

COVID Impact to Volunteer Programs
Survey Results – July 2020

Pre-COVID number of volunteers

Less than 50	22
50-150	29
151-300	12
301 – 500	14
501-750	3
751- 1000	2
1000+	1

Pre-COVID number of staff managing volunteers

Zero	1
.5	1
1	29
1.5	2
2	26
3	8
3.5	2
4	5
5	1
6	1
7	1
10	1
12	2
17	1

Pre-COVID museum attendance annually

10,000 or less	12
10,001 – 50,000	20
50,001 – 100,000	12
100,001 – 250,000	8
250,001 – 500,000	15
500,001 – 1 million	3
More than 1 million	3

What type of museum do you work for?

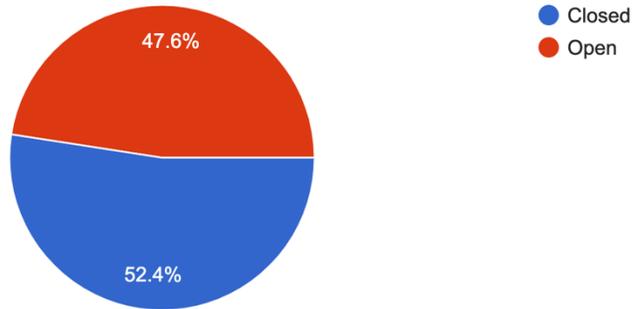
History Museum	22
Art Museum/ Center	21
Specialized museum	8
General (Multi-Disciplinary)	7
Science/Technology	6

Historic House/ site	6
Natural History/Anthropology	4
Aquarium	2
Cultural Center and museum	2
Cultural site and Church	1
Arboretum	1
Historical society	1

***Note: for the questions using the term “currently,” the survey responses were all collected between July 6 – 24, 2020

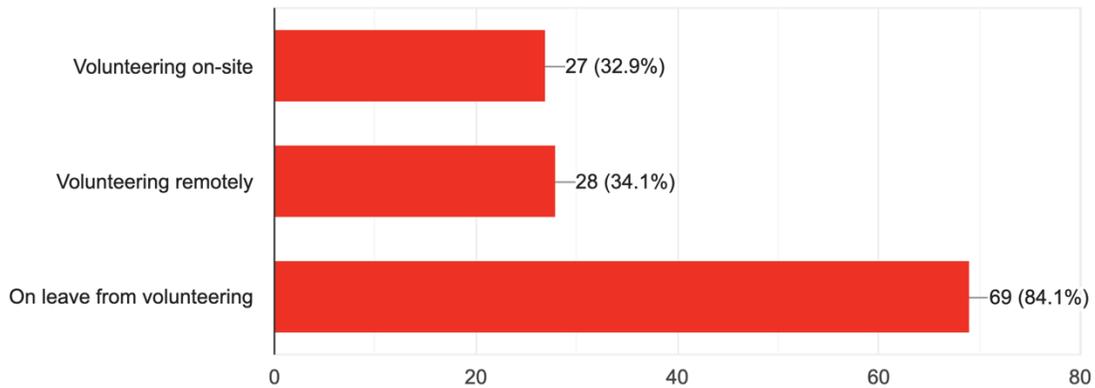
Is your museum currently:

82 responses



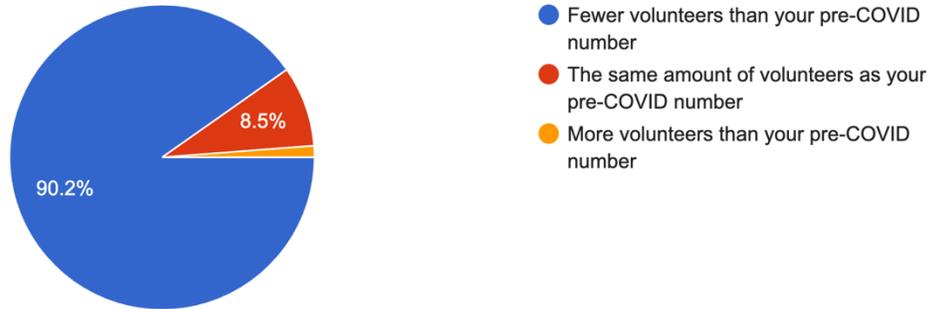
Are your volunteers currently (check all that apply):

82 responses



In the next 3 to 6 months, do you anticipate having:

82 responses



Common/ grouped answers for Why you think your volunteer numbers will go down/ stay the same/ go up?

