

**AVA TRANSITION FORUM MINUTES
BASED ON THE MEETING AGENDAⁱ
OUR PROFESSION: FOCUS ON THE FUTURE
Seattle, WA**

Saturday, June 17, 2006 3:00-7:00 p.m. (Pacific) Grand Hyatt, Eliza Anderson Amphitheater

In Attendance

Please see the attached directory

Purpose of the Meeting

In the wake of the Association for Volunteer Administration's (AVA) dissolution, many professional volunteer administrators are asking "what now?" This forum provided an opportunity for us all to learn about efforts already underway, envision and develop options for continuing to advocate and support our professional identity, and to maintain momentum in the process of organizing.

Welcome and introduction – Robert Goodwin, Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network, and Liam Leduc Clarke, The UPS Foundation

All participants, in the room and on the phone, introduced themselves by name and affiliation.

Facilitators Introduction—Penny Mabie, Lynn Lefkoff and Sarah Brandt, EnviroIssues

- **Meeting approach and format**

Together today's participants represent over a thousand years of experience in volunteer management.

Today's discussion will not focus on what happened with AVA and why it dissolved. Today's meeting is a forward-looking forum. The intent is to develop a framework and common vision / values for how to provide support to volunteer managers in the future.

- **Agenda review and participant expectations**

Participants recorded their expectations for the day on their registration forms.

When we looked at them, there was some great variation and even conflicting expectations. However, some of the common expectations include: (1) open and honest discussion, (2) clarity on what happened with the previous association and what will follow, and (3) how will the discussion be organized.

It is imperative to acknowledge that such a large group of people (over 80 in-person and over 30 over-the-phone attendees) will not be able to come away with a clear action plan today. However, taking baby-steps towards a comprehensive action plan can and will be accomplished today.

- **How the discussion and decisions at this meeting will be recorded**
Notes will be taken and distributed by Points of Light Foundation staff.

Part I: Where We Were and Are

- **History of Associations in the Volunteer Management Profession – Susan Ellis, Energize Inc.**

- 1) AVA died, not the field!!!
- 2) Even when AVA was still in operation, members had questions in regards to the exact nature of the relationship between AVA and associations. Today we live in much different world than we did 40 years ago when AVA was first established.
- 3) Professional Associations vs. Resource providing support agencies (see attachment # 1 for charts used during the meeting).

Professional Associations:

- Members self identify as part of the profession
- Home for your identity
- Members are always most powerful, there may be staff but members are key (unlike Points of Light Foundation)
- Provides a forum for discussing issues of importance to practitioners of the profession and acts as a voice for the profession.

Resource providing support agencies

- Give services

- 4) There are local, state and national professional associations and support agencies for volunteering in any setting (generic), as well as parallel organizations for field-specific volunteering, such as health care. In the generic arena, there is little connection among the levels; in the field-specific arena, often the local and state levels are chapters or affiliates of the national.
- 5) While AVA attempted to be international, nowadays countries have their own national organizations serving their needs.
- 6) We are in a different area of resources today, especially in terms of electronic resources and exchange. The professional field of volunteerism is still here. Just to set the right tone – this is a forward-looking conversation.
(See attachment # 2 for a chart used during the meeting).

- **Update on organizing activities by colleagues post-March 1**

Report on the current status of AVA assets in “temporary” homes – Katie Campbell

There are no temporary homes anymore. Katie and others navigated through the hurdles! Both the Certified in Volunteer Administration (CVA) credentialing program and the Journal of Volunteer Administration (JOVA) are safe.

- 1) JOVA: As of April 18, 2006 the JOVA has been legally transferred to the North Carolina State University. As of July 1, 2006 the JOVA will be

electronic-only and renamed the *International Journal of Volunteer Administration* (IJOVA) to incorporate its expanded international scope. (See attachment # 3 for more details).

