization, one administrator shared:

New connections made with several groups, organizations, and individuals have resulted in collaborations, partnerships, referrals, and recruitment as well as development and support of special projects . . . We have seen an increase in in-kind donations to the program and have expanded our funding opportunities as a result of new, boomer-led initiatives that had not previously existed including a recently awarded grant.

Another volunteer coordinator shared during an interview that:

Within the past six months, I have been to a number of civic groups, business organizations and non-profit organizations. These community partners have been the foundation to recruiting boomers for our agency.

Program administrators and volunteer coordinators also commented on the general support they received from the community regarding their specific programs and support for early childhood-focused efforts. An administrator shared how the focus on young children has garnered increased community support:

The community has been aware of our program, and has been supportive of it. I think that there is an increasing awareness of the real struggles that families are having, and I think this, in our program, is a part of trying to help the community know that there are multiple opportunities to make a difference and one of the advantages of working with small children is you have this built-in attraction that's a little different from some of the other volunteer opportunities in terms of just personal satisfaction. And I think the community responds to that.

Reflecting on how increased recruitment of community volunteers reflecting the linkages across the community has benefitted their program, one administrator detailed:

The Boomers & Babies project has had an immediate impact on our community. We have seen an increase in the number of boomer volunteers who are working with our organization over the past six months and are beginning to receive interest from their friends and family about getting involved as well. We have found that cross-communication helps strengthen our community and allows us to better serve the families we are working with, as well as provide a greater volunteer training experience.

Some programs found that community partnerships sometimes did not provide expected outcomes. For instance, a few program administrators talked about how certain partnerships, in which they had planned outcomes, had “*since closed their doors unfortunately and we were really relying on them to drive volunteers to us.*” One administrator shared that she has:

When I started here, I went and met with the head of each one of the agencies that could have any way to use volunteers. “What do you need in the way of volunteers? How can I help you?” And I feel like I built relationships with most of those people, but in terms of them being actively involved in recruitment, no.

Challenges Related to Recruitment

Although the organizations were very successful in their boomer volunteer recruitment efforts, they did identify some challenges. One key challenge, identified during interviews, reflected the ***restriction of recruiting adult volunteers within boomer age*** parameters. One administrator represented many of the sentiments by stating:

You know we've had people that miss it by a year or two on either side, but we still bring them in and work with them because we're not going to turn down a good volunteer just because they don't fit in the boomers program.

One administrator's comment represented what many of the other programs have found during recruitment.

Many of our consistent volunteers are probably sixty-five to seventy-five, and it's interesting, because they are in that age group, to some extent, they have more time to give than the people who are forty-eight to sixty-five.

Another administrator stated that *"It would have been easier for us if it was just the minimum dates of birth, you know, youngest people, but then let us go up and include all of the adult volunteers who come--older volunteers."*

Administrators also shared their belief that difficult **economic times may be influencing commitment among volunteers**. For instance, one administrator felt that the current economic climate impacted recruitment as *"those who thought they would be retiring and being willing to help"* were not readily available due to the need to stay employed or return to work.

One administrator shared that *"because of the rural nature of [city name], it's not as easy as other places, just because many of our boomers don't come with a pension, a retirement [income] like you might find in university towns or where there's more government involved."*

An additional barrier included the sometimes daunting geographic regions represented by programs. One program administrator commented:

With this particular project, our target was the west end of the county. . . and of course now we have the rest of our program, which is in seven counties, so that's a challenge.

Volunteer coordinators in some programs felt **stretched due to distance between community partners and programs** when it came to making contact with potential volunteers. As one administrator stated: *"People want [our volunteer coordinator] all over the county to talk."*

Locating venues for recruitment in counties also proved challenging for some programs. According to one administrator, *"Finding the best location and marketing techniques to attract more attendees continues to be a challenge."*

Perceived difficulties that potential volunteers might feel about working with children was also viewed as a challenge to recruiting. As shared by one Administrator:

I think some people are a little bit scared, too. So, we have to let them know this, this is the good side of it and your work is important and you're not going to have to do anything that's going to make you uncomfortable.

Another common recruitment challenge **concerned finding volunteers that fit program needs, while simultaneously meeting boomer personal needs**. One volunteer coordinator shared that their episodic volunteer projects are great, but they also *"really do need more volunteers in the classroom."* Meeting the personal

needs of boomers to encourage their volunteer participation also emerged as a linked challenge to programs:

One of the other areas that's tricky for boomers in their recruitment is finding them a role that's flexible enough for their travel, for taking care of older parents, and for some of them that they're still transitioning out of a job because our main volunteer role is a morning job that's from nine thirty to twelve thirty. So that flexibility piece has been a challenge for boomer volunteers, finding them a meaningful role that allows for their vacations and other things they have going.

Organizations also mentioned the need for recruiting a broader range of volunteer backgrounds as most programs reported that their volunteers were highly represented by two professional groups, retired teachers and retired nurses. Programs were especially interested in recruiting more “Spanish-language volunteers”.

Finding volunteers who were willing to make a long term commitment to classroom-based work was also problematic. This was coupled with the **turnover of committed volunteers and the need to replace them**. For instance, one volunteer coordinator shared that:

There's not a lot of folks who can actually make that commitment, you know? We have some good ones who do and come in faithfully, but, you know, we'll certainly have to double that number. Well, we have reached a point when a few of our really long-term volunteers were ready for a break. So, we had to do a little bit more recruitment and have been partially successful.

Finding the time to develop volunteers and make effective placements was also mentioned by one administrator: “You have to nurture them for several information sessions or meetings to encourage them to realize they can take time out of their busy lives to help young children.”

One key issue raised by administrators focused on providing a quick and specific way to draw volunteers into the organization. She commented on the importance of having a speedy process from the first contact with potential volunteers and the follow-up to immediately involve them with the program: “[Volunteers] didn't want to wait. ... ‘We'll place you next year.’ ‘Oh no, we want to start now!’ We've gone and gotten them started.”

Finally, the timing of the recruitment process in relation to the development of the capacity by the organization was noted. One administrator explained the progression of their recruitment process:

Now that things are really taking off, I think we've learned through our learning community and through our own processes that... we were doing all the more traditional volunteer recruitment pieces early in the project,

when they weren't getting people in the door in the numbers we were hoping to get in. Plus, you can't bring volunteers in to work with kids individually and in groups until you've got the [infrastructure]. So, we've got the training. We had to design the training, design the classroom training, design the kits, and purchase the materials. Once we had all of that in place, which is right after the first of the year. Since then, recruitment has been much, much easier.

Another administrator underscored the importance of having the infrastructure and support materials in place for volunteer recruitment:

If you build it, they will come" We did and they are! Now that we have a beautiful, new [facility] and a program that welcomes boomer-age volunteers, word of mouth has been the best recruitment tool we have engaged to date. Of course, we do not depend on this as being our mainstay with regard to recruitment efforts (although it works well). A handbook, volunteer job descriptions, promotional brochures, news releases, and a PowerPoint recruitment presentation will soon be in place to attract even more residents and community leaders.

Despite the recruitment challenges, organizations remained flexible, adapted their strategies, and capitalized on what worked well in recruitment. At the end of the program year, all eight organizations had made substantial gains in their numbers of boomer volunteers.

1.2.2 Boomer Volunteer Perspective on Recruitment

Boomer volunteers were asked to report on the organizations' recruitment strategies, see Table 9. According to survey responses, 75% of volunteers agreed (agree or strongly agree) that their organization used effective recruitment strategies. Also, 85% of volunteers agreed with their organization's ability to work with other community partners to recruit volunteers.

Table 9: Recruitment Strategies, Boomer Volunteer Perception

2012	Boomer Volunteers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Recruitment Strategies		
Organization utilizes effective recruitment strategies	4.05	0.74
Organization works with other community partners to identify and recruit volunteers	4.16	0.67

* Response categories ranged from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree* for Boomer Volunteers, N = 20.

Recruitment

Boomer volunteers were asked how they first heard about opportunities to volunteer and what motivated them to engage in Boomers and Babies projects.

Boomer volunteers echoed many project administrators saying that word of mouth was an effective recruitment strategy for Boomer and Babies programs. Five boomers indicated that they had decided to volunteer through personal contacts (i.e., “*friends who were volunteers encouraged me*”), one volunteer was encouraged by her employer, and three additional volunteers stated that they had been recruited by specific project staff members that they knew.

Volunteering or attending other activities in similar organizations (i.e., churches, Head Start programs) motivated seven boomers to volunteer on projects. Two volunteers began volunteering after attending a program facilitated by the volunteer coordinator and two other boomers initiated contact with specific projects after learning about programs and making decisions to volunteer because of personal transitions from paid work to retirement.

Finally, one boomer decided to volunteer after working in Head Start classrooms that involved her children and grandchildren and another boomer used her volunteer time to satisfy practicum credit for an adult degree program.

Boomers Motivation for Volunteering

Boomer volunteers shared multiple motivation factors that encouraged their participation in programs. The two most frequent reasons that boomers felt motivated to volunteer reflected the desire to **contribute to the future of children and their communities and to engage in valuable work**. Eight boomer volunteers specifically shared that they wanted experiences that contributed to the well-being of children. They recognized that aiding children during their early years had benefits not only for the child but also their families and the larger communities. For instance, one boomer stated:

That’s why we’re here. We love the children. When you see kids in the community and you see the need of these kids to learn something different and to interact with adults, that’s when you think about volunteering for these programs and really focus on the future, that they are our future.

One boomer who had years of experience in education explained how s/he viewed the investment in children as essential within an organization that supported healthy outcomes:

The data does show that you can prevent so much of this sequela that happens when people are nurtured and taught and cared for and all that. So it really does have a sense of your preventing problems that is making your community a better place.

This boomer added that the current program in which s/he volunteered had a “*very high success ratio and their administrative costs are extremely low. That means a lot to me.*”

Finally, another volunteer identified how her life, as well as succeeding generations within her own family, would have been enhanced if she had been involved in the past with a similar program that focused on child well-being:

Being that if I had myself been exposed to this type of environment, the differences that could have been made in my generation and in my children and now their children. So it's amazing and when you feel that and the passion that they have for the kids primarily, to have better starts and better futures just based on some basic learning and style changes. It's just amazing.

For six boomer volunteers who were retired or still working, their participation in programs met a need to give back and to do something meaningful within their communities. For instance, one boomer explained that there were “good role models about giving” and for her,

Having a sense of how much we were blessed and helped by other people and what a difference that has made and how many opportunities I have had, that is all the more reason why I should do those things also.

For those boomer volunteers that were retired, their motivation to volunteer reflected the **change in their schedules**, their decisions as to **how to use their time**, and the desire to **use the skills they had developed in working with young children** in a new context. Regarding the desire for volunteer flexibility identified by multiple volunteers, one boomer noted that her organization allowed her “to choose what works best for you. And I think that's why they have so many volunteers because they make it easy for you to want to volunteer.”

Another boomer succinctly outlined why she volunteered by stating that “it seemed a natural fit between their needs, my degree and work experience in early childhood development, and my available time.”

Commenting on her transition from work to retirement, one boomer shared that she had worked with young children and when she transitioned out of her paid position, she “didn't want that, the experience I already had, to just go stale.”

Various other motivational factors were mentioned by boomers based on their personal circumstances and desires. One boomer wanted to engage in volunteer tasks that were streamlined into direct and enjoyable contact with children. When she was recruited to volunteer, she was told that she didn't have to “change the diapers, you don't have to break up fights, you don't have to be with a child that's difficult, you just get to do all the good stuff.” Another volunteer wanted to engage hands-on with children rather than simply offering financial support to the organization. She shared:

I much more enjoy giving them money when I've actually got the personal commitment and being involved and seeing how money is used, who the people are, and they let you be so much more hands-on involved.

Focusing on a desire to feel needed, one boomer stated that the administrators and teachers at her site made her *“realize that we are there and you are needed, like you’re staff.”*

Engaging in volunteer work also underscored boomer’s desires for generativity, expressed earlier through their desire to help future generations but also by passing down their knowledge to others. Two volunteers that work with children in creating gardens were enthusiastic about their ability to share valued information about gardening with children. *“It’s kind of exciting to see kids and they’re so excited about something that they’ve grown themselves.”*

1.3 Increased Coordination of Boomer Volunteers

Increased organizational capacity for boomer-age volunteer involvement includes not only the use of effective recruiting strategies, but also the creation of an infrastructure to coordinate boomer volunteers once they have committed to volunteering.

Indicators of the infrastructure to effectively coordinate volunteers includes the volunteer coordinator position, procedures for screening and assigning volunteers, a tracking system for volunteer information and hours, providing adequate supervision, communication strategies for keeping volunteers informed, and performance feedback. Components of volunteer coordination also include matching their roles with their interest and expertise, assigning meaningful tasks, and allowing for flexibility in scheduling of volunteers. Feedback on these aspects of coordination was provided by administrative staff, teachers, and boomer volunteers.

1.3.1 Administrative Staff and Teacher Perspective on Coordination of Volunteers

All of the grantees reported an increased organizational capacity to effectively coordinate their boomer volunteer programs. One administrator reflected:

We have a formalized volunteer program now. We have a procedure. We have a presence on the Internet. People can go on our website, fill out an application. It goes to someone. That person reads it and puts them in a position. And I don’t think that we had the [structure] to do that before, so we just really have increased our ability to deal with volunteers.

During the interviews and focus groups, administrative staff and teachers were polled on similar items related to the overall capacity of their organization to coordinate boomer volunteers. Generally, there was agreement that the organizations had developed the organizational infrastructure to support volunteers, see Table 10. Response categories ranged from 1 = Completely Disagree to 6 = Completely Agree.

Table 10: Coordination of Boomer Volunteers, Administrative Staff & Teachers Perception

2012	Administrative Staff		Teachers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Coordinating Boomer Volunteers				
Organization has paid position/staff time for coordinating volunteers	5.25	1.64	5.38	0.97
Organization has procedures in place for screening and assigning volunteers	5.93	0.25	5.33	1.16
Organization has a system in place for tracking volunteer information and hours	5.44	0.79	----	----
Organization provides adequate supervision for volunteers	4.88	0.70	4.76	1.37
Organization utilizes consistent communication strategies for keeping volunteers informed	4.69	0.58	4.68	1.34
Organization provides performance feedback to volunteers	3.81	0.88	4.05	1.47
Teacher provide performance feedback to volunteers in classroom	----	----	4.42	1.44
Volunteer's roles matched with their areas of interest and expertise	5.50	0.61	4.89	1.01
Volunteers assigned meaningful tasks and roles within the organization	5.38	0.70	----	----
Volunteers have clearly defined roles & responsibilities	5.13	0.78	----	----
Volunteers have flexibility in scheduling to meet their individual needs	5.47	0.72	5.33	0.82
Organization trains volunteers to meet the needs of your classroom	----	----	4.47	1.44
Teachers train volunteers to meet the needs of their classroom	----	----	4.64	1.27

* Administrative Staff, N = 16; Teachers, N = 40.

The ability to hire a volunteer coordinator which in turn motivated the development of programs also was identified by directors and some volunteer coordinators as key to success. One director shared how the volunteer coordinator impacted program development:

Hiring the volunteer coordinator and then having to get these learning centers in and get them manned and then in the interim [volunteer coordinator] had to build the programs. She had to get the job description for the events that we wanted to have here with the use of the volunteers. . . She had to get flyers out. She had to get posters created. She had to make a handbook and all of these job descriptions, so she had a lot of legwork to do from September until January actually start getting things moving. She did just an absolutely phenomenal job.

Administrators valued the volunteer coordinator role and wished to sustain the recruitment, training, and coordination of volunteers over time.

For many programs, the Boomers and Babies program also provided the motivation to reassess and revamp needed project features to effectively integrate boomer volunteers. For instance, one volunteer coordinator talked about how deliberate attention to the program *"opened several cans of worms"* but she viewed this as *"not necessarily in a bad way."*

Additional discussion of these changes is incorporated with feedback from administrative staff, teachers, and boomers through interviews and focus groups in sections 1.3.3 – 1.3.7.

1.3.2 Boomer Volunteer Perspective on Coordination of Volunteers

Overall, boomer volunteers positively rated the volunteer coordination within their organization, see Table 11. Response categories for boomer volunteers ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 11: Coordination of Boomer Volunteers, Boomer Volunteer Perception

2012	Boomer Volunteers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Coordinating Boomer Volunteers		
Organization has paid position/staff time for coordinating volunteers	4.43	0.66
Organization has procedures in place for screening and assigning volunteers	4.52	0.73
Organization has a system in place for tracking volunteer information and hours	4.57	0.66
Organization provides adequate supervision for volunteers	4.52	0.66
Volunteer's roles matched with their areas of interest and expertise	4.43	0.58
Organization utilizes consistent communication strategies for keeping volunteers informed	4.48	0.66
Volunteers receive regular communication from program staff	4.62	0.65
Organization provides performance feedback to volunteers	4.00	0.82
Volunteers assigned meaningful tasks and roles within the organization	4.50	0.59
Volunteers have clearly defined roles & responsibilities	4.35	0.73
Volunteers have flexibility in scheduling to meet their individual needs	4.67	0.56
Volunteers trained by the organization to meet the needs of the program	4.29	0.70

- Boomer Volunteers, N = 21.

