



## Creating Connections Workshop Series: Appreciation & Recognition



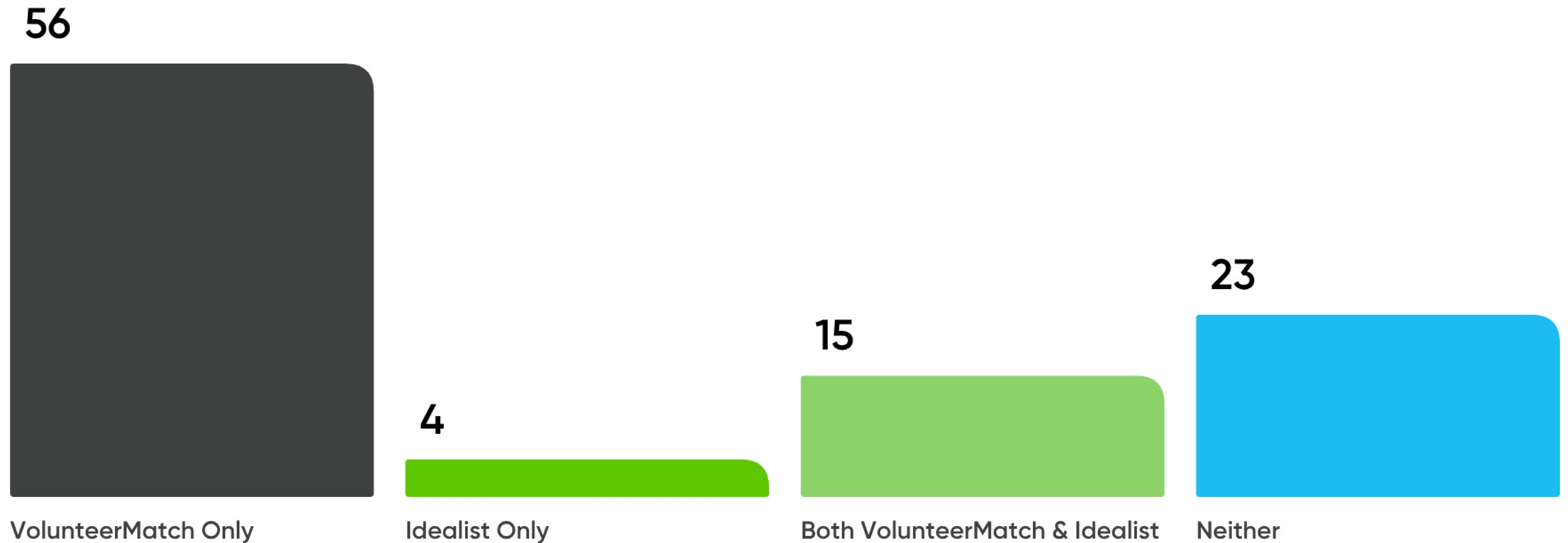


# Welcome!

This series is designed to walk you through the most important components for creating connections with new and ongoing volunteers.

- All resources and recordings will be shared
- You'll get out what you put in – consider planning an hour of focus time between workshops
- I can't do it for you, but I'm here to help

