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Citizen Advisory Board Member Profile, Washoe County, NV

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INTRODUCTION:

In 1998 Citizen Advisory Boards (CAB) members were telephone surveyed by the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (n= 68) to determine 1) their interest in a board training program; 2) their preferred training format; and 3) a profile of board membership. All fourteen Citizen Advisory Boards were represented in the survey (Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency and Percent of Citizen Advisory Boards Surveyed in Washoe County

Board Name	Frequency	Percentage of total sample
East Washoe Valley	4	6%
North Valleys	4	6%
Spanish Springs	5	7%
Warm Springs	4	6%
Galena-Steamboat	5	7%
Gerlach/Empire	4	6%
SW Truckee Meadows	7	10%
Sun Valley	9	13%
W Truckee Meadows	5	7%
Incline Village/Crystal Bay	5	7%
SE Truckee Meadows	3	5%
Verdi Township	3	5%
W Washoe Valley	5	7%
Cold Springs	5	7%
TOTAL SAMPLED	68	100%¹

Results of the telephone survey were used to design a pilot training program developed by Cooperative Extension with the assistance of Leslie Roylance and the Washoe County Department of Community Development. The training program, Citizens Changing Communities (C3), emphasizes community capacity building skills. Community capacity is typically described as citizens learning skills on how to cooperatively work together for problem-solving and shared decision-making (Lochner et al. 1999, Aspen Institute 1996). Citizens changing communities is a skill building program aimed at improving the overall effectiveness of advisory boards in Washoe County.

This summary report presents results from the pilot training program C3 and a profile of citizen advisory board members during 1998-1999.

SURVEY PROCESS:

Board members were surveyed using a pre/post telephone survey administered through the University of Nevada, Reno Center for Applied Research. The project was funded through a Junior Faculty Research Grant by the University of Nevada, Reno. Leslie

¹ Total percentage may not equal 100 due to rounding.

Roylance provided current board members names, telephone numbers, and member status. The pretest was used as a need assessment to determine current board habits and skills, member's interest in receiving free training on specific topics and demographic questions. The posttest survey evaluated the effectiveness of the pilot training program, Citizens Changing Communities (C3). The Human Subjects Committee on the UNR campus approved both pre and posttest instruments to assure all responses would be kept anonymous and confidential.

SURVEY RESULTS:

Training Workshops/Information. Board members were asked questions regarding their interest in receiving free training or information on the topics of 1) time and meeting management; 2) conflict management; 3) problem-solving; 4) goal setting and action planning; and 5) decision making styles. Interest among board members for all training topics was high. Problem solving gathered the most overall interest of board members (79%) (Table 2.)

Table 2. Training Topics and Percent of Interest Among Board Members

	Time & Meeting Mgmt.	Conflict Mgmt.	Problem Solving	Goal Setting	Decision Making
Very Interested	30.0	41.0	44.0	43.0	40.0
Moderate Interest	38.0	35.0	35.0	31.0	35.0
Little Interest	21.0	9.0	13.0	15.0	16.0
No Interest	9.0	13.0	6.0	9.0	7.0
Don't Know	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	
Refused				1.0	2.0
Total (Percentage)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Overall Interest (Combined Very and Moderate Interest)	68%	76%	79%	74%	75%

All five training topics were summarized into a series of factsheets. All board members in 1998 were provided access to the training materials. Some board members received the factsheets in the mail, some were instructed to go on-line to access the material. Regardless of how members accessed the program materials (i.e., either factsheets sent in the mail, or factsheets on-line) the material content was the same. Three hands-on workshops were also offered during 1998-1999, but received very low participation (7%) by board members.

Although the pilot year had a low participation rate (i.e., members who actually read the program materials) among board members (26%), those who did participate in the program rated the materials as very effective (75%). The two most valuable training topics were problem-solving (83%) and goal setting/action planning (75%). As a result of low participation, program delivery methods have been revised during 2000. Program

materials are now automatically included in new member orientation packets and on-line materials are posted on the CAB web page for easier access.