Additional discussion of these items is incorporated with feedback from administrative staff, teachers, and boomers through interviews and focus groups in sections 1.3.3 – 1.3.7.

1.3.3 Procedures for Coordinating Volunteers

An overarching theme among the administrative staff were the procedural changes relevant to volunteer activities since becoming a Boomers and Babies grantee. As part of the six-month and year-end report, grantees were asked whether they had created, maintained, or revised volunteer procedural changes during the past year. Specific procedures included the following:

- volunteer manuals
- intake forms
- screening
- clearly defined job descriptions
- supervision
- feedback process
- tracking of hours
- communication systems
- volunteer recognition

As would be expected for the two veteran pilot projects, their efforts focused were on maintaining or revising the volunteer procedures they had developed during previous years as a result of the initiative. The only exception was Family Nurturing Center's creation of a volunteer supervision protocol.

Not surprising, the newly funded projects invested in the creation of new procedures and the revision of existing processes. The majority of the new projects reported the creation of volunteer manuals, clearly defined job descriptions, and protocols for volunteer supervision. Most of them also revised their existing volunteer intake forms, methods for tracking volunteer hours, and systems for communicating with volunteers. Half of the new projects created a process for feedback, screening procedures, and recognition systems for volunteers. The rest reported either maintaining or revising the methods they had used previously.

By implementing procedures for screening and assigning volunteers and tracking volunteer information and hours, the organizations have increased the capacity of the organizations to coordinate volunteers. The majority (92% to 100%) of staff and teachers chose the highest categories for these items on the survey indicating they felt that the organizations had a system in place for tracking, screening, and assigning volunteers based on their personal experiences.

Many administrators shared that they had bolstered their screening process to better identify interest, skills, and fit when placing volunteers into positions. Additional contact with the initial volunteer during the screening process, for instance, could include tours, interviews, and shadow experiences in addition to

background checks in different programs. One volunteer coordinator described their specific screening process:

That's what we start out with, what interests they fill out in the volunteer application. Once we get [application and criminal background check], then we begin to work with them, more specifically around what their strengths are, what it is that they want to do, what they want to be in terms of the different age groups or classrooms, tasks, and really get them the support training that they need. But we always wait for that criminal history clearance, because we just can't afford to let somebody in on the risk that they might not pass that. That's the number one thing.

Another volunteer coordinator discussed the importance of the individual interviews with prospective volunteers:

People make an appointment. I come in and talk to them, get to know them a little bit, find out what their background is in terms of volunteering or professionally and find out what their interests are. I try to kind of read between the lines and understand a little bit what their motivation for volunteering is, and then I give them a tour of the facility and give them a handbook, give them the application paperwork. On it, there are ideas to check for things they're interested in.

One administrator talked about the shift they had made to on-site screening to allow for more staff involvement and ownership in integrating boomer volunteers into their classrooms and programs:

We always did the background checks and interviews, like any other staff member would be, but that was all done at our administrative levels, and then the volunteers would just get passed on to our program . . . whereas now, the staff are involved in the process and really have ownership now. And, so staff sit in on interviews with the volunteers.

In addition to screening, ninety-four percent of staff and 87% teachers thought their organizations provided adequate supervision for volunteers. Boomer volunteers also felt that supervision was provided, with 90% of volunteers in agreement with this item. This indicates that staff, teachers, and boomers felt generally positive about the volunteer supervision.

1.3.4 Training Boomer Volunteers

Training of boomer volunteers is an important component in the coordination of volunteers and increasing the capacity of the volunteer program. The item *volunteers trained to meet needs of the program classroom* was rated slightly higher by administrative staff (mean = 5.00) compared to teachers (mean = 4.47). One-hundred percent of the administrative staff agreed with this item whereas only 75% of teachers agreed with the item. This difference could be attributed to administrators noting the increase in training opportunities for volunteers while

teachers are seeing a need for additional training that they perceive could be more targeted to roles that volunteers may fill in their classrooms.

All program administrators reported that they conducted training on site for boomers. The eight organizations offered a combined total of 95 training sessions for boomer volunteers during the past year. Approximately 297 total contacts were made with boomer volunteers in these trainings.

Table 12: Boomer Volunteers Training

	Pilot Grants	New Grants	Total
Training of Boomer Volunteers			
Number of trainings for boomer volunteers	15	80	95
Number of boomer volunteers attending (total attendance of all trainings)	71	226	297

purpose, audience, duration and content of the training varied across sites. Orientation to the organization and discussion of specific roles for volunteers were offered both in group settings and individually. Some program administrators reported that they conducted very specific training with in-house and outside program facilitators on topics related to early childhood development, at-risk child characteristics and behaviors, mental and physical health of children, and domestic violence and family contexts. Titles for some of these trainings included Circle of Security, Child Cues and Non-Verbal Communication, Positive Guidance, Facilitating Playgroups, Early Literacy and School Readiness, Boundaries with Children and Families, Parent Child Interaction Therapy, PRIDE Skills, and Purposeful Play.

Site administrators also commented on the training they provided that was specific to certain tasks. For instance, one director explained that volunteers in fundraising and administrative roles “*get trained depending on what the event or the activity is and they’d be trained by the person supervising that activity.*” Most site administrators reported new volunteer training with topics that helped boomers to learn about programs and better integrate into roles.

Program administrators reported using trainers from other community organizations, local community college early childhood programs, as well as experienced boomer volunteers to conduct trainings. One site administrator shared how they have expanded their training content and created a follow-up strategy with boomer volunteers who participated in the initial training:

The new volunteer training has been expanded to include discussion of the work of Dr. Bruce Perry - 6 Core Strengths for healthy child development and how the [organization] is encouraging attachment and self-regulation. A boomer volunteer is now calling the volunteers who attended the last

training to obtain volunteer input, to encourage and support volunteers, and to arrange mentoring and additional individualized trainings if requested.

Some of the challenges regarding training included comments from administrators who were concerned about increasing the participation of boomers in training sessions. One administrator shared that they have had a *“difficult time bringing all of the early childhood boomers to training.”* In their case, *“training has been more individualized and we have made volunteers aware of some training opportunities in the area, and we have steered resources that are online . . . more passive training methods.”* One administrator mentioned that episodic volunteers receive less training than those boomers who volunteer consistently over time or are in direct contact with children.

Eighty-six percent of boomer volunteers agreed that they were *trained to meet the needs of the program classroom*. Most volunteers commented that they felt adequately trained. One participant said, *“the organization does an excellent job of training.”* However, another participant commented, *“the structure and organization of the training process has been a little confusing, not as efficient as it could or needs to be.”*

1.3.5 Assigning Volunteer Roles

Boomer volunteers interviewed in the 2008 Phase 1 study said that it was important for them to feel they were a “member of the team”, an integral part of the organization. This includes being placed in roles that are meaningful to both the organization and them personally, feeling that the contribution they are making is valued and appreciated by program staff. At the end of the 2011-2012 program year, the majority of administrative staff (100%) and teachers (92%) said that volunteers were assigned *meaningful roles and tasks within their organizations and classrooms*. In addition, all but one volunteer participating in the focus group agreed with this statement.

One-hundred percent of teachers and 94% of staff agreed that *volunteers have clearly defined roles*. Eighty-five percent of boomer volunteers agreed that their *roles and responsibilities are clearly defined*.

In addition to volunteers’ roles being meaningful, it is also important that volunteers are matched to tasks and responsibilities based on their interests and expertise. All of the administrative staff and teachers (100%) agreed that *volunteers were matched to roles* indicating they felt the organization had assigned volunteers to positions where volunteers’ would feel the most comfortable and be the most proficient. Ninety-five percent of volunteers agreed that they were *matched to tasks and responsibilities based on their interests and expertise*.

Programs geared their placement processes to their specific sites and needs. A volunteer coordinator shared their program approach which included:

Identifying current and anticipated program needs, and then developing specific projects, roles, and position descriptions to address these needs and capacity gaps. We perform interviews with new volunteers to assess their fit for our program and special projects and then provide new volunteer orientations to prepare these individuals for a fun and enriching experience.

Another site provides:

boomer volunteers with a flyer that provides descriptions of the key volunteer opportunities. A staff member talks with each volunteer about their skills/interests/amount of time available/schedule available, to guide toward appropriate roles. Classroom volunteers have a "Good Fit Visit" (following a classroom orientation) to help the volunteer and the volunteer coordinator decide if a Head Start classroom will be right for them.

Utilizing classroom observations as a way to help boomer volunteers find an optimal placement for their volunteer commitment, another program administrator shared:

Volunteers are encouraged to observe in several classrooms to ensure volunteer satisfaction with the age and challenges of the children in a classroom and with the personalities and methods used by the teaching staff.

Generally, most directors and volunteer coordinators emphasized that they had intentional strategies for placing volunteers in positions that increased staff engagement with volunteers, ensured better fits between volunteer and placement context, and helped retain volunteers over time. One administrator stressed that her staff has more *"ownership in the process which has created strong relationships and provided better fits for volunteer placement."* Another administrator emphasized that it is important to:

Clearly outline the expectations of the volunteer position and allow the volunteer to be honest about whether they wish to volunteer in that capacity. If the position description is not accurate, we have found that we risk losing the volunteer and their skills completely.

Finally, to ensure a fit between volunteer and placement, administrators emphasized the need for frequent opportunities for feedback between volunteer and staff. As one director noted, a staff member will check in with the volunteer, and *"if the volunteer is not excited about their role, our staff works with the person to find another position."* A volunteer coordinator emphasized the importance of evaluation as a communication tool and a feature of their placement process. She stated:

After six months, the volunteer is asked to evaluate their experience and, if it is an ongoing volunteer role, determine whether they want to continue volunteering in the same capacity.

1.3.6 Flexibility in Scheduling

Administrative staff (100%) and teachers (97%) agreed that there was *flexibility in scheduling volunteers to meet their individual needs*. Boomer volunteers also felt the organizations and teachers *flexible to their scheduling needs* with all but one volunteer agreeing with this.

Some of the volunteers commented on how their commitments to volunteering had shifted over time. In many cases, volunteers increased their time commitments as their schedules were more spacious and as they became more integrated within programs. For instance, one volunteer explained that her time commitment has increased because of the way she felt integrated into the program:

When you feel like you are making a difference and the teachers appreciate you being there and the kids recognize you and you have a sense of knowing and seeing what needs to be done and just do it, you don't have to feel like you're waiting for someone to tell you what to do.

Another shared that her commitment increased as she observed the need to *"provide consistency for the children."* Boomers who previously worked and now were retired found that they could increase their hours yet this also could work in reverse. For some, economic constraints demanded a return to the job market. As one volunteer shared, *"with me, I just started doing as much as I could. Like right now, I have a fulltime job and I am not given any time right now to volunteer, but I will come back."* Other volunteers had to decrease their time commitments due to family circumstances or change in family needs. As one boomer explained:

Because I have a teenager at home and some commitments that he has and that I need to help with or want to be involved with and other commitments that I'm involved with like the church committee and doing other things that have kind of taken some of my time as well. And as my parents get older, I'm going to have those kinds of commitments too so it's a trade, you know.

Finally, one volunteer shared that she is taking time away from her volunteer experience because *"at the beginning, it's too much to learn ... you get so stressed, but I will probably come back."*

1.3.7 Communication with Volunteers

Effective communication was noted as a key factor in helping to integrate boomer volunteers within organizations. Teachers, and administrators indicated on the survey that the organization was utilizing effective communication strategies, though administrative staff agreed more with this item (100% of staff agreed with this item) compared to teachers (82% of teachers agreed with this item).

Communication with volunteers was valued by teachers and administrators.

Ratings of regular communication from program staff by volunteers were also strong with a mean of 4.62 on the five-point scale. One volunteer explained how this impacted her experience from the first day in the organization:

Even in the beginning on the first day and you're thinking you want to volunteer in the classrooms, they let you know what the expectations are up front. They have you just come and sit in the classroom for the first session just to see if it's a fit for you, there's no pressure... You decide and then you kind of just go at your own pace and there are classes all the time and they're very good about shooting out emails about things that are coming up. They keep us really informed. I have never been involved with anyone or group that was so appreciative.

Another specific facet of communication is *providing performance feedback to volunteers*. Administrative staff and teachers rated this item lower compared to the other items. Seventy-five percent of staff and 68% of teachers agreed with this item. This item was also rated lowest on average by boomer volunteers. Sixty-seven percent of volunteers agreed with this item and 33% rated this item as neutral.

1.4 Organizational Capacity Summary

All of the organizations substantially increased the number of boomer-age volunteers serving their organizations. During the past year, a total of 400 new boomer volunteers were recruited by the organizations. Adding boomers recruited previously, the organizations had a total of 584 boomers currently volunteering with their program at the end of the program year.

The increase in the capacity of the organizations to support volunteers led to their success in enlisting boomers. As a result of the initiative, organizations strengthened their infrastructures in many ways. All sites utilized a volunteer coordinator which was viewed as a fundamental component for making the initiative effective. The organizations created or revised their procedures for screening, assigning, and tracking volunteers. Grantees also addressed other infrastructure components including providing adequate supervision, communicating with volunteers, and providing performance feedback.

Organizations used a variety of recruitment strategies including working with community partners. While all strategies were somewhat fruitful, the strategy which proved most successful was recruiting by word-of-mouth. Grantees strengthened their ability to coordinate their newly recruited volunteers by matching volunteer roles with their interest and expertise, assigning meaningful tasks, allowing for flexibility in scheduling of volunteers, and providing training. The eight organizations offered a combined total of 95 training sessions for boomer volunteers during the past year. Approximately 297 total contacts were made with boomer volunteers in these trainings.

Boomers served in an array of roles with the organizations. Fifty-five percent of all boomers volunteered in reoccurring roles, whereas 45% volunteered in episodic roles. Combining newly recruited volunteers with existing boomer volunteers, a total of 14,318 hours were volunteered at the pilot and newly funded organizations this past year. Forty-eight percent of those hours were with children in the classroom and 31% with children in literacy activities. These boomer volunteers impacted 1,907 children directly and 4,241 children indirectly. Their volunteer service is valued at nearly \$270,000 and is equivalent to almost seven full-time positions.

2. Boomer Engagement

While a strong organizational infrastructure serves as the foundation for implementing a boomer-age volunteer initiative, successful organizations must also find a formula for engaging and retaining volunteers.

2.1 Integration of Boomer Volunteers into Organizations

A key element necessary for strengthening early childhood programs through boomer volunteerism is the ability of the organization to successfully integrate the volunteers into their program settings. Thus, administrative staff, teachers, and volunteers were asked to report on key aspects of integrating volunteers, including valuing boomer volunteers, staff attitudes toward volunteers, and staff training.

2.1.1 Administrative Staff and Teacher Perspectives on Integration

Overall, administrative staff and teachers positively rated the integration of volunteers into the organization, see Table 13. Response categories for administrators ranged from 1 = Completely Disagree to 6 = Completely Agree.

Table 13: Integration of Boomer Volunteers, Administrative Staff and Teacher Perception

2012	Administrative Staff		Teachers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Integration of Boomer Volunteers				
Organization/Staff view volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program	5.81	0.39	5.03	1.40
Organization trains staff to integrate volunteers into program	4.75	1.03	4.47	1.43
Staff integrates volunteers into program	5.19	0.63	5.39	0.92
Staff values volunteer's involvement and contribution to the program	5.44	0.61	5.33	1.05
Staff has positive attitude toward volunteers	5.27	0.68	5.16	1.15
Volunteers recognized for their contributions to the program	5.44	0.61	5.20	1.06

Organization integrates volunteers into critical roles within the organization	5.13	0.78	----	----
Retain volunteers	5.19	0.73	---	---

* Administrative Staff, N = 16; Teachers, N = 38.

On the survey, 100% of administrative staff agreed that *volunteers were integrated into critical roles within the organizations*. One-hundred percent of staff and 87% of teachers indicated the *staff and organizations view volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program*.

2.1.2 Boomer Volunteer Perspectives on Integration

Like the administrative staff and teachers, boomers also positively rated their integration into the organizations, see Table 14. Response categories for volunteers ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 14: Integration of Boomer Volunteers, Boomer Volunteer Perception

2012	Boomer Volunteers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Integration of Boomer Volunteers		
Organization/Staff view volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program	4.76	0.53
Staff values volunteer's involvement and contribution to the program	4.71	0.55
Staff has positive attitude toward volunteers	4.76	0.43
Organization integrates volunteers into critical roles within the organization	4.48	0.59
Volunteers have positive interactions with staff	4.86	0.35
Volunteers feel valued in their volunteer role	4.81	0.39
Volunteers feel treated as team member by staff	4.76	0.43
Volunteers treated as a professional by program staff	4.76	0.43
Volunteers recognized for their contributions to the program	4.67	0.47

* Boomer Volunteers, N = 21.

On the boomer volunteer survey, 95% of volunteers indicated the *staff and organizations view volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program* with all but one respondent ranking this in the agreement categories.

In the focus groups, boomer volunteers were positive about their integration within their organizations. Their comments suggested that they feel valued by the

executive director, coordinators, and teachers. One volunteer specifically stated that her organization *“does an excellent job of training and communicating and appreciating their volunteers.”* Another volunteer added, *“You become more of an integral part of the dynamics and you feel like you’re a necessary part of being there and making it happen.”*

2.1.3 Valuing Boomer Volunteerism

All administrative staff and 95% of teachers indicated *staff valued volunteers* by agreeing with this item. On the volunteer survey, 95% indicated the *staff valued volunteers’ involvement and contributions* with all but one respondent in agreement with this item.