Numbers will go down due to:

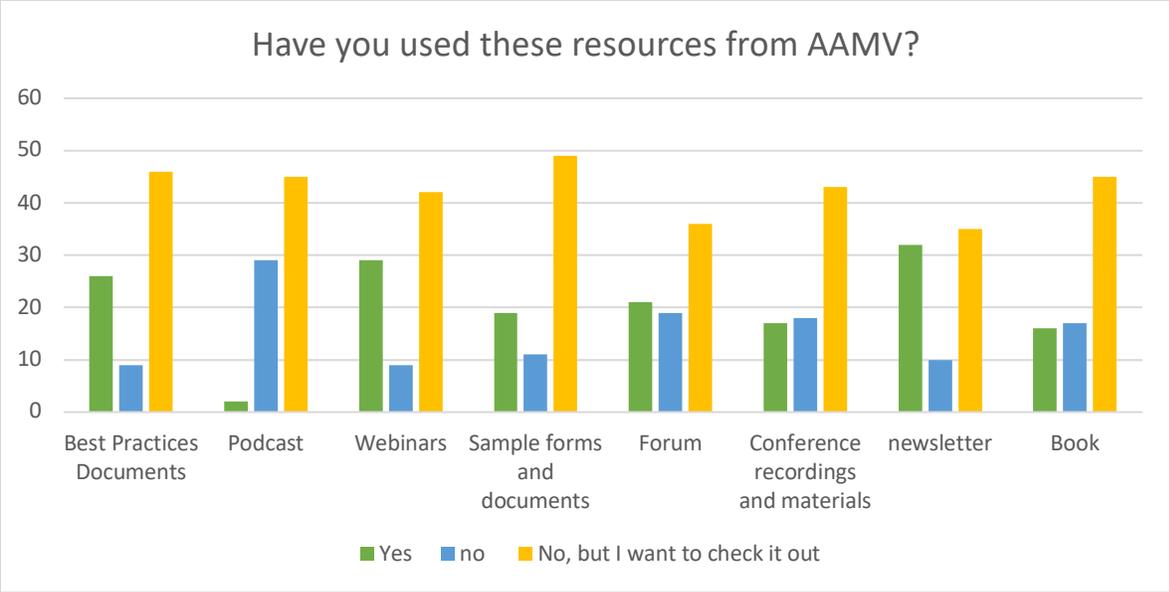
Age of volunteers/ High risk individuals	32
No tours/ limited volunteer opportunities	23
COVID will still be an issue in 6 months/ it will take more time to bring volunteers back	10
Volunteers are waiting for vaccine	8
Fear of virus	6
Volunteers were/are ready to retire from volunteering	5
Engagement	4
Waiting to see how reopening goes	2
Building capacity limits	2
Recruitment difficulty	1

Numbers will stay the same due to:

Dedication of volunteers will bring them back	4
Horticulture opportunities	3
An influx of younger volunteers	1

Numbers will go up due to:

Need more, so will recruit more	1
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What other resources could AAMV provide for you?

- Don't know 10
- Nothing 7
- Chat forum 3
- Meet ups/ working/ networking groups 3
- Results of this survey 2
- Retention
- Volunteers
- Reopening plan descriptions
- Webinars
- Sample Documents
- Managing a successful volunteer program
- Touring post COVID
- Feedback on volunteer and patron surveys
- Conflict resolution tips
- Best practices for current era
- BIPOC Networking/ Forum

Common/ grouped answers for How are you staying connected with your volunteers?

- Email 63
- Phone 31
- Zoom/ Google meet or other platform 31
- Newsletter 18
- In Person 7
- Social media 6
- Small outdoor gatherings 3
- Virtual tours 2

Cards	2
Texts	2
Drive bys	
We aren't	
Volunteer website	
Remote project work	
Survey	
Scavenger hunts	

What interesting things are you doing in volunteer management/ engagement?

