

Pro Bono Readiness Research

LBG Associates and LBG Research Institute

January 2012



INVESTING *for* Good™

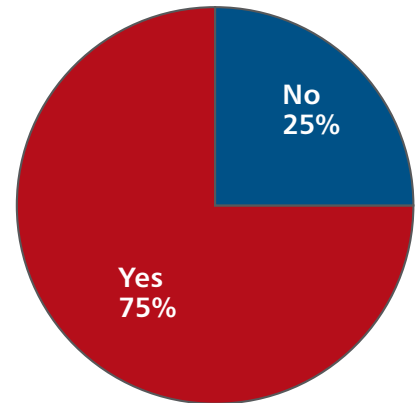
Introduction

Capital One asked LBG Associates and LBG Research Institute to conduct a survey to assess nonprofit readiness for pro bono services with the intent to increase the effectiveness of these initiatives. Capital One and its partners sent the survey link to nonprofits around the country in December 2011 and January 2012. The survey closed on January 9, 2012, with 1,348 responses.

Findings

Have you used pro bono services or the professional skills of volunteers to strengthen your organizations' infrastructure?

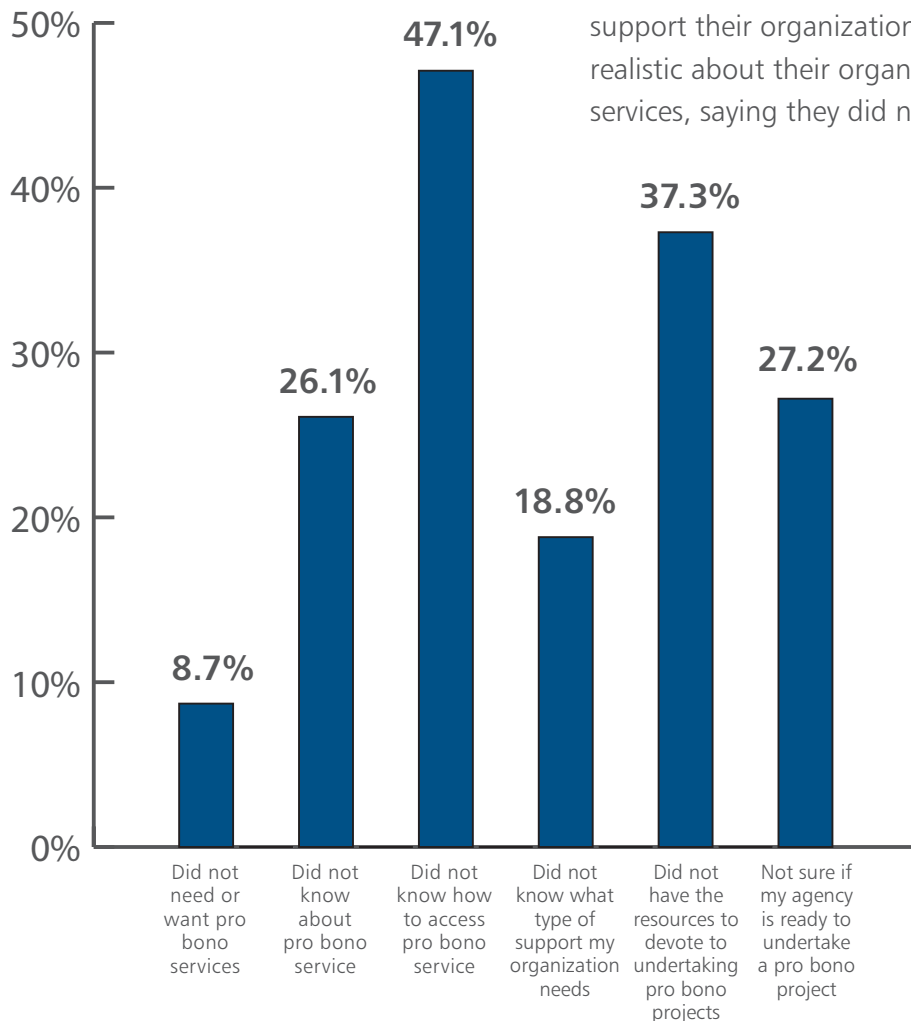
The majority (75%) of respondents are familiar with pro bono because they have used these services or volunteers' professional skills at their organization.



