

Implications of Volunteerism in Idaho

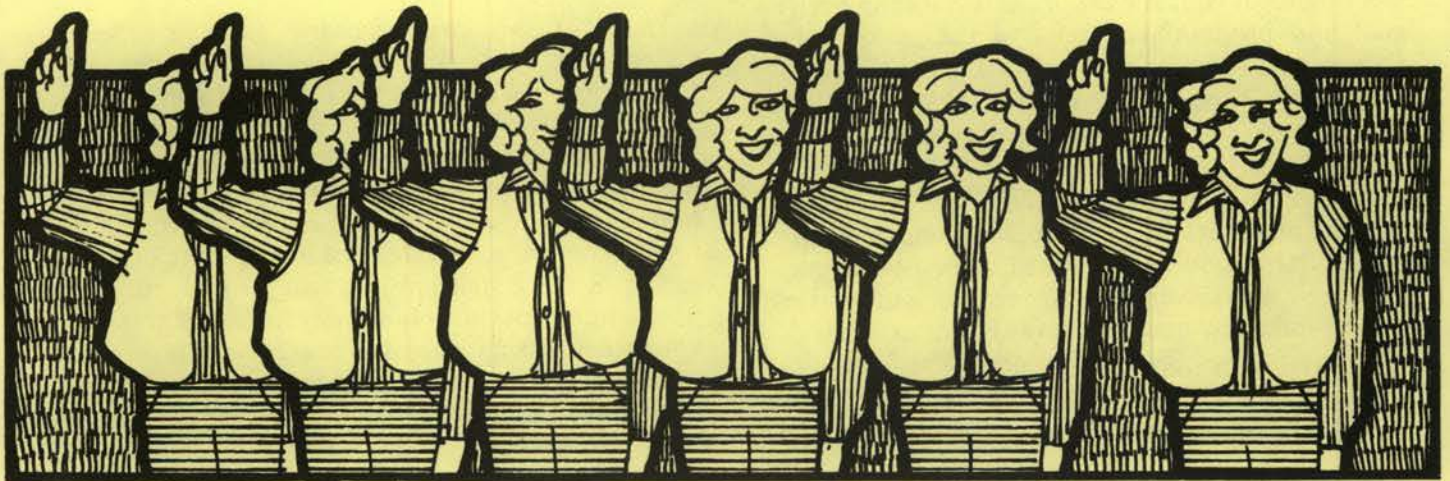
National and Idaho State Projections

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Implications of Volunteerism in Extension National and Idaho State Projections

Adapted for Idaho by Corinne M. Rowe, Associate Extension Professor¹

Foreword

The training and utilization of lay volunteers to work with Cooperative Extension agents in implementing local educational projects has long been a goal and program emphasis of the Cooperative Extension Service (Sanders 1966). Yet little information has been systematically collected to show the full scope and impact of volunteer lay leadership.

In 1983, a national study titled "Implications of Volunteerism in the Cooperative Extension Service" was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service (USDA-ES) to be conducted by the University of Wisconsin. Administration of interview questionnaires began in 1984.

Projection of the number and type of volunteers to the 50-state Cooperative Extension Services (CES) is possible from the national sample which was drawn randomly from all types and sizes of counties in the United States. The four Idaho counties participating in the national study, however, are not by themselves representative of all Idaho counties. Thus, to increase representation of all segments of the Idaho Cooperative Extension Service and project to Idaho, four counties were added to the initial Idaho sample to participate in the initial phase of the study. This report, giving national volunteer projections and a comparative Idaho projection, is based on the IVE report, "Partners in Action: Com-

munity Volunteers, Cooperative Extension Agents — National Projections," supplemented by additional Idaho data (1984).

Data for this comprehensive study are being collected in two phases. These include: (1) an inventory of agent estimates of the number and type of volunteers, the approximate number of volunteer hours given to Extension, agent time spent in training and working with volunteers, agent views of the importance and impact of volunteers and their attitudes toward the volunteer leadership development aspect of the Extension job; and (2) in-depth telephone interviews with randomly selected Extension volunteers. The initial part of phase one — projecting numbers, types of volunteers and volunteer hours devoted to Extension — is reported here.