Zoom "Morning Coffees". It gives the docents a chance to see each other and for us to share any news or updates
Remote activities to learn more about each other
Trying to interact with volunteers who are not needed due to reduced hours and days.
a small gift as a token of appreciation upon their return
Provided new docent and continuing ed via zoom and a special, online link only for them
Developing alternative programs and tools such as puzzles, games, handouts, etc.
Less days open and shorter hours.
zoom meetings to keep volunteers connected
We are changing some of our in-person training to online. This allows those volunteers taking a Leave of Absence to stay updated on our content, training requirements and helps them feel engaged.
The education team has our volunteers working on art making bags for visitors to take home since our art making space is closed.
Held a virtual pizza dinner and hang out.
We don't have a security team, so our volunteers assist guests on the exhibit floor by enforcing our "do not touch" policy. They also help guests ensure social distancing guidelines are being met.
Surveys and education sharing, a docent blog
New to this role- working on expanding our opportunities/offerings to cover more than just events; looking to have volunteers in more support roles.
Reinventing many of our programs to on-line activities, many are working remotely at home on a fundraising project
We're launching a new virtual tour experience with a small team of docents.
I have a volunteer book club that meets monthly. We read books regarding our museum's subject matter. While we are not meeting now, the volunteers are still reading the books and e-mailing me their thoughts. I keep in touch with e-mail and phone calls.
Coming up with (new) ways volunteers can help remotely.
We are creating some virtual programming for members and volunteers and members
Zoom meetings and parking lot meet-ups!

Just making sure they are safe
A monthly e-blast
I recruit and coordinate the volunteers, but they volunteer in multiple different departments in the Museum. Knowing that relationships are key to retention, I try to see each volunteer on the day they are here-if only for a minute or two. Always make sure to thank them and ask if there is anything I can do for them.
Distributing readiness-for-return surveys to evaluate engagement
Many of our docents are older, so introducing them to new digital/electronic way of communicating/meeting has been received well by all.
We are hosting a Zoom version of our Quarterly Meeting with a guest scientist speaking. We have assembled a gallery/education research team, we continue to publish the quarterly newsletter, we are sending out city and community volunteer opportunities to help with crisis response and allowing them to count the time, we are offering a teen volunteer opportunity for them to earn service learning credit, we continue to interview volunteer candidates and process them for a September online orientation, we have created an online training library so they can study online, we are building an online adult ed class on Natural History for volunteers (free) and for community members (tuition-based)
I am facilitating the completion of a money/mission matrix, which is focused on our education department's sustainability. This incorporates feedback from museum volunteers, staff, senior leaders, board members and program participants. It will be used in conjunction with a SWOT analysis to frame a discussion regarding our programming model and the direction it should go.
We've been watching films and reading books and having discussions afterwards
awarding volunteers with pins for reaching 100 hours. Hosting a picnic, monthly training sessions etc
Having volunteers evaluate our digital offerings
Our museum is offering virtual field trips that our volunteers join. They also join many of our live virtual programs.
Back-to-school sessions (virtually) in the fall
For volunteer appreciation week, we got 20 staff from across the Museum to record a brief thank you. We then compiled that and sent it out to volunteers, along with a myriad of other virtual thank yous.
We recently established a volunteer Diversity and Inclusion Committee to support museum initiatives on DEAI
Using Zoom and Moodle as course management system resources for training and onboarding; volunteer hour data entry via off-site volunteer; potential volunteer team to re-design internal forms; possibly develop on-line training content remotely
The weekly educational Zooms are Docent led for Docents. They are stretching their technology comfort levels, teaching each other, staying engaged, and connected.
Our docents, who will not be needed until 2021 due to cancellation of programming and tours, are going to offer some virtual tours to their fellow volunteers. Let's them do what they love and keep skills fresh while offering enrichment to other volunteers.
We are sending targeted training with group trivia style quizzes

We have begun working on virtual volunteering doing things such as translating, book groups, study groups, and lots of idea generation projects. We are also planning little parties with randomized list of members of the volunteer corps so they can get to know each other better, and stay social. We will also begin working on virtual training opportunities for a new volunteer database management system.
Exploring how things like Zoom can transform volunteer meetings, orientations, and learning events in the future to be more accessible to all volunteers.
Our first zoom for volunteers to talk to the director.
Looking into new volunteer website during the downtime
We have a monthly volunteer blog that provides enrichment materials for our volunteers
Zoom chats. Surveys/gathering feedback to improve engagement
1. providing offsite volunteer opportunities; 2) sharing volunteer recommendations for books, streaming, activities with other volunteers and updates on museum offerings via group emails; 3) provide training and opportunities for social gathering on Zoom
Created a weekly newsletter and virtual programming

What has been the biggest struggle with COVID and your volunteer program?