COMMUNITY PROFILE OF BOARD MEMBERS:

Who joins CABS and why do they join? Citizens join advisory boards to become involved in their community (Figure 1).

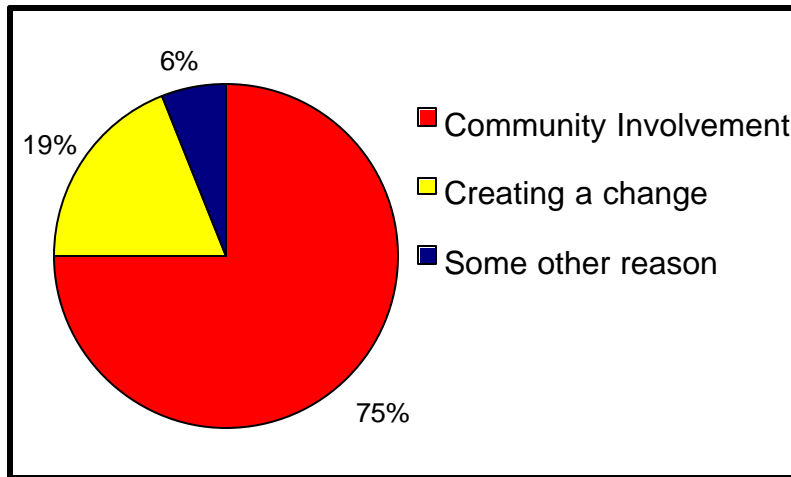


Figure 1. Reason for joining a Citizen Advisory Board

Most board members surveyed have largely served on the board between 1 to 3 years (Figure 2).

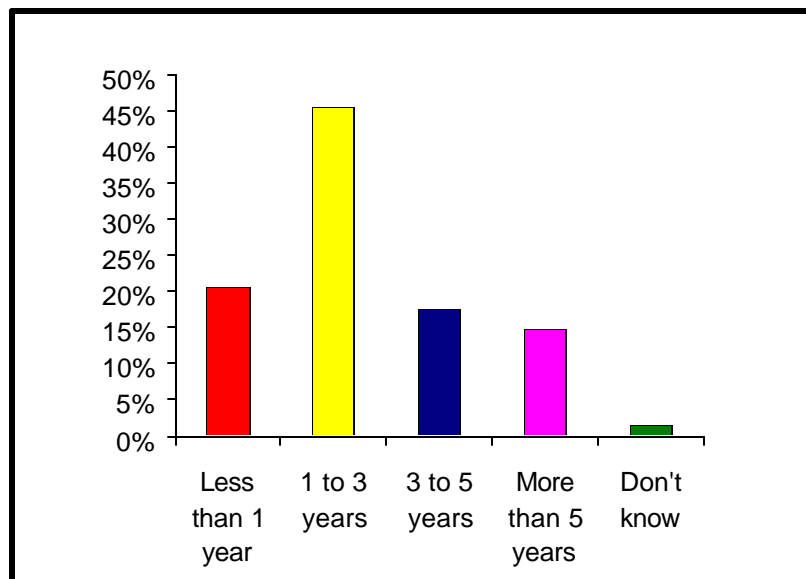


Figure 2. Length on the Board

Board members are typically long term residents of the County, with 40% living in the area over 20 years (Figure 3).