# Are you currently using:

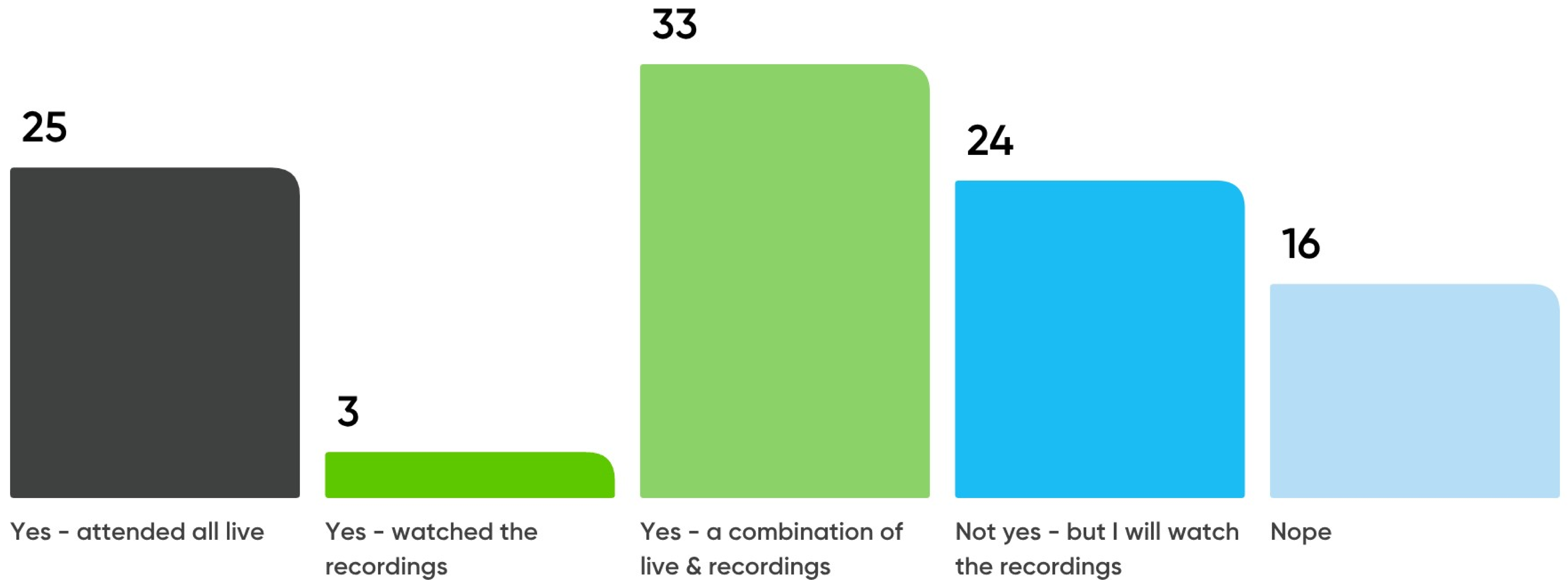


# Creating Connections Workshops

Previous Sessions:

- Kick Off
- Invitations & On-boarding (unfortunately no recording)
- Orientations & Team Building