My volunteers are bored and want to return, but it would be difficult to social distancing and meet the requirements of sanitizing.
Creating other opportunities for the docents
Concern for their safety when we reopen. Have we done enough?
By being open fewer hours and days
changing schedules
getting them to come work as docents, they are fearful of leaving their homes and being close to tourists
see above about people returning. Before we opened to public, in late May and June, we could have used some volunteers behind-the-scenes, but many lived in life care facilities where they could not leave or have visitors.
hoping they won't drift away while sheltering at home, or worse - become ill
Our biggest struggle is losing events which in turn loses volunteers
Even when the governor allowed museums to open, we did not. Our docent are all over 60. They also interact with our visitors a lot and our visitors are largely from two California hot spots. We just cannot risk opening and exposing our docents to COVID.
Staffing exhibit buildings.
Keeping the doors open
Recruitment- location in a city with a lot of traffic, newer organization, changing leadership at our organization

keeping volunteers engaged
knowing when it will be safe for volunteers to return.
Scheduling for gift shop volunteers- even with all the safety guards in place, they still are staying away. Our main group of volunteers are snow birds so we are limited in summer months.
We hope that when we reopen, we will have enough volunteers comfortable with returning to help at the museum.
keeping volunteers engaged
Readiness to have them return
Our volunteer manager was fired, and I am answering this in his stead. The second biggest problem has been communication. Staff are not being given enough information, and our projects are being shot down by directors. This means that volunteer opportunities we have come up with are being dismissed, but we aren't being told why. We would love to engage our volunteers more, but we keep being told not to.
Not knowing when they can expect to return to volunteering
Keeping them safe
Not knowing when the veteran volunteers will come back.
Understanding the complexities of this illness and how to help our volunteers through this challenging time. It seems that each volunteer has different concerns about COVID and it does not help that almost every day you hear new "best practices" to keep them safe. Some of our volunteers are very confused and fearful.
The volunteers want to be engaged in the museum again, but we have to keep our numbers in the galleries low so this is not a possibility at this time.
We have been shutdown since March 18 and do not have a reopening date set. Keeping their engagement and interest in the observatory is challenging. Convincing them that we will be safe once we reopen is also challenging.
Our "usual" volunteers are declining to come into the museum, which is totally understandable.
Aging docent population and the fear of infection, as is all staff
All opportunities were onsite for large events. We have kept all of our part time employees working remotely so they are taking up the busy work that would be assigned to volunteers. Our volunteer program has been stagnant for 2 years, with no one running it. I took over in January and was in the process of rebuilding it from the ground up. This has now been stalled.
The biggest change is lack of in person activities but that is now changing.
Creating new content to keep our volunteers engaged. The museum is also doing the same for member, donors, and visitors. It is a challenge to keep things feeling fresh for each constituent group.
Our volunteer manager was let go so I have just taken over managing the volunteers. Our volunteer program is paused until the end of the year.
Not knowing if they will be allowed to come back by administration.
Not being able to see each other face to face.
They all miss the social aspect of being at the Museum.

