

LAPA & Postdoc Office 2008 Annual Survey Results

Introduction

Each year, the Los Alamos Postdoc Association in collaboration with the Postdoc Office, conduct an annual survey to collect information from the postdoc population regarding their postdoc experience and other things of interest. The results are summarized and the issues are raised with upper management.

The 2007 survey had 5 sections with 31 questions, with many write-ins that were difficult to analyze. This was our first survey trial and some questions were very similar and implied a positive outcome, which several postdocs noted in their responses. We have tried to improve the survey to be more accurate and not to generate biased results.

The 2008 survey consisted of three sections: Postdoc Demographics, which tried to determine the composition of the postdoc population; Los Alamos National Laboratory, which tried to find out how the postdoc population feels about the Lab; and Los Alamos Postdoc Association, which tried to find out how the postdoc population feels about LAPA. The 2008 survey had more multiple choice type questions and rewording/new questions to better survey the postdoc population. At the time of the 2008 survey there were 315 postdocs at the Lab. Almost 100 postdoc participated in the survey. These results will be used in meetings with management to improve the postdoc experience at the lab, as well as the Postdoc Office and LAPA working on creating new workshops and events that postdocs want.

If you have any comments, suggestions, or new questions that we should take into account in the 2009 survey, please email secretary_lapa@lanl.gov. Thank you!

Postdoc Demographics

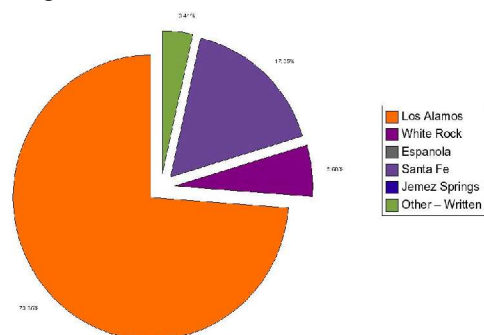
1. What is your citizenship?

45% US Citizens, 55% Foreign Nationals

It is important that the postdoc office and LAPA work to help meet needs of foreign nationals. Some of the major issues that were discussed in other questions include – Computer Access, Jobs – having companies that will hire foreign nationals at the career fair. These are complex issues that LAPA, the Postdoc Office and Upper Management need to work on.

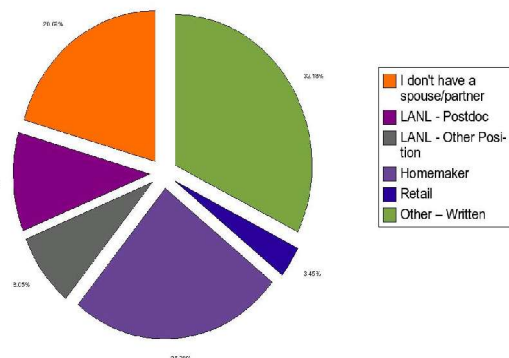
2. Where do you live?

The majority of postdocs live in Los Alamos with the second largest living in Santa Fe, the “Other” are comprised of Taos and Nambe. The LAPA socials and picnics have typically been in Los Alamos. LAPA has held several Santa Fe socials, but the turn out has been very low. If you have any ideas for locations/times/activities that may encourage more postdocs to attend or would like to work with the social committee to host an activity please email the LAPA social chair at lapa_social@lanl.gov.



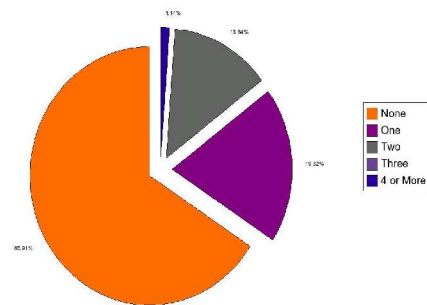
3. Where does your spouse/partner work?