# Did you attend or watch the previous sessions?





# If you attended or watched did you:



Review the Kick off worksheet



Talk to a manager/colleague



Complete the Invitations & On-Boarding Worksheet



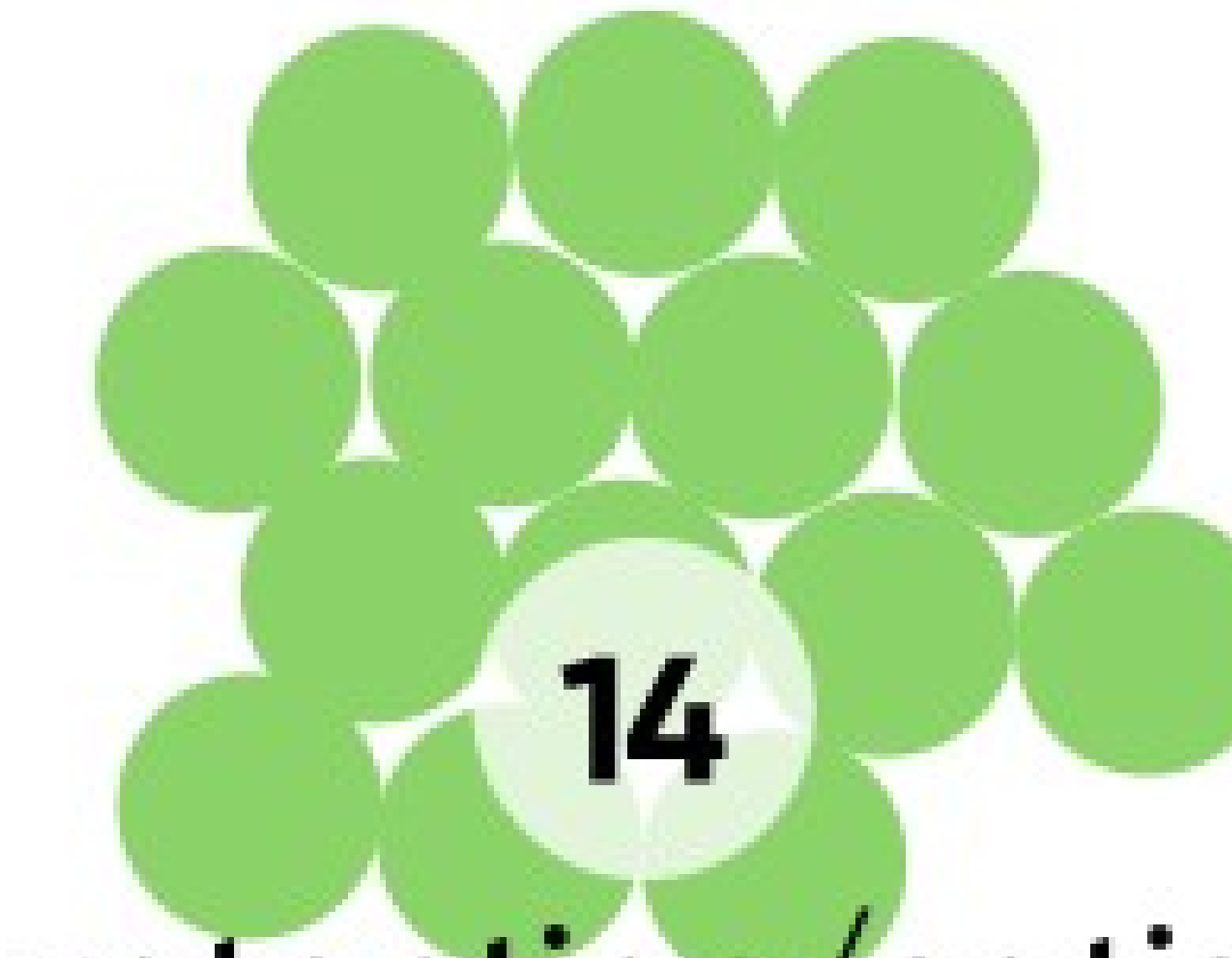
Complete the Kick Off worksheet



Think differently about volunteer relationships



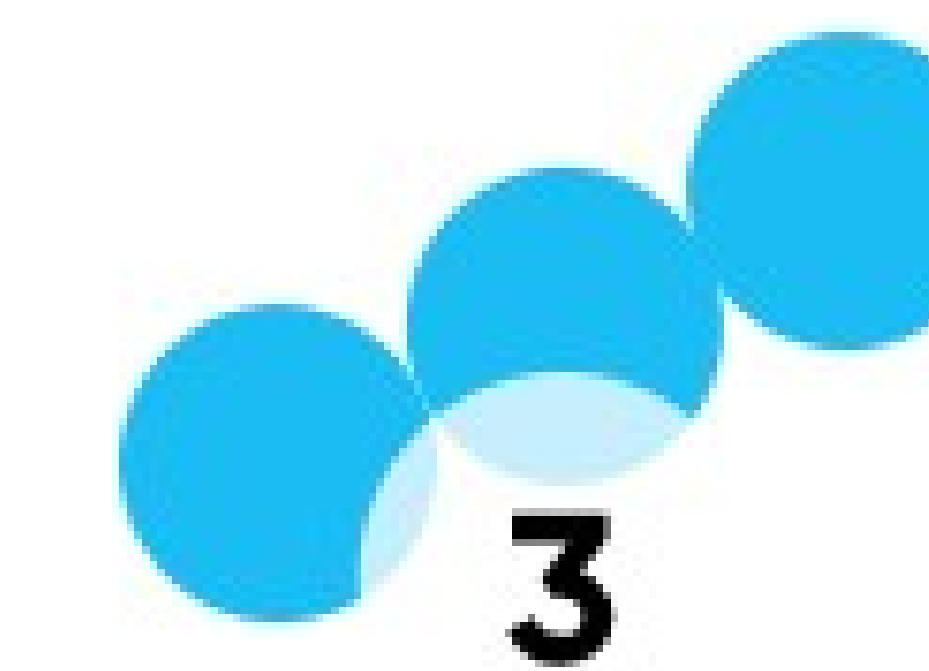
Reviewed the Orientation & Team Building Worksheet



Review your retention/satisfaction data



Review the Invitations & On-boarding worksheet



Completed the Orientation & Team Building Worksheet

# Meaningful Recognition

Not all recognition is created equal

- Is personalized and heart-felt - Is tied to the mission, clients, and culture
- Shows you value the work a volunteer does - Volunteers are not interchangeable, and they don't want to feel like it
- Makes an investment in the volunteer - Time, energy, responsibility, not necessarily money



# 5 Languages of Appreciation for Volunteers

## Words of Affirmation

Spoken or written. Honest and personalized.