Results from the entire project will include a report of the composite findings and their implications as well as reports for each of the four main program areas in Extension: Home Economics, Resource Development, 4-H/Youth and Agriculture.

National Implications of Volunteerism in Extension (IVE) data were collected and compiled by a research team under the leadership of Sara M. Steele, Project Director, Department of Continuing and Vocational Education, University of Wisconsin. Additional Idaho data were collected and compiled by Corinne M. Rowe, Idaho State IVE Contact, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, University of Idaho.

¹This publication is based in part on work conducted by the National IVE Project Staff, University of Wisconsin, Department of Continuing and Vocational Education, in 1984.

Community Volunteers and Cooperative Extension Agents: Partners in Action

Some people regard themselves as volunteers; others just think of themselves as people helping other people or people getting things done. Regardless of the label, these unpaid people do essential work with many different agencies and organizations. One such agency is the Cooperative Extension Service (funded jointly by the federal government through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the state through the Land-Grant University and the county through the County Extension Office). Volunteers work with Extension on all three levels. This report only looks, however, at how county Extension staff and volunteers work together.

The Extension Volunteer Partnership Is Important

The time, effort, enthusiasm, skills and talents of volunteers — people willing to help other people — are just as important today as they were during pioneer days. The difference is that the community problems and individual needs of today are more complex and apt to require more technical information and greater group organizational skills.

Cooperative Extension Service agents help volunteers secure information from universities and government agencies and then interpret it for each local situation. Extension agents are part of the faculty or staff of the state Land-Grant Universities and, thus, have ready access to information on many subjects. Agents are trained and experienced in the processes needed to carry out volunteer programs including instruction, communication and organization. As a result, they are able to help volunteers analyze situations and plan the appropriate approaches.

Extension offices exist in 42 of the 44 Idaho counties as in almost every county of the United States and in all trust territories and outlying areas. The number of staff members and specific programs in each county will vary, but assistance to volunteers is available from all offices.

Information Sources

The IVE study collected data from a national, random sample of 315 counties with populations ranging from 859 to 1,428,285. County locations ranged from Anchorage, Alaska, to Volusia County, Florida; from Zapata County, Texas, to Aroostook County, Maine; and from the island of Hilo, Hawaii, to Essex County, Massachusetts.

The sample included both urban centers such as San Francisco, Denver, St. Louis and New York

City, and sparse population areas like Millard County, Utah, and Humboldt County, Nevada. The Idaho sample included Adams, Bannock, Benewah, Franklin, Gem, Jerome, Minidoka and Nez Perce counties (Fig. 1).

Cooperative Extension agents in the sample counties were asked to inventory their work with volunteers during 1983.

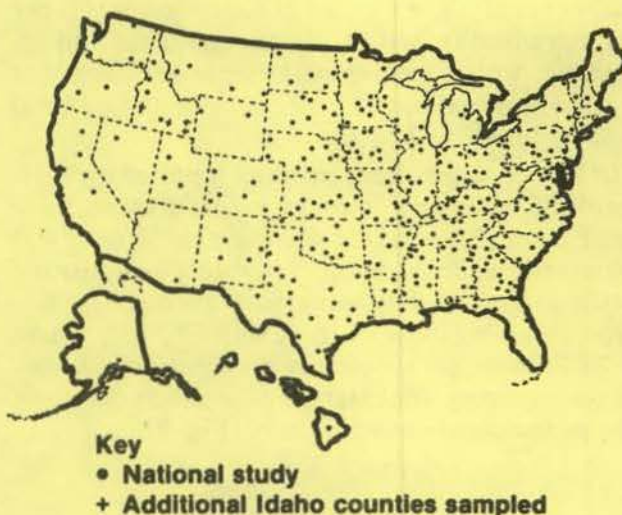


Fig. 1. Counties in study sample.