If you have not used pro bono services, why not?

Of the one-quarter that have not used pro bono services, the reason is overwhelmingly because they did not know how to access these services.

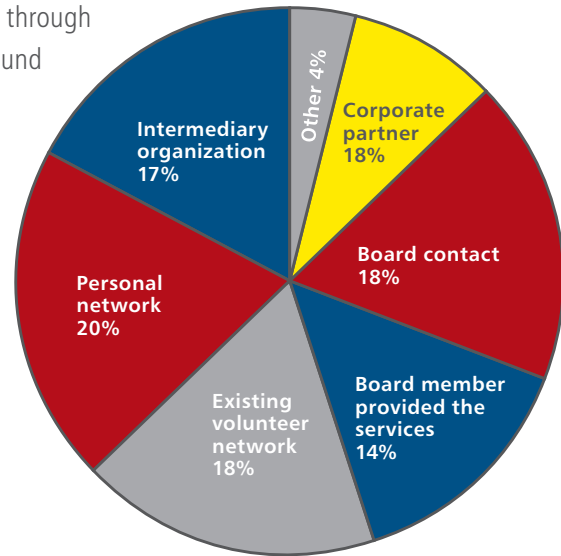
But one-quarter also said that they did not know about pro bono services at all.



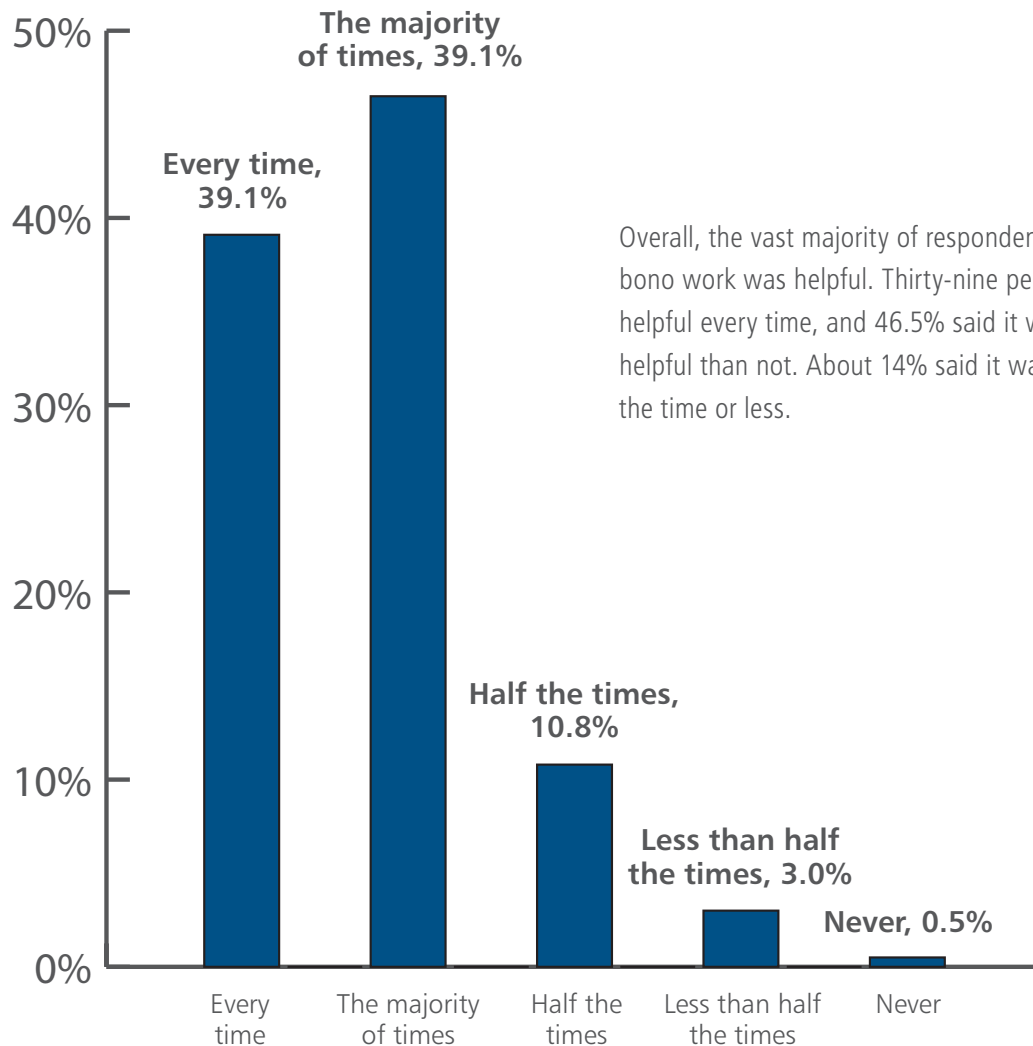
Another 19% said they did not know what type of support their organization needed. About 37% were realistic about their organizations' ability to use the services, saying they did not have the resources to devote to a pro bono volunteer. One-quarter was not sure that their agency was ready to take on a project. Only 8% said they did not want or need pro bono services.