While administrative staff and teachers indicated they valued boomers, boomer volunteers remarked on the changes they had witnessed over time regarding their integration into their programs. They mentioned how their participation in the past was not recognized or that their activities as a volunteer were undervalued. The volunteer coordinators and staff were cited at both locations represented by focus group volunteers to have changed these attitudes. As one boomer volunteer summarized, *“Now we know what to do, but you know, the first year starting, it really it was tough. It’s been a real learning curve, too. ..it’s gotten a lot better!”*

Administrative staff and teachers indicated volunteers were *recognized for their contributions to the program*. One-hundred percent of teachers and staff felt this was being done. Also, all of the boomer volunteers agreed that they were *recognized for their contributions to the program*. Appreciative of the luncheons and other ways that programs tangibly thanked them, boomer volunteers were much more likely to acknowledge the importance of a simple thank you from staff as a *“volunteer needs to feel like they’re valuable.”*

Boomers identified how important it was that *“everybody tells you thank you-- teachers and parents and everybody.”* Newsletters were viewed as a useful way to *“find out about other programs and details.”* Additionally, the volunteer coordinator at one site was noted for communicating clearly and early with volunteers. The boomer volunteer added, *“I’m glad because every time that we showed up to the schools, they were ready for us and we were reading to the kids.”* Another boomer volunteer explained that the volunteer coordinator typically responded to her with *“let me see what I can find out about that. I’ll get right back to you. And [the volunteer coordinator] does all the time.”* Another boomer volunteer shared:

I think the support from the older volunteers and the coordinator, has been really great. You could ask questions and the coordinator, he will tell you. He will always tell you an answer. He will give you an answer. The volunteers that have more experience, they kind of guide you and train you.

Volunteers specifically were asked to indicate if they felt *treated as a team member by staff* for which 100% of volunteers responded that they were treated as a team member. All of the volunteers also felt that the program *staff treated them as a*

professional. On the volunteer survey, 100% of volunteers indicated they had positive interactions with staff members. This was the highest rated item in this section followed by volunteers feel valued in their volunteer role. One volunteer expressed, “the organization makes me feel valued and that I am an important contributor.” Volunteers also felt satisfied with their experiences volunteering, with all but one volunteer agreeing that they felt satisfied. One volunteer said, “My volunteering has been a fulfillment in my life that I had never experienced.”

2.1.4 Attitudes of Staff Toward Volunteers

One-hundred percent of administrative staff and 95% of teachers agreed that *staff has positive attitudes toward volunteers*. All of the volunteers were also in agreement that *staff has positive attitudes toward volunteers*.

Administrators generally reported positive staff attitudes toward boomer volunteers. In many cases, these observed positive attitudes were a shift as volunteer coordinators made concerted efforts to formalize programs, ensure smooth volunteer transitions into classrooms, and to train/prepare staff for accepting volunteers within their programs. For instance, some administrators talked about the change of attitudes over time. One administrator explained:

I think there were some reservations and apprehensions. I think maybe they viewed it as an interruption in programming and in the classroom, not knowing when they were going to be here, who it was going to be, or even their background.

Intentional efforts by volunteer coordinators to help teachers and other staff members work effectively with boomer volunteers was evident during interviews. One volunteer coordinator explained how their focus on improving how volunteers were integrated into classrooms had increased the positive responses among teachers:

We’ve placed the volunteers in classrooms where we have a teacher who is not overwhelmed, and their reaction has been fantastic. I would say from all the feedback that we’re getting that they love their boomer volunteers. They’re crazy about them. They love them. They love that they come trained. They love that we do the orientation.

Another volunteer coordinator talked about a specific training that they offered staff that focused on the integration of volunteers:

We had training this past year, which was on a strategic plan, to really train our staff and our work with volunteers, from the Oregon Volunteer Network and they came down and provided a day, about three-to-four hour training. . we were really trying to get the staff to understand the importance of the volunteers, how they can increase and help to make their job better if they’re willing to work with them, and so I think it’s catching on. I think some staff do a really great job on getting boomer volunteers and other volunteers, that’s like the least of their worries.

Finally, the attitudes of staff appeared to be linked to workloads. As one administrator offered:

I would say that when the staff have time, they do really, really well. When it's one more thing added to the pile of already feeling overwhelmed, it doesn't work so well, but when their workload is manageable and they feel like they have the time, they usually love their boomer volunteers.

A reprioritization of workload also appeared to help change attitudes over time, as one administrator explained:

They were very open. It's just that they have a lot on their plate already. It was kind of asking them to shift and change their schedule to make time for things. I would never in any way say they were resistant. They were really open to it, but already overloaded.

One other factor that influenced the attitudes of staff toward boomer volunteers concerned the level of expertise and maturity that boomer volunteers could bring into the classroom. As one administrator summarized:

I think the staff has come so far in collaborations, training, and integrating volunteers into the classroom as staff themselves have become part of the whole process, not just having a volunteer show up in a classroom. Staff have ownership in the process which has created [change in] their attitudes when they get that regular, boomer volunteer who comes in, who has some skills, who knows what to do, who takes initiative---that's the volunteer that they want and they're finding that in boomer volunteers.

Boomer volunteers largely spoke positively about staff attitudes toward them as they worked alongside the teachers in the classrooms and programs. Boomer volunteers typically shared stories and described in detail how they felt about the positive ways in which they were treated during the recent year at both sites. Highlighting how she was treated, one boomer volunteer detailed that there was:

such an appreciation there that does not go away even though you've been there awhile and you just still feel like a million bucks when you walk out there because they're always 100% appreciative of what you do. And just that appreciation; I mean if your name happens to appear in there [the newsletter] its yellow highlighted and they make you feel like wow I just got a star here. So I mean it's those small little things that make a huge difference in the volunteer role.

Another volunteer's comment summed up a common feeling in the focus groups when she stated, "They're actually like, "Oh, I'm so happy you're here today."

Boomer volunteers also shared that it took a bit of time for staff members to learn how to work with them, especially if they were older or had experience with young children. Having worked in health care, one boomer volunteer shared:

I thought it was kind of funny when I first started-I worked [in health care] for thirty years-and the teachers were probably about half my age and it always made me chuckle when they didn't know they could trust me and you would kind of have to prove yourself. I probably have a lot more education than they do and a lot more life experiences but I don't have early childhood education, I have different education. I would really have to try to be just an observer and not the one that was directing things that were going on. You know I wanted to be there to be their assistant but I'm not used to being the one that doesn't make things happen, I'm used to being the one that made things happen, not the one that was told what to do. So it took awhile for them to trust my knowledge-base and skills, and now they will actually come to me and talk to me if there is a kid with a rash or something medical going on, they let me in that conversation. But it was kind of cute how they kind of just assumed that I knew nothing. Over the last few years it has been a real compliment to me that I can come into the classrooms and I am closer to some of the children that I am to others and one of the teachers will come up to me and say that this child has had a bad week so spend as much one-on-one time with this child as possible, and to me that really means a lot that they would like me to spend more time with the one child.

2.1.5 Staff Training

Staff training played an important role in the integration of boomer volunteers into the programs. Seven of the Boomer and Babies sites reported offering trainings for staff on volunteer management and/or working with volunteers. In total, 34 trainings were offered with a (duplicated) total of 1,038 staff attending the trainings, see Table 15.

Table 15: Staff Training

	Pilot Grants	New Grants	Total
Training of Staff			
Number of trainings for staff on volunteer management and/or working with volunteers	7	27	34
Number of staff attending (total attendance of all trainings)	69	969	1,038

Some topics for staff training included Volunteers 101, the importance of volunteers, volunteer motivation, supervising volunteers, communicating with volunteers, compassion fatigue, engaging volunteers as members of the teaching team, and encouraging volunteer contributions and use of their skills.

While most of the staff trainings appear to be held as stand-alone opportunities by the organizations, Family Building Blocks has integrated volunteer management into their monthly all-staff meetings. During this time, staff discuss management strategies and brainstorm training topics for volunteers. In addition, the individual

departments also use the time to discuss volunteer issues unique to their unit. For example, teachers discuss the roles of volunteers in the classroom during their teaching team meetings.

On the survey, administrative staff rated the item *organization trains staff to integrate volunteers into their program* slightly higher than teachers rated the item, though this was not a statistically significant difference based on dependent t-test analysis ($p < .05$). Eighty-eight percent of administrative staff and 74% of teachers agreed the organization trains staff to integrate volunteers. This could mean that the administrative staff perceives that their trainings for teachers exceed the amount offered in the past. Teachers may feel that they could benefit from additional staff training related to working with boomers.

2.2 Integration of Boomer Volunteers into the Classroom

In addition to the questions about how the organization is integrating volunteers, teachers were also asked some specific questions about integrating boomers into their classroom. On average, teachers felt positive about their abilities to provide a welcoming environment for volunteers and integrate them into their classroom, see Table 16. Response categories for teachers ranged from 1 = Completely Disagree to 6 = Completely Agree.

Table 16: Integrating Boomer Volunteers into the Classroom, Teacher Perspective

2012	Teachers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Engaging Boomer Volunteers		
Assign volunteers to meaningful tasks and roles within your classroom	5.11	1.05
Match volunteers with their areas of interest and expertise	5.17	0.80
Maintain clearly defined volunteer roles & responsibilities	5.03	1.01
Provide flexibility in scheduling to meet the individual needs of the volunteers	5.31	0.78
Recognize volunteers for their contributions to the program or your classroom	5.36	0.79
Provide a welcoming environment	5.56	0.74

* Teachers, N = 38.

With the initiation of programs and the ongoing efforts made to integrate boomer volunteers into programs, teachers were asked on surveys if and how their perceptions of boomer volunteers had changed over the past year. Most teachers responded that their perceptions had not changed. As one teacher asserted:

I have always been very appreciative of our volunteers and the time they put in helping us in the classrooms and with other projects. During my years in the younger classrooms, I have appreciated their help even more with giving

us a lower child-adult ratio, which is so important with meeting the needs of the younger children.

For those who experienced a change in perceptions, comments generally focused on new understandings as to how much boomer volunteers can contribute to their classrooms. One teacher shared, *“I am more aware of training needs that volunteers have and my role to make them feel integrated into our program.”* Another stated that *“I feel that the boomer volunteers have been a big asset to our classroom and I would like to see more volunteers come in.”*

A few teachers expressed appreciation for the unique qualities of boomers particularly the maturity they brought to the classroom. One teacher explained, *“Now, we have many volunteers who are the age of our students' grandparents. They have a little more time and often patience to give.”* Bringing together the generations, older and younger, also was viewed as a positive outcome newly witnessed through the integration of boomers.

Some teachers found that they were able to better accommodate boomers in their classrooms over time. For instance, one teacher illustrated how she had changed over time:

I have learned to allow the volunteer to feel safe in sharing their ideas and fears. This has helped in making everyone in the classroom feel needed and heard. They can assist us in achieving small groups within our larger classroom sizes. I have noticed older aged individuals enjoy the company of young kids.

A volunteer coordinator described how the teachers had taken a more active role in the integration of boomer volunteers:

The staff has become much more involved in the volunteer engagement, training and supervision role. Having everyone involved has made this process much more tolerable even if it means it's ‘a work in process.’ It's also giving me, the lone volunteer coordinator, a much needed break from the responsibility of every little detail of a volunteer's experience. I have been able to refer to my boomer commitment hours as sacred and the staff has become much more respectful of what it takes to recruit and fill our positions as well as develop strategies to keep them happy and engaged.

Finally, the increase of boomer volunteers was credited with motivating a cultural shift within programs. As one administrator suggested:

I think that we are learning how to integrate volunteers into our agency. Previously, we have not been very volunteer friendly. We are learning how to train staff and volunteers, and support them as they are involved with our agency.

2.3 Boomer Engagement Summary

A primary element for the successful integration and engagement of boomer volunteers is attitude of the staff, particularly teachers, toward the volunteers. Almost all of the organizations provided trainings for their teachers in order for the staff to better understand and utilize the volunteers.

As boomer volunteers were integrated into the organizations, administrative staff and teachers viewed them as valuable assets. The programs engaged the boomers in meaningful work by matching the volunteers to defined roles, providing flexible work schedules, making their work environment welcoming, and recognizing them for their contributions. Boomer volunteers reported having positive interactions with the staff and felt valued by the staff.

3. Barriers and Challenges

In the 2008 Phase 1 study, several potential barriers to including boomer volunteers in early childhood settings were identified by both early childhood professionals and potential boomer volunteers. These potential barriers were included as items in the evaluation. Administrative staff, teachers, and boomer volunteers had varying views of the extent to which barriers influenced the project in Phase 3, see Table 17. Not all items were asked of each type of participant.

Table 17: Barriers and Challenges to Boomer Engagement

2012	Administrative Staff		Teachers		Boomer Volunteers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Barriers and Challenges						
Physical/health limitations of volunteers	2.00	0.94	2.29	1.03	1.45	0.69
Generational differences in approaches to interacting with young children	2.13	0.86	2.74	1.20	1.42	0.67
Confidentiality issues	1.25	0.43	2.03	1.03	1.21 ^a	0.61
Liability issues associated with utilizing volunteers	1.25	0.56	1.86	1.17	1.42 ^a	1.09
Volunteers' personal family caregiving limits their time to volunteer	2.13	1.17	1.94	1.24	1.95	1.10
Staff is not supportive of integrating volunteers into the program	1.75	1.03	1.63	1.04	----	----
Language barrier for recruitment of non-English speaking volunteers	2.38	1.36	1.86	1.15	----	----
Maintaining communication with volunteers	1.93	0.68	3.03 ^a	1.32	----	----
Securing volunteers for specific needs within your organization (i.e. clerical, fundraising, classroom, etc.)	2.63	1.17	2.41	1.29	----	----
Supporting professionalism among volunteers	1.31	0.46	1.80 ^a	1.01	----	----
Accommodating volunteer scheduling preferences	2.38	1.11	2.03	1.04		
Administrative Staff Only Barriers						
Secure funding for costs associated with utilizing volunteers	2.38	1.27	----	----	----	----
Recruitment strategies	2.31	1.16	----	----	----	----

Transition of key staff (within your own or a partner organization)	1.88	1.17	----	----	----	----
Timing of volunteer recruitment (i.e. program is seasonal)	2.13	0.99	----	----	----	----
Age limited to boomer volunteers for this funding	2.81	1.13	----	----	----	----
Scheduling group meetings with volunteers	2.94	1.03	----	----	----	----
Not enough time for volunteer coordinator to fulfill all of the needed duties	3.19	1.51	----	----	----	----
Teacher Only Barriers						
Including volunteers disrupts the schedule and flow of the classroom	----	----	2.06	1.25	----	----
Not enough tasks to keep volunteers busy in my classroom	----	----	1.61	0.95	----	----
Volunteers do not have a rapport with the children	----	----	1.76	0.89	----	----
Consistency in volunteer scheduling	----	----	2.00	1.21	----	----
Too many volunteers scheduled at the same time	----	----	1.42	0.82	----	----
Volunteers do not have skills necessary to fulfill the role they have been assigned	----	----	2.12	1.41	----	----
Boomer Volunteer Only Barriers						
It is difficult to set limits on my personal involvement when working with children and families	----	----	----	----	1.58	1.04
The challenges of working with children and families who have overwhelming needs keeps me from wanting to be a volunteer	----	----	----	----	1.44	1.26
Volunteering will limit the flexibility of my private time	----	----	----	----	2.32	1.08

*Response categories ranged from 1 “Not a Barrier” to 5 “Significant Barrier”, Administrative Staff, N = 16; Teachers, N =35, Boomer Volunteers, N = 20.

^aWording of items varied depending on the role of the survey respondent

3.1 Barriers Identified by Administrative Staff

In general, administrative staff and teachers viewed the listed barriers in the survey as slightly more likely to be hindrances to boomer engagement compared to volunteers’ views of the same issues. The highest rated barrier by administrative staff was *not enough time for the volunteer coordinator to fulfill all of the needed duties*. *Scheduling group meetings* was also seen as a prevalent barrier with 63% of staff rating this as “somewhat” to a “significant” barrier. Boomers time constraints also impacted their participation in training sessions. The third highest ranked barrier by staff with a mean score of 2.81 was that the *age was limited to boomer volunteers for this funding*.

3.1.1 Project Implementation Challenges

Challenges to program implementation also rested on issues connected to boomer adults and their ***location within their lifespan***. For instance, one administrator commented on the health issues that some boomers face:

After nearly four years of the project, we have found that aging boomers have increased illnesses or medical conditions (such as hip or knee replacement) that make it difficult to volunteer in the classrooms-our biggest volunteer need. Also, as they age, they seem more susceptible to contacting illnesses from the children and are less resilient in recuperating.

Several administrators talked about the challenge to recruit **consistent boomer volunteers** as “boomers do take trips, so they’re gone quite a bit and they’re very busy.” Another added,

They are, for the most part, really responsible about calling and saying ‘hey, I can’t make it tomorrow,’ or ‘I can’t make it today,’ but it still is challenging. The people that are volunteering, that are boomers, have really busy lives.