Examples:  
Thank you note, feedback on a job well done.

## Quality time

Individual or small group time. Social or role related.

Examples:  
Check-in, Feedback coffee, invitation to lunch.

## Acts of Service

Support from others, pulling together as a team, all contributing.

Examples:  
lending a hand, support for difficult or struggling volunteer, mentor

## Gifts

Branded swag or role specific items/tools

Examples:  
Clothing, drinkware, supplies to do the work.

## Physical Touch

Only as appropriate and only with consent.

Examples:  
High-five, fist-bumps, other contact if appropriate.



# Recognition Pyramid

Different types of recognition and recognition activities

- All are important
- Individual volunteers will appreciate some more than others



# Meaningful Recognition

Volunteers notice when recognition isn't done well

- Consider where values and activities are not aligned – what do you say you value? What do you recognize?
- Volunteers don't work for “free” – impact, mission, and recognition are what they work for
- Only recognizes favorites, or isn't open to everyone – only one type of engagement is recognized



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

saying thank you

Gifts of organization  
merch

yearly gift of jam

Goal: milestone gifts

Hand written notes

A thank you email to  
all volunteers

in person , day of,  
thank you.

thank you email right  
after the event

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Thank you cards,  
personal thank you's

Posting on social  
media

Birthday cards and  
anniversary cards

In person/In the  
moment

Words of affirmation and  
engaging in small talk to  
get to know them more  
personally.

matching effort to  
impact

Right now it only  
includes perspnal  
thank you emails.

end of year  
recognition awards



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Alignment with all departments

notecards

hand written notes

annual picnic where they can bring a +1

Personally connecting to volunteers so they feel valued

Cards mailed to home.

Verbal thank you.  
Annual celebration with gifts

Words of affirmation and gifts and being available.

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

thank you notes

handwritten thank-you at year end

Celebrating small wins for volunteers (recognizing their accomplishments outside of the organization), invitation to provide feedback, invitation to quarterly meetings.

We do an annual kickoff call with key leadership, we sent a thank you gift, and did thank you phone calls from students

Social media shoutouts and t-shirts.

Gifts cards

phone calls to say you are appreciated

Traditional twice a year luncheon. Will not work going forward as since end of COVID volunteer age is lower and more working volunteers. Always thank you notes and birthday cards.



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Thank you email

Gifts of appreciation

Annual volunteer  
appreciation event

no real strategy yet. we'd like to have ongoing recognition board, online, as well. lots of contact, tshirts, snacks

Giving \$10 off to a local non profit

Birthday cards

Food!

Highlighting a person in a meeting .  
Thanking them!

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Milestone gift

-saying thank you in person -  
thank you follow-up email -t-  
shirt after 40 hours -name  
tag after 100 hours -  
quarterly meeting/updates  
and feedback check-in

Party Thank you notes  
Swag Birthday cards

Some posting on social  
media

Birthday and Thank  
you card every end of  
FY.

Thank you from the  
CEO

No specific gifts yet but -  
checking in at the beginning  
of the week, checking in the  
day of the volunteer visit,  
thanking them for completing  
the visit

Birthday corner in our  
volunteer newsletter



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

volunteer appreciation  
breakfasts/lunch  
throughout the program  
year

Yearly Volunteer party

lots of thank yous

Swag, badges, thank  
you cards

We give a little  
certificate that say's  
Thank you!

Occasional social  
media spotlight of  
individual volunteers

handwritten specific  
thank you notes.

Annual volunteer shirts  
and special recognition  
gifts for a small group  
(different each year).

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Gift presentation of seminars

this year - custom chocolate bars

Spotlight blog stories

saying thank you

Regular recognition from their site liaison, and card and gift during national volunteer week.

