



## Engaging and Sustaining our Lifelong Learners!



### ***Perspectives:***

- The global population is getting older, and projections indicate that over 21% of people worldwide will be over the age of 60 by the year 2050. This large and voting portion of society is often left out of science outreach and should be invited to participate as we face the mounting and complicated issues across the globe.
- Being engaged in citizen science efforts also serves to improve both mental and physical health for this audience. Retirement can lead to social isolation, which has been linked to health problems including heart disease and early death.
- Motivations are more related to personal benefits, such as increasing their own background knowledge and holding values which lead them to being involved in environmentally related activities. Once motivations and needs for this audience are better understood in the context of GO, then recruitment strategies and retention methods can be tailored accordingly.



### ***Best Practices:***

- Find ways to engage with this audience within the network of organizations who already serve and recruit them. These range from efforts focused on this audience, such as local senior and community centers, Road Scholars, and Lifelong Learning Institutes; to larger organizations that include LLL as well as other age groups, such as public libraries, Sci Starter, and others.
- Having varied options for engagement is important. These can include shorter 2-week “campaigns”, engagement with SME’s who provide context and show value for their observations, as well as monthly emails highlighting the work being done by these citizen scientists as well as showcasing specific people to keep them engaged and their

efforts noted. This audience is not as motivated by being involved in scientific papers as much as by knowing they are involved and engaged in efforts to serve a larger good or to be useful. Providing updates on NASA science is very valuable to this audience, as well as other resources they can access to learn more about topics of interest.

- Providing multiple ways of being engaged is essential. Considering a continuum that includes stand-alone efforts, multigenerational activities, working with formal/informal education as a volunteer, as an aspect of work they are doing with a larger project (Master Gardener, Audubon, etc.). Providing “case studies” of how the different ways that GO LLL are getting involved and sustaining their engagement would be useful.
- LLL are interested in sharing their stories and their work with others. This aspect of LLL could be considered by sharing case studies, having a monthly email showcasing people and their efforts, having a dedicated webpage with GLOBE to share these (similar to [GLOBE Stars](#)).
- Lack of available time, waning interest in the topic, overly complicated protocols, and web/app design that is hard to read or understand become the main reasons for not starting or dropping out. Being able to monitor the needs and interest as well as the goals is important in maintaining their involvement.
- Evaluation results from NESEC’s “[Nibble and Drop](#)” research suggested that this audience were statistically more likely to cite contributing to NASA research and science as their primary motivations for joining the program. They also found that this audience ceased participation in GO was that they felt they were not making a meaningful contribution or when if they didn’t receive feedback and felt they were not doing a good job.

### [Bibliography](#)



For more information, please contact Dorian Janney at [dorian.w.janney@nasa.gov](mailto:dorian.w.janney@nasa.gov).