If yes, how has your organization gained access to these volunteers/services?

Board members and networks are crucial to finding pro bono volunteers. Twenty percent of respondents said they found their volunteers through personal networks, either their own or their staff's, and 18% found them through their existing volunteer networks. Another 18% found volunteers through Board member contacts, and 14% said the Board members themselves provided the services. Seventeen percent used an intermediary, like Taproot, to find skilled volunteers. Corporate partners were the smallest source of volunteers, at just 9%. Volunteer sources in the "other" category included universities and online postings.



If yes, how many times was the pro bono work helpful?



Overall, the vast majority of respondents felt that the pro bono work was helpful. Thirty-nine percent said it was helpful every time, and 46.5% said it was more often helpful than not. About 14% said it was helpful only half the time or less.

Among the respondents who said the project was helpful half the times or less, the most frequent complaint was that the deliverable was disappointing—more than half said this was the problem. About 45% said that the volunteers were not knowledgeable about the agency or sector needs. Almost as many respondents felt that too much of the organization’s staff time was needed for the project.

About one-quarter felt that the project took too long to finish or that the volunteer did not have the right skills. Twenty-three percent said they underestimated the scope of work that was required.

The volunteer’s lack of commitment or personal time constraints were most frequently noted as issues in the “other” category. Frequently, respondents said that the volunteers meant well, but they found that the volunteers did not have the time required to complete the project as desired. Other issues were recommendations that were not realistic in terms of money or staff and overall poor quality of the work compared to what the nonprofit staff could produce, had they the time.

If the answer above is “Half the times, less than half the times, or never”, what are the top reasons for why a pro bono project did not go well? Please select up to five reasons.	Response Percent
The deliverable was disappointing	58.0%
Volunteers were not knowledgeable about the agency or sector needs	44.9%
Too much of the organization’s staff time was needed	43.5%
The project took too long to finish and didn’t meet our time constraints	25.4%
Volunteers didn’t have the right skills	24.6%
The organization underestimated the scope of work that was required	23.2%
Other	23.2%
We did not have the right technical expertise or infrastructure in place to conduct or implement/sustain the work	22.5%
Decisions in my agency were not made in a timely manner	8.7%
We did not have the necessary internal buy-in	4.3%
Our pro bono projects all went well	2.2%

What Do Nonprofits Need?

According to the survey, nonprofits need pro bono services far more than they need either skills-based or traditional volunteers. More than 66% said they need professional services that improve the infrastructure of the nonprofit, such as a web designer improving a website or an HR executive consulting on performance appraisals. Seventeen percent said they need skills-based volunteers, those that use their skill set in the volunteer job but are not addressing the internal workings of the nonprofit. Examples include a banker teaching financial literacy or a scientist judging a science fair. About 16% said they most need traditional volunteers who can deliver services directly to the community, like planting a garden or building a playground. Less than 1% said they do not need volunteers at all.

What kind of volunteer support is your nonprofit in need of MOST?	Response Percent
Pro bono services, volunteers using their direct business skills to provide professional services to improve the infrastructure of your nonprofit	66.7%
Skilled-based hands-on volunteering project, delivering services directly to the community using select general skills	17.0%
Traditional hands-on volunteering project, delivering services directly to the community, e.g., cleaning a beach, painting a building, serving meals	15.7%
We do not need volunteers of any type	0.6%

Given the above results, it is not surprising then that two-thirds of respondents strongly agreed that they could increase their organization's social impact if they could get pro bono consulting services. Twenty-two percent somewhat agreed that that is true and 9% agreed that is true. Combined, that's 96% of respondents that agreed that pro bono resources can move an organization forward.