National Figures

Findings from the sample were projected to national figures by multiplying by 10 since the 315 counties were a 10 percent probability sample of all counties stratified by population. The response rate was 99.7 percent; thus multiplying the sample data by 10 was viewed by the IVE project team as being an accurate national projection.

Idaho Figures

Findings from the Idaho sample were projected to Idaho figures through a process of weighting responses according to CES professional staff positions. Adams and Benewah counties, predominantly rural counties with single agents, were considered to be representative of the 13 Idaho single-agent counties. Figures gathered from Franklin, Gem, Jerome and Minidoka counties, mid-sized counties with two agents each, were weighted to represent 21 counties. Nez Perce, a three-agent county, and Bannock, a four and one-half agent county with EFNEP paraprofessionals, were considered representatives of the eight more highly populated Idaho counties, or those with more than 30,000 people.

How Many People and How Much Time?

How Many People?

About 2.9 million individual volunteers worked with CES agents in volunteer activities in 1983. This means that about one of every 80 people in the United States used the Cooperative Extension Service to assist others. Comparable Idaho figures are 30,500 individuals or approximately one in 30 Idahoans.

The number of Extension volunteers per county ranged from 39 to 18,000 nationally with a median of 615 and from 52 to 5,481 in Idaho, a median of 500 per county. The number of Extension agents per county ranged from 1 to 25 nationally, and 1 to 4.5 in Idaho, with a median of 3 agents per county or 11,000 agents nationally and 2 per county for a total of 80 in Idaho.

In Idaho, single-agent counties reported an average of 128 volunteers across all program areas. Two-agent counties indicated an average of over 400 volunteers, while the number of volunteers assisting in the largest county programs averaged nearly 2,900, including those working with EFNEP. Where EFNEP exists, paraprofessionals function in a middle management role extending the efforts of Extension professionals to volunteers (Fig. 2).

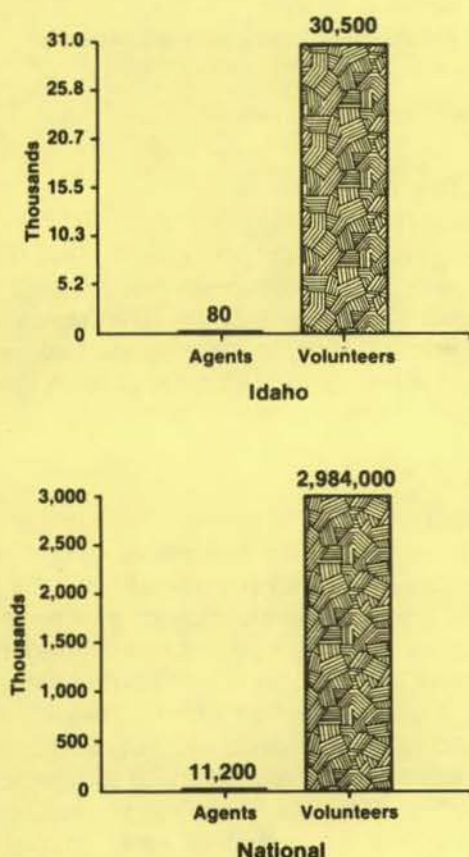


Fig. 2. Number of Extension agents and local volunteers in 1983.

The program area reporting the highest percentage of volunteers in Idaho county programs was 4-H/Youth, accounting for 46.5 percent of all Extension volunteers. Home economics followed closely with 44.5 percent. Agriculture programs benefitted from the activities of 9 percent of county Extension volunteers (Fig. 3).

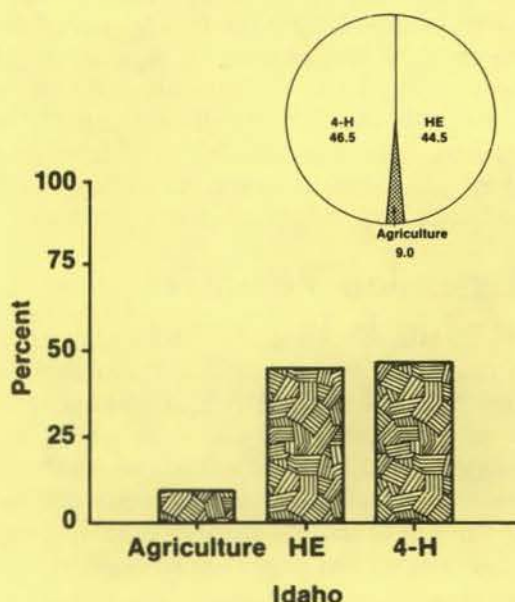


Fig. 3. Division among program areas by percent of total volunteers.