Annual lunch

A thank you email to all volunteers

annual dinner with +1

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

survey for feedback  
and then formed a  
volunteer advisory  
committee

Keeping appreciation  
front of mind to offer it  
up organically

Notes from the people  
who receive the  
volunteer service

Inviting to trainings

Free org Tshirts after 3  
months

We do not have a  
recognition/appreciation  
plan because  
management feels it sets  
a precedent in inequity.

Milestones Notes  
Luncheons

breakfasts & brunches  
throughout the year



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

optional social gatherings and self care sessions

Verbally say hello in person and thank them face-to-face.

Notecards

volunteer dinner

community happy hour for volunteers (we buy snacks) and it's a time for them to meet one another

describing the specific impact of their project on the environment and the park visitors today and in the future.

opportunities to learn more about the organization and see behind the scenes

We have a big volunteer appreciation brunch once a year.

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

end of year  
celebration event

Encouraging others  
around the organization  
to show appreciation to  
volunteers

Yearly

Follow up after first  
volunteer shift to share  
thanks and see how it

volunteer spotlights on  
social media and  
website

Staff appreciation  
notes

thank you on social  
media

Thank yous via email  
too.

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Planning to start a quarterly coffee

always saying thank you and whenever I get feedback from staff about a volunteer I share it with the volunteer immediately

Asking for their ideas and constructive criticism for the volunteer program.

Highlighting volunteers who do something special

Annual appreciation party.

End of school year thank you calls (all staff task)

Follow up after first volunteer shift to thank them and see how it went

Supplied good quality gear  
Food/refreshments at trainings  
Mid season jet boat ride/bbq  
End of season appreciation dinner with certificates/speeches  
Sharing their photos they share  
Sharing their Art



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Personal phone calls, volunteer appreciation day event, regular 'volunteer coffee meetup' events to let vols meet each other and give us feedback in person

we have a program where staff and volunteers can give each other a free beverage from our cafe.

Volunteer of the year award with a plaque presentation by our CEO and a social media post

individual thank you emails

Showing you care. Really listening. Keeping up with their personal life as best you can.

Volunteer appreciation lunch with activities

Annual banquet/end of year - I'm new to my positions and gathering this information now.

social meetups

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Meetings with guest-speakers

Monthly volunteer update email to share collective impact and share thanks

monthly initiative - every month we have a gratitude action

Mentees writing thank you cards mailed to mentors' homes..

certificate of participation with swag and goodies from corporate sponsors, either them picking it up or shipping them

volunteer appreciation night

Snacks and a free beverage during their shift

Annual project slide show of accomplishments

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

After a patient passes away, thanking them for their specific role with the patient/family.

taking people out to socialize - lunch/coffee etc

Shout outs every week

Rubber duckie awards catch. Volunteer handling situations with grace ducks look graceful on top of water but paddling hard under the water

Sending them positive feedback from a patient/family if shared with me.

monthly newsletter emphasizing the impact they've made this past month

Monthly news letter celebrating top hours  
Sharing their art/photos/stories they share

Nominating volunteers for special recognition and featuring them and their work in social media and newsletters.



# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

I work at our thrift shop a few days a week and check in with my volunteers and share thanks with them and ask our staff to do the same everyday during/after their shifts.

Whenever volunteers give feedback about ways we can improve their volunteer experience or make their work shift more comfortable, I try to act on it.

**Shout outs on social media**

For student volunteers, after they complete a certain amount of hours, they qualify for shadowing medical staff at our hospital.

**Fun social events like bowling and ice skating**

We are mostly virtual, so looking for more virtual/remote ways to celebrate.

Annual Volunteer Recognition Event - all volunteers and teachers they volunteer with are invited. Awards given for outstanding 1st year volunteers and honor others based on teacher nominations

**mentees record a video thank you message for our volunteer mentors**

# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

snacks/ candy and water always provided

\$10 off gift certificate to shop at our thrift shop

In hospice - card when patient passes

donation to a nonprofit in volunteer's name (retiring volunteer)

Monthly individual birthday cards.

Data video providing the impact they have made in numbers for our organization

Organizing enrichment activities that give volunteers an opportunity to spend time with each other.

Thank you cards any time someone donates something - even if it's small. Some volunteers have told me they save every card I've ever sent.