Administrators talked about the personal experiences they faced in coordinating programs whether that reflected **workload, development of new skills and ideas, or management of staff attitudes towards volunteers**. One volunteer coordinator shared that the difficulties of “trying different techniques if you’re feeling sort of down yourself and overloaded.” Another administrator explained her challenge:

Being forceful enough to say ‘I’m going to work on volunteer stuff today and that’s all I’m going to do’ and not be drawn into something else. You know, because it’s really easy to lose track of what you’re supposed to be doing for the day, and if you can’t concentrate on the goals of this project, you can’t get it done.

Another administrator outlined a list of all that was involved in coordinating volunteers to demonstrate the time constraints:

Limited hours allocated to the volunteer coordinator to build the program; recruit volunteers; receive training; train volunteers; create job descriptions, handbooks, brochures, and a PowerPoint presentation all while participating in webinars, visiting other sites, working with Center partners, and learning the job.

Finally, more than one Administrator talked about staff attitudes toward volunteers that included the facilitation of buy-in for staff to integrate volunteers when overloaded themselves, the cultural and language differences between staff and volunteers at some sites, and issues of confidentiality regarding the children. When discussing some of the barriers connected to staff integration of volunteers, one administrator posed the question, “*why do we need boomer volunteers in some of our areas?*” to her staff and realized that she needed to spend more time and education in training staff to work with volunteers effectively.

3.1.2 Infrastructure Challenges

Infrastructure of programs continued to pose barriers to effective implementation of programs. **Funding of programs and resources** emerged in every interview with program administrators ranging from the limitations of the physical facility, the anticipated reduction in programs without grant funds, and the ability to create programs that are sustainable. Infrastructure challenges often were identified in programs that were in their first building year. One administrator asked, “*What’s the point of recruiting a whole bunch if they get here and they become frustrated because we aren’t behaving the way we should to accommodate boomers?*”

Several administrators shared how the startup of programs was more complex and time consuming than was previously thought. Outcomes came slower and recruitment of volunteers was delayed in some sites. One administrator explained,

The first part of the year was a lot of process, and it was a lot more process I think than we originally thought . . . We thought that things would happen much faster than they could.” Another added, “It’s been just a simple matter of logistics. . . the program is reasonably small and, as all other programs are, like social service programs, is underfunded. So we don’t have the financial resources to do the things with the depth and the speed that would be desirable.

Some programs felt challenges regarding the **balance of volunteer participation and program needs**. One administrator explained this issue by stating “*At times, we’ve had more [volunteers] than we need and then we’ve had, more than a couple of times, where we’ve had to call a volunteer . . . there is a tipping point adult-child ratio in a program like this.*” For one program, the reduction in staff hours impacted the coordination of volunteers. Another program administrator explained that they had “*perhaps more recruits available than there are opportunities to plug them in.*”

Time to work with volunteers also impacted the balance of volunteer-program needs. For instance, one administrator shared that “*As a greater number of boomers become volunteers, there is an increase in the amount of staff time spent to process their applications, answer questions, and create a valuable experience for them.*” This sometimes occurred in programs where there were transitions in the volunteer coordinator position or when programs spent significant time “*getting all the pieces in place, when there was literally nothing in place.*” As summarized by an administrator, our “*biggest challenge continues to be the capacity to absorb the change and expansion accompanied by greater volunteer involvement and the resulting increase in programming options and service delivery.*”

A major challenge highlighted by some administrators concerned the **reporting expectations for programs**. One administrator explained, “*A major challenge for us is how we track those boomers, ‘cause I don’t think those numbers are accurate. I think the numbers are smaller than what they [actually] are.*” Another administrator shared that “*some of the demographic information that the project has asked us to get from volunteers has been challenging either to get or to ask.*” The requirement [by her organization] to complete a criminal background check also was identified as a challenge to her program as it “*has deterred many of our Head Start grandparents [from participating]*”.

3.2 Barriers Identified by Teachers

Overall, teachers also rated the same set of barrier items as greater challenges compared to the ratings by the volunteers. The highest rated item was *lack of time to communicate with volunteers about their role, tasks, etc.*, indicating teachers viewed this as more of a barrier compared to the other barriers.

Teachers were also asked to rate potential barriers that were specific to utilizing volunteers in their classrooms. Among these were three items related to scheduling of volunteers. Overall, the majority of teachers indicated that none of these potential scheduling issues were key barriers. However, three teachers (10%) rated *consistency in volunteer scheduling* as a “significant” barrier and two teachers rated *including volunteers disrupts the schedule and flow of the classroom* as a “significant” barrier.

Five teachers (15%) thought *too many volunteers scheduled at the same time* was a “somewhat” or “moderate” barrier. Seven of the teachers (21%) reported that *not enough tasks to keep volunteers busy in my classroom* was a “somewhat” or “moderate” barrier. Thirty-three percent of teachers indicated that *volunteers do not have skills necessary to fulfill the role they have been assigned* was a “somewhat” to “significant” barrier.

As reported earlier, most teachers expressed positive support for boomer volunteers and stated their appreciation for the work they did in their classrooms. There were, however, a few suggestions made by teachers to improve the integration of boomers into their classrooms. One teacher felt that boomer volunteers had *“not been integrated properly.”* Through more attention to training, this teacher felt that integration could be more successful within her program. Another felt that the teachers *“have not had the support from the organization in making sure the volunteers are ready to be in the classroom without a better orientation to what Head Start is about and how we work with our children and families.”* Finally, one teacher posed questions to underscore directions for further development of the program:

I think volunteers are important and can be extremely valuable. . . It can be a meaningful experience for the volunteers, students, and teachers. I just think we are running into the age-old problems of lack of consistency and increased work load for those utilizing volunteers. How do we train volunteers to be more independent? Can they plan meaningful age-appropriate activities without the teacher needing to take on this additional responsibility? We have to plan for our parent volunteers, too, so we are essentially planning for two different groups of volunteers often in the same day. How can it better be a win-win for all parties involved? How do we encourage the sort of accountability that will make volunteers want to show up?

3.3 Barriers Identified by Boomer Volunteers

Overall, boomer volunteers viewed the listed barriers in the survey as slightly less likely to be hindrances compared to administrative staff and teachers. The highest rated item by volunteers, also asked of administrative staff and teachers, was *volunteers’ personal family caregiving limits their time to volunteer* with a mean score of 1.95. Administrative staff in general saw this as more of a barrier to volunteers than volunteers thought this to be a barrier for themselves.

Boomer volunteers were also asked to report on several specific questions about the unique barriers related to being a volunteer. Within these items, *volunteering will limit the flexibility of my private time* was the highest rated barrier by volunteers with nine volunteers (48%) rating this as a “somewhat” or “moderate” barrier.

During focus groups, boomers also mentioned other barriers to volunteering. The most mentioned barrier was the need for flexibility – whether that was to increase or decrease time commitments or to take summers off. While boomer volunteers recognized that *“you see a difference in the kids when they take time off (summer),”* she still wanted her time away from volunteering during those three months.

Boomer volunteers mentioned physical limitations that influenced their volunteering experiences. In one volunteer’s case, she worked hard to overcome her chronic pain. She explained that *“there are days that are really challenging, but I just keep doing it and it just makes you feel better and makes you think about others besides yourself.”*

Administrative consistency and organization of volunteer tasks and expectations emerged as concerns in focus groups. One volunteer described her frustration in a lack of communication between staff and volunteers prior to the start of the Boomer and Babies project:

We would show up for reading and be told that ‘Oh, there’s no reading today’ I know that happened to the teachers, too several times where they had it in their schedule that there was gonna be reading and it didn’t materialize. Yeah, no communication really and it was very difficult, and it happened probably five or six times where I showed up at the school and was told then by the staff, ‘Well, I guess there’s no reading today.’

Yet with the introduction of a paid volunteer coordinator through the project, the volunteers experienced improvement in organizational expectations and structure. As this volunteer also explained:

But this year, we had a paid coordinator, and it made a huge difference because we knew what was going on. We knew where we were supposed to be. Things didn’t get canceled.

Regarding the administration of the volunteers, some of the volunteers felt that the expectations for volunteers were overwhelming and at times too much to handle. One volunteer shared that *“there’s all of this other stuff to do to go and read with the kid for half an hour”* which left her feeling frustrated that she couldn’t devote more time to simply reading with the children.

Another volunteer explained that she and others were asked to take on some tasks that were complex and demanding. She stated that that the staff member *“had no*

clue what was involved.”

Finally, a few boomers explained that the attitudes of staff members could at times discourage their involvement. One volunteer explained that boomers in general have *“a lot of knowledge and some of us are very highly trained at different things. So don’t treat us like we’re [inexperienced]”*.

3.4 Barriers and Challenges Summary

The most prevalent barriers from the administrative perspective were insufficient time for the Volunteer Coordinator to fulfill all of the needed duties, scheduling group meetings, and the age was limited to boomer volunteers for this funding. Additional challenges identified by administrative staff during interviews included consistency of volunteers, infrastructure changes to accommodate the initiative, and funding concerns.

Overall, teachers did not indicate significant areas of challenges to boomer engagement. The highest rated barrier on the teacher survey was lack of time to communicate with volunteers about their roles, tasks, etc. Although not significant, other items that were rated somewhat higher by teachers than by administrative staff included generational differences in approaches to interacting with young children, confidentiality issues, and physical/health limitations of volunteers.

Overall, boomer volunteers viewed the barriers listed in the survey as slightly less likely to be hindrances compared to administrative staff and teachers. The highest rated item by volunteers, also asked of administrative staff and teachers, was that volunteers’ personal family caregiving limits their time to volunteer. Boomer volunteers were also asked to report on several specific questions about the unique barriers related to being a volunteer. Within these items, volunteering limits the flexibility of my private time was the highest rated barrier by volunteers. This barrier was also the most mentioned during the boomer focus groups.

As evident above, there were differences among the groups as to the perceived barriers to boomer involvement in the early childhood programs. Although none of the barriers had a significantly high mean, administrative staff and teachers tended to view the barriers as more likely to be impediments than did the volunteers. Volunteers also mentioned communication and role related challenges.

By identifying the challenges, organizations can likely address many of the barriers through more concerted efforts in the training of volunteers and facilitating better communication between teachers and volunteers. Organizations may also consider more frequent check-ins with the volunteers to ascertain their comfort level with the complexity of tasks they are assigned.

4. Impact of Boomer Volunteerism in Early Childhood Settings

The integration of boomer volunteers in to early childhood settings has led to many positive outcomes for the children they serve, the organizations, and the boomer

volunteers themselves.

4.1 Impact on Children

A primary goal of this initiative was to positively impact children's growth and development by integrating boomer volunteers into the early childhood organizations and making meaningful connections to the children served by the program.

4.1.1 Administrative Staff and Teacher Perspective of Impact on Children

Administrative staff and teachers were asked about their view of volunteers' impact on children in their program. Strong agreement among the administrative staff indicated they viewed volunteers as impacting children. Teachers, however, in general rated these items as lower compared to the staff, see Table 18. Response categories for administrators ranged from 1 = Completely Disagree to 6 = Completely Agree.

Table 18: Volunteers' Impact on Children in Program, Administrative Staff and Teacher Perception

2012	Administrative Staff		Teachers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Volunteers' Impact				
Classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio	5.63	0.48	4.71	1.63
Children can be divided into smaller groups for activities	5.88	0.33	4.91	1.44
Children spend more time in literacy activities	5.67	0.47	4.74	1.40
Children have more one-on-one time with an adult to work on learning objectives	5.69	0.58	4.97	1.25
Children have increased language development	5.50	0.61	4.88	1.41
Children have increased school readiness skills	5.56	0.61	4.79	1.39
Children have more opportunities for enrichment activities (i.e. field trips, music, etc)	5.38	0.78	4.80	1.41

* Administrative Staff, N = 16; Teachers, N = 38.

Organizations engaged boomer volunteers in best practices that are known to contribute to improved child outcomes, positive development, and school readiness. Their results included lower adult-child ratios in classrooms, smaller group sizes, and increased time spent by children in literacy activities. One-hundred percent of the staff mostly or completely agreed that *classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio*, *children can be divided into smaller groups for activities*, and *children spend more time in literacy activities*. All the other items related to boomer impact were rated in the top three categories (slightly, mostly or

completely agree) by the staff. However, all of these items were rated significantly lower (based on t-test analysis, $p < .05$) by the teachers except for the items *children have increased language development* and *children have more opportunities for enrichment activities* (there was no statistical difference found between the teacher and staff ratings of these two items based on dependent t-test analysis, $p < .05$). For example only 82% of teachers agreed *that classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio as opposed to 100% of administrative staff*.

Being Positive Role Models

During interviews, the administrators detailed the varied ways that boomer volunteers have benefitted the children in their programs. Foremost in interviews, administrators typically shared how boomer volunteers had ***helped the children in their programs to feel safe, accepted, and loved***. As one administrator explained:

They share their love, they make the children feel valued just by showing up every day-every week, they are building relationships with our children, and, as you know, with young children it's that attachment between caring adults that is the key. . . .that is what our boomer volunteers do.

According to administrators, many of the children in their programs lack consistent adult presence in their lives. Boomer volunteers ***modeled adult positive adult behavior to children and also provided care consistently over time***. This example was offered by one program administrator:

We have one little person here who had been through so much, and had a very abusive step-dad. The mom finally was able to get away from this guy, and he was actually arrested, but [the child] just had no trust whatsoever and he was just very confused about good guys and bad guys. We're telling him policemen are good people. Firemen are good people. They want to help you, and yet his understanding of every time someone like that showed up at his house, was that somebody was going to get hurt, or somebody was going to be taken away. . . we actually had a baby boomer police officer who has come in and has formed a very strong attachment with this child, and comes in on a regular basis and sees him, and it's helping him to sort out what good guys do, what bad guys do, and really helping with role-modeling for him, as well.

A volunteer coordinator shared another story about the positive role modeling provided by boomer volunteers:

We have a grandpa who's in the classroom and the children just adore him. They just flock to him when he's in the room and there's only four grandpas that we have in our whole program out of eighty-nine and the children are just so excited to spend time with them and he got to know one little boy really well whose dad is in prison and they spend almost the entire class time together and I just think how cool is that going to be later if he grows up to remember there was at least one male role model that he had.

Those boomer volunteers who worked directly with children were recognized by administrators for providing **quality interaction and special attention to individual children**. One administrator described how boomer volunteers are making an impact with children in programs:

[The children] greet and they hug them. They want to play with them and have them read stories. One of the big elements with children in a relief nursery are positive, nurturing, consistent, patient relationships that accept children in their as-is condition, and that's what volunteers do. They help the children. They read with them. They truly enhance the developmental goals and program.

Another administrator described the excitement the children feel for the volunteers in their classrooms.

Mr. [last name]'s coming. He's here! He's here!" They run to the window. They see him. You know, that kind of thing. It adds a really wonderful, positive flavor to their day, you know, and that extra warm relationship is really beneficial to the child, giving them some extra individual attention, which is wonderful, or small group attention.

Providing Enrichment Opportunities

Several administrators described how boomer volunteers have **engaged in literacy activities with children**. The opportunity to read with children, engage in activities that promote letters and words, and share the love of reading were all viewed as important features of volunteer activities. One administrator explained:

Probably the greatest success has been the implementation and coordination of our SMART reading program. Our SMART Coordinator - who is a boomer - has devoted countless hours in making this program successful. As a result, several boomer-age volunteers have read to and completed other literacy activities with our students in the Head Start classroom. The teachers have commented several times about how wonderful it has been to have SMART volunteers reading to their students. Moreover, several boomer volunteers have expressed how they have enjoyed spending time in the classroom reading to the students.

Boomer volunteers also have brought their **special skillsets** into their work with children that have created new opportunities for child development and engagement. For instance, one volunteer:

Brings giant books with sing-along music. Her radiant approach and bright persona engages the children with their full attention for extended periods of time. The eminence of this activity has helped meet the needs of the children and the teachers in many comprehensive ways.

Another administrator described the importance of art activities facilitated by volunteers:

One of the boomer volunteers said, 'I love helping with art projects because I get to work with the children in small groups and the teacher can continue with other learning in the classroom.' Without volunteers, many art projects would not be possible. Art projects can be so much more than art - there is math patterning and science learning, for example, that can be part of an art project. It makes learning so much fun and meaningful for the kids.

Directors and volunteer coordinators offered many examples of how boomer volunteers make a difference when serving children in their programs. One boomer, Sam, is making a difference in the life of a young boy, David (both pseudonyms):

David began our program as a toddler. When he first entered the Relief Nursery's therapeutic classroom, he did not make eye contact and was not able to verbally communicate. Additionally at home, David did not receive much one-on-one attention, nor did he have a positive male role model. Due to many varying circumstances, he ended up entering the foster care system. David was fortunate enough to find a very loving placement and he improved sufficiently to graduate to the preschool classroom where he soon met a very special friend. Sam is a boomer and a volunteer in our preschool classroom who brings songs, stories, and music to the children during Circle Time. . . David instantly connected with Sam. Circle Time, a task that which had once been a difficult for David to sit through due to his limited verbal abilities, now became an activity he eagerly awaited and truly enjoyed. Sam's stories and music continued to pull him even further out of his shell. David became especially excited when Sam volunteered to be a chaperone on a recent visit to the pumpkin patch. David was absolutely beaming with pride as he walked hand in hand through the pumpkins with his new buddy. Clearly, Sam had made a dramatic and quantifiable difference in David's life.