20% of postdocs do not have a spouse/partner, while those that do have a wide variety of jobs. Many of the “Other” include graduate students and undergraduate students as well as teachers. This is important for management to know for family medical and other insurances and benefits for hiring packages. Also LAPA and the Postdoc Office sometimes receive Job Announcements for stores and organizations around Northern New Mexico. If there are enough Spouses in search of work, we could email out this information to all postdocs, or maybe setup some special mailing list for these types of announcements, so we don't create spam for the majority of postdocs.



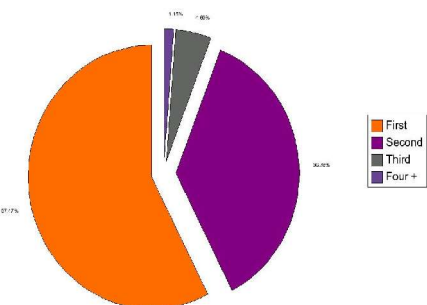
4. How many children do you have?

A majority of postdocs do not have children, while 34% do. LAPA needs to make sure they also have some socials and activities that are child friendly. If you have ideas for child friendly postdoc socials, please email the LAPA social chair at lapa_social@lanl.gov.



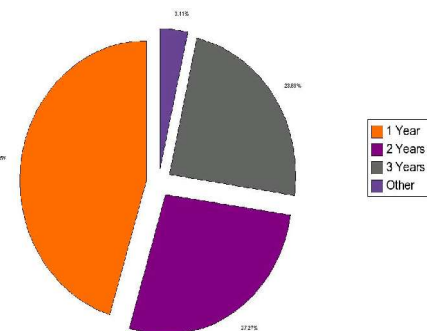
5. How many postdoc positions have you had?

For a majority of postdocs this is their first postdoc position. The Postdoc Office and LAPA annual career fair is an important activity to help postdocs get full time positions or their next postdoc position. If you are interested in helping put on the 3rd Annual Career Fair or have contact information for a particular company (preferably a specific person to contact) please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov.



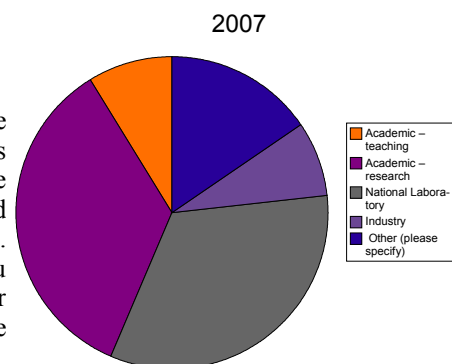
6. How long have you been a LANL Postdoc?

Most postdocs are in their first or second years. There are quite a few 3rd years, as well as the “Other” fraction being 4th years. Typically 3rd years and 4th years are given to individuals who are in the conversion process, but not able to convert before their 3rd or 4th year. With a new conversion process for C-Division, that may be developed to lab-wide, hopefully the conversion process will be clearer and more stream-lined. If you are interested in the conversion process or have individuals you would like to give a conversion talk please contact LAPA conversion chair at lapa_conversion@lanl.gov.



7. What is your career goal?

Unfortunately this question had a problem in the 2008 database and the choice results were lost. Shown here are the 2007 survey results. For many postdocs LANL is a stepping stone to a career in academia or industry. There were some suggestions on later questions that workshops on academia application writing and also grant/proposal writing would be useful to have the Postdoc Office try to setup. If you are interested in helping put on the 3rd Annual Career Fair (which can let you get more phase time with companies) or have contact information for a particular company (preferably a specific person to contact for the company) please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov.



Los Alamos National Laboratory

8. Please Select if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

a) I would recommend being a postdoc at Los Alamos National Laboratory.