- 2) CVA: In an effort to preserve it, three plans were considered. It is now safe and sound with a sponsoring organization – Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA) created specifically for the purpose of preserving CVA. It has:
 - a) 6 founding members (3 of them present here), which is the best way to ensure credibility, growth and value of this credential! Before the summer is over, there will be a discussion around how to expand the board.
 - b) About 100 candidates are looking at the program right now; many of them expressed the interest only after the dissolution of AVA. (See attachment # 4 for more details).

- **Report on the progress of VRM Roundtable’s task force – Claudia Dalton**

Volunteer professionals created the VRM Roundtable in March 2006 to discuss a replacement for AVA:

- a) A survey administered to the former members of AVA showed that 87% of those who responded said that they would like to have an independent national association.
- b) There are 104 individual practitioners serving on nine different teams.
- c) Each team voted and selected team leaders – nine of them in total.
- d) Information from the survey is still being collected and analyzed.

- **National Organizations’ Volunteerism Network – Karen Key**

National Organizations Volunteer Network (NOVN), sponsored by AARP & the National Human Resources Assembly was formed to share experiences on national and international levels. NOVN provides networking resources and opportunities that AVA could not effectively provide. There is no formal structure for NOVN – no board, no staff, etc

NOVN is a successful model so far and fits the niche very well. At a recent meeting, participants discussed concerns they thought should be addressed when discussing a potential new association.

- a) Provide an access point for resources to connect
- b) Serve to broaden this profession
- c) Support volunteer resource management
- d) Adequate financial resources must be provided

Part II: Where We Want to Go

Needs and Wants - What's missing in your world?

This was a 40-minute small group discussion. Participants were divided into small groups. Over-the-phone participants were asked to disconnect and connect again around 4:50 p.m. when they could participate in the report out. The groups were asked to discuss and answer the following questions.

- 1) What are the things that support our identity as professionals?**
- 2) What did AVA provide that we didn't get anywhere else or that was valuable to maintain or adapt in some way?**
- 3) What did we not get from AVA that might now be possible?**

Each group's notes were recorded on flip charts. Below are the notes from all the small groups.

Group # 1

Needs & Wants:

- To encourage people to consider this as a career and not just a job
- Forming a "tree" of organizational structure to affiliate local & state associations with the national
- Resources from a national organization to support the local level
 - Example: templates, bylaws etc.
- Circular, back & forth
- More regional conferences – crossing current "boundaries"
- Advocate standards & consistent education for practitioners
- Need a non-academic publication—journal, newsletter

What's missing?

- Group identity as separate from others
- Trainer training—to offer local access
- Need our own distinct conference (not this one)
 - Possibly alternating between 1 yr national + 1 yr regional
- Web knowledge portal
- Central conference calendar
- Job bank
- Educate executives
- Webcast conferences into local level

Group # 2

Needs

Association
Conference
Research
Advocacy
Prof. development

Wants

Mentoring
Networking
Continuity
Best practices
Ethic standards

Training (Academy)
Advanced Leadership Track
* Accessibility
* Inclusiveness membership
History of field

The Source of Information
Higher Education
Credibility
* Collaboration w/ org
Technologically Adv.
Searchable Database

Needs & Wants:

- Marketing / PR for the profession
- National Training & event calendar
- National Organization with International Collaboration
- Build mutual local / regional support networks

What AVA provided:

- CVA
- Ethics Code
- Focus on Volunteer Management with diverse groups and individuals
- Brain Trust
- Access to input
- Positioning the profession
- Recognition of excellence
- The journal
- Home for Affiliate Organizations

Possibilities Forward

- Web based information & support / training
- Stronger support / connections to local organizations
- Openness to non-paid volunteer managers / outreach
- Publicity & marketing of the profession & conferences
- Discern value to membership
- Sharing conference information with those who could not attend the conference
- Financial partnerships (foundations, corporate business)
- Board members outside the profession / more diversity
- Closer link with academic research
- Degree program
- Executive training for future leaders

Group # 3

What are the things that support our identity as professionals?

- Professional Organization
- CVA
- Professional Credentials
- Define – Education & knowledge, skills, and abilities sequence:
 - Levels

- Define career path
- Continually redefine

What did AVA provide that we didn't get anywhere else or that was valuable to maintain or adapt in some way?