Supporting Teachers and Lowering Adult-child Ratios

During interviews, both administrators and volunteer coordinators pointed out how the boomer volunteers helped teachers in the classroom by freeing up staff time to work with specific children, reducing adult-child ratios, and providing ongoing support for classroom projects and needs. One administrator noted:

They have raised staff morale, given staff more encouragement and time, enhanced our ability to work one-on-one with children, enhanced our ability to serve the whole family, and raised the level of professionalism in all our programs.

Teachers also identified many ways in which the integration of boomer volunteers into their programs had increased their capacity to serve children. Foremost, teachers felt that they could better meet the needs of children *"by having a lower child-adult ratio. It also reduces the stress and work load of staff so that we can be therapeutic with the children."* With boomer volunteer help, teachers felt that they

were better able *“to move around the classroom, spend more one-on-one with children and meet their needs.”* One teacher specifically stated that *“volunteers allow each child to get their individual needs met more often and with higher quality.”*

Teachers indicated that boomer volunteers often were engaged in literacy activities with children. When describing the ways that volunteers in her classroom had enhanced program capacity in serving children, one teacher underscored how:

Volunteers are able to work individually with students who are struggling with picking up literacy skills. Also, they provide meaningful social interactions to students who might need extra attention.

Another teacher highlighted:

The higher ratio of adults to children provide children the opportunity to make healthy attachments and gain developmental milestones to further their success as they journey through education and life.

Boomer volunteers also helped staff in other contexts outside of classroom. As one administrator shared, *“even having another person in the office who can handle problems with the copier can translate to support!”* Another director noted that the increase in boomer volunteers has allowed for the development of new programs. She noted:

We’ve been able to launch one [new initiative] into a second and these are the music programs that so far have proven to be beyond even my lofty expectations, in terms of the breadth and the impact of boomer volunteer opportunities available.

Gains in Child Skills

For most directors and volunteer coordinators, success of the program was observed and in some cases measured through the gains that the children were making in their programs. They noted that boomer volunteers increased the ability to serve children and provide a caring and skilled adult population who could focus on child development and well-being. Attributed to boomer volunteer involvement:

Children have had more enriched language, more opportunities to be held and soothed, more opportunities to experiment with creative materials, more robust and active play, more opportunities to sing and dance and interact with literacy--and generally a more consistent response to the needs of the children.

Another volunteer coordinator commented that *“individual children with high needs are getting extra targeted support and attention.”* Finally, one administrator summarized that their program has improved through *“the quality of care and education we’ve been able to provide to very high-risk children.”*

Another administrator identified an increase in school readiness among children as a result of boomer volunteerism. Through 151 hours of additional help provided by boomers in their Head Start classrooms, boomer volunteers have been active in working with both individual and small groups of students. One administrator highlighted how test scores have increased in part due to boomer support of children:

We've been able to see the difference in the children's comfort, their excitement, and how we're utilizing that time and that has translated into academic and social progress, very clearly. The scores--we use, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) have been very, very high, [but] they were high prior to this program. They've increased within this program, specifically for some of those children who really needed more of the individualized support.

To illustrate how boomer volunteers have impacted children in their programs, many teachers offered examples from their own classrooms. The following two examples highlight the work of boomer volunteers and their role in the lives of the young children. One teacher shared how a boomer volunteer was able to develop a meaningful relationship with a young child in her classroom:

After consistently coming into the classroom once a week to volunteer, one child in particular who needed lots of one-on-one attention started going to the volunteer for comfort, allowing the volunteer to build a connection and relationship with the child; in turn, the volunteer and child left feeling "filled up" at the end of the day because of the nurturing relationship that was established.

Another teacher reported about the impact a volunteer made regarding a young boy in her classroom:

One little boy who had been removed into foster care and recently placed back with his mother grew very attached to a volunteer in the classroom. The consistency of this volunteer helped this little boy cope through all the changes and transitions he was experiencing. It was very meaningful for that little boy.

4.1.2 Boomer Volunteer Perspective of Impact on Children

Boomer volunteers were asked about their view of their own impact on children in their program. Volunteers responded to these items on a 5-point scale with 1 being *Strongly Disagree*, 3 being *Neutral*, and 5 being *Strongly Agree*. Out of the 21 volunteers completing the survey, only 14 completed this section. Some volunteers noted that they did not answer because they did not work with children. It is important to note that this is volunteers' perception of their impact and they may not have the same level of knowledge in these areas as the administrative staff and teachers.

Table 19: Impact on Children in Program, Boomer Volunteer Perception

2012	Boomer Volunteers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio	4.50	0.76
Children can be divided into smaller groups for activities	4.64	0.61
Children spend more time in literacy activities	4.00	0.85
Children have more one-on-one time with an adult to work on specific skills	4.43	0.62
Children have increased language development	4.29	0.70
Children have increased school readiness skills	4.21	0.67
Children have more opportunities for enrichment activities (i.e. field trips, music, etc)	3.86	1.06

* Boomer Volunteers, N = 14.

Moderate to strong agreement among the volunteers indicated they viewed themselves as impacting children, see Table 19. The highest rated item was *children can be divided into small groups for activities* with 81% of volunteers agreeing with statement. *Classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio* was the next highest rated item with 71% of volunteers in agreement with this. The lowest rated item by volunteers was *children have more opportunities for enrichment activities*. Boomers may have rated this item lower because they themselves have not volunteered in enrichment activities and may not have known about the extent to which other boomer volunteers had contributed to this item.

Boomer volunteers described a variety of ways that they felt their participation as volunteers made a difference in the lives of the children they touched. First, boomer volunteers explained how ***children positively changed through contact with volunteers***. One boomer volunteer noted, “As a volunteer I obviously don’t have the impact that the teacher does but to see a child come back as second grader and know they came in here as a two and half year old so shy and so fearful.” Another volunteer emphasized this point: “We have had kids that were pretty withdrawn and pretty sad and very, very quiet and then one day, they’ll come over and do this [motion hug] to you. It’s the best.”

Many boomers volunteered by engaging children in reading and ***helping with literacy and school readiness***. Talking about the reading time she spent with the children, one volunteer remarked: “And when you ask... do you get to read at home or somebody reads to you at home? And sometimes they say no, so for us to go there and read to them, they feel special.” One boomer volunteer was excited to share a “success story.”

This happened in the first few days that I volunteered and one thing is that you do other things when they're dealing with the hard times and I was doing a lot of reading. There was one little boy who you could tell had never spent much time sitting down reading with a parent or with anybody. So the first few times it was a minute then a few minutes. A few weeks went by and still was just a few minutes and I came into the classroom one day and he's sitting there with a book and he raised up and said, "Teacher, read to me". Now to me that's a success story.

Boomer volunteers also talked about **providing a safe environment** for children and letting them know that they could **trust** in them. One boomer volunteer explained, *"They will seek comfort from me if tired and want to be held if they have something to show someone. They smile and laugh with me."* Another added, *"They now know me and trust me. I feel they have more self-confidence because of their interactions with me and other adults."*

Finally, boomer volunteers identified how they provided instruction on new topics and helped the children to learn new skills. One boomer volunteer explained:

Often the children have good ideas, smiles. When they catch on, they like to chatter about everything, which is great because I know I've gotten my idea in their heads.

Another volunteer shared her enthusiasm for helping children to understand gardening and the sources of their food.

And that whole idea of going from planting seed, growing, dirt, all that stuff, to actually harvesting and cooking, it's just so exciting to make that connection. I think we understand that but kids don't get that. Where does our food come from?

4.2 Impact on Organizations

While the outcomes for children with whom the boomer volunteers work directly are substantial, it is also important to recognize that organizations benefitted greatly from the initiative.

4.2.1 Administrative Staff Perspective of Impact on Organization

Administrators identified how boomer volunteerism directly contributed to program success, which translated into quantifiable results. With the advent of Boomers and Babies programs, administrators reported that the influx of boomer volunteers increased staff capacity and the professionalism of programs. Some administrators summarized how their programs have been strengthened:

As a result of boomer volunteer involvement we have changed the organizational infrastructure to include volunteers in positions formally only filled by employees - thus broadening our circle of confidentiality and allowing for workloads to be distributed to non-paid employees. With that,

certain boomer volunteers have become regarded in a more professional manner and their input and opinions have been considered when planning and executing activities for children, volunteer training, and staff engagement.

Increasing Program and Staff Capacity

Many administrators shared that their program capacity had expanded through the integration of additional skilled boomer volunteers. One site administrator commented that they *“had our first-ever organization-wide orientation”* and that they were *“training staff to help us create the processes and materials that will make our volunteer program more organized and efficient.”* Skilled volunteers in a wide variety of areas, who in turn increased capacity, improved facilities, and enhanced the program infrastructure was cited as an indicators of program success during the year.

As one administrator highlighted:

Overall, this project has increased our ability to serve children and families by creating a better overall experience in our program. More assistance [in the classroom] helps make employees feel supported and in turn they are able to provide more quality care to the people they serve.

For instance, one administrator talked about the change over time as the program was developed:

We didn't really have volunteers show up here. There wasn't really that much accountability. They have schedules now. They call in if they're not able to make it. I think that we giving them that value and then getting back in return has just been amazing. For example, last spring a couple of boomer volunteers trained teachers on kindergarten readiness-- how to enroll children for kindergarten, what to expect in kindergarten classrooms and standards to be meet by the end of kindergarten. This was very helpful to staff members, none of whom had ever worked in a kindergarten classroom.

A volunteer coordinator who formerly worked in the classroom outlined how boomer volunteers have increased staff capacity to serve children:

When I used to be in the classroom I used to have to be in the classroom, then ride the school bus, then take a quick break and go right out to home visits. It just allows them more time for planning for the home visits, for making more phone calls on referrals, for things like that. So, that's saving them about an hour and a half of time in the morning and in the afternoon.

During interviews, administrators also identified the increase in time that teachers could spend with individual children and the drive to create a secure foundation for the volunteers as all contributing to an increase in the professionalism of sites. As one administrator summarized: *“Because of the talent and wisdom of boomers,*

they have been able to support our staff in ways that have significantly improved our program. Our teachers have learned an incredible amount from the boomers.”

Another director shared that “*school readiness has increased substantially*” as a result of the influx of boomer volunteers and that “*additional boomer volunteers have been placed in classrooms to support individual children with high needs and to assist as needed under the direction of a teacher.*”

Additionally, programs reported increased program capacity as a result of boomer volunteers. Boomers have helped to complete projects, develop new partnerships, and identify needed resources. One administrator described how the Seed-to-Table program has built new raised beds, engaged over 100 volunteers, and emerged strong under boomer leadership. Even when the number of boomer volunteers was less than expected, another program administrator stated that:

Our boomer volunteers contributed more than one-third of the total volunteer hours for the time period. We are excited to have new boomers volunteering and are grateful for the tremendous amount of time and level of expertise they bring to the children, families, and staff.

Raising Financial Resources

Boomers helped develop programs by soliciting donations, identifying community sources for funding, and making contact with private sources for financial contributions. For instance, one director, talking about the contributions of boomers to program capacity elaborated:

It has really allowed us to expand the services to children and families greatly, and then the volunteers...because they're so involved in our fundraising and development department, they have also helped us continue to raise a lot of private funds with, of course, all of those used to serve children and families.

A few program administrators pointed to the enhanced physical structure as another benefit to the program as supported through volunteer efforts. One administrator shared that they had put in some additional play areas for the children through the use of episodic boomer volunteers. In fact, because of their boomer volunteers, they saved money and resources. She noted, for the “*first playground install, we had to pay the people from the playground to come and do the install, and that cost us 3,000 dollars.*”

Contributing to Positive Work Climate

Boomer volunteers also supported staff efforts which in turn created more positive attitudes between staff and volunteers. One administrator shared:

Our staff works with very challenged, stressed, dysfunctional families, and it helps so much to have people come in from the community that are positive. They have good life stories to share. Their attitude is blithe and cheerful, and that's just helping staff out, so that doesn't get so bogged down in the

trauma of dealing with various challenges and families. So it's good for the very practical sense of reducing the ratio in the classroom and it's also great for more of that psychological support.

A volunteer coordinator added that boomer volunteers have really contributed to the work climate in positive ways. She shared that they *“have raised staff morale, given staff more encouragement and time, and enhanced our ability to work one-on-one with children.”*

Promoting Community Awareness and Development of Partnerships

Multiple administrators talked about how some boomer volunteers have influenced community awareness of their early childhood programs through spreading the word about program outcomes, recruiting others to volunteer, and sharing information with other community agencies and organizations. For instance, boomer volunteers involved in Head Start garden groups have developed *“strong partnerships”* within the program and with other community groups that interface with the program.

One director noted:

During the past year, we have seen a large increase in the number of individuals requesting information about [our program] and that have signed up to attend our community tours and fundraising events. Boomer volunteers have been strong advocates for our work and often tell their friends and family about [us].

4.2.2 Boomer Volunteer Perspective of Impact on Organization

Boomer volunteers detailed the ways that they felt their volunteerism had impacted organizational capacity and effectiveness. Some boomer volunteers described their roles in raising money for programs through auxiliary and board activities. They felt positive about ways that they could directly help children and families through these fundraising efforts:

It's wonderful to be able to have the money to do this because these are requests that aren't covered by other types of help that there is in the community. There are lots of different things to help with like heating and some odd things that are real needs. And you really feel like you're making a difference when you can help somebody pay for medication and school books.

Boomer volunteers felt that they contributed to organizational capacity in other ways as well. One boomer volunteer outlined how his and others' efforts made a difference.

When this organization is doing these things [incorporating volunteers], [it helps] the public funds go further in the process, so really you're getting twice as much bang for the buck using the same dollars. You know everybody asks for more money and that would be great but it's using the

same dollars. And that's something that is bypassed when people are looking at effectiveness of organizations.

Another volunteer specifically saw how she made a difference within the organization.

They make the dollar go as far as they possibly can in an efficient way to reach more families, and by being the volunteer, whether or not I am a contributor or not monetary wise, I am still contributing and saving them money. And it's amazing, they do so much and I don't see any frivolous spending in this particular organization. They are very careful and I think that's wonderful.

Boomer volunteers also shared how they helped families directly through providing opportunities for skill development. For instance, one program asks families to submit written requests regarding their needs and boomer volunteers evaluate these proposals. Through this process, families:

learn how to write requests, they learn how to financially put monetary value on that, and then they are involved in the shopping, and then we get these heart rendering thank you notes with pictures and it's just so incredibly empowering for us [boomer volunteers] to say nothing of what it's doing for these parents to learn these steps.

4.3 Impact on Boomers

The influx of boomer volunteers served as the catalyst for numerous positive outcomes for children and the early childhood settings in which they were served. However, the boomers themselves reaped rewards through their volunteerism.

4.3.1 Boomer Volunteer Perspective of Impact on Themselves

Boomer volunteers were enthusiastic about the ways they felt personally impacted through their involvement in programs. Response categories ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree for volunteers.

Table 20: Impact on Volunteers, Boomer Volunteer Perspective

2012	Boomer Volunteers	
	Mean	Std. Dev.
Engaging Boomer Volunteers		
Volunteers feel satisfied with their volunteer experience	4.71	0.55
Volunteers feel they are making a difference in the lives of children and families	4.50	0.74
Volunteers are more knowledgeable about child development	4.55	0.67
Volunteers feel confident in working with children and families from diverse backgrounds	4.35	0.73

*Boomer volunteers, N = 21.

In general, most boomers (95%) indicated that they were *satisfied with their volunteer experience* at the organization. Most volunteers felt that they were *making a difference in the lives of children and families at their organizations*, with 85% of volunteers agreeing with this item. Eighty-five percent of volunteers also agreed that they *felt confident working with children and families from diverse backgrounds*. Boomer volunteers also reported that *their knowledge about child development had increased*, with 85% of boomers agreeing with this item. Additional details on how boomers have been impacted by their participation in the Boomers and Babies program were provided in the volunteer focus groups.

Making a Difference for Children

Most common, volunteers valued the opportunity to be a part of the **growth and development of children** and stated that they knew that they were a contributing factor to this process. Boomer volunteers underscored how important it was for them to contribute to child well-being. One volunteer described her excitement as she watched children grow due to her nurturance. She shared, *“They just absorb it and they just want to know more and more and more about everything. And it’s nice to see them smile and say, ‘Yes, I got it!’”*

Boomer volunteers also identified ways in which their **personal attitudes and awareness about the needs of children and communities had shifted** due to their volunteer involvement. For instance, one volunteer candidly shared how her attitude toward participating families had changed through direct involvement:

I had a real sense of not really understanding the program before I got involved at all. I really kind of made an assumption that these were people who weren’t taking responsibility for the families that they chose to have. . . so I wanted to know is there some education going on to empower women to control their family sizes if they choose to. So now after a year or so of being involved I have gotten a lot more informed about how [organization] does talk to people about that and just getting to know the families and all the different circumstances that people come to be in the position that they are in. I think we are being exposed to all kinds of people who have those kinds of situations. So I’ve actually become much more open-minded.