86.36% of postdocs agreed that they would recommend being a postdoc at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The other 13.64% gave the following reasons for not wanting to recommend being a postdoc such as LANL moving away from basic science, not well suited to continue onto academia, too much bureaucracy, getting converted is difficult, too many restrictions for foreign nationals, and several individuals had poor treatment by their advisors/group leaders. LAPA does hold postdoc concern meetings (in fact one is currently in the planning) to compile the major postdoc issues and present them to management. If you are interested in participating, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov. For those of you having problems with your mentor/advisor that you cannot resolve between yourselves, you will need to work up line management (team leader, group leader, etc.) to see if the problem can be resolved.

b) I am encouraged to develop new and more efficient ways to do my research.

87% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 13% give the following reasons why they disagree such as too much training, too long to procure items, too much paperwork, lack of encouragement from mentor/advisor. LAPA has been discussing training issues with lab management to try to streamline training, so you are registered and ready to go as soon as you arrive, so you can get to your research faster. If you are interested in participating in the upcoming postdoc concerns meeting, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov.

c) I am treated with respect from my mentor.

92% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 8% give the following reasons why they disagree such as being watched over too much being treated like a child and not being watched over at all and being hard to contact. For those of you having problems with your mentor/advisor that you cannot resolve between yourselves, you will need to work up the line management (team leader, group leader, etc.) to see if the problem can be resolved. LAPA has discussed mentor training in previous concerns meetings, but it has not been in the top 3 problems that we discuss with management. LANL does have Mentor guidance and training with annual refreshers: <http://int.lanl.gov/science/postdocs/mentoring.shtml>. Since mentor issues keep coming up we need to review these guidance and training documents and see how we could improve them. If you are interested in participating in the upcoming postdoc concerns meeting, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov.

d) I am treated with respect from my co-workers.

94% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 6% give the following reasons why they disagree such as there are always a few individuals that are difficult to get along with.

e) Training is provided to enable me to do my job well.

77% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 23% give the following reasons why they disagree such as the postdoc is expected to figure out their training plan and lots of the training is not relevant to the work that the postdoc is doing. LAPA has been working with management to streamline training and also get the advisor/mentor to have a training plan in place before the postdoc arrives (try to be part of the hire-on package). If you are interested in participating in the upcoming postdoc concerns meeting, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov.

f) I know my job requirements and what is expected of me on a daily basis.

89% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 11% give the following reasons why they disagree such as having to figure out how to approach your project without help from mentor/advisor, not knowing how to choose which projects to work on and having different advisors/mentors with conflicting ideas of what you should do. Basically all the reasons came down to having advisors/mentors not mentoring and when someone has multiple advisors, not having the advisors meet with each other to discuss what the postdoc should be doing. This item would fall under mentor training, which has been a past topic at the LAPA postdoc concerns meetings, but has always been below the top three problems, that are focused on with management. If you are interested in participating in the upcoming postdoc concerns meeting, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov.

g) My research is progressing well.

85% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 15% give the following reasons why they disagree such as problems coding and problems working with advisor/mentor. Again this item would fall under mentor training, which has been a past topic at the LAPA postdoc concerns meetings, but has always been below the top three problems, that are focused on with management. If you are interested in participating in the upcoming postdoc concerns meeting, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov.

h) The overall time line of my research is on track.

82% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 18% give the following reasons why they disagree such as coding problems, inadequate support from advisor/mentor, no time line established, changing fields/groups, and unexpected issues.

i) My research is based closely on my original research proposal.

73% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 27% give the following reasons why they disagree such as changing projects, needing training, having to work on other projects and funding problems.

j) I want to be converted to a staff position.

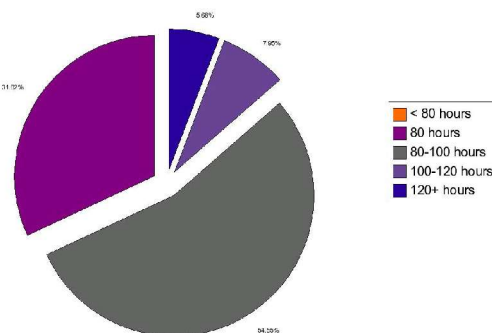
69% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 31% give the following reasons why they disagree such as getting into academia and industry, undecided, wanting to be in another field, and going back to their native country to work.

k) My mentor provides the right level of oversight on my work.

