

## AVA CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY NOTES

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In response to the dissolution of the Association of Volunteer Administrators (AVA), the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network hosted two conference calls on March 28 and April 19, 2006. The calls provided an opportunity to discuss current and anticipated needs of volunteer resource managers and possible next steps to support AVA's former members.

A total of nearly 100 volunteer managers, representing local, state and national organizations, participated in one of the two calls. Jackie Norris, Chair of the Volunteer Center National Network Council, facilitated and Robert K. Goodwin, CEO of the Foundation, offered welcoming remarks. Overall, participants on the call believe that AVA's closing creates a void in national leadership to advance the profession of volunteer administration. National leadership must support the professional growth of volunteer administrators, DOVIAs and others working with and leading volunteers.

- 1) *What do you need as a professional volunteer administrator from a national association or organization? What essential services do you need for your personal or professional success (may include new services not provided by AVA)?*

### **Advocacy**

- Services or programs like certification (CVA), and a professional magazine are seen as big helps in advocating the profession
- Targeted outreach and messaging to Executive Directors and CEOs of nonprofit organizations is important to continue to build the case

### **Training**

- Training templates that can be incorporated into existing programs
- Educational resources, products and tools
- Resources to create local training programs, including training curriculum
- Linkages, networking and knowledge sharing with others in the field
- Mentoring system pairing new volunteer administrators with experienced managers; incorporating CVA

### **Connections**

- Connecting volunteer managers through formal and informal opportunities

- 2) *What will be required of a national organization (new or existing) to meet members' needs and increase membership, provide leadership and advocacy, and advance the field of volunteering and volunteer administration?*

### **Advocacy**

- Advocacy efforts should be two-fold as activities should forward the profession *and* advance policy with regard to volunteering
- Understand the breadth and depth across the volunteering field for full exchange (example given: environmental vs. social volunteering)
- Increased outreach to those unaware of the profession or its impact
- Capacity to reach new potential funders, members and supporters

### **Structure**

- Determining the cost/benefit value of membership
- Strong degree of transparency
- Encourage accessibility to those that chose not to join AVA previously
- Member voice is important

### **Networking**

- Mechanisms to connect members are required
- Outreach to nonprofit leadership (executive directors and CEOs) is needed to encourage understanding and appreciation of the role of the profession
- Connections to all including Volunteer Centers, corporations and DOVIAs

### **Training**

- Adequate online resources
- Online training, and video conferencing
- Partnerships with community colleges to help develop trainings and provide higher education opportunities for managers

- 3) *What infrastructure should be in place to ensure that members have a voice? How can members best lead, contribute to, and connect with a national agenda for the profession of volunteer administration?*

### **Networking**

- Utilize message boards to post questions and topics for discussion on volunteering; and other easily searchable communications opportunities including blogs, listserves and online groups to access best practices. *Existing vehicles identified by participants included [www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com), [cybervpm.org@yahoo.com](mailto:cybervpm.org@yahoo.com), [www.PointsofLight.org](http://www.PointsofLight.org) and [www.bamboounderground.com](http://www.bamboounderground.com).*
- Create forum to start database of members, including former AVA members that connect people

### **Structure**

- National organization with regional representation was suggested as an appropriate policy/governance model with connections to members through local DOVIAs.

- The infrastructure of national organization should add value to the infrastructure of existing organizations

4) *How can Volunteer Centers best support and enhance the work of volunteer administrators?*

**Networking**

- Facilitate networking among peers

**Advocacy**

- Advocate for staff development trainings
- Publicize meetings and events
- Outreach to upper management and serve as advocates of the field

**Structure**

- Work with and be a resource for DOVIAs and volunteer resource managers
- Serve as housing agents to create stronger partnerships for a stronger community of volunteer managers

**Training**

- Resource for local training or professional support

5) *What training, certification or other professional opportunities could be supported nationally, but also delivered locally?*

**Training**

- Competency training is needed. Best practices and a curriculum should be established that can be delivered by local organizations
- Volunteer managers to train staff in volunteer management and interaction
- Cross-sector approach to training the field—focus on function of volunteer manager, health care with crime prevention with environmental
- New and advanced trainings
- Certification as a part of trainings including CVAs
- Certification of agencies and programs as well as individuals
- Uniform processes that support curriculum to be delivered locally for state certification
- Accessible training opportunities in addition to national conference

**Networking**

- Maintain in-person meetings
- Build bridges with higher education organizations and management centers
- Connect and involve leaders across volunteering groupings

## *Recommended Next Steps for the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network*

### **Networking**

- Make forum at conference more accessible (The Foundation will host a forum for former AVA members on Saturday, June 17 during the National Conference on Volunteering and Service at the Grant Hyatt in Seattle, WA. The Foundation is working to enable call-in capability for those wanting to participate in the discussion, but unable to physically attend).
- Announce the national conference forum's facilitator and provide agenda in advance
- A wide net should be cast for discussion at the conference and not limit outreach exclusively to former AVA members
- Reach out to engage DOVIAs to participate in the forum
- Host a conference call or session prior to the meeting scheduled at the conference
- Continue to inform AVA members of updates
- Reach out to AVA leadership for member inclusion

### **Structure**

- Develop criteria for ideal partnership into a template for dissemination
- Form core group or advisory committee
- Engage DOVIA representatives
- Research legal implications for starting new AVA-type organization
- Talk to former AVA staff (K. Campbell) concerning members' list and CVA list

### **Organizing**

- Develop online survey to provide good data on opinions from the field
- Prevent duplicative efforts
- Governance and infrastructure – very important to organize well
- Explore international vs. national concerns from the field (start with N. America then move globally)
- Consider using retired professionals with marketing and other skills
- Use Foundation network and connections
- Align organizations that promote the profession of volunteer management with protocols, measures, and outcome strategies
- Use trainings and fundraisers as organizing events
- Centralize national operations; reformation of new AVA-type organization as part of Foundation

### *End Notes*

- The Foundation will host a forum for former AVA members and other volunteer resource managers at Conference (Sat. June 17 at the Grand Hyatt in Seattle, WA from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.).

- To date, 300 former AVA members have accepted the Foundation's invitation to free membership.
- The Foundation was involved with the development of VRM Roundtable's recent survey but is not co-sponsoring the Taskforce's push for a new organization, although, the Foundation will continue to serve as a collaborator.
- The Foundation will be lead by the consensus of the field with regard to its role in this area.
- If encouraged by the field to do so, the Foundation will research the requirements to meet member expectations, and review sources required to satisfy membership (resources, governance structure, etc.).
- Conference call notes to be posted on VRM Roundtable.
- Participants expressed concern regarding the intent of creating a new and independent organization without full exploration of other options. It was the consensus of the group to decelerate the process of forming a standalone organization.
- The Foundation was encouraged to remain part of the planning process and continue its leadership role in convening and supporting relative discussions. The Foundation is investigating expanding its existing role to support identified needs as expressed by participants.

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