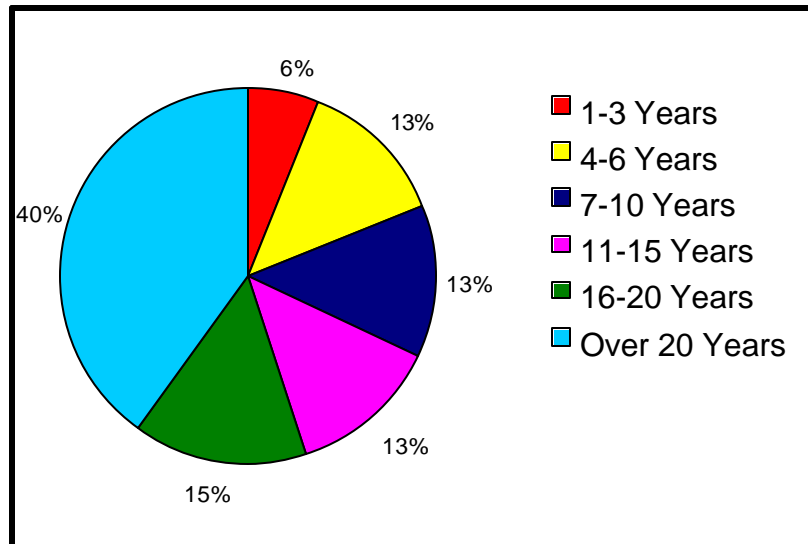


Figure 3. Length of Residency in Washoe County

Most board members (76%) have some form of higher education either in a technical school or college and 47% of board members are college graduates or higher (Figure 4).

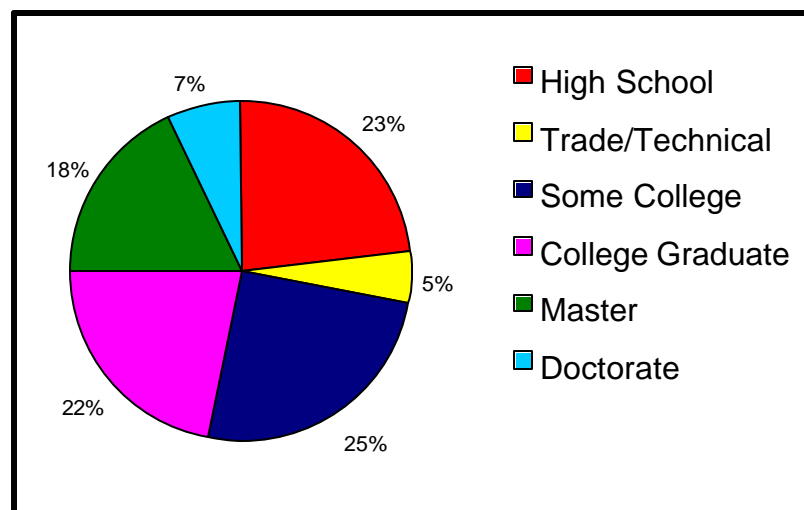


Figure 4. Highest Completed Education by Board Members

While income levels among board members vary, 50% of board member's income ranges between \$51,000 to \$100,000 (Figure 5).