How Much Time?

Nationally, volunteers spent more than 71 million days collectively on activities with Extension in 1983. Idaho Extension volunteers spent over 960,000 days. Volunteers invested about 51 days for every day of Extension professional staff time invested in volunteer activities, volunteer training and development (Fig. 4).

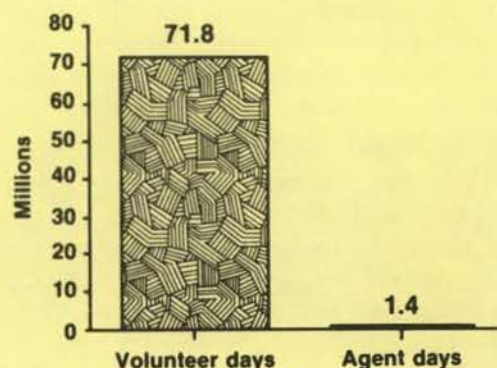


Fig. 4. Number of days in 1983 spent by agents and volunteers working with Extension.

Time spent by individual agents in working closely with volunteers ranged from less than 20 percent of their total work time to more than 80 percent. The average was about 33 percent.

Dollar Value of Volunteer Time

If the hours donated by volunteers had been reimbursed at a wage equivalent to the work involved (calculated at \$8.00 per hour based on an IVE study of comparable worth in business and industry), communities would have paid more than \$4.5 billion nationally. Idaho's share of this would have amounted to nearly \$2.4 million.

In contrast, the total budget for the Extension Service (federal, state and county, and others' contributions) in 1983 was approximately \$860 million nationally and nearly \$5 million in Idaho. Fig. 5 shows a graphic comparison.

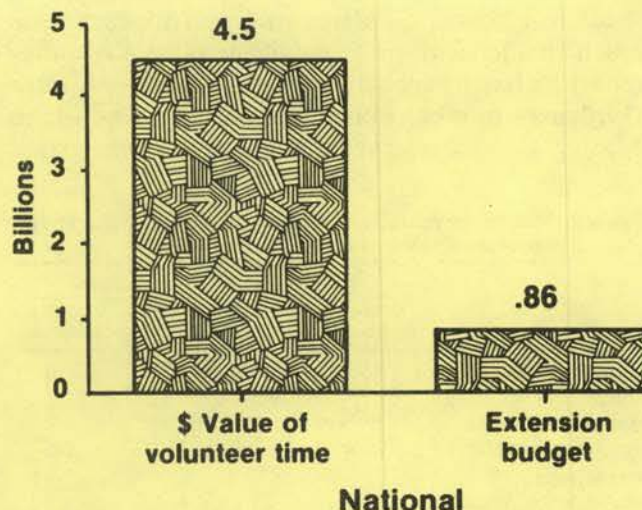


Fig. 5. Dollar value of volunteer time as compared with the 1983 Extension budget.

What CES Programs Receive Volunteer Assistance?

The national IVE study indicated that about 74 percent of the volunteers were in programs developed by Extension, thus assisting directly with the implementation of Extension programs locally. The other fourth involved volunteers from other community organizations or agencies, thus receiving some of their training from Extension professionals, or independent volunteers. These are people who work in the community independently of either Extension or other organized community groups.

Within Extension developed programs some volunteers were specialized as Master Food Preservers, Master Gardeners or 4-H Leaders. Others just lent a hand. Overall, about a million and a half volunteers were enrolled in specific Extension volunteer programs. Another million helped with special projects and activities.