To what extent do you agree that you could increase your organization's social impact if you could get free (i.e., pro bono) consulting resources?	Response Percent
Strongly agree	65.6%
Somewhat agree	21.7%
Agree	9.4%
Somewhat disagree	3.0%
Strongly disagree	0.3%

Respondents' Reflections on Their Organization

Respondents were asked a series of questions designed to assess the readiness of their organizations for pro bono services, including their missions and goals, and their interactions with volunteers. The following tables show the results for all respondents.

Nearly every respondent (91%) said that they are clear on how each program relates to their organization's mission and values. Far less, though, believed that the staff and the board are on the same page about the kind of social change the organization is trying to achieve—68%. The same percentage said they know what the organizational goals are for the next few years.

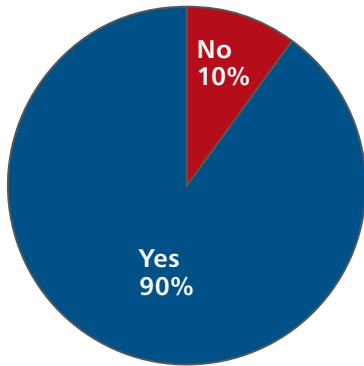
Consider the following statements as you reflect on your organization.	Yes	No	Somewhat	N/A
Organizationally, are you clear about how each program relates to your mission and vision?	91.3%	1.0%	7.4%	0.2%
Are all staff and board on the same page about the kind of social change you are trying to achieve?	67.8%	4.9%	26.1%	1.1%
Do you know what your organizational goals are for the next few years?	67.5%	5.5%	26.8%	0.2%

As for respondents' interaction with volunteers, almost half had a volunteer management process in place and knew how to solicit information about what volunteers are trying to get out of their involvement with the nonprofit. Just over half said that when they received feedback on ways to improve their volunteer engagement, they acted on it.

Since pro bono volunteers are essentially unpaid consultants, the survey asked if the respondents had worked with consultants or vendors before. Eighty-percent said yes, they had managed external resources before.

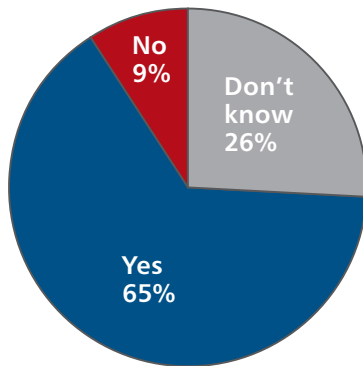
Consider the following statements as you reflect on your organization and its interaction with volunteers.	Yes	No	Somewhat	N/A
Do you have a volunteer management process in place?	49.3%	21.7%	27.4%	1.6%
Do you have a staff person managing volunteers full time?	29.9%	52.7%	15.2%	2.3%
Have you managed external resources before (like consultants, vendors, etc)?	80.1%	9.4%	9.2%	1.2%
Do you know how to solicit information about what your volunteers are trying to get out of their involvement with your organization?	48.9%	14.6%	33.9%	2.6%
If you received feedback on ways to improve your volunteer engagement, did you act on it?	52.1%	3.8%	17.2%	27.0%

Do you know what capacity-building challenge(s) your organization faces and are you familiar with resources/tools that will help you assess what areas of capacity building are your greatest needs?



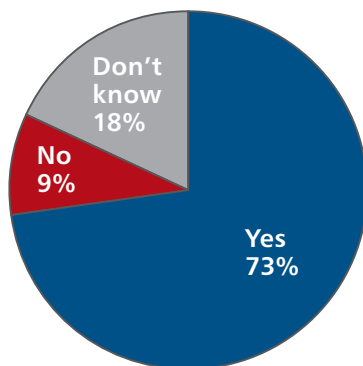
A third part of volunteer readiness is knowing what the organization needs. Nearly 90% of respondents said they know what capacity-building challenges their organization faces. Half (52.3%) said they are familiar with the resources and tools that will help assess the organization’s greatest capacity-building needs.

Are there organizational challenge(s) you want pro bono volunteers to address?



When asked directly if there are organizational challenges that they would like pro bono volunteers to address, 65% said yes. That is nearly identical to the percentage that said they are in most need of pro bono volunteers.