80% of postdocs agree with this statement. The other 20% give the following reasons why they disagree such as the mentor is a micromanager to the mentor does not provide enough oversight. Again here maybe mentor training to state that the candidate and mentor need to discuss the level of oversight, training and other job aspects before hire-on, so the potential postdoc knows what they are getting into. If you are interested in participating in the upcoming postdoc concerns meeting, watch for announcements in email to all postdocs, or you can also email the LAPA policy chair at lapa_policy@lanl.gov.

9. How many hours do you usually work in a 2-week period? (Work being defined as research, administrative duties, training, paperwork, procurement, seminars, workshops, etc.)

32% of postdocs work 80 hours, 55% work 80-100 hours, 8% work 100-120 hours and 6% work 120+ hours every two weeks.



10. Considering your progress to date do you plan on a 3rd year extension?

11% of postdocs do not plan on a 3rd year extension, while 26% are to far away to estimate. 35% plan on getting a 3rd year extension and 27% are already on a 3rd year extension. Typically 3rd (and rarely 4th) year extensions are given to postdocs in the conversion process. With a new conversion process for C-Division, that may be developed to lab-wide, hopefully the conversion process will be clearer and more stream-lined. If you are interested in the conversion process or have individuals you would like to give a conversion talk please contact LAPA conversion chair at lapa_conversion@lanl.gov. The Postdoc Office and LAPA annual career fair is an important activity to help postdocs get full time positions or their next postdoc position. If you are interested in helping put on the 3rd Annual Career Fair or have contact information for a particular company (preferably a specific person to contact) please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov.

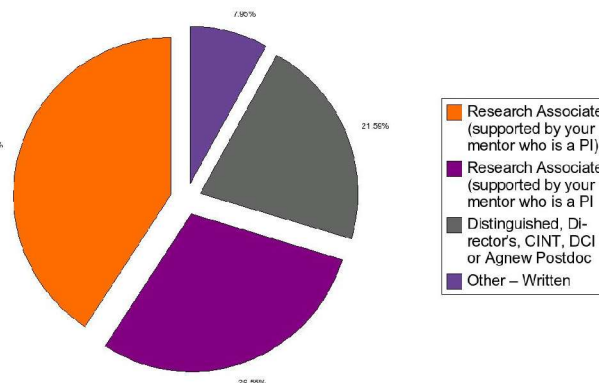
11. Have you published or presented any of your research in/at:

- a) **Scientific Journal (Peer Reviewed)** – 58% have
- b) **Conference Proceedings** – 48% have
- c) **National Meeting** – 59% have
- d) **Local Colloquium/Seminar** – 38% have
- e) **Team or Group Meeting** – 64% have
- f) **Grant or LDRD Submission** – 36% have
- g) **Other – Please Explain** – None

There has been some discussions within LAPA about bring back the postdoc seminar series, originally held by the Postdoc Office. This seminar series lets postdocs practice presenting their work and get to hear all the different types of work that go on at LANL. We were considering having a lunch or dinner social, where food would be provided by LAPA and several talks could be presented, if you are interested in an event like this please email the LAPA social chair at lapa_social@lanl.gov.

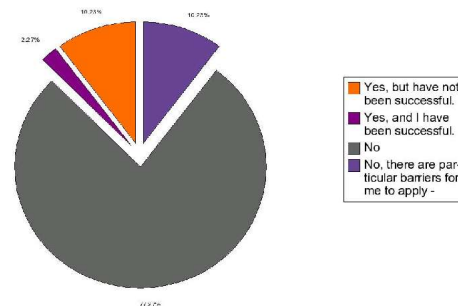
12. What is your funding situation?