Extension's three main forms of volunteer activity are through: (1) groups Extension helped to form, (b) Master Volunteer programs and (c) short-term projects.

Extension Organizations

Over the years, several community or county organizations have developed throughout the country which have close ties to the Cooperative Extension Service, including Extension Homemakers Clubs, 4-H Clubs, agricultural commodity and breed groups and some community and resource development committees. Table 1 shows the frequency with which these programs are found in counties throughout the United States and the number of volunteers serving as officers or leaders of

those groups. The largest number in any one program was the more than 524,000 adults and youth serving as volunteer leaders with local 4-H clubs.

Table 1. Number of volunteers from organizations which work closely with Cooperative Extension.

	Nationally		In Idaho	
	Counties Indicating	Volunteers (Approx.)	Counties Indicating	Volunteers (Approx.)
Local 4-H Clubs and Interest Groups	96%	524,000	100%	5,000
Extension Homemaker Clubs	80%	269,000	91%	696
Ag Commodity/Breed Groups	88%	70,000	95%	2,005
Resource Groups	67%	52,000	12.5%	201

Master and Middle Management Volunteer Programs

Within the last few years Extension has developed Master Volunteer programs. Volunteers exchange a specified number of hours of community service — often teaching others — for a specified number of hours of training from the Extension agent (Table 2).

The first such program was the Master Gardener program. By 1983, one-fourth of the counties reported Master Gardeners with a national total of about 15,000 volunteers. Similarly, about a fifth of the counties in the national IVE study said they have Master Home Economics Volunteer Programs with about 9,700 volunteers.

Idaho's Master Gardener program appears to be much smaller with only one of the sample counties reporting having such a program. Volunteer Master Gardeners number about 56 in Idaho. The Idaho Master Food Preserver Program, by contrast, is

Table 2. Number of volunteers assisting as Master and/or Middle Management Volunteers.

	Nationally		In Idaho	
	Counties Indicating	Volunteers (Approx.)	Counties Indicating	Volunteers (Approx.)
Master Gardeners	25%	15,000	2%	56
Master Home Economics Volunteer Programs	20%	9,700	87.5%	225
4-H Middle Management Volunteer Programs	—	—	62.5%	445

found in approximately 37 of the 42 Idaho counties. The program accounts for 225 volunteers.

A third master volunteer program not examined by the national IVE study is that of 4-H middle management, 4-H volunteers who provide service to other 4-H leaders or whose primary job is to coordinate some part of the local 4-H program such as an event or activity. Five of the eight Idaho counties sampled indicated having established such a program with 445 volunteers projected to be active throughout the state.

Information Providers

In 1983, county Extension Service agents provided more than 2,894,000 national volunteers (30,500 in Idaho) with agriculture, home economics, community and youth development information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or a Land-Grant University. In turn, the volunteers shared that information with more than 48 million people nationally and 213,329 in Idaho (Fig. 6).

With Extension training and assistance, volunteers worked with a wide range of subjects. Topics included: food for fitness, money management, seed selection, crop production, weed and pest control, consumer buying, public affairs and youth development. In addition, volunteers and Extension agents worked together on special topics such as survival skills for latchkey children, infant car seat safety programs and sea survival training for commercial fishermen.

Some volunteers taught groups — 4-H project groups, Extension Homemaker Clubs or other community groups. Some appeared on TV or radio programs. Other volunteers staffed educational exhibits or answered telephone requests for information.

Volunteers worked with Extension agents in identifying needed information and presenting it in a manner relevant to the farmer, homemaker, business person, youth or community citizen. This partnership of fitting information to local needs is a Cooperative Extension Service tradition which strengthens the partnership between volunteers and Extension staff.