Having time to connect with everyone individually.
Volunteers are fearful to volunteer with the public
We don't have many opportunities for remote volunteering, so all of our volunteers are essentially on leave.
The frustration of our volunteers when we tell them they can't come back yet.
The unknown of when we could reasonably bring volunteers back and then the hesitancy on the part of volunteers to commit to return because of the uncertain health concerns.
Maintaining engagement while operations are scaled back
Volunteering was a big part of the docents' life and for many it was something that they did on their own time and something that was very satisfying and enjoyable to them.
The age of most of our volunteers - they aren't ready to come out yet. Also, the loss of our biggest volunteer opportunity for them.
The museum closure. Volunteers really miss the social benefits of volunteering - socializing, keeping occupied, getting out of the house, making a difference for others, continual learning, working with experts. We are trying to create as many virtual opportunities for our volunteers to engage as possible. But we also have to consider technology "fatigue" for staff and volunteers.
Most of our volunteers are seniors and considered vulnerable to COVID.
Getting the volunteers back to work
Getting them to understand why we are not allowing them back at this time.
making sure that all volunteers are following the safety procedures
Volunteers want to be involved, but we have nothing for them to do
The toughest struggle has been in dealing with new technologies for remote meetings and in understanding that we will not return to volunteering at the museum as it was pre-COVID.
Getting leadership support of volunteer engagement.
Trying to keep volunteers engaged without a firm timeline for their return. Also, trying to train them remotely to use Zoom so that we can still meet with them regularly.
Waiting for furloughs; furloughs; knowing that elderly volunteers rely us to stay active and alert; lack of transparency from museum leadership
Mostly senior citizen participation then youth participation. Nearly all volunteers who've expressed concern have indicated suspending, but not leaving, volunteering.
Feeling disconnected from our volunteers. And them feeling disconnected from us.
Lack of communication and clarity from leadership, leadership not taking full advantage of volunteers as a resource. Not seeing my Docents on a daily basis. My inbox is completely overwhelmed because it's all by email now instead of our regular chats.
Staff being furloughed, bringing new volunteers into the museums.
We have had to spend a lot more time on communication and learning/exploring new ways to do things and keep volunteers engaged while still doing what we need to do to prepare for reopening, which includes surveying our volunteers to see who is ready to return and who wants to return but is not yet ready. All with same staffing level and all of us on reduced schedules due to financial impact of closure

on our museum (but grateful to have a job, and reduced schedule is what is helping museum retain staff).

staying connected with our technically and cognitively challenged volunteers

Not having concrete answers of information to give them

Can not place them because we do not even have our staff back fully yet

We were closed for 3 months, and now that we are open again for our outdoor spaces so many volunteers want to return, but their safety is a concern. The biggest struggle has definitely been in adjusting the way volunteer interact with the institution for a shift and for visiting.

The hardest thing has been the loss of staff that manage the day to day with the volunteers. We are currently on hold with our program due to this.

having our staff who work in the volunteer program cut in half

We lost a staff position, so are down to 2 staff in the office, both part-time furloughed until volunteers are on-site again. That makes it challenging to stay responsive. We also don't have the ability to create digital roles, so volunteers are on hiatus until recalled. This will be a gradual process with an unknown timeline.

Keeping them engaged

Keeping the information updates current in a daily changing environment

Limited volunteer opportunities due to the social distancing

The uncertainty of knowing how the pandemic will progress in the future and how it may continue to affect our museum and volunteer program and ability to have on-site volunteers

Finding enough offsite activities to keep the volunteers actively engaged

Unable to give concrete answers to volunteers

Any silver linings you would like to share?

Hopefully we'll be able to create a new set of roles for volunteers to engage with the public and bring them back on board.

Zoom has made it possible to conduct remote meetings with volunteers, and for the first time ever our organization is offering virtual lectures that more can participate in. We also have recordings to share afterwards.

We just had our annual volunteer recognition event via zoom and 200+ volunteers attended, lots of great feedback

wish I could

The pandemic is causing us to rethink our program offerings and format. I certainly view this as a silver lining because there is support for new and different programs that we did not have otherwise. The pandemic is a catalyst for assessing our overall program model.

Really high levels of enthusiasm to be back

We are forced to be creative with raising money and keeping our non profit afloat

It's become even more clear how dedicated our volunteers are. They want to be here helping, and are willing to do projects to take home to stay engaged.