41% of postdocs are research associates supported by mentor who is a PI. 30% are research associates supported by mentors who is a PI on an LDRD. 22% are distinguished, directors CINT, DCI, Agnew postdoc fellow. 8% are trying to find funding or are a Seaborg postdoc (this will be added to the list next year).



13. Have you applied for your own funding (you as PI)? Select all answers that apply.

77% of postdocs have not applied for funding, 10% have but were unsuccessful, and 2% have and were successful. 10% state that there are barriers. The question should be reworded to be as Co-PI, because LANL does not allow postdocs to be full PI's because they are limited term, but certain named postdocs can sometimes be PIs.



14. Have you participated in proposal writing that may or has affected your funding situation?

44% of postdocs have participated in proposal writing.

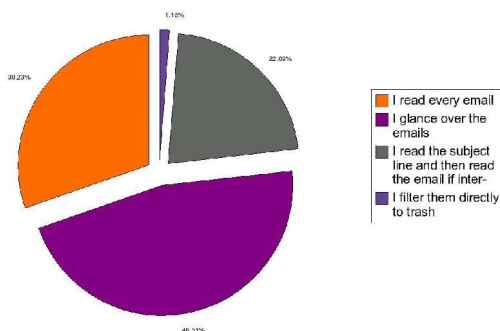
15. What changes, if any, do you feel need to be made to improve the postdoc experience at the lab?

This is a written question and had many responses. Text in parentheses () is something LAPA or LANL is working on. The responses include, scheduling training ahead of time (being worked on by LAPA with management - lapa_policy@lanl.gov), classes offered infrequently and fill up quickly, ability to attend conferences and apply for jobs (LAPA is working on a 3rd Annual career fair - lapa_career@lanl.gov), require proposal writing in 2nd year (postdocs can be co-PIs), mentor training (LANL does have Mentor guidance and training with annual refreshers: <http://int.lanl.gov/science/postdocs/mentoring.shtml>. Since mentor issues keep coming up we need to review these guidance and training documents and see how we could improve them.), computer access – especially for foreign nationals, such as being able to install programs and have control over their work computer, streamline purchasing/repair requests, clear process of conversion (C-Division is working on and may be applied lab wide), training for travel and other tasks, set up a post-doc mentor system where a new postdoc could be matched to a postdoc who has been at the lab for a year to be able to ask questions and not feel isolated (LAPA has socials and general assembly meetings that all postdocs are welcome to attend – these are good places to meet other postdocs and to ask questions and vent frustrations among peers), allowing more holiday time or special time to be able to attend job interviews or get visas renewed, reduce bureaucracy, and reduce/simplify paperwork.

Los Alamos Postdoc Association

16. How often do you read LAPA emails?

30% read all emails, 47% glance over the emails, 22% read subject line to see if interested, and 1% filter them directly to trash. Emails are tricky because you need to get the word out about workshops, meetings and socials etc. but you don't want to create too much spam. We typically try to send out two announcements, usually one a week before and another the day of. For a complete listing of all upcoming events you can check the monthly LAPA newsletter for upcoming events!



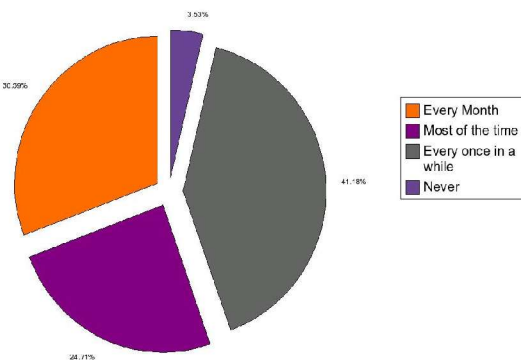
a) For each of the email types below, please check 1 if you want to receive more reminders, 2 if the number of reminders sent out is satisfactory, and 3 if you want fewer reminders:

