For communities where overall economic conditions are a major problem, 100% of the 60 mayors surveyed report that their local governments use unpaid volunteers. This is in comparison to communities where overall economic conditions present minor or no problem where 67% of their local governments use unpaid volunteers. In total, 91% of local governments who report overall economic conditions as a moderate or major problem reported use of unpaid volunteers.

Implications

With this data we can look at times when communities rely most heavily on unpaid volunteers. It is possible that during times of economic hardship volunteers work with local government officials to fill the gaps that have formed due to job loss. Volunteers may also work together to remedy the issues causing the negative economic conditions in their communities.

Problems / Future Directions

The original survey data has several flaws. First of all, many of the respondents from the same counties had differing answers regarding the use of unpaid volunteers in their communities. In the future, I would like to develop a survey specifically designed to answer the question of how do local governments utilize unpaid volunteers, if at all?

Background

This research is being conducted through the Indiana Nonprofits Scope and Dimensions Project using data from a survey of local government officials that was administered by the IACIR in 2012. Overall, the Indiana Nonprofits Project is working to strengthen the relationships between local governments and nonprofits to benefit the communities they are a part of.

In the 2012 survey we asked practitioners — specifically Mayors and School Board Members — about:

- Economic conditions in their communities
- K - 12 Education
- Whether or not they used unpaid volunteers

More information regarding the Indiana Nonprofits Scope and Dimensions project can be found at http://www.indiana.edu/~nonprof/home.php

Main Questions

1. What conditions make volunteer use more likely?
2. What kind of impact do unpaid volunteers have on the communities they work in?

Of school board members who report that their schools are teaching enough about government and civics, 89% say that they use unpaid volunteers. This compares to 64% of the 61 school board officials surveyed who report that their schools do not teach enough about government and civics and use unpaid volunteers.