Meeting Personal and Social Needs

Boomers also shared that volunteering met social needs. Many volunteers described the **sense of collegiality** they felt with teachers, staff, and other volunteers. One volunteer described how she felt less isolated being involved with the program by expanding her contact with younger generations. She added, *“I enjoy working with children. Most of my life I have. I help take care of an Alzheimer’s parent so this gives me a different perspective on life.”* Boomer volunteers also frequently shared how they felt *“valued and that I am contributing to an important cause. I feel loved by the children.”*

Finally, boomer volunteers often remarked on **the enjoyment they experienced** and shared that *“the kids are the highlight of week and that they received “lots of hugs.”* Direct contact with the children also encouraged fun exchanges and playful experiences as outlined by one volunteer:

One day, we had two classes, one that doesn't speak Spanish and the other did speak Spanish, so I was doing both. But during free time, they would take different spots. They would either have the domestic, which is cooking or put on clothes or whatever. One of the little girls came up to me and spoke Spanish, and she wanted me to try on these shoes. They were pretty little shoes, but she wanted me to try them on. They're adult shoes, but they were playing dress-up. So I put them on. I says oh, I feel like Cinderella. They didn't know what Cinderella was, so I sat down and I told them Cinderella stories, so we just marched around with different kinds of shoes on, and they enjoyed that. 'Cinderella, I'm Cinderella'.

Increasing Knowledge of Child Development

Boomer volunteers shared that as a consequence of their volunteer experiences, their **knowledge of early childhood development had increased**. Learning occurred when working directly with children, through guidance and examples from teachers, and through trainings that focused on understanding *“the age group that you are volunteering with.”* Volunteers cited understanding more about how to *“sense when there is trouble at home,”* how to *keep “emotion out of it without judgment until the expectation [of the child] was met,”* and how to *“talk with the kids; even the way they sit at the table makes a difference.”*

Another volunteer learned the importance of being positive with young children *“such as saying ‘we walk’ instead of saying ‘no running’”* and noted how knowing this would have been helpful earlier in her life: *“Of course your child learns ‘no’, that's the first word they learn. But it's the positive, so I wish I had my four-year-old to raise again.”* Other comments from volunteers included the importance of consistency with young children, integration of *“song, movements, hand movements”* into classrooms to help children attend to tasks, and their desire to *“know more about early childhood development.”*

Increasing Advocacy

Focus group members responded passionately when asked if their involvement had contributed to **increased advocacy for early childhood initiatives**. Some volunteers advocated for early childhood programs in their social circles and communities. A few shared how they have talked about the success of their program with key officials and program administrators. One boomer volunteer described his perspective on the work of his organization and the message he conveys to others: *“Political decision makers say that they want results tomorrow but it doesn't work that way. Early education is far more effective.”* Another volunteer shared how she is advocating for the development of similar programs in other regions.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have . . . dozens of [programs] around instead of just a couple. It just seems like there are so many generations now that grew up, they weren't raised they just grew up. And so there are basic things about sitting down and having a meal, you know that's not common in houses. I mean you go into homes that are not at risk and everybody is eating separate and they're just going every which way. To have this kind of mentality spread on a national and global basis really would change the world. It would get back to parenting rather than our kids just growing up.

4.3.2 Administrative Staff Perspective of Impact on Boomers

Complementing what boomers had to say themselves, administrators cited several ways that they felt that boomer volunteers were impacted by their participation in programs. First and foremost, administrators talked about how they frequently heard that volunteer participation among boomers was motivated by a desire to make a difference in the life of a child and to engage in meaningful work. As one director outlined:

They get when they've made a true connection and they are making a difference in the lives of this child with the training that we give them, they also understand the impact that they can give during early child[hood] is something that is going to last through their whole lifetime. And so they take it very seriously and I think they feel very privileged, honored. I think they feel valued. You know it's not easy work and they keep coming back, so I have to believe they believe it's working, and for many of them, you see those little magic miracle minutes, you know, where something just absolutely occurs that you know they will never forget and that's making a difference for that child.

Administrators, additionally, were able to observe and listen to boomers speak about the **affection, excitement, and positive responses** they received from children. One director shared this example:

He had a little guy just come up and hug him the other day, and he said "is it okay if I hug him?" He was just thrilled. He's this big man. He's about 6'2", and this little guy was so glad to see him. Those things just melt my heart.

Boomer volunteers appeared not only enthusiastic about the responses they received from children, they also shared how their work with children helped them **offset loneliness and isolation**. One volunteer coordinator commented on how a boomer had shared that her work as boomer volunteer was *"the reason she gets up in the morning."* Another volunteer had relayed to an administrator that she wanted *"to have a place in my community where I feel wanted."* An administrator added, *"boomers also just value these relationships that they've built, not only with the children but with our staff."* Finally, their commitment to volunteering and their work with children also helped boomers to **structure their days**, particularly during transitions such as those from paid work to retirement. One volunteer coordinator relayed:

She was missing that work schedule that she needed and counted on and we were expecting her at a certain time and she had a specific role to play and it just really meant a lot to her to still be needed, still be valued, to know that if she wasn't here, we were going to call and check in and I think it just brought a ton of meaning to her life and to her day just to be on a schedule.

Working with children also helped boomers who did not have grandchildren or whose grandchildren lived at a great distance away. One boomer expressed to a staff member that her work with children gave her *“a chance to connect with children that are the same age as her grandchildren.”* A volunteer coordinator shared that another boomer volunteer stated that *“I know that I'm never going to have grandchildren and I want to make a connection with kids.”*

Administrators felt that boomer volunteers were able to use their current skillset to benefit children directly, which in turn brought boomer satisfaction. For instance, one boomer volunteer was able to offer carpentry skills to the families in the program. The Volunteer Coordinator explained:

We wanted to give each child a book on their way out the door, and I figured we needed another draw, so . . . Home Depot donated materials for twelve bookcases, so that we could give a bookcase away each week. Our baby boomer built the bookcases. It was just wonderful, and he was so proud. When we had the national visit here in March, we had him speak about that, and he wants to get more involved, too.

Volunteering also encouraged **new skill development**. One director explained how volunteers were able to learn more about the circumstances of children with special needs or who were at-risk.

They come with a lot of skills, but they've continued to learn, so it may be more about children who have been abused or neglected, or children with autism, or they've learned new intervention techniques that they shared, like skills from people in the community.

Administrators identified acquisition of skills relevant to personal contexts as a positive outcome for boomers. For instance, one director shared a comment from a boomer: *“I'm a better grandparent now than I would have been, because of what I've learned.”*

4.4 Overall Impact Summary

Administrative staff and teachers from all of the funded organizations indicated that boomer volunteers have had significant impacts on their organizations and the children they serve since the initiative began. Organizations engaged boomer volunteers in best practices that are known to contribute to improved child outcomes, positive development, and school readiness. The integration of boomer

volunteers had a positive effect on the learning environments. Impacts included lower adult-child ratios in classrooms, smaller group sizes, and more time spent in literacy activities by the children.

Administrative staff reported that individual child outcomes included improved language skills and scores on literacy-related inventories. In addition, administrative staff and teachers said that the boomer volunteers provided the children with positive, caring, adult role models.

The inclusion of boomer volunteers in the early childhood settings increased both the programming and staff capacity of the organizations. The organizations benefited as boomer volunteers helped to raise financial resources, contributed to a positive work environment, and promoted community awareness about the programs. The boomers also felt that they positively impacted the organizations particularly through garnered resources and service expansion.

The boomer volunteers also benefitted from their involvement with the organizations. Boomers felt a sense of personal fulfillment and valued the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children. They also acknowledged a more empathetic attitude toward higher risk families. Both the volunteers and the administrative staff recognized that the boomers increased their knowledge of child development and adopted new skills as a result of their volunteer work.

5. Looking to the Future

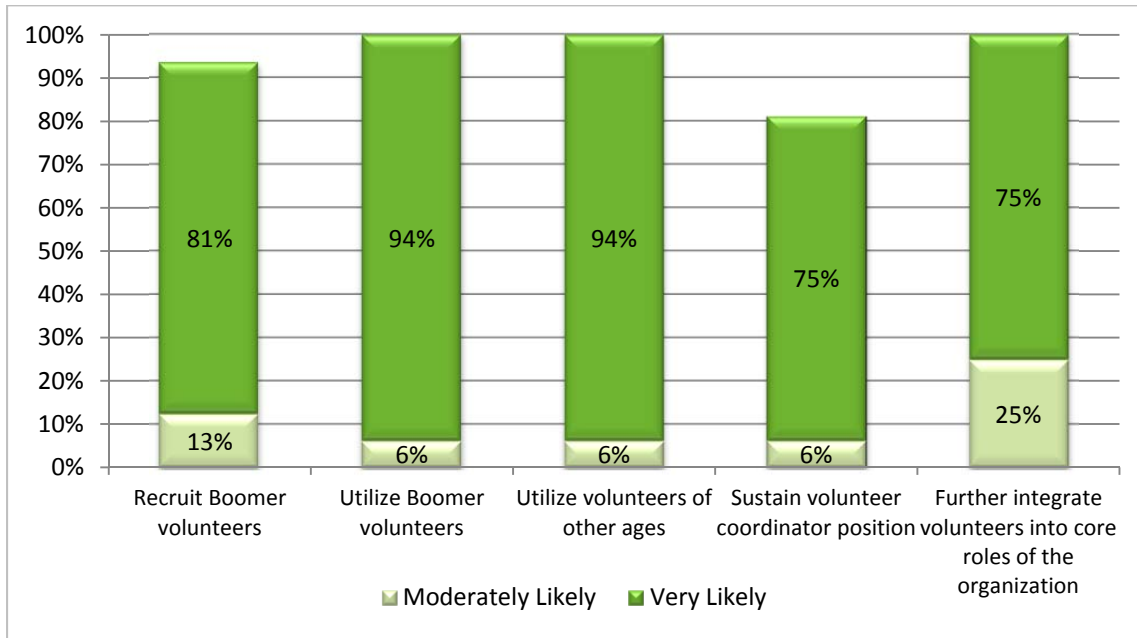
Through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, administrative staff and boomer volunteers looked to the future and provided information on their likelihood of future involvement, advice for other programs, feedback on the Learning Community, and additional words for the funders.

5.1 Likelihood of Future Involvement

Administrative staff and boomer volunteers were asked to evaluate their likelihood of continued involvement with aspects of the Boomers and Babies initiative once funded ends.

5.1.1 Administrative Staff Perspective on the Future

Looking to the future, administrative staff were asked how likely they were to continue several components of their project on a 5-point scale with 1 = *Not at All Likely* to 5 = *Very Likely*. Figure 2 displays the percentage of administrative staff that reported they were moderately or very likely to continue an action in the future.

Figure 2: Organization's Likelihood of Future Initiatives with Volunteers

Overall, administrative staff indicated that they plan to continue to involve boomer volunteers in their organization after funding for this project has ended. One hundred percent of administrative staff indicated they were very or moderately likely to *utilize boomer volunteers*, *utilize volunteers of other ages*, and *further integrate volunteers into core roles of the organization* in the future. Ninety-four percent of staff members stated they were very or moderately likely to *recruit boomer volunteers* in the future and 81% stated they were very or moderately likely to *sustain a volunteer coordinator position*.

Sustaining Volunteer Coordinator Positions

Directors specifically were asked about their commitment and ability to sustain volunteer coordination after grant funding had ended. Responses varied as to the allotted full-time equivalency (FTE) they expected to have in place and whether coordination in the future would involve paid or volunteer positions. Clearly, all directors valued the role of the volunteer coordinator and the outcomes they had observed and measured over the past year as suggested by this director:

We have to do this. It's very important. With the shrinking budgets and the economy the way it is, we haven't had to cut any children from the program, even though we've got budget cuts, and I believe that that is directly due to our ability to recruit volunteers who are providing us with very meaningful effort.

The challenge in sustaining the volunteer coordinator position after funding ceased, however, related to tight financial resources and varied needs across programs.

A few directors expressed commitment to maintain the volunteer coordination at the current level. One director explained that the volunteer manager at her site had provided the expertise and organization that they valued regarding volunteers. She stated their decision to retain the position after grant funding had ended because *“that’s made a big difference, having somebody whose responsibility is to find volunteers, orient volunteers, and get them involved.”*

Typically, however, most directors predicted a reduction in the position or a transition from paid to volunteer status. In some cases, the current plan was to reduce the FTE of volunteer coordination from full-time to part-time as one director highlighted, *“[Currently] the position full-time and I feel that that was needed in the first year. So, we are committed to sustaining that at a part-time level.”* Decisions to shift from paid to unpaid status also were identified among administrators who currently did not have a volunteer in this role. One director shared, *“We’re hoping that we’re going to be able to recruit from amongst some of our volunteers, from lead volunteers who are willing.”*

For those programs in the early phase of funding, directors were evaluating the importance and outcomes related to the volunteer coordination in place. As one director stated, *“That’s what we’ll be determining over the next year.”*

The directors whose funding cycle was coming to an end hoped to identify other funding streams through grants and donations. One director shared how they planned to fund future volunteer efforts:

We have applied for an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer position and we’re waiting to hear on that person to continue with a volunteer coordinator position. We’re waiting on some funding... we haven’t any grants that would specifically fund our volunteer coordinator, but drawing a little bit from each program, we’ll be able to do that. So, it’s a high priority, but we have to fund current staffing positions first.

The primary issue with sustaining the volunteer coordinator position in the two pilot programs is associated with funding. For one organization the position is filled by a volunteer, for the other it is a paid position. With limited resources, however, retaining the funding for this position may prove difficult. As one administrator shared, *“Right now we’re going into the next fiscal year and we’re half of where we need to be financially.”*

5.1.2 Boomer Volunteer Perspective on the Future

Boomer volunteers were also asked about their likelihood of continuing or deepening their involvement with early childhood programs on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *Not at All Likely* to 5 = *Very Likely*. Figure 3 displays the percentage of administrative staff that reported they were moderately or very likely to continue an action in the future.

Figure 3: Boomer's Likelihood of Future Volunteerism

On the survey, all of the boomers indicated they were planning to *continue in their volunteer role with the organization*. Eighty-one percent stated they would be very or moderately likely to *recruit others to volunteer with the organization*. A little over half of volunteers said they would be likely to *advocate for early childhood programs and policies*. The volunteers seemed content with their personal level of involvement as the survey results showed they were not very likely to *increase their volunteer hours, take on additional roles or responsibilities, or seek additional volunteer roles with other early childhood organizations*.

5.2 Advice to Other Programs

Through focus groups and interviews, administrative staff and boomer volunteers were asked about recommendations for other programs that might be considering integrating boomers as volunteers.

5.2.1 Administrative Staff Offer Advice to Other Programs

When asked what they felt was important in beginning Boomers and Babies programs, administrators responded with many recommendations based on lessons learned, particularly about attending to the infrastructure of programs. Specific areas noted were in gaining administrative approval; establishing effective screening, placement, and training processes; working with staff to integrate volunteers; and integrating flexibility into the programs. One director offered an inclusive recommendation for programs:

Create a solid foundation that's flexible; keep an open mind about all the demographics that volunteer with you and that you serve, not just boomers. Focus on what works and do not be scared to change, even though you

might lose face. And celebrate your successes because it might take a while to get to them.

Below are other suggestions raised by directors and volunteer coordinators that generally represented the advice offered across programs:

- **Establish a solid foundation:** *“Have everything in place to really keep them engaged and also, I think just providing them with the education training piece... respecting their input and involvement, and creating a partnership, rather than ‘this is what you need to do.’ Relationship is the key.”*
- **Gain Administrative Approval:** *“You really have to start from the top down. Our director has really been involved with the project. That’s been great. I think that was a real key.”*
- **Have Staff in Place:** *“The two things that I would say are the most critical, a full-time volunteer coordinator, at least for the first year or two, when you get the program launched and the infrastructure going and have some engagement there, and make sure at the least, at the very least, that the volunteer coordinator is teaming up with a boomer, when it comes to their recruitment and engagement process.”*
- **Develop Effective Partnerships:** *“I think it’s really essential to develop collaboration, to define partners that seem open.”*
- **Tailor Training Opportunities:** *“They really need to look at training. That’s a huge issue, because we tweaked what we were doing as far as training for the boomers specifically.”*
- **Understand the Boomer Population:** *“Focus on boomers, specifics which can be learned from AARP. There’s a whole bunch of resources. And then, develop some of those and work them into what you’re doing.”*
- **Offer Flexibility:** *“When you have boomers, being flexible, because they are still in that transition time. Our volunteers don’t usually have a full eight to five open every day of the week yet. So, being flexible... being very good at just the management system of it.”*
- **Develop Meaningful Volunteer Experiences:** *“Making that right connection so [volunteers] feel like they’re doing something meaningful. Put them with something that they are going to enjoy doing, that they think is meaningful.”*
- **Address Volunteer Screening:** *“I think the screening is important. We have had very few volunteers who haven’t worked out, but the care on the front end is really important, to avoid some difficult times on the back end.”*

- **Focus on Volunteer Fit within the Organization:** *“I think that it’s important to get the right volunteer that fits well for everything involved, so the kids, their personalities, their energy levels, but also whatever teacher it is and whatever activities there are. I mean, spending time up-front to make sure that the skills and what the person wishes to do and give really aligns well with what it is and what we’re offering them.”*
- **Value the Volunteers:** *“When people come in the door, you have to be very, very welcoming to them, and let them know that they are welcome here and that they’re very much needed here.”*

5.2.2 Boomer Volunteers Offer Advice to Other Programs

Boomer volunteers were also asked what advice they would offer to other early childhood education programs considering integrating boomer volunteers into their organizations. Many of the volunteers suggested simply looking at their current organizations as they viewed them as highly effective in volunteer integration.