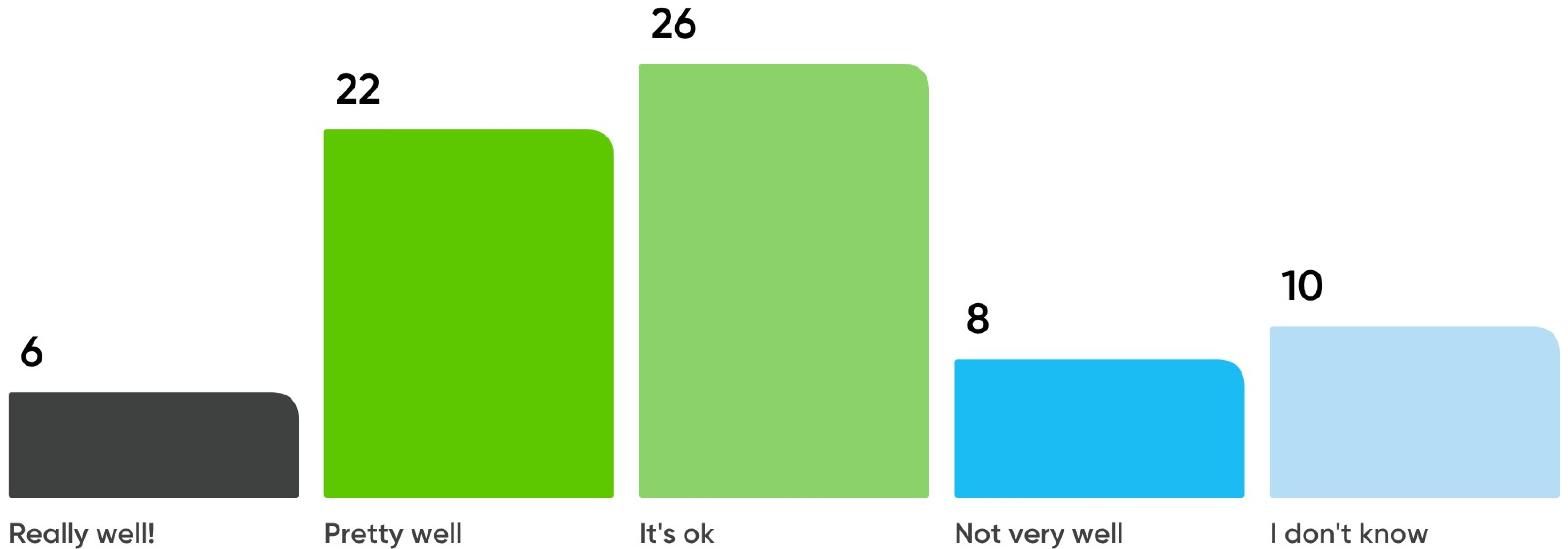
# What are the components of your recognition & appreciation strategy?

Gratitude posts on social media

Every time a staff gives me a compliment about something volunteers do I send it out to the team



# How well is that current strategy working?



# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

Funds

planning events. It is hard and scary.

Picking a good day and time to get the best turn out.

Reaching all our volunteers

Lack of budgeted \$\$

not having a lot of money in my budget

Time and money

Doing all the work myself

# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

funds

capacity

only one person in the  
volunteer team and I  
dont have the  
capacity

funds

Funds/approval to use  
them

Time and money

Funding

money and getting  
volunteers to attend!



# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

consistency

I am brand new and don't know the volunteers well

Wide spread area covered, budget, working and still in school volunteers.

time and money

Getting people to actually show up

Management does not want to spend the money.

Money and small shelter, very minimal space to engage with.

Not knowing what to "give"

# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

Funds and our volunteers don't want us to waste money on them

making sure you are covering all volunteers

Funds,

Finding something that appeals to everyone

time and money

Getting volunteers together

Time and focus

time and budget

# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

times/ideas - we ask for ideas and get very little response

not everyone shows up!

time!

60% of our volunteers are one and done- college town, so lots of student volunteers

So many different volunteers to learn and balance

money; time to plan my whole appreciation strategy

scheduling conflicts

I am the only one on the volunteer team and I don't have the time



# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

Staff participating to recognize our volunteers.

Remote Volunteers

recognizing youth volunteers. they don't like recognition events.

time and funding

Timing of events

Picking dates that everyone can attend

planning events for a statewide volunteer program

figuring out what helps our volunteers feel appreciated.

# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

time

Money is a challenge. Not just having limited funds, but the way our organization lets us spend money (we're not allowed to purchase food for volunteers or staff).

Finding a way to show virtual appreciation to hundreds of volunteers

I'm stuck in an office and do not see everyday volunteers to say thank you. And our yearly appreciation party is poorly attended, and I spend so much time planning it

money and always thinking of something new that they would like.

every volunteer has a REALLY unique schedule, events are really hard and haven't been well attended, even with multiple days. With gift items, not hearing back from volunteers about when they are in

A location to gather

Everyone wants something different

# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

Consistent progress of classes for volunteers and learners.

Availability for volunteers to attend event and time of year.

Our organization's leadership not understanding the importance of recognizing volunteers.

Staff participating

Time

barriers to flow of information in both directions

Mgmt wants it to be held on a Monday when it isn't a great day for many or they are already off to their summer homes (we get lots of snowbird volunteers).

Money and getting recognition gifts approved by executives.



# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

I would like to provide individualized recognition, but I don't have enough access to volunteers to know them that well to know what they'd prefer

Making it individual enough when there are so many different volunteers in so many areas.

Hard to connect with all volunteers

Leadership not understanding the importance of recognizing all volunteers (not just the favorite ones)

brand new program, building capacity, setting up management tool is challenging

Time - have many ideas, however not always the time to make it happen

I'd like to do more but I'm only one person and am trying to balance my work/personal life

Time

# What is your biggest appreciation & recognition challenge?

time

virtual kudos board /  
peer to peer  
recognition  
opportunities

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

I got nothing!

started a volunteer advisory committee and am going to have them help with recognition

Handwritten (small) notes

I liked the picnic idea

Year end party. No awards just a party.

providing PD's for continuing classroom volunteers working with our HS students

When you said "recognition brunch" for some reason that seemed more fun than the dinners I've been doing

I liked the note cards idea!



# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

small gifts? talk more to volunteers

I wanted to attend today to get ideas!

Inviting all volunteers to an annual luncheon, implementing annual awards

I want to recognize volunteers as groups - those who help on a specific task/project

taking someone to lunch/coffee one-on-one

Wall of appreciation/recognition board

Social Media Spotlight and ongoing recognition board

Thank you cards.

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

Volunteer Superlatives

A volunteer happy hour at our office

Add a section in the orientation process asking what ways they would like to be appreciated in

giving volunteers more leadership roles

starting a volunteer advisory committee

bring the volunteers together

Working with local businesses for donations to do a monthly recognition, not based on time, but who was in the community this month

Asking my volunteers how they want to be recognized

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

Umbrellas for Spring

Our volunteers want happy hours, but paying for adult beverages is hard as a non-profit

Getting our staff in on the thank you- volunteers get taken for granted!

the handwritten mailed to home cards are such a good idea!

I liked the rubber ducky idea - those who do the work gracefully, but it takes a lot of effort

More simple recognition like notes and thank yous

Recognition gala

i liked asking a volunteer to help with event planning!



# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

in my follow up survey after the project asking if they have new ideas for recognition and appreciation.

Need ideas for virtual recognition!

I can just share that, for the organizations I volunteer for, the whole "Zoom Appreciation" thing is AWFUL. What a chore. I would never do that. It does not feel like being appreciated at all.

start early in giving recognition, don't wait for 1 year mark

I do my appreciation breakfast during volunteer appreciation week

Group activity, all volunteers invited

Yesterday, we held a luncheon for all our local volunteers and I potted succulents in pots that had TEAM messages on them. I added our logo on the back too.

Handwritten notes

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

Have clients write thank you notes and send them to volunteers.

Challenge coins for outstanding work, or assisting/supporting others, special out-of-the-ordinary performance

Love the idea of note cards!! Really appreciate the idea of different love languages and translating into volunteer gifts/events/different ways to show gratitude!

Recognition dinner

We don't give out awards

A meet-up for volunteers. Picnic or brunch. Add thank you cards, with written appreciation.

Happy hour tip (pay for happy hour snacks) volunteers are okay to buy their drinks. Works for us!