Would you be more likely to seek pro bono support if you could better translate your organization’s infrastructure challenges into specific projects and skills that pro bono volunteers can offer?



Seventy-three percent said they would be more likely to actually seek pro bono support if they could translate the organizational challenges into specific projects and skills that pro bono volunteers can offer.

Fundraising is the number one area in which respondents said they would consider using pro bono help, with 80% naming that as a potential project. Seventy-nine percent said they would use pro bono volunteers for marketing and branding, and 74% said they could use help with PR and communications. Seventy-percent need help with technology. Relatively few, about 30%, said they would consider having pro bono volunteers help with financial management or operations.

In which of the following areas would you consider using pro bono volunteer support? Select all that apply.	Response Percent
Fundraising	80.3%
Marketing/Branding	78.7%
PR/communications	73.8%
Technology	70.2%
Strategic Planning/Management	51.2%
Board Development	50.1%
Human Resources and Leadership Development	40.8%
Financial Management	31.6%
Operations	28.3%
Other	10.0%

Respondents with actual experience with pro bono projects and those considering them were asked to reflect on aspects of the project management that can lead to success (or failure) of a project. The results are divided into two tables: areas of higher and lower certainty.

Respondents were, for the most part, very clear on what project success looks like, how the project results would be used, and the deliverable they wanted. More than 71% agreed that they are sure of these aspects of a project. Sixty-seven percent believed that the project manager has the knowledge and capacity to manage the project, and 60% said that all the individuals who need to be involved with the project are available. About 58% said they know what information they need to provide the volunteers for them to be successful and that they can easily access that information before the volunteer begins the project. In all these categories, between 20% and 36% said they know the answers to these questions “somewhat,” and very, very few said “no.”

Areas of Higher Certainty

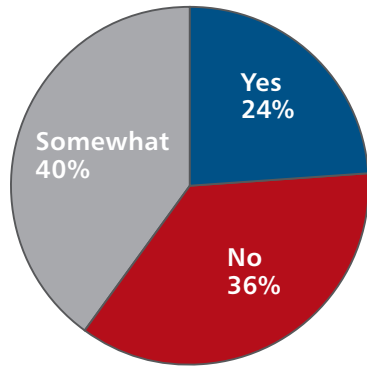
Consider the following statements as you reflect on a pro bono project that you have either engaged in or are considering participating in.	Yes	No	Somewhat	N/A
Can you define what project success would look like?	77.2%	1.8%	20.0%	2.7%
Do you know how you will use the project results?	74.0%	4.4%	19.5%	2.9%
Do you know what kinds of deliverables you are looking for from your pro bono volunteers?	73.2%	3.1%	23.0%	2.4%
Does the project manager have the organizational knowledge and capacity to manage it?	66.9%	3.4%	24.6%	5.9%
Are all the individuals in your organization who need to be involved with this project available?	60.2%	6.0%	30.2%	4.0%
Do you know what information you need to provide volunteers in order to help them achieve success?	58.7%	4.2%	36.3%	2.2%
Can you easily access that information before your pro bono volunteers are engaged?	58.2%	5.4%	34.6%	3.0%

Respondents were far less certain about other aspects of a pro bono project, such as whether all stakeholders were on board with the project, whether the project was ultimately implementable and sustainable, whether past road blocks to success still remained, and whether the organization had the right technical infrastructure in place to support and implement the project.

Areas of Lower Certainty

Consider the following statements as you reflect on a pro bono project that you have either engaged in or are considering participating in.	Yes	No	Somewhat	N/A
Have you vetted this idea with stakeholders to be sure everyone is in agreement about the value of the project?	46.6%	17.4%	30.3%	6.3%
Do you know how you will implement, sustain and support the project after it's delivered?	46.5%	10.1%	40.4%	3.5%
Have you addressed any road-blocks in the past on your own that have affected your ability to solve the challenge that the pro bono project will address?	45.6%	12.8%	29.6%	12.0%
Do you have the right technical infrastructure in place to implement and support the outcomes of this project?	39.8%	9.9%	46.1%	4.6%

Are you familiar with project management tools/resources that you can use to successfully manage your pro bono project?



The respondents who reported successful pro bono projects either all of the time or the majority of the time tended to rate all of these factors higher than the rest, but the list remains in the same order as above. This suggests that the factors with higher certainty may be more correlated with success than the factors with lower certainty.