The following suggestions also were expressed in both focus groups:

- Make sure that volunteers *“just feel welcome.”*
- Value volunteers by *“being flexible, training well, working around that”*
- Spend time on recruitment *“because some of those organizations are so small that they are totally depending on the volunteer they’ve got that if they don’t have them coming in then they are in a bind too.”*
- Create volunteer job descriptions. As one boomer volunteer shared, *“a lot of boomers - we worked a lot of years collectively. And we’re used to going to a workplace knowing what we’re supposed to be doing, and I think a job description really helps.”*
- Make clear organizational and communication channels. As one boomer volunteer suggested, *“If things don’t run smoothly, volunteers will go find something else to do. We’re busy people even though some of us are retired. I’m very busy.”* Another added that *“if you want volunteers to participate, you have to be organized. They have to know what they’re doing, when they’re supposed to be there, what’s expected of them and then be organized enough to have that happen once you get there.”*
- Remember the motivation for volunteering. As one boomer volunteer stated, *“volunteers are there because we love to volunteer not because we love the money... we are there because we want to help. We’re not expecting pay. We are expecting the smiles.”*

5.3 Feedback on Learning Community

As noted in the introduction, the Boomers and Babies Learning Community was established to provide support and share resources with early childhood programs seeking to integrate boomer volunteers. During interviews, administrative staff were asked specifically about their participation in the Learning Community. Volunteer coordinators were enthusiastic about the Learning Community. They were particularly excited about the opportunity to interact with those representatives who were initiating programs during the past year. Directors were equally enthusiastic and underscored the benefit for those coordinating the volunteers, although they were less likely to attend. One volunteer coordinator shared:

The feedback has been invaluable. [I don't have to] reinvent the wheel. And being able to hear from them about the other programs, about challenges and about other issues, validating the fact that you're not alone in this and understanding more clearly what some of the beyond-obvious issues and advantages there are of getting boomers engaged with youngsters. It's been wonderful and I'd like to see it expanded, not only in terms of the breadth of it, but more programmatic, purposeful, and frequent.

Another volunteer coordinator commented on the generation and fit of ideas for a specific site:

I think every time we hear something, when we share, it gives us another idea, so that we look at it to see if that's something that we can do. Does that fit within our organization? Does that fit within our community? We always learn valuable, new valuable information.

Finally, volunteer coordinators shared how valuable the Learning Community was for the initial startup of their programs when they were new in their positions. For instance, one volunteer coordinator explained:

When I started I thought that 'oh, okay, I'm going to go through all this and just wave this magic boomer wand and they're just going to float in from somewhere' and it's not quite that simple. Definitely having the help of others just with ideas and suggestions for things you're already doing that could be done better. All that helps.

A volunteer coordinator noted the importance of making connections with other programs, "I couldn't have done this project without this Learning Community."

Barriers to attending learning communities typically centered on lack of time and ability to get away from the grant site to attend. As one volunteer coordinator shared:

I haven't used those as much as I should have, because I'm just trying to get through the day with the deadlines and stuff. I think it's been beneficial, but I could use it more.

Another volunteer coordinator shared that the learning communities have *“been really good. I always come back with a lot of ideas. It’s just having the time to implement everything.”*

5.4 Words for Funders

When asked if there was feedback that they would like to give the funders, administrators first expressed their appreciation for the financial resources and support they had received to develop the Boomers and Babies project. One volunteer coordinator explained:

How grateful we are. Because we didn’t really know when we came on board, hitting me with it, because I was new and it was new, and it really felt like [the funder] was somebody who, in this boomer grant, was walking beside us and helping us develop our programs here. I think the boomer grant and the volunteers here are going to be very instrumental to the success of this facility and the partnerships that are here.

Generally, administrators shared how they were acknowledged and supported as one director reported, *“I feel they have really paid attention to the challenges we’ve faced and to the gaps that have been identified.”*

Acknowledging that keeping the program sustainable over the long term was going to be a challenge, many administrators felt that they had the infrastructure as provided through grant support to carry on many features of their programs once funding ceased. They wanted the funders to know that they desired to keep their programs going even when the grant funds were no longer available. One administrator shared that their program has *“miles to go, but it’s very, very exciting. I’m glad that we’ve had this experience. As long as I’m here, I’m going to make sure that it keeps going.”*

Administrators expressed their appreciation for the grant requirement to develop an infrastructure that could support boomer volunteers. As one director explained, *“With this, we totally have a direction to go, let alone all the other changes that will benefit everybody from now on and what we’re going to be doing.”* A director shared that the grant helped them to realize that they *“needed a volunteer coordinator in our department . . . We thought we could just spread those tasks around, and now we’ve seen what happens when you really intentionally work with a volunteer coordinator.”* Another stated that *“the other thing that the grant has allowed us to do, is actually do volunteer appreciation.”*

Administrators also expressed recommendations to the funders regarding the current parameters and expectations set out in the grant process. For instance, many administrators desired to extend age constraints for volunteer recruitment outside boomer age groups. One administrator stated:

If I was going to make the recommendation to this project, to OCF, I would suggest that they extend it so that it can go up to older volunteers and not stop at sixty-five... I think it would be more in keeping with what I think is the

intent of this project, which is how do you get people who have retired and are older-how do you get them engaged? That doesn't mean age sixty-five.

Another administrator felt that at times the link of boomer volunteers to early childhood was not always effective:

I think that the premise is interesting, the baby boomers thing. In some ways, I felt like the ideas came together and they also sometimes diverged from each other. I felt like we were building up our preschool volunteer program and I felt like we were building up our boomer presence, but sometimes I think it doesn't work very well together and sometimes I wish we were either focusing on building up boomer volunteers or building up the preschool program.

One volunteer coordinator had a different experience that she wished to express to funders:

I've enjoyed this program. I'll be honest with you, after my last two failed attempts with the [organization] engaging boomers, I really thought that this program was going to be – well it's been challenging but I was worried it wasn't going to succeed. What I've seen is just the opposite. So I've been, just from a personal, professional point of view, I've never believed in focusing on a certain volunteer demographic and driving them in the door. This has changed my mind on that. So it's been a really positive effect for me and I'm glad it's been successful.

Administrators shared other insights that they wanted to communicate to The Oregon Community Foundation and Oregon State University as outlined below:

Having OCF involved in the project has been of great interest to me. That was one of the reasons that we went ahead and applied for the grant, because we knew that we would have the training and the technical assistance and support of not only Oregon State, but... the things that Ford Family Foundation and the Oregon Community Foundation provide through those kinds of partnering, if you will. We've worked with OSU for years in different aspects of different projects that we've had and it's just such a value-added component rather than someone just handing you the money and saying 'Okay, do well with it. We'll check back in a year and see how you're doing.'

[The funding and support] built the capacity of staff. So, obviously the money that we got to provide the program from Oregon Community Foundation was just a piece of it, but it really has built the skills and the capacity for us to continue to do what we should have been doing all along.

The partnership has just been wonderful, and it has impacted our services in just so many ways. There were so many things that I had wanted to move forward with, but just didn't really have the capacity, so it's been such an

exciting year for me. Like one of the things, I mentioned it before, just something as simple as providing a meal for our families. Some of the things that have been dreams or goals for me have actually been accomplished, and that's thanks to the Oregon Community Foundation. We also have an advisory committee now and we serve dinners now, which is something that I wanted to do for a long time. We've been able to provide enhanced services to families and it's allowed me to meet some of my personal goals for the program as well.

SUMMARY

All eight of the organizations involved in the initiative substantially increased the number of boomer-age volunteers serving their organizations. During the past year, a total of 400 new boomer volunteers were recruited by the organizations. Adding boomers recruited previously, the organizations had a total of 584 boomers currently volunteering with their program at the end of the program year.

The increase in the capacity of the organizations to support volunteers led to their success in enlisting boomers. As a result of the initiative, organizations strengthened their infrastructures in many ways. All sites utilized a volunteer coordinator which was viewed as a fundamental component for making the initiative effective. The organizations created or revised their procedures for screening, assigning, and tracking volunteers. Grantees also addressed other infrastructure components including providing adequate supervision, communicating with volunteers, and providing performance feedback.

Organizations used a variety of recruitment strategies including working with community partners. While all strategies were somewhat fruitful, the strategy which proved most successful was recruiting by word-of-mouth. Grantees strengthened their ability to coordinate their newly recruited volunteers by matching volunteer roles with their interest and expertise, assigning meaningful tasks, allowing for flexibility in scheduling of volunteers, and providing training. The eight organizations offered a combined total of 95 training sessions for boomer volunteers during the past year. Approximately 297 total contacts were made with boomer volunteers in these trainings.

Boomers served in an array of roles with the organizations. Fifty-five percent of all boomers volunteered in reoccurring roles, whereas 45% volunteered in episodic roles. Combining newly recruited volunteers with existing boomer volunteers, a total of 14,318 hours were volunteered at the pilot and newly funded organizations this past year. Forty-eight percent of those hours were with children in the classroom and 31% with children in literacy activities. These boomer volunteers impacted 1,907 children directly and 4,241 children indirectly. Their volunteer service is valued at nearly \$270,000 and is equivalent to almost seven full-time positions.

A primary element for the successful integration and engagement of boomer volunteers is attitude of the staff, particularly teachers, toward the volunteers. Almost all of the organizations provided trainings for their teachers in order for the staff to better understand and utilize the volunteers.

As boomer volunteers were integrated into the organizations, administrative staff and teachers viewed them as valuable assets. The programs engaged the boomers in meaningful work by matching the volunteers to defined roles, providing flexible work schedules, making their work environment welcoming, and recognizing them for their contributions. Boomer volunteers reported having positive interactions with the staff and felt valued by the staff.

Administrative staff and teachers from all of the funded organizations indicated that boomer volunteers have had significant impacts on their organizations and the children they serve since the initiative began. Organizations engaged boomer volunteers in best practices that are known to contribute to improved child outcomes, positive development, and school readiness. The integration of boomer volunteers had a positive effect on the learning environments. Impacts included lower adult-child ratios in classrooms, smaller group sizes, and more time spent in literacy activities by the children.

Administrative staff reported that individual child outcomes included improved language skills and scores on literacy-related inventories. In addition, administrative staff and teachers said that the boomer volunteers provided the children with positive, caring, adult role models.

The inclusion of boomer volunteers in the early childhood settings increased both the programming and staff capacity of the organizations. The organizations benefited as boomer volunteers helped to raise financial resources, contributed to a positive work environment, and promoted community awareness about the programs. The boomers also felt that they positively impacted the organizations particularly through garnered resources and service expansion.

The boomer volunteers also benefitted from their involvement with the organizations. Boomers felt a sense of personal fulfillment and valued the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children. They also acknowledged a more empathetic attitude toward higher risk families. Both the volunteers and the administrative staff recognized that the boomers increased their knowledge of child development and adopted of new skills as a result of their volunteer work. Boomers indicated that they were very likely to continue in their volunteer roles with the organizations, recruit others to volunteer, and advocate for early childhood programs and policies.

Overall, administrative staff indicated that they plan to continue involve boomer volunteers in their organization after funding for this project has ended. Clearly, all

directors valued the role of the volunteer coordinator and the outcomes they had observed and measured over the past year. The challenge in sustaining the volunteer coordinator position after funding ceased, however, related to tight financial resources and varied needs across programs.

When asked what they felt was important in beginning Boomers and Babies programs, administrators responded with many recommendations based on lessons learned, particularly about attending to the infrastructure of programs. Specific areas noted were in gaining administrative approval; establishing effective screening, placement, and training processes; working with staff to integrate volunteers; and integrating flexibility into the programs. Boomers also offered advice to early childhood organizations. Their advice centered on organizations preparation for volunteers and interactions with them once they were recruited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes and information shared by the grantees during the second year of Phase 3 of the initiative, the following are recommendations for strengthening efforts by organizations to integrate boomer volunteers into early childhood settings:

Allow time for building an infrastructure for initiating a boomer volunteer program. Many of the administrative staff indicated that more time had been invested in the “start up” of the initiative than they had anticipated. The amount of time to hire and train the volunteer coordinator should be factored into the first year schedule as well as the time needed to create or revise screening protocols, placement procedures, tracking systems, and volunteer manuals. These essential elements of the infrastructure are needed to build a strong foundation for the volunteer program.

Seek teachers input throughout the initiative. Since most boomer volunteers will be working directly with teachers in their classrooms, it is essential to incorporate teachers’ input for volunteer roles, responsibilities, and scheduling procedures. Administrative staff should also frequently check-in with teachers to continually assess their volunteer needs and satisfaction with assigned volunteers.

Continue to provide training for teachers on utilization of boomer volunteers. Since teacher training aimed at working with boomer volunteers appeared to positively impact their appreciation of volunteers’ contributions to their classrooms, early childhood settings should provide specific training for their staff on boomer volunteer engagement or blend this topic with other trainings that are provided.

Target boomer volunteer recruitment based on organizational needs. Organizations were very successful in recruiting significant numbers of boomer volunteers. As the programs continue to evolve, it will be important to assess the specific areas within the organization where volunteers can fill gaps. Depending on

the program, this may lead to more recruitment of either episodic or reoccurring volunteers.

Continue to provide training for boomer volunteers. Providing orientation for boomer volunteers not only helps the volunteers be better prepared for their roles within the early childhood setting, but also familiarizes the organization with the boomer. In addition, organizations should provide other opportunities for volunteer training pertinent to the roles that they will assume. Because administrative staff have found that it can be difficult to have a critical mass of volunteers attend topic trainings on a given date, organizations may consider developing modules or web-based trainings that volunteers could complete on their own.

Facilitate enhanced communication between the teachers and the boomer volunteers. Both teachers and boomer volunteers indicated that more frequent communication and feedback would be beneficial. A challenge to this exchange is a lack of time. As boomer volunteers are coming in and out of the classroom, the teachers are actively engaged with the children and are not able to provide timely communication. Organizations should explore options for meeting this need. They may consider checklists, pre-printed encouragement notes, or electronic methods that could ease and accelerate interactions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Volunteers by Site

Appendix 2: Volunteer Hours and Children Served by Site

Appendix 3: Volunteer Roles by Site

Appendix 4: Boomers and Babies Volunteer Survey Results

Appendix 5: Boomers and Babies Administrative Staff Survey Results

Appendix 6: Boomers and Babies Teacher Survey Results

Number of Volunteers

	Adelante Mujeres	Family Building Blocks	Family Development Center	Family Nurturing Center	Gladstone School District 115	Neighbor-Impact	Umatilla-Morrow Co. Head Start	Volunteers of America Oregon	Total
Number of Volunteers									
Boomer Volunteers									
Number of Boomer volunteers before the project	1	117	10	7	6	12	14	2	169
Number of NEW Boomer volunteers recruited	56	63	69	51	32	34	47	48	400
<i>in RECURRING volunteer roles</i>	36%	32%	23%	47%	66%	65%	79%	58%	47%
<i>in EPISODIC volunteer roles</i>	64%	68%	77%	53%	34%	35%	21%	42%	53%
Total number of ALL Boomer volunteers	87	153	69	86	33	44	64	48	584
<i>in RECURRING volunteer roles</i>	53%	44%	23%	76%	61%	61%	86%	58%	55%
<i>in EPISODIC volunteer roles</i>	47%	56%	77%	24%	39%	39%	14%	42%	45%
Non-Boomer Volunteers									
Number of Non-Boomer volunteers before the project	1	158	24	4	39	296	605	10	1,137
Number of NEW Non-Boomer volunteers recruited	187	108	164	61	85	82	248	46	981
Total number of Non-Boomer volunteers	305	412	239	86	29	143	537	67	1,818
All Volunteers									
Total number of volunteers recruited this year	243	171	233	112	117	116	295	94	1,381
Total number of volunteers	392	565	308	172	62	187	601	115	2,402

Note: Pilot Grant results from April 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012, New Grant results from June 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012.

Volunteer Hours

	Adelante Mujeres	Family Building Blocks	Family Development Center	Family Nurturing Center	Gladstone School District 115	Neighbor-Impact	Umatilla-Morrow Co. Head Start	Volunteers of America Oregon	Total
Volunteer Hours									
Newly Recruited Boomer Volunteers									
Hours volunteered by NEW recruited Boomers	552	693	511	703	222	324	1,773	350	5,128
Hours spent with children in the classroom	226	94	169	536	72	159	1,339	202	2,797
Hours spent with children in literacy activities	224	21	50	144	95	159	1,339	0	2,032
All Boomer Volunteers									
Hours volunteered by ALL Boomer volunteers	1,803	5,059	511	3,877	416	984	1,318	350	14,318
Hours spent with children in the classroom	431	2,110	169	3,396	72	605	1,277	202	8,262
Hours spent with children in literacy activities	431	618	50	1,423	94	605	1,277	10	4,508
All Volunteers									
Hours volunteered by Non-Boomer volunteers	1,454	13,845	1,210	1,742	1,966	1,990	7,928	2,960	33,095
Hours volunteered by ALL Boomer volunteers*	1,803	5,059	511	3,877	416	984	1,318	350	14,318
Total Hours by all volunteers	3,257	18,904	1,721	5,619	2,382	2,974	9,246	3,310	47,413

Note: Pilot Grant results from April 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012, New Grant results from June 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012.