A wall of appreciation in our office! That's so cool

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

social media shout outs and highlight what volunteers do

Brunch

volunteer appreciation wall

more decor - we have small space but I made a volunteer corner/wall it's super cute and warming and gave them cubby space during their shift. So they feel that they have a space

Invitation to volunteer events over giving them a gift. The gift is the experience.

sharing a gift  
recording of lecture or speaker series

Gift drop off

Monthly or quarterly news and gratitude letter



# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

I love allowing an opportunity to give input. Let's ask them how they can be appreciated and what changes they want to see!

cards of appreciation

showing them their impact through data and reports - it makes them so happy lol

Highlighted in our monthly newsletter

workshops leveraging strengths, then having their own arts and crafts activities

We don't have a location, but maybe a platform like Discord could be used for shout outs and offering support?

getting quotes from our partners that recognize and appreciate our volunteers - they hear from us a lot

Table at the annual gala for top or special volunteers that year.

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

A appreciation campout!

Volunteer spotlight

Thank you messages from participants in newsletters and or website

Invite to a happy hour, free drink on us ( anyone with any amount of volunteer hours to meet our staff to chat, get to know one another (make sure space is accessible)

Gratitude bags-People write notes and put in bags to give to volunteers

Liability!

Finding local regional awards that volunteers qualify for

I ask our staff to write thank

# What new ideas do you have for recognition & appreciation?

I had schools we distribute food to have students color, draw, and write little messages on posters - thanking the volunteers

Mahalo (thank you) for this series!

Let volunteers help me with this more. Help me plan events. Help me by making thank you cards (I already have two who do this but could always use more!). Maybe even recruit someone to write them!

get help from others to make it more dynamic

How to do unique recognitions for each volunteer and get ALL of them!



# Thank you!

All slides, worksheets and available recordings are on the Learning Center! [learn.volunteermatch.org](https://learn.volunteermatch.org)

# How are you rethinking how you build relationships with volunteers?

More personalized!

saying hi and  
checkin on them

More personal  
connection via phone

def asking how they  
want to be recognized

Onboarding vs.  
Orientation...need to  
figure out how we're  
doing these things  
distinctly

Appreciating even the  
non-consistent  
volunteers

I would love to use  
platforms like menti to  
do live engagement.

Coffee and donuts at  
our office once a  
quarter.

# How are you rethinking how you build relationships with volunteers?

I like to spend a lot of one on one time with the volunteers. I round every shift and connect with each volunteer daily.

I would like to have more Brunches, lunches for them. more get together

getting to know about them personally maybe not problems but their personal milestones and highlighting

more personalized, on smaller basis and not just a yearly recognition luncheon

More onboarding and checking in

Spending time outside of formal work time, just chatting with them and getting to know them on a personal level

certainly designing an individual survey - based on tenure and experience. thank you

Ask how they would like to be recognized



# How are you rethinking how you build relationships with volunteers?

Connecting with our volunteers via emails & phone calls

Actually give recognition beyond a thank you on a text or email. Meet-ups and ongoing conversations.

I like the key : engrave their name on a blank key and give it to them as they are the key to our success!

I need to work with upper management to get them understand that this is a team effort and we need staff at all levels to be engaged in building relationships - recognition can be a place to start

Like coffee and donuts idea

Start appreciation in the beginning - ask them how they want to be appreciated. Continue weekly checkins, and set up a group volunteer coffee / lunch time in the future.

Let the kids give the volunteers appreciation awards

Check in coffee's

# How are you rethinking how you build relationships with volunteers?

I share lunch when we have time

Mahalo (thank you) for this series. It's been very helpful!

Let them help me with recognition more!

Small appreciations are important too. Maybe more important than physical gifts or big parties

Thinking about how to create an appreciation plan that is sustainable and responsive. Quarterly coffees, Slack or similar, ready-to-go notecards

We did Snappy gifts in the past and it didn't connect. I will do more personalized notes in the future.

Having more time to relax and get together rather than at a volunteer opportunity as we're very busy.

Email to parent about an outstanding/standout performance by a student during a volunteer activity

# How are you rethinking how you build relationships with volunteers?

random days of coffee dates maybe more people would be able to show up, smaller groups

Expanding our FB group to be more comprehensive!

Starting clubs that aren't related to my specific volunteer's roles but get them together. Book clubs. Poker/card/game clubs. Let the volunteers lead them!



# Thank You!

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