



Rethinking Older Adult Volunteer Engagement in Student Supports

September 2026

Webinar Guide

Across communities, the role of older adult volunteers is evolving—and so must the ways organizations recruit, engage, support, and celebrate them. This guide provides a high-level overview of the key strategies highlighted in the [Volunteering Defined webinar series](#), which took place over the course of the 2025-26 school year, as well as links to resources from each of them. This webinar series, created by Idealist and executed alongside the Partnership for Student Success with support from the AARP Foundation, brings together innovative thinking, practical tools, and real-world insights to help you reimagine what meaningful volunteer engagement looks like in today's context.

Through this content, you will explore how to shift from traditional models to more dynamic, person-centered approaches that recognize the range of strengths, experiences, and motivations of older adults. From rethinking recruitment and crafting compelling, engaging messaging, to building rich volunteer personas and creating authentic feedback channels, this series is designed to help you connect more effectively with those who want to serve.

You will also dive into the organizational side of engagement, equipping staff with the skills and confidence to support and supervise volunteers, designing thoughtful recognition and appreciation strategies, and advocating for systems that truly value volunteer contributions. Along the way, you'll hear "ideas from the field" that showcase what's working in organizations like yours.

Join us as we rethink, redesign, and reimagine the future of volunteer engagement—together.

Whether you are building a volunteer program from the ground up or looking to transform existing practices, this series provides actionable strategies to strengthen engagement, improve satisfaction, and foster a sense of belonging for older adult volunteers.

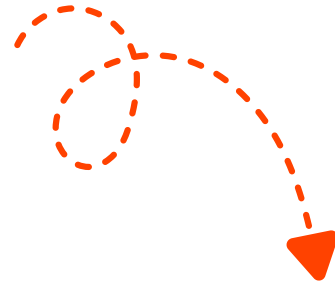




Rethinking Older Adult Volunteer Engagement

Volunteering is evolving. Changes in community needs, workforce expectations, technology, and individual motivations are reshaping how people choose to engage with causes they care about. Organizations that want to attract and retain volunteers must adapt to these shifts by creating more flexible, meaningful, and inclusive opportunities for participation.

Start the journey by listening to the first recording.



[Access Recording](#)

[Access Slides](#)





Rethinking Volunteer Recruitment

Recruiting older adult volunteers requires more than simply filling open positions. It means understanding what motivates adults aged 55+, recognizing the experience and skills they bring, and creating opportunities that align with their interests, schedules, and desire to make a meaningful impact. This session explores how organizations can rethink traditional recruitment approaches to better attract and engage older volunteers in today's changing volunteer landscape. You will also learn about building older adult volunteer personas and designing recruitment messaging for older adult volunteers.

Rethinking Recruitment



[Access Recording](#)
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Building Older Adult Volunteer Personas



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Designing Recruitment Messaging for Older Adult Volunteers

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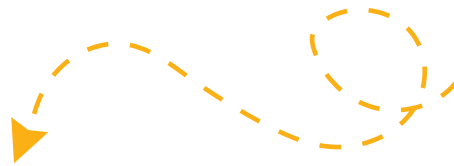




Rethinking Volunteer Appreciation & Recognition

As organizations work to engage and retain older adult volunteers, recognition and appreciation play a critical role in creating meaningful volunteer experiences. This set of sessions explores how thoughtful, intentional recognition strategies can strengthen volunteer satisfaction, deepen commitment, and foster long-term relationships with volunteers age 55 and older.

This three part section focuses on volunteer appreciation and recognition including designing and implementing new recognition and appreciation strategies and designing feedback channels and volunteer satisfaction surveys.



Rethinking Appreciation & Recognition



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Designing & Implementing New Recognition & Appreciation Strategies



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Designing Feedback Channels & Volunteer Satisfaction Surveys



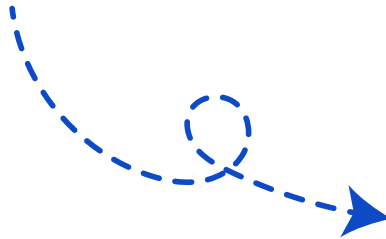
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Strengthening Volunteer Leadership & Support

As organizations increasingly rely on older adult volunteers, staff must be equipped with the skills, confidence, and tools to effectively supervise volunteers, address evolving needs, and foster positive volunteer experiences. This three-part learning series explores the critical role staff play in volunteer engagement and retention. Participants will examine strategies for supporting and supervising volunteers, advocating for older adults as valuable community assets, navigating challenging conversations and age-related transitions, and sustaining themselves through the demands of volunteer management.



Empowering Staff to Support & Supervise Volunteers



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Managing & Championing for Older Adult Volunteers



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Managing Burn Out & Advocating for Yourself



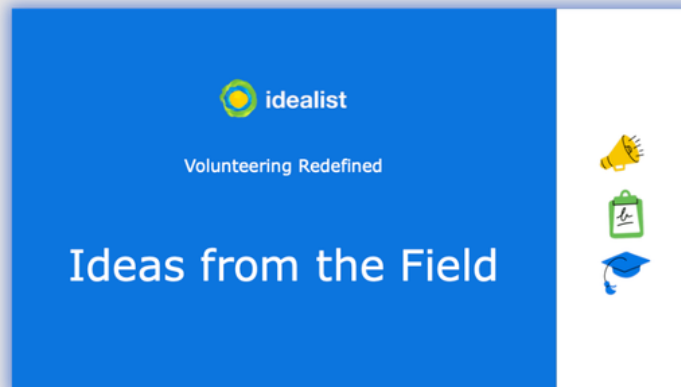
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Special Feature: Ideas from the Field

This session highlights innovative approaches to engaging older adult volunteers through a combination of data-driven insights and real-world practice. Participants will hear from the AARP Foundation Impact Analytics team about emerging trends, research, and strategies that can help organizations better understand volunteer engagement and maximize impact. In addition, a spotlight presentation from Empowering Readers OC will showcase how a volunteer-powered literacy program is successfully supporting students while creating meaningful opportunities for older adults to contribute their skills and experience. Together, these presentations offer practical ideas and inspiration for strengthening volunteer programs and expanding community impact.



[Access Recording](#)

[Access Slides](#)





The AARP Foundation is the philanthropic affiliate of AARP with a mission to strengthen financial resilience for and with older adults by empowering individuals and improving systems. We pursue impact in two ways: empowering older adults to address their immediate financial needs and improving the systems that keep them in poverty. This is accomplished through the dedication of volunteers and partners who bring our mission to life. More information about our programs and how to volunteer can be found at www.aarpfoundation.org.



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Idealist connects idealists—people who want to do good—with opportunities for action all over the world. We are the number one resource helping people find jobs, internships, and volunteer opportunities at social-impact organizations.



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The Partnership for Student Success is a national coalition committed to expanding evidence-based and people-powered supports so that every student has the support they need to succeed and thrive.



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