- A National Network:
 - Bench mark
 - Regional Conference even years
 - National Conference odd years
 - Lends credibility:
 - Set standards (to United Way)
 - Professional Development
 - Research
 - Networking
 - Variety of Typical Organizations
- Hybrid Publication:
 - Trends, issues
 - Advocates
 - How to Tools
- Journal Research;
- Academic Practical
- Funds – tied to practical, research issues
- Professional Ethics
- Competencies

What did we not get from AVA that might now be possible?

- Funds for practical research
- More member involvement:
 - Issue Dialogue
- Need Clout
- Training Templates
 - How to setup DOVIA
- Legislation advocacy
- Grant options
- Build Communities of Practice
- Get Connected
- Connect State Groups
 - Best Practices
- Tri-state meetings
- List Serve
- Conference calls
- Tie theme areas to researchers
- Match making
- Regional Coordination
- Tie in academics with Data & emerging needs

Group # 4:

Needs & Wants:

- Certification
- Publications
- Body of knowledge
- Networking / Sharing / Interaction
- Common language / standard practices
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Access point for those who are new to the field
- Tracking of trends, issues, new research
- Opportunities for leadership development for the field
- A national conference
- Opportunities for continued growth & professional development for experienced practitioners
- Connecting point for many sub-sectors / industries
- Connecting DOVIAs / local networks
- Code of ethics
- Recognition of excellence in the profession
- Support for career advancement
- Mutual support / collegiality
- Positioning us as professionals and skilled managers
- Resource / support for creating a new network, affinity group
- Influencing public policy “Washington DC Representative” and / or equipping us to be effective advocates
- Financial sustainability – “Attitude adjustment” re: investing funds & in ourselves as professionals
- Access to connecting with colleagues in other countries

Group # 5

Wants & Needs:

- Credentials
- Professional Standards for practitioners
- Ethics
- Defining shared values
- Peer recognition and support
- Validating it as a profession amongst the whole organization
- Raising the profile of the profession externally
- Getting to the executive committee
- Representation

What did AVA provide that we didn't get anywhere else or that was valuable to maintain or adapt in some way?

- Credentials
- National conference with practitioner presenters & leaders in the field
- Networking opportunities
- Independence
- Leadership in professionalization
- Status for the profession
- High quality materials like journal
- Visibility to the organization

What did we not get from AVA that might now be possible?

- Regular communications
- Leadership on a national level
- Transparency
- Democracy
- Regional and local engagement
- Leadership development on the local level
- Represented a narrow focus of group, e.g. social services
- Disconnect from mission
- Board dominated by small organizations
- Disengaged from policy making / developing in volunteering
- Helping shape national service

Group # 6

What are the things that support our identity as professionals?

- Advocacy for profession – throughout organizations, positioning
- Peer support – networking
- Credentialing
- Training / learning / development
- Organization’s appreciation / value of volunteers – “volunteers” empowered to speak to value of both themselves & VM
- Broad – both informal / formal
- Recognize unpaid VM – unaffiliated – no budget
- Volunteers are not “appreciated” nationally – funds value

What did AVA provide that we didn’t get anywhere else or that was valuable to maintain or adapt in some way?

- Documents:
 - Ethics of VM
 - Profile of profession
 - National salary averages
- Networking – membership list
- Conference VM saw / used as resources
- Journal

- CVA
- Gave sense of validity / value to profession
- “Skills” bank
- Avenues for affinity groups
- Regional – opportunity to be presenter
 - Leadership
 - Prof. development ladder
- Website

What did we not get from AVA that might now be possible? Engagement of DOVIAs / regional structure & connections – regional trainings;

- Consistent / reliable training structure
- “High” tech
- Did not establish national credible presence at / in other professions
- Funds available
- Guidelines for volunteer managers (i.e. IRS regulations)
- Staffing
- Capacity building initiatives
- Collaboration
- Branding / National Marketing
- Focus in USA

Group # 7

What are the things that support our identity as professionals?