*row repeated in table for clarity of presentation

Children Served by Volunteers

	Adelante Mujeres	Family Building Blocks	Family Development Center	Family Nurturing Center	Gladstone School District 115	Neighbor-Impact	Umatilla-Morrow Co. Head Start	Volunteers of America Oregon	Total
Children Served by Volunteers									
Newly Recruited Boomer Volunteers									
Children served by NEW Boomer volunteers <i>directly</i>	40	33	102	36	235	162	113	62	783
Children served by NEW Boomer volunteers <i>indirectly</i>	40	474	470	284	222	956	206	54	2,706
Total Children Served by New Boomer volunteers*	80*	507*	572*	320*	457*	1,118*	319*	116*	3,489*
All Boomer Volunteers									
Children served by ALL Boomer volunteers <i>directly</i>	50	74	194	450	485	234	306	114	1,907
Children served by ALL Boomer volunteers <i>indirectly</i>	50	920	572	1,044	292	965	336	62	4,241
Total Children Served by ALL Boomer volunteers*	100*	994*	766*	1,494*	777*	1,199*	642*	176*	6,148*

Note: Pilot Grant results from April 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012, New Grant results from June 1, 2011 – May 30, 2012.

*number is duplicated because one child could be served both directly and indirectly

Volunteers Roles

	Adelante Mujeres	Family Building Blocks	Family Development Center	Family Nurturing Center	Gladstone School District 115	Neighbor-Impact	Umatilla-Morrow Co. Head Start	Volunteers of America Oregon	Total
Volunteer Roles									
Read to children	22	62	20	42	12	26	18	2	204
Assist in classrooms	4	41	16	45	3	26	18	24	177
Lead enrichment activities with the children	11	21	69	5	24	8	8	11	157
Facility maintenance (painting, yard work, etc.)	0	25	40	13	0	2	4	25	109
Prepare learning activities for classrooms	14	45	16	13	0	4	5	6	103
Serve on organization's Board	3	12	15	10	4	4	9	3	60
Organize volunteer activities	17	13	0	4	0	0	4	2	40
Work in office	2	12	2	2	3	4	4	0	29
Mentor other volunteers	4	1	8	8	0	0	3	0	24
Provide training for program staff	3	0	4	3	0	1	5	3	19
Drive bus	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Other	41	36	75	24	0	8	21	6	211

Appendix 4: Boomers and Babies Volunteer Survey Results 2012

Participant Information

Length Volunteered	
1-2 years	5
3-4 years	5
3-6 months	3
More than 5 years	6

Volunteer Work Status	
Employed full-time	3
Employed part-time	1
Retired	7
Does not work	7
Student status	1

Volunteer Highest Level of Education	
High school graduate	1
Some college	4
Associate's degree	2
Bachelor's degree	4
Graduate or professional degree	8

Volunteer Gender	
Female	19
Male	2

Volunteer Race/Ethnicity	
White	17
Hispanic/Latino	2

Organizational Infrastructure for Supporting Boomer Volunteers

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Organizational Infrastructure for Supporting Boomer Volunteers					
Organization has paid staff position/time for coordinating volunteers	21	4.43	0.66	3	5
Organization has procedures in place for screening and assigning volunteers	21	4.52	0.73	3	5
Organization has system in place for tracking volunteer information and hours	21	4.57	0.66	3	5
Organization provides adequate supervision for volunteers	21	4.52	0.66	3	5
Organization utilizes consistent communication strategies to keep volunteers informed	21	4.48	0.66	3	5
Organization utilizes effective recruitment strategies	20	4.05	0.74	3	5
Organization provides performance feedback to volunteers	21	4.00	0.82	3	5
Organization is connected with community partners to identify and recruit volunteers	19	4.16	0.67	3	5
Organization views volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program	21	4.76	0.53	3	5
Organization integrates volunteers into critical roles within the organization	21	4.48	0.59	3	5
The organization's staff value volunteers' involvement and contributions to program	21	4.71	0.55	3	5
The organization's has positive attitude toward volunteers	21	4.76	0.43	4	5

Engaging Boomer Volunteers

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Engaging Boomer Volunteers					
I am assigned meaningful tasks and roles within the organization	20	4.50	0.59	3	5
My volunteer role is matched with my areas of interest and expertise	21	4.43	0.58	3	5
I have clearly defined volunteer roles & responsibilities	20	4.35	0.73	3	5
My volunteer hours are scheduled based on my availability	21	4.67	0.56	3	5
I receive recognition for my contributions to the program	21	4.67	0.47	4	5
I have been trained by the organization to meet the needs of their program	21	4.29	0.70	3	5
I have received feedback about my performance as a volunteer	21	4.38	0.72	3	5
I am treated as a team member by the organization's staff	21	4.76	0.43	4	5
My interactions with the organization's staff have been positive	21	4.86	0.35	4	5
I am treated as a professional by the program staff	21	4.76	0.43	4	5
I feel valued in my volunteer role	21	4.81	0.39	4	5
I receive regular communication from the organization's staff	21	4.62	0.65	3	5
I am more knowledgeable about child development as a result of volunteering with this organization	20	4.55	0.67	3	5
I feel confident in working with children and families from diverse backgrounds	20	4.35	0.73	3	5
I am making a difference in the lives of the children and families with whom I work	20	4.50	0.74	3	5
I feel satisfied with my volunteer experience	21	4.71	0.55	3	5

Perception of Volunteers' Impact on Children in Program

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Volunteers' Impact					
Classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio	12	4.50	0.76	3	5
Children can be divided into smaller groups for activities	14	4.64	0.61	3	5
Children spend more time in literacy activities	14	4.00	0.85	3	5
Children have more one-on-one time with an adult to work on specific skills	14	4.43	0.62	3	5
Children have increased language development	14	4.29	0.70	3	5
Children have increased school readiness skills	14	4.21	0.67	3	5
Children have more opportunities for enrichment activities (i.e. field trips, music, etc)	14	3.86	1.06	2	5

How likely are you to do the following?

Not at all Likely	Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
1	2	3	4
			5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
How likely are you to do the following?					
Continue in your volunteer role with this organization	21	4.86	0.35	4	5
Increase your volunteer hours with this organization	21	3.38	1.00	1	5
Take on additional roles or responsibilities with this organization	21	3.38	1.00	1	5
Seek additional volunteer roles with other early childhood organizations	21	2.57	1.18	1	5
Advocate for early childhood programs and policies	21	4.10	0.97	2	5
Recruit others to volunteer for this organization	21	4.33	0.78	3	5

Perceptions of Volunteering in an Early Childhood Setting

Not True at All		Somewhat True		Very True
1	2	3	4	5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Perceptions of Volunteering in an Early Childhood Setting					
Physical/health limitations affect my ability to work with young children	20	1.45	0.67	1	3
Generational differences in approaches to working with young children makes my work with this organization difficult	19	1.42	0.67	1	3
It is difficult not to share information about the children that may be confidential	19	1.21	0.61	1	3
Liability issues of working with young children concern me	19	1.42	1.09	1	5
It is difficult to set limits on my personal involvement when working with the children and their families	19	1.58	1.04	1	5
The challenges of working with children and families who have overwhelming needs keeps me from wanting to be a volunteer	18	1.44	1.26	1	5
Working with young children is fun	19	4.74	0.71	2	5
Volunteering will limit the flexibility of my private time	19	2.32	1.08	1	4
My personal family caregiving limits my time for volunteering	19	1.95	1.10	1	4

Appendix 5: Boomers and Babies Administrative Staff Survey Results 2012

Participant Information

Staff Gender	
Female	14
Male	2

Years Worked at Organization	
Less than 5 years	5
5-10 years	6
11-15 years	3
Over 20 years	2

Highest Level of Education	
Some college	2
Bachelor's degree	4
Graduate or professional degree	10

Volunteer Race/Ethnicity	
White	15
Bi-racial/Mixed	1

Organizational Infrastructure for Supporting Boomer Volunteers

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Organizational Infrastructure for Supporting Boomer Volunteers					
Organization has paid position/staff time for coordinating volunteers	16	5.25	1.64	1	6
Organization has procedures in place for screening and assigning volunteers	15	5.93	0.25	5	6
Organization has a system in place for tracking volunteer information and hours	16	5.44	0.79	3	6
Organization provides adequate supervision for volunteers	16	4.88	0.70	3	6
Organization utilizes consistent communication strategies for keeping volunteers informed	16	4.69	0.58	4	6
Organization provides performance feedback to volunteers	16	3.81	0.88	2	5
Organization works with other community partners to identify and recruit volunteers	16	4.94	1.03	2	6
Organization views volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program	16	5.81	0.39	5	6
Organization trains staff to integrate volunteers into program	16	4.75	1.03	2	6
Organization integrates volunteers into critical roles within the organization	16	5.13	0.78	4	6
The organization's staff integrate volunteers into program	16	5.19	0.63	4	6
The organization's staff value volunteers' involvement and contributions to the program	16	5.44	0.61	4	6
The organization's staff have positive attitude toward volunteers	15	5.27	0.68	4	6
Utilize effective recruitment strategies	16	4.94	0.90	2	6

Engaging Boomer Volunteers

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Engaging Boomer Volunteers					
Assign volunteers to meaningful tasks and roles within the organization	16	5.38	0.70	4	6
Match volunteers with their areas of interest and expertise	16	5.50	0.61	4	6
Maintain clearly defined volunteer roles & responsibilities	16	5.13	0.78	3	6
Provide flexibility in scheduling to meet the individual needs of the volunteers	15	5.47	0.72	4	6
Recognize volunteers for their contributions to the program	16	5.44	0.61	4	6
Retain volunteers	16	5.19	0.73	3	6

Barriers to Project Implementation

	Not a Barrier		Somewhat		Significant Barrier
	1	2	3	4	5
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Barriers to Project Implementation					
Physical/health limitations of volunteers	16	2.00	0.94	1	4
Generational differences in approaches to interacting with young children	16	2.13	0.86	1	4
Confidentiality issues	16	1.25	0.43	1	2
Liability issues associated with utilizing volunteers	16	1.25	0.56	1	3
Staff is not supportive of integrating volunteers into the program	16	1.75	1.03	1	4
Language barrier for recruitment of non-English speaking volunteers	16	2.38	1.36	1	5
Maintaining communication with volunteers	15	1.93	0.68	1	3
Securing volunteers for specific needs within your organization (i.e. clerical, fundraising, classroom, etc.)	16	2.63	1.17	1	5
Supporting professionalism among volunteers	16	1.31	0.46	1	2
Accommodating volunteer scheduling preferences	16	2.38	1.11	1	5
Securing funding for costs associated with utilizing volunteers	16	2.38	1.27	1	5
Recruitment strategies	16	2.31	1.16	1	5
Transition of key staff (within your own or a partner organization)	16	1.88	1.17	1	5
Timing of volunteer recruitment (i.e. program is seasonal)	16	2.13	0.99	1	4
Age limited to Boomer volunteers for this funding	16	2.81	1.13	1	5
Scheduling group meetings with volunteers	16	2.94	1.03	1	5
Not enough time for volunteer coordinator to fulfill all of the needed duties	16	3.19	1.51	1	5
Volunteers' personal family caregiving limits their time for volunteering	16	2.13	1.17	1	5

Perception of Volunteers' Impact on Children in Program

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Volunteers' Impact					
Classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio	16	5.63	0.48	5	6
Children can be divided into smaller groups for activities	16	5.88	0.33	5	6
Children spend more time in literacy activities	15	5.67	0.47	5	6
Children have more one-on-one time with an adult to work on specific skills	16	5.69	0.58	4	6
Children have increased language development	16	5.50	0.61	4	6
Children have increased school readiness skills	16	5.56	0.61	4	6
Children have more opportunities for enrichment activities (i.e. field trips, music, etc.)	16	5.38	0.78	4	6

How likely are you to do the following?

Not at all Likely		Somewhat Likely		Very Likely
1	2	3	4	5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
How likely are you to do the following?					
Recruit boomer volunteers	16	4.75	0.56	3	5
Utilize boomer volunteers	16	4.94	0.24	4	5
Utilize volunteers of other ages	16	4.94	0.24	4	5
Sustain volunteer coordinator position	16	4.50	0.94	2	5
Further integrate volunteers into core roles of the organization	16	4.75	0.43	4	5

Appendix 6: Boomers and Babies Teacher Survey Results 2012

Participant Information

Staff Gender	
Female	32
Male	0

Years Worked at Organization	
Less than 5 years	12
5-10 years	13
11-15 years	2
Over 20 years	3

Highest Level of Education	
Some college	4
Associate's degree	11
Bachelor's degree	12
Graduate or professional degree	5

Volunteer Race/Ethnicity	
White	26
Hispanic/Latino	2
Native American	2

Organizational Infrastructure for Supporting Boomer Volunteers

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Organizational Infrastructure for Supporting Boomer Volunteers					
Organization has paid staff position/time for coordinating volunteers	40	5.38	0.97	3	6
Organization has procedures in place for screening and assigning volunteers	39	5.33	1.16	1	6
Organization provides adequate supervision for volunteers	38	4.76	1.37	1	6
Organization utilizes consistent communication strategies for keeping volunteers informed	38	4.68	1.34	1	6
Organization provides performance feedback to volunteers	38	4.05	1.47	1	6
Organization trains staff to integrate volunteers into program	38	4.47	1.43	1	6

Engaging Boomer Volunteers

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Integrate Boomer Volunteers into the Organization					
Organization matches volunteers with their areas of interest and expertise	35	4.89	1.01	2	6
Organization provides flexibility in scheduling to meet the individual needs of the volunteers	36	5.33	0.82	3	6
Organization recognizes volunteers for their contributions to the program or your classroom	35	5.20	1.06	2	6
Organization trains volunteers to meet the needs of your classroom	36	4.47	1.44	1	6

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

Integrate Boomer Volunteers into the Classroom					
Assign volunteers to meaningful tasks and roles within your classroom	36	5.11	1.05	2	6
Match volunteers with their areas of interest and expertise	36	5.17	0.80	4	6
Maintain clearly defined volunteer roles & responsibilities	36	5.03	1.01	3	6
Provide flexibility in scheduling to meet the individual needs of the volunteers	36	5.31	0.78	3	6
Recognize volunteers for their contributions to the program or your classroom	36	5.36	0.79	4	6
Train volunteers to meet the needs of your classroom	36	4.64	1.27	2	6
Provide performance feedback to volunteers	36	4.42	1.44	1	6
Provide a welcoming environment	34	5.56	0.74	3	6

Staff's Values & Attitudes Toward Volunteers

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Staff's Values & Attitudes					
The organization's staff view volunteers as integral to the overall sustainability of the program	38	5.03	1.40	1	6
The organization's staff have positive attitude toward volunteers	37	5.16	1.15	1	6
The organization's staff value volunteer contributions to the program	36	5.33	1.05	2	6
The organization's staff integrate volunteers into program	36	5.39	0.92	3	6

Perception of Volunteers' Impact on Children in Program

Completely disagree	Mostly disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Mostly agree	Completely agree
1	2	3	4	5	6

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Volunteers' Impact					
Classrooms have a lower adult-to-child ratio	35	4.71	1.63	1	6
Children can be divided into smaller groups for activities	35	4.91	1.44	1	6
Children spend more time in literacy activities	35	4.74	1.40	1	6
Children have more one-on-one time with an adult to work on specific skills	35	4.97	1.25	1	6
Children have increased language development	34	4.88	1.41	1	6
Children have increased school readiness skills	34	4.79	1.39	1	6
Children have more opportunities for enrichment activities (i.e. field trips, music, etc)	35	4.80	1.41	1	6

Barriers to Successful Integration of Boomers Into Classrooms

Not a Barrier		Somewhat		Significant Barrier
1	2	3	4	5

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Barriers to Project Implementation					
Physical/health limitations of volunteers	35	2.29	1.03	1	4
Generational differences in approaches to interacting with young children	35	2.74	1.20	1	5
Confidentiality issues	35	2.03	1.03	1	4
Liability issues associated with utilizing volunteers	35	1.86	1.17	1	5
Staff is not supportive of integrating volunteers into the program	35	1.63	1.04	1	5
Language barrier for recruitment of non-English speaking volunteers	35	1.86	1.15	1	5
Lack of time to communicate with volunteers about their role, tasks, etc.	35	3.03	1.32	1	5
Securing volunteers for specific needs within your classroom (i.e. reading pal, art, music etc.)	34	2.41	1.29	1	5
Lack of professionalism among volunteers	35	1.80	1.01	1	5
Accommodating volunteer scheduling preferences	34	2.03	1.04	1	4
Including volunteers disrupts the schedule and flow of the classroom	33	2.06	1.25	1	5
Not enough tasks to keep volunteers busy in my classroom	33	1.61	0.95	1	4
Volunteers do not have a rapport with the children	33	1.76	0.89	1	4
Consistency in volunteer scheduling	33	2.00	1.21	1	5
Too many volunteers scheduled at the same time	33	1.42	0.82	1	4
Volunteers do not have skills necessary to fulfill the role they have been assigned	33	2.12	1.41	1	5
Volunteers' personal family caregiving limits their time to volunteer	35	1.94	1.24	1	5