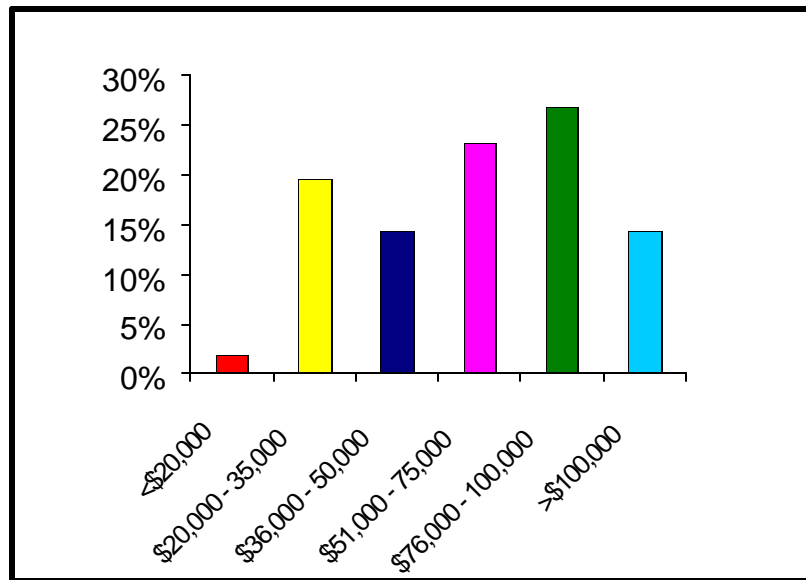


Figure 5. Gross Family Income Among Board Members

How satisfied are board members? When board members are asked how satisfied are they with decisions made by their board, most members (73%) are usually satisfied. When rating *the decisions* made by their boards, 58% feel their boards make good decisions. When asked overall, how satisfied are they as Citizen Advisory Board members, 40% rated themselves as very satisfied (Figure 6).

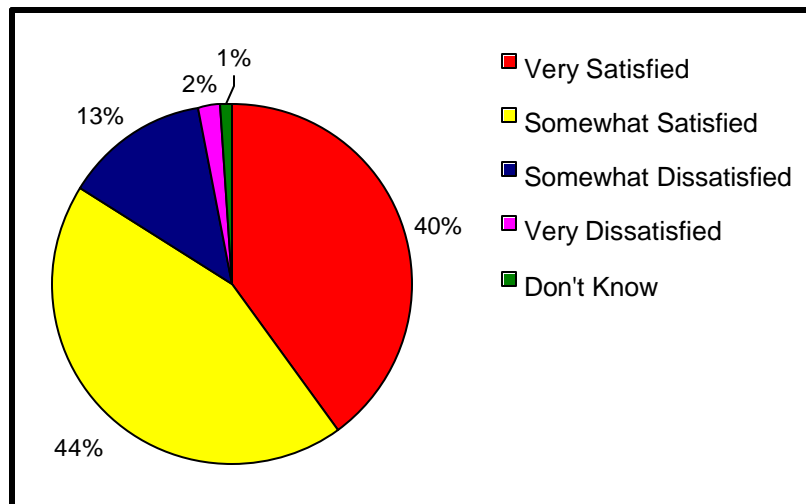


Figure 6. Satisfaction as a Board Member

When asked about their current level of motivation as a board member, a little more than a third of members surveyed rated themselves as very motivated. (Figure 7.)

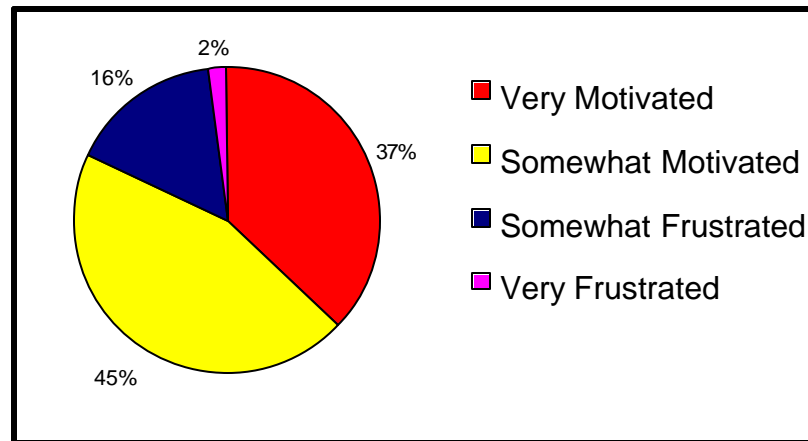


Figure 7. Motivation as a Board Member

It does not appear that time spent on the board reduces the level of satisfaction among board members. Since the majority of members have served on the board between one to three years (Figure 2), there is not an increase in dissatisfaction the longer one serves on the board (Figure 8). Motivation level seems more constant across time spent on the board with those who are very motivated. In other words, it appears that those members who are very motivated continue to stay motivated regardless of their length on the board (Figure 9).