- **LAPA GA Meeting Announcements** – 10% more, 77% satisfactory, 13% fewer
- **LAPA Social Announcements** – 13% more, 80% satisfactory, 7% fewer
- **LAPA Committee Announcements** – 8% more, 80% satisfactory, 12% fewer
- **LAPA Newsletter Announcements** – 8% more, 87% satisfactory, 5% fewer
- **LAPA Conversion Seminar Announcements** – 9% more, 82% satisfactory, 9% fewer
- **LAPA and Postdoc Office Workshop Announcements** – 18% more, 76% satisfactory, 6% fewer
- **LAPA and Postdoc Office Seminar Announcements** – 14% more, 79% satisfactory, 7% fewer
- **Postdoc Office Job Announcements** – 25% more, 69% satisfactory, 6% fewer

Here the best LAPA can do is try to get the most in satisfactory and try to get the more and less about equal, which seems to be the case for most email types. More Workshop announcement will be sent out, we have usually now been sending 3-4 usually 2 weeks before, 1 week before, on the day of the sign-up deadline. The Seminar Announcements and Job Announcements don't occur very often, which may be a reason for the higher numbers for wanting more.

17. How often do you read the LAPA Newsletter?

31% of the postdocs read the newsletter each month and 25% read it most of the time. 41% read it once in a while and 4% do not read the newsletter. The newsletter is the main form of communication from LAPA to the postdocs including all the events and what happened at the last general assembly meeting. We also include postdoc profiles, introducing postdocs to the postdoc population (if you would like to do a postdoc profile please send your name, group, Ph.D. institution, research interest and hobbies or interests along with a picture of yourself to the Communications Committee chair at lapa_communications@lanl.gov). Also you can access the current and old newsletters at: <http://www.lanl.gov/projects/pda/newsletter.shtml>.



a) If you read the Newsletter what segments do you want to see more of, select 1 for more, 2 for just right and 3 for less:

- **Cover Story** – 19% more, 75% just right, 6% less
- **Recent Events** – 19% more, 77% just right, 4% less
- **Upcoming Events** – 25% more, 74% just right, 1% less
- **Committee Reports and GA Meeting Minutes** – 7% more, 78% just right, 14% less
- **Postdoc Profiles** – 33% more, 57% just right, 10% less
- **Things to do Around Northern New Mexico** – 40% more, 51% just right, 9% less
- **Committee Spotlights** – 6% more, 82% just right, 12% less
- **Postdoc Office Announcements** – 14% more, 81% just right, 5% less
- **New Postdocs and Recent Conversions** – 20% more, 72% just right, 8% less
- **Calendar of Events** – 23% more, 75% just right, 2% less

Again we try to get the majority in the satisfactory and calibrate the more and less. Somethings like the reports and minutes cannot be changed, because they are dictated by the bylaws to be distributed to the postdoc population. We have started to include all information on upcoming events and workshops that we know of in the newsletter. We try hard to get postdoc profiles at general assembly meetings and socials, if you would like to do a postdoc profile please send you name, group, Ph.D. institution, research interest and hobbies or interests along with a nice picture of you to the Communications Committee chair at lapa_communications@lanl.gov. Also for Things To Do Around Northern New Mexico, if you have something to share please write up some directions, describe the thing to do and provide a picture and email the Communications Committee chair at lapa_communications@lanl.gov! We have been providing more information, especially spelling out all the group names for the new hires and conversions. We are also trying to keep the LAPA calendar updated, the Calendar can also be found on-line at: <http://int.lanl.gov/science/postdocs/calendar/month.php>.

18. Did you attend the LAPA and Postdoc Office 2008 Career Fair

31% of postdocs went to the 2008 Career Fair. Note that the Career Fair is a LANL sanctioned event and all postdocs can come during regular working hours to attend. If you are interested in helping put on the 3rd Annual Career Fair or have contact information for a particular company (preferably a specific person to contact) please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov.

a) If you participated in the career fair, how did it compare to other career fairs that you have been to?