The factors with higher certainty, for the most part, relate to the planning and management phases of a pro bono project. Yet the answers to the next two questions suggest that nonprofits wanted and needed help with planning and management of a project—a conundrum. For example, only 24% of respondents were familiar with project management tools and resources that could help an organization manage a pro bono project, although 40% said they are somewhat familiar those tools. Still, 36% were not familiar with them.

Similarly, project planning and management is what the majority of respondents said they need most to better manage a pro bono project. These statistics hold true even for respondents who had a successful pro bono project in the past. Further study would be needed to tease out the reason for this seeming contradiction.

What does your organization need to better manage a pro bono project? Select all that apply.	Response Percent
Project planning/timeline management	58.5%
Management bandwidth	44.8%
Technical skills	43.7%
Project scoping	42.4%
Team management	32.9%
Needs identification	32.6%
Other (please specify)	11.9%

Conclusions

What makes a nonprofit ready for pro bono help? What makes the resulting pro bono project successful? A look at the data just for respondents who have had successful pro bono projects all the time or the majority of the time is instructive to answer these questions.

An organization is more ready for a pro bono project and the project is more likely to be helpful and successful under these conditions:

- The organization is clear on how its programs relate to its mission and vision
- The organization knows what its goals are for the next few years
- The organization has experience managing external resources
- There is at least a modest volunteer management process in place
- The organization knows what capacity building challenges it faces and can translate them into specific projects for pro bono volunteers with the right skill sets
- The organization can define what project success looks like and the deliverables it is seeking, and knows how the deliverables will be used

The nonprofit may not be ready under these conditions:

- The nonprofit staff does not have enough time to educate and manage the volunteer
- The nonprofit has not considered its ability to sustain the project after it is delivered
- The nonprofit has not addressed any existing road blocks that have prevented the nonprofit from resolving the challenge in the past
- All stakeholders have not bought into the value of the project

The statistical data as well as the open-ended responses point to some reasons why pro bono projects do not turn out as well as expected. Besides not having the above in place, a project can fail because:

- The volunteer does not know enough about the agency, its mission, and its challenges
- The volunteer does not have the required time to complete the project
- The volunteer does not understand the nonprofit culture and how to work within it
- The deliverable recommends something outside the nonprofit's budget or technical abilities

Although it was very gratifying to discover that 75% of the nonprofits surveyed are familiar with pro bono, only 9% of respondents said they find pro bono help at the corporate partners. Clearly, there are many opportunities for companies to partner with nonprofits to help them benefit from pro bono services.

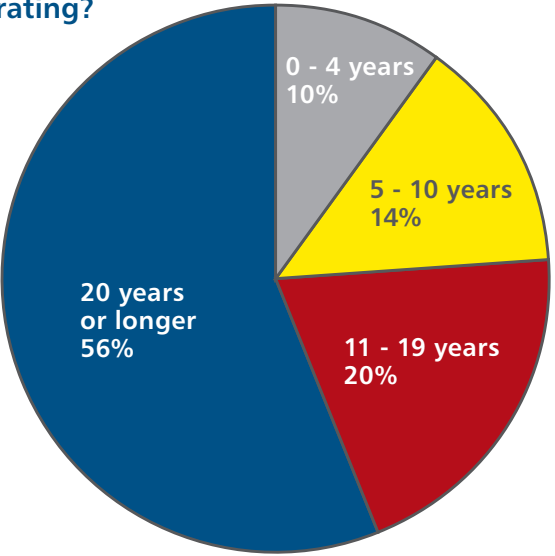
Corporations can remove some of the barriers simply by actively marketing their employees. The survey showed that the number-one reason nonprofits have not used pro bono services was because they did not know how to access them. Yet 92% of these nonprofits said they could use such services. Corporations can be the catalyst to increase the use of pro bono simply by getting the word out that they are willing to provide employees for free consulting. Furthermore, the corporation can help the nonprofit become ready for their services by starting at the beginning—translating organizational challenge into specific projects.

In the initial meeting, corporations looking to place pro bono volunteers at a nonprofit partner should ensure that the nonprofit has some, and ideally all, of the success factors listed above. The volunteers, though, must also be sure that they have the required time to educate themselves thoroughly on the organization's mission, programs, culture and capacity before embarking on the project. Furthermore, the volunteer must be committed to finishing the project in the timeline given and delivering exactly what is expected. Otherwise, both parties will be disappointed with the experience and the outcome.