- Professional development opportunities
- Core competencies:
 - Volunteer manager means something
- Professional Writing – research / trends
 - Proactive; anticipate change developments
- Networking
- Statistics; how many volunteer hours; economic impact
- Best practices in volunteer management
- National Conference
- Title – all over map, Drs. are Drs
 - Identifiable name

What did AVA provide that we didn’t get anywhere else or that was valuable to maintain or adapt in some way?

- National Conference for Professionals – Network
- Contact information on web for various assistance
- Just existence of AVA & website
- Membership status
- Value? Credibility
 - Defined core competencies
 - Defined ethics

- Professional writing

What did we not get from AVA that might now be possible?

- Local connections – Regional Conference
 - Need for local, regional & national
- Technology
 - Online training
 - Listserv
- Forum for groups
- National organization umbrella for other groups
- National clearing house for information from other organizations
- Respect for profession
 - Self Esteem
 - See value of volunteer manager
- A voice for the profession
 - Advocacy

Group # 8

What are the things that support our identity as professionals?

- The journal
- The AVA philosophy / standards – gave us credibility
- Having the association on the speak for us to represent us as a field
- Website
- National figures, heroic figures, spokesman for our field
- Expertise & research – identifying trends
- Certification process
- National and Internal identity

What did AVA provide that we didn't get anywhere else or that was valuable to maintain or adapt in some way?

- A checkpoint for smaller organizations, provided a template
- The national conference provided great networking opportunities
- Cyber VPM listserv

What did we not get from AVA that might now be possible?

- We did not feel approached enough from “what are you doing to” standpoint
- Not enough lobbying for public policy
- Use as a hub to connect with other organizations such as Points of Light Foundation, etc.
- Help the DOVIAs succeed
- We did not get a “credible” CVA credential AND recognition for OTHER credentialing programs that were possibly as challenging or more difficult

Over-the-Phone

- The organization should not compete between capacity levels
 - Local vs. State
 - State vs. Federal
 - Federal vs. International

Perfect World – What’s the vision for how to support our profession?

Participants were asked to add anything to the small group reports that would be needed to complete a perfect world for professional volunteer managers.

- Funds
- Adequate staffing
- Balance between staff and volunteers
- Scholarship and re-granting for development opportunities
- Funds to support members traveling
- Strategic partnerships
- Networks of networks
- Educating new leaders early

Organize themes. Is a common vision emerging?

The facilitators observed that the small group work was pretty consistent regarding themes and queried participants as to whether further thematic work was needed. Participants agreed there was clear consistency across all the groups and no further organization was needed.

Some additions were suggested:

- Staffing at the national level
- Super-structure runs the risk of forgetting how powerful individual volunteers are – in a perfect world there would be a good balance between staff and volunteers
- Scholarship and re-granting for professional development opportunities
- Always empowering members, support travel from region to region
- Strategic partnerships – one participant observed, “I worked in an office that had no funding for a year and I saw what just going out and talking with others can do and how powerful relationships can turn up.”
- Networks of networks
- Educating people just coming into the field, rather than throwing them into the deep water
- Maintain the Academy

Part III: Next Steps

The Journey – Mapping a path

- **Identify baby steps:**
Participants brainstormed activities that could be undertaken immediately, in the near future and in the next few months. The discussion included further questions and concerns about activities already underway.

That can be done in the next three days

- Post notes from this meeting on listservs quickly
- Survey attendees about AVA relevance – go to VRM survey online
- Develop mission statement and vision
- Come up with a name
- Collect who wants to be part of “contact committee”
- Clarify how many organizations we are building and who is leading the effort – “put the brakes on current efforts & provide a forum to ask if this is the right structure
- Survey the attendees to find out why this is a relevant conversation
- Tell everyone that we have positive issues to discuss, positive steps are taken forward, negativity is not the only issue, hope for larger participation next time.
- Convene
- Have a follow-up meeting here at the conference
- Initiate collaboration
- Questionnaires for conference participants
- In-person “invitation” for conference participants who were not here
- Strategize about leadership for a new organization and who would it be
- VRM members provide answers to the questions discussed in the small group sessions and post on a 9th set of flip charts
- Have a survey reflect agenda questions
- Develop informal charts that cover topics covered today