Of those attending 25% thought this was better than others, 64% thought it was similar and 11% thought it was worse. The main reason for the worse was that there were not many employers for their field and also many employers require US citizenship. If you have contact information for a particular company (preferably a specific person to contact) please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov and they will try to get them to come.

b) Did you get any interviews?

Of those attending 44% got interviews with companies!!

c) Do you have any comments or suggestions for the 2009 Career Fair?

Two postdocs replied that they had a job offer from this fair, some said we need more companies, and some of the employers did not know about the diversity of research at LANL. We did hold a career fair social for employers and LANL postdocs to mingle and also see posters about all the science that goes on at the LANL. If you are interested in helping put on the 3rd Annual Career Fair and organize the social or other aspects please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov.

19. Do you take advantage of the free workshops sponsored by LAPA and the Postdoc Office?

40% of postdocs have attended at least one of the free workshops.

a) If you participated in the workshops did you attend:

- Behavioral Interviewing Workshop – 58%
- CV Writing Workshop – 76%
- Technical Talk Workshop – 28%

The Technical Talk workshop is a new workshop where postdocs can give a short ~5-10 minute presentation, which is recorded and then played back with useful comments and suggestions for improvement.

b) Would you recommend these workshops to other postdocs?

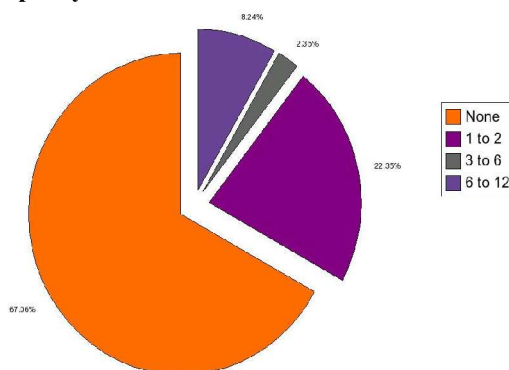
89% of the postdocs who took the workshops would recommend them to other postdocs.

c) Are there any other workshops that you would like to have offered?

The workshops that are wanted are grant/proposal writing, Academic Job Application Writing (research plans, philosophy of teaching, Negotiations, etc.), How to Network, and How To Use Concur. Also some noted that the times were inconvenient and that it would be nice for the CV workshop to have recent examples of LANL postdoc CV's (if you would be interested in donating a copy of your CV for others to study, please send a copy of your CV to Mary Anne With at the postdoc Office – with@lanl.gov).

20. How many LAPA General Assembly Meetings have you attended in the past year?

67% of postdocs have not been to a GA meeting. 22% have been to 1 or 2, 2% have been to 3 to 6 and 8% have been to 7 to 12. General Assembly meetings are dictated by the LAPA Bylaws (available on the LAPA webpage: <http://www.lanl.gov/projects/pda/> to be the 2nd Wednesday of the month. Noon was chosen, because that was when the majority of officers and chairs could attend. This meeting is where most of the work gets discussed. There are other ways to become an active member of LAPA, including becoming an officer or chair, or by joining a committee. To join a committee just send an email to a committee chair. Usually committee meetings are arranged such that everyone could attend, and these meetings are where the real work is done.

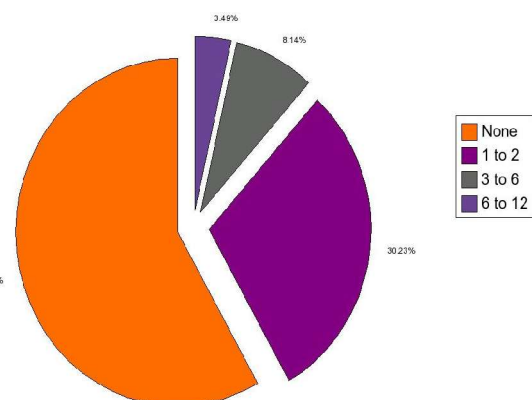


a) How could LAPA increase your attendance at GA Meetings?