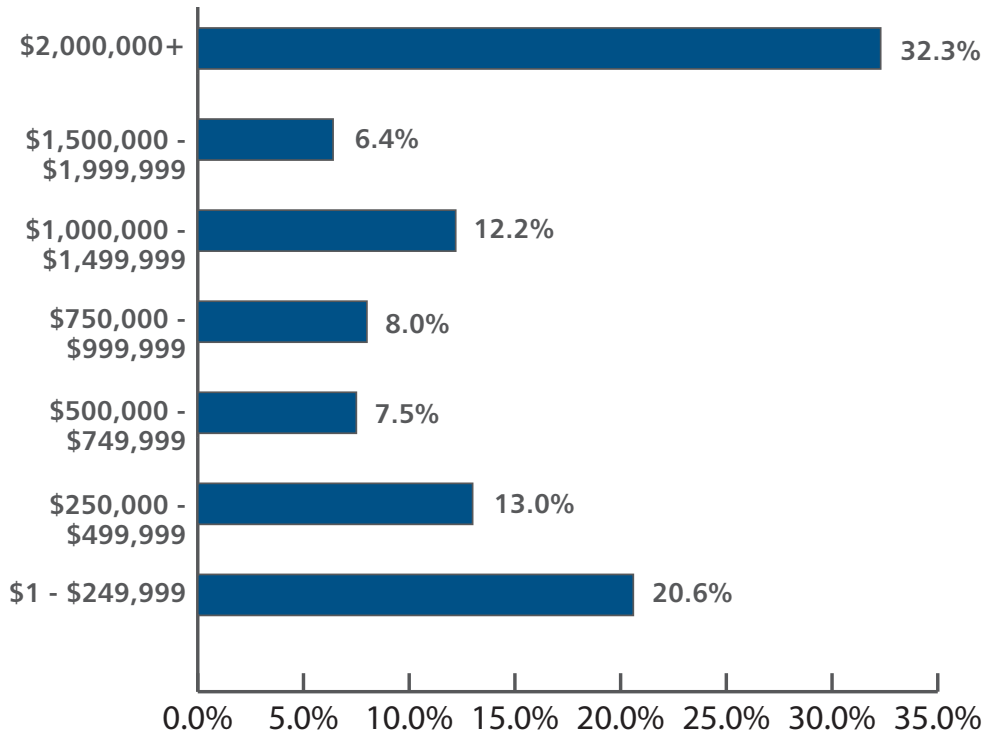
Demographics

Please select the most relevant mission category your organization is focused on.	Response Percent
Education and Youth	34.2%
Arts, Culture, and Humanities	11.7%
Other (please specify)	11.4%
Health Care	11.0%
Housing and Homelessness	10.0%
Human Services	7.8%
Environment and Animal Protection	4.0%
Jobs, Training, and Employment	3.9%
Management and Technical Assistance	2.3%
Economic Development	1.6%
Women's issues	1.1%
Legal assistance	1.1%

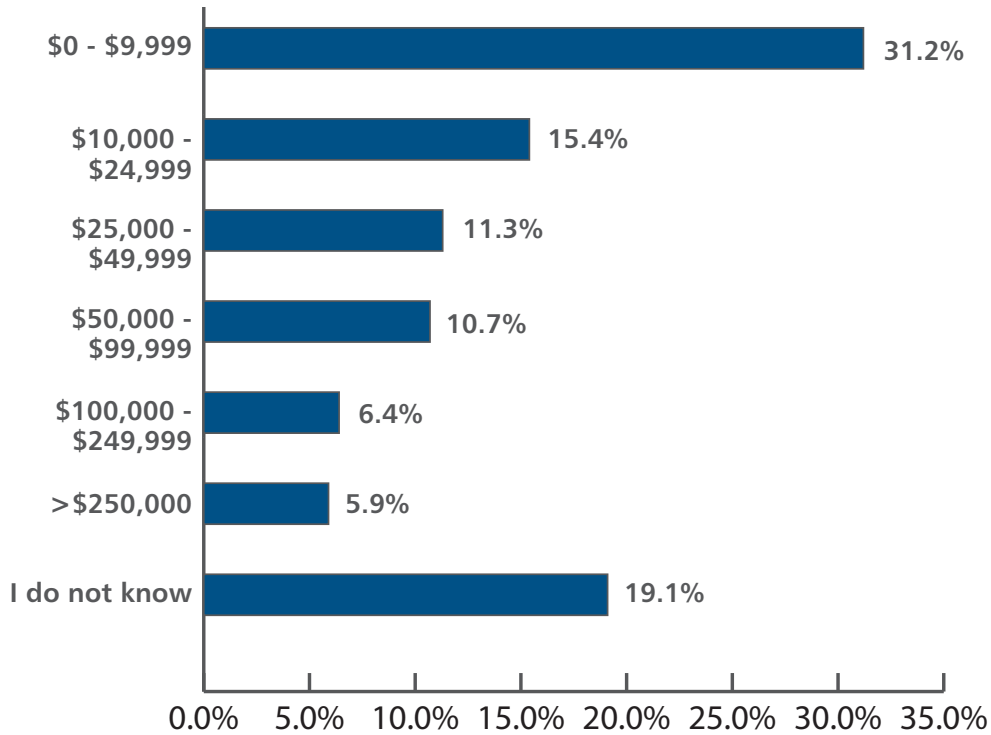
How many years has your organization been operating?