That can be done in the next three weeks

- Review other efforts – e.g. VRM, assign task within gaps directory / website
- Establish time line for efforts
- Continuing forums for discussing larger question – vet & validate
- Initiate network dialogues between interests
- DOVIAs report to the VRM Roundtable on their thoughts regarding structure
- Determine where we get the funding for more dialogue, more face-to-face meetings, long distance conference calls
- Provide more clarity on what are the major options that we have

That can be done in the next three months

- Have a follow-up forum – suggested to be in September in conjunction with the ASDVS conference in Philadelphia
- Reports on VRM work, Certified organizations, other efforts;
- Research other models
- Identify VRM gaps & areas for collaboration

- Find resources to support the collaboration

Outstanding questions and concerns – practical and philosophical expressed by participants

- Need a person focused on this (someone to steer)
- Honor institutional history & work already being done
- There has been a transparent process that has led to an accepted structure
- How many organizations are being built and who is building them?
- We are talking about collaboration but are we – have we discussed it?
- Are there any elephants in the room (how many of them) – there needs to be a sense of caution, perhaps brakes should be put on current efforts until we can catch up
- Is this the right structure? More dialogue needs to happen – meetings, face-to-face gatherings. It needs to be vetted and validated!
- Research emerging trends in membership organizations
- Build upon ideas, perhaps the Red Cross could provide some assistance
- Clarify “Professional association”
- What models are options?
- What models are viable?
- Is there a need for an association?
- International or National?
- Developing structure where ALL voices are heard / represented
- There seems to be consensus that we need an independent professional national association. {The facilitator tested consensus in the room and while there was broad support, there were some who indicated they were not sure they agreed with the need for an independent professional national association.}
- There are tensions that not everyone may know how to deal with. Traditionally, there is a difference between a movement and a professional association. Are we just a movement? Are we forming a professional association truly?
- I hate to still see people leaving this meeting in two camps.
- Are there two camps? VRM Roundtable folks need to communicate more with others.
- Where do we begin? – That is the hard part. Who has the vote?
- The VRM Roundtable is what we already have here today – maybe there are two groups in the room but the VRM taskforce is transparent, it is published on-line, and everyone is invited to make comments.
- A visible call to action was given to form the VRM Roundtable, although the task force is by no means the only way
- The idea of ownership is a little bit scary as not everyone has been aware of the VRM Roundtable. The train is apparently already moving but the conversation should be kept open – there is a need for more dialogue, more openness and transparency
- Let’s make sure the 2,000 people attending the conference know about what’s going on, inform people, and see if they are interested
- How to make everyone happy? How about keep encouraging people to participate in the existing roundtable survey. The VRM survey is currently closed on the website, but VRM folks will find out if it can be re-opened

- There is still a lot of confusion – the survey for example: some people do actually want a survey. Clarity is not here yet. There is a lot of energy but still some confusion & hesitation.
- An action would be good for us all to commit to would be to be positive and let everyone know that we are moving forward

Three immediate initiatives were agreed to:

- A small group will develop a handout for conference attendees that 1) informs them about the ongoing organizational efforts and 2) encourages them to participate. It will also encourage people to go the VRM website and take the on-line survey (if it can be reopened successful).
- Another meeting will be organized for Monday evening, June 19. The location of the meeting will be posted at the Energize, Inc. booth in the vendor exhibition hall.
- A follow-up forum will be held in Philadelphia, at the Marriott, on September 21, from 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.

7:00 p.m. Adjourn

Post Script

- The conference attendee survey was completed and distributed. 180 forms were returned, requesting further information about next steps. VRM-Roundtable did re-open their online survey.
- A follow-up meeting was held as planned on June 19. Minutes of that session are attached here.

ⁱ Minutes prepared by Paulina Migalska of Points of Light Foundation.