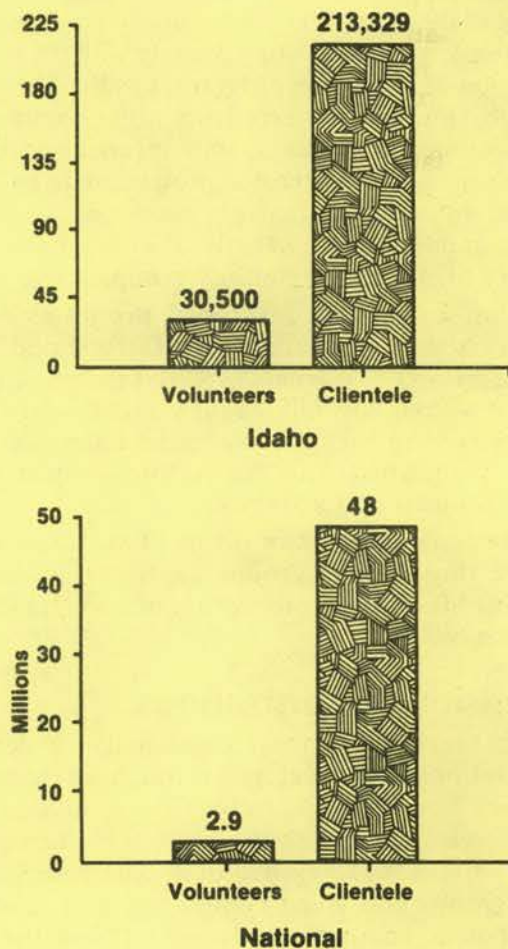


Fig. 6. Number of volunteers sharing information and clientele reached in 1983.

Specific Projects

The third kind of Extension volunteer program is specially designed for a specific project. For example, agents reported helping volunteers assess the need for an afterschool day care facility, organize a speaker's bureau or provide consumer information at local grocery stores. These programs vary across counties; but in most counties, Extension agents assist volunteers in organizing short-term projects.

Volunteers Who Lend a Hand

In addition to the volunteers who hold specific roles in structured Extension programs, thousands of others assist for shorter periods and help in a variety of ways. Some are guest speakers on Extension

programs. Some help with activities and events by providing transportation, stuffing envelopes, directing traffic, lettering signs or supervising activities. Others help those who are in specific roles. Such helpers are seldom counted in Extension reports, but their work is very important.

Volunteers Working Together

Extension volunteers and agents work together on a variety of tasks. Nationally, the 2.9 million individuals were involved in more than 7.3 million volunteer efforts. Related Idaho figures are 30,500 individuals involved in 100,500 volunteer efforts. (The average volunteer was included in three of the tasks explored in the study.)

Maintaining Organizations and Programs

Nationally, more than 414,000 volunteers serving as officers on boards of local organizations kept their members in touch with the Cooperative Extension Service with Extension providing officer training, information and counsel as requested. In addition, over 1,924,000 worked with Extension on tasks such as recruiting and promoting local programs, assisting with community surveys or providing funds and facilities for local Extension programs.

Volunteers strengthened Cooperative Extension programs by identifying needs and prioritizing requests for programs. More than a million served on Extension advisory boards, ad hoc planning groups or committees. Extension agents indicated that volunteers were very important in making informa-

tion more useful to clientele, helping agents better understand local situations and selecting the best programming methods. They also reported that volunteers helped them reach more people, including many not otherwise reached by Extension.

Literature Cited

Sanders, H. C. (ed.) 1966. The Cooperative Extension Service. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Implications of Volunteerism in Extension Project Staff. 1984. Partners in Action: Community Volunteers, Cooperative Extension Agents - National Projections. Univ. of Wisconsin, Dept. of Continuing and Vocational Education.



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Service . . . The Cooperative Extension Service has offices in 42 of Idaho's 44 counties under the leadership of men and women specially trained to work with agriculture, home economics and youth. The educational programs of these College of Agriculture faculty members are supported cooperatively by county, state and federal funding.

Research . . . Agricultural Research scientists are located at the campus in Moscow, at Research and Extension Centers near Aberdeen, Caldwell, Parma, Teton and Twin Falls and at the U. S. Sheep Experiment Station, Dubois and the USDA/ARS Soil and Water Laboratory at Kimberly. Their work includes research on every major agricultural program in Idaho and on economic activities that apply to the state as a whole.

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