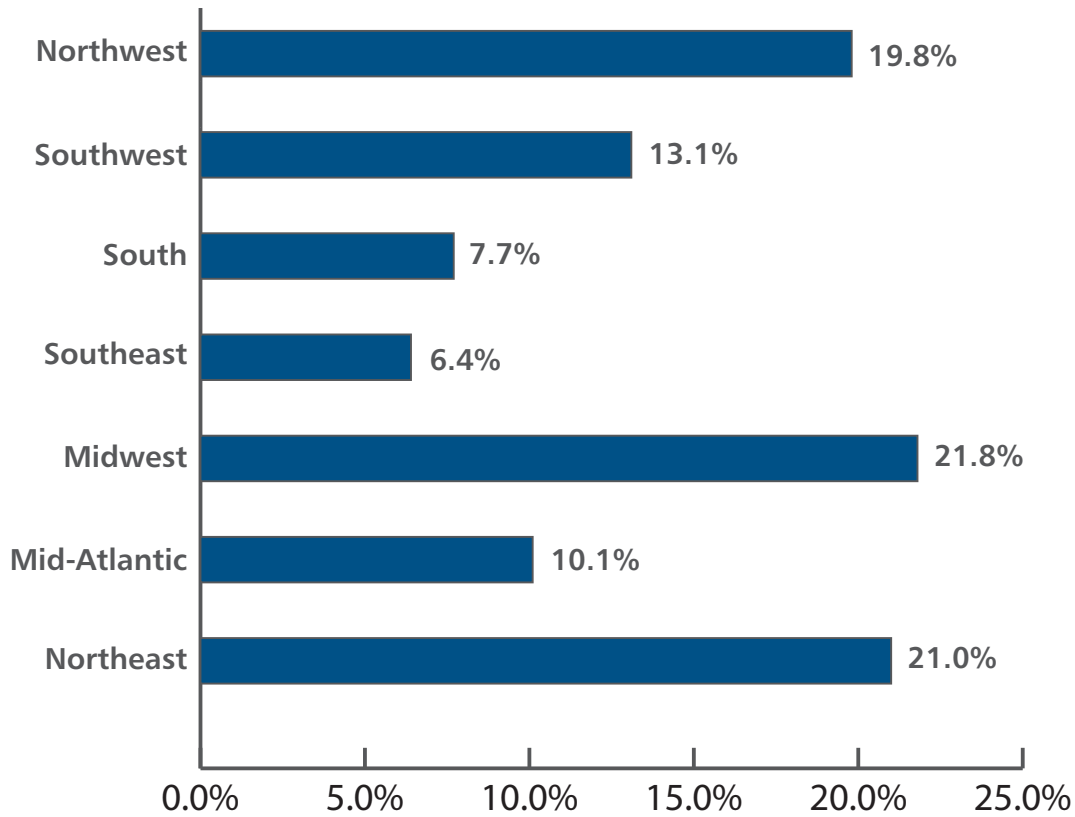
What is the approximate size of your organization's operating budget?



For the upcoming year, how much of your annual budget will be spent on outside contractors and consultants?



In what region of the country is your organization headquartered?



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