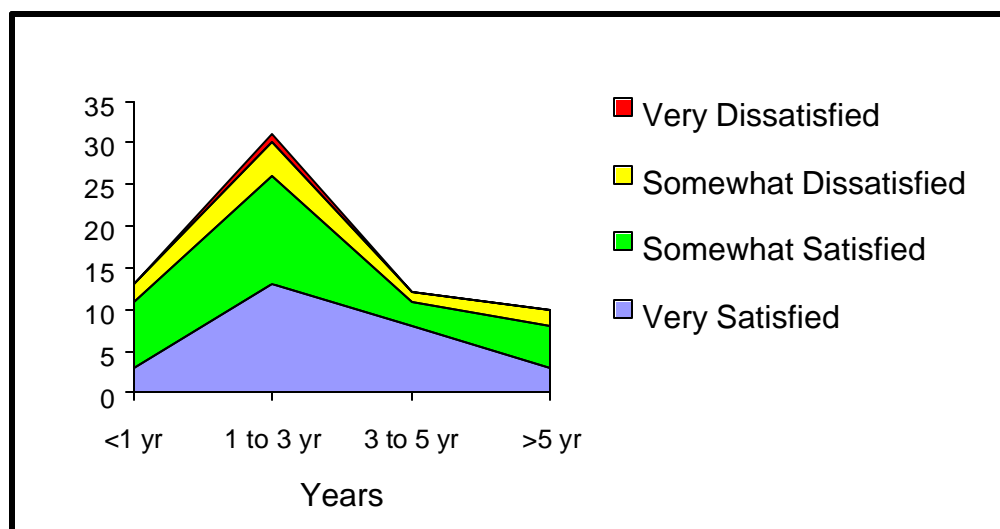


Figure 8. Length on Board and Level of Satisfaction

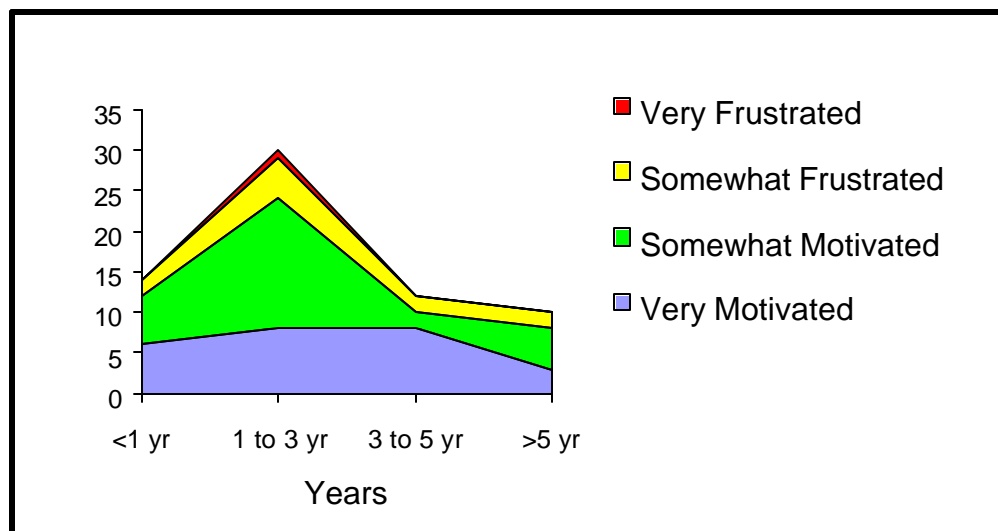


Figure 9. Length on Board and Motivation

Conclusion: Overall, citizens who join Advisory Boards in Washoe County join to be involved in their community, they typically have been long term residents of the County, have some form of higher education and they are generally satisfied with being a board member. Satisfaction and motivation levels could be improved upon. Citizens are joining boards to be involved and do something in their community. Anecdotal comments indicate board members desire a more participatory role in their community than they are currently permitted. While the boards are well organized and provide a worthwhile aspect of public participation, board members appear to be a valuable, but potentially untapped resource with various capacities. Additional evaluations may help explain board member capacity plus provide an understanding into what sustains satisfaction and creates motivation among board members.

References:

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