Free food is a major reply, and in fact for the Bi-Annual Meetings (where the results of the officer elections are given) the social committee provides free food. Our Budget is limited considering all of the events we would like to do. If you are interested in the financial aspects of LAPA you could join the Financial Committee by emailing the chair at lapa_financial@lanl.gov. Different locations have also been suggested. Typically we hold the meetings in Otowi in Siderooms A&B, but we have also held the meetings at Canyon School and the MSL. If you have suggestions for meeting places, where there is ample parking and a room that can hold 20-40 people and is open to foreign nationals please email the LAPA president at president_lapa@lanl.gov.

21. How many LAPA Socials/Picnics have you attended in the past year?

58% of postdocs have not attended a social, 30% 1-2, 8% 3-6 and 3% 7-12. Socials usually have free food and are held in a variety of locations. We have tried socials in Santa Fe, but the turn-out have usually been very low.



a) How could LAPA increase your attendance at socials?

Free food is a big response, alternative places, child-friendly socials, have lunch socials instead of only evening socials, and have a social in White Rock. There has also been discussion at LAPA about having hiking activities, sports, and other recreational activities that postdocs could participate in. If you would like to work with the social committee to host an activity please email the LAPA Social Chair at lapa_social@lanl.gov.

22. What issues would you like LAPA to take on?

This was a written question. Text in parentheses are activities LAPA/LANL are doing. Responses included helping management understand that postdocs need to have time to work on CVs and go to job fairs and interviews as part of the postdocs job (LAPA has a job fair, which has managements approval to attend during working hours), have a postdoc forum

(we do have one, but it is not very good: <http://int.lanl.gov/projects/pda/mboard/mboard.php> - if there is interest and we have funds maybe we could get a more user friendly version up and running), trying to get a mentoring program to help teach mentors how to mentor, computer access for foreign nationals, more social activities – dancing, allow postdocs to be a PI (because postdocs are limited term they cannot be PI, except for certain named postdocs – however postdocs can be co-PI with a permanent staff member).

23. Do you have any comments/suggestions you would like to share with LAPA?

This was a written question. Most responses were that LAPA is doing a good job. The other responses include trying to expand LAPA and have more activities (we are trying to get more diversity in the socials and also add other activities such as hiking and sports – if you have ideas or would like to participate in the Social Committee please contact the LAPA social chair at lapa_social@lanl.gov), start to include the student organizations as well (this is a good idea, because they face similar issues and also many become postdocs – we are in the process of having the student organizations join us for the 3rd Annual Career Fair, which will increase attendance, and possibly get more companies to attend – if you are interested in the career committee please email the LAPA career chair at lapa_career@lanl.gov), the postdoc socials are not new people friendly (We apologize if you felt left out, we try to have large tables that everyone can gather around and make new friends, but especially at picnics people tend to cluster in small groups and not interact much except around the food, which is why we would like to introduce sports – like we had tennis at one picnic and bring back volleyball, which we had a year or two ago). If you have any other comments or suggestions please email the LAPA president at president_lapa@lanl.gov or contact any of the LAPA officers and chairs:

President	Chris Taylor	president_lapa@lanl.gov
Vice-President	Harshini Mukundan	vice-president_lapa@lanl.gov
Secretary	Partha Mukherjee	secretary_lapa@lanl.gov
Treasurer	Adam Farrow	treasurer_lapa@lanl.gov
Social Chair	Amanda Klingensmith	lapa_social@lanl.gov
Policy Chair	Jessica Houston	lapa_policy@lanl.gov
Communications Chair	Ryan Trovitch	lapa_communications@lanl.gov
Conversion Chair	Dhriti Bhattacharyya	lapa_conversion@lanl.gov
Financial Chair	Chris Taylor	lapa_finance@lanl.gov
Career Chair	Dave Kuiper	lapa_career@lanl.gov
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