We really appreciate each other and have this community to share our love of museum and sharing knowledge.
Gave me an opportunity to develop completely new procedures, from developing new training manuals and orientation, to new recruitment processes and job descriptions, to new recognition events, etc.
Time of reflection on how we do things and why and how we will change to adapt.
So far none of our volunteers are COVID 19 positive!
We are all looking forward to getting back. this has given us all time to reflect, study up, and share information.
I have more time to organize files and create programming for our volunteers and members on-line.
Not at this point.
The group is very grateful to have even the virtual meetings and everyone is eager to learn more. A portion of our volunteers have started their own virtual book clubs and happy hours which is rewarding to hear.
Even with all of the challenges of navigating this uncertain situation, many of our volunteers have reached out to let us know how much they still love our museum and being part of it.
Goodbye business casual!
Gives us a reason to review safety protocols, review and revise behavior training, any issues with our current volunteer program that we can change during this time.
We have all gotten a crash course in how to use teleconferencing software to continue our operations and stay connected.
Virtual Tours have been fun
How committed so many volunteers are
Yes!! The volunteers have taken to virtual meetings and programming really well. I have been slowly trying to help them work with online materials over the past year and this situation, having to throw them into it they have risen to the challenge and surprised themselves even more than they surprised me! They've done a great job working with Zoom and connecting over the internet. I'm so proud of my corps!
Nope. Thanks for asking though. ./
Given the monstrous financial impacts, loss of audiences, and disappearance from public view, I do not currently see a silver lining.
This gives us an opportunity to reassess our Volunteer needs and program
Org has had a recent round of layoffs. The org-wide volunteer coordinator was laid off and there is currently a void. The mgmt of org-wide volunteers was already pretty scattered. There is the silver lining that leadership may be open to restructuring and finally working to professionalize the volunteer corps org- wide.
Our volunteers are ready to help
We've instituted new (and much needed) scheduling procedures for our horticulture pilot team. We'll be using this time to re-evaluate our entire volunteer program and identify new initiatives and goals.
all volunteers are ready to return when it is safe to do so. they really miss interacting with our visitors and being a vital part of the museum.
Using this time to plan strategically
We have gotten to know the volunteers better through their recommendations for leisure activities

Our volunteer are staying engaged and look forward to returning. We continue to aquire new volunteer interests.
none
We have gotten a lot of work done throughout the museum and have added several new displays.
Discovering the number of volunteers who would support our mission in difficult times.
Seeing only gray clouds
we have struggled to get locals involved but with travel restrictions they now seem to have "found" us.
The volunteers know we are trying and many want to return when it is more safe.
I think we are getting more interest from the college age community as they have more free time.
I have learned how committed our volunteers are!
we have learned how to host virtual training...
We are being forced to change! We've already implemented some changes into programs that have come back and planned for changes to those that are currently on hold. Overall, it is an increase in flexibility to make volunteering easier for them. That has been a long time coming!
The amount of new, younger volunteers applying because they are sick of being bored stuck at home and are looking for something to do.
Businesses and non profits are being forced to get creative about how we can continue to serve our patrons during COVID. We are embracing new technologies and creating new resources, that frankly we will likely continue long after the crisis is over because it expands our impact. We can reach people who may never have even visited our institutions. We have also discovered how productive staff can be when working from home and it may lead to more telecommuting in the future - good for the environment too!
The COVID19 Closure (almost 4 months) allowed us to take a hard look at the Volunteer Program and largely refocus it. We pared down the volunteer positions that are urgent needs and are focusing on them. We added levels of advancement that are clear and attainable. We added more benefits to the volunteers without increasing cost significantly. (Swag/Discounts/Membership) Obviously, there is a cost to the Membership that is significant, but we tried to offset that by setting a number of hours that a volunteer must serve before receiving a membership. (Some of this might qualify as 'interesting things' but have been more of a silver lining.
It has been nice getting the chance to chat more casually via Zoom meetings and sharing hobbies with each other, etc.
Using technology, particularly Moodle and Zoom, to monitor enthusiasm, participation, and progress of volunteer skill development. Also that there are volunteers who wish to continue serving our museum and are comfortable with the COVID protocols our museum has put in place.
we've had a larger participation in virtual meetings than on-site meetings
I have added 4 new volunteers since the museum reopened in early June, two of which have become very active.
The volunteers are eager and excited to come back. They miss our museum and constantly ask how they can be helpful.
With very few volunteers around we are taking the opportunity to completely redesign our volunteer program to better meet the needs of the institution in the future.
Our volunteers have really enjoyed our daily positivity digest. So much so that many of them have begun sending us ideas to include.

Yes! This has forced us out of the "dark ages" and we are embracing technology in very creative ways! This was always on our "to do" and this gave us the needed incentive to make it work! An additional silver lining is that with the Museum closed for almost 3 months, we made some changes in our scheduling procedures and volunteer standards. Prior to COVID, I got a "push-back" from our volunteers on every little change. This allowed me to put in place these changes, and everyone accepted the changes as part of our COVID process changes.