

# COVAA Steering Committee Retreat

Las Vegas, NV  
June 8-10, 2007



***“We are architects... building a strong foundation for COVAA.”***



***A Note to Readers...***

*When reviewing these COVAA Las Vegas retreat minutes, you will see lists of issues that have been identified for further discussion as we ask ourselves important questions during this process.*

*Research and planning continue and we view these minutes as a “**work in progress**”—**final decisions are yet to be made**. The committee is dedicated to building a strong foundation that will support all future COVAA efforts and possible collaborations.*

*Thank you!*

# Friday Evening, June 8, 2007

## Ground Rules

(Flexible...)

- Seek first to understand
- Be positive
- Be open-minded
- Be cooperative
- Be honest
- Resolve to stay free from criticism and competition
- Be participatory
- Honor commitments
- Be communicative
- Focus on common interests
- Stay focused on the goal
- Have fun!!!
- No idea is stupid
- Share leadership/responsibility
- Self-manage

## Retreat Attendees

Wanda Lee Bailey, COVAA Project Strategist

Erin Barnhart, Advocacy

Rebecca Burton, Certification

Betsy McFarland, Communication

Vicki Bateman, Professional Dev.

Betty Aldworth, Resources

Mary Kay Hood, Standards

Joanna Johnson, Steering  
Committee Chair

Todd McMullin, Technology

Vicki Leigh, Values



**Saturday, June 9, 2007**

## **Organizational Identity Work**

***What business are we in? What is: Our Direction, Our Future, and Our Image?***

### **Recap of What Came Out of Denver**

Attendees reviewed notes from the Denver Congress and recalled the high points:

- Need a collective voice for the profession; show cohesiveness
- Advocacy/ elevate profession
- Professional
- Building capacity for everyone at every level of volunteer management / Education, credentialing
- Change ourselves and think outside the box
- New language
- Create stronger strategic alliances to the broader volunteer world
- Use existing resources (IJOVA journal, CVA, CyberVPM, etc.) and don't duplicate efforts
- Clearinghouse / be a link in the profession
- Innovate
- Respond to trends
- Galvanize (ignite spark that leads the charge – be a catalyst – have a finger on the pulse of what is happening in the field)
- Be the national expert – body of best practices
- Grassroots and accessible – member driven / Bottom-up, not Top-down
- Credible / polished
- Leadership
- Creating volunteer leadership as a career path / resources / benchmarks
- Types of membership – open to individuals or DOVIAs, or combination thereof?
- Inclusive / diverse (not just non-profit, needs to be multi-sector)
- Regional
- Congress
- Don't recreate AVA

### **Steering Committee Pre-Retreat Survey Summary**

Retreat attendees completed a brief survey prior to arrival in Las Vegas.

#### ***What needs does our organization satisfy?***

- Continuing education
- Provide resources

- Advocacy
- Networking
- Leadership
- Lead the way in positioning the profession
- We fill a gap at the national level
- We unify what is happening at the regional/local level
- Legacy – reaching out to youth, future leaders (Honor the past, while setting the course for the future)

***What products/services do we offer?***

- Education
- Training
- \*Linkage / Resources
- Networking
- \*Support / Advocacy

\* Linkage / Resources and support/advocacy should lead.

***What market do we serve?***

- Individuals whose responsibility is to lead volunteers – whether paid or not paid – in any setting
- “Servant leadership empowers engagement”

Who are our ideal clients?

- Everyone interested in volunteerism, volunteer issues, and volunteer management.
  - Volunteers themselves
  - Corporate
  - Government
  - Volunteer leaders/managers
  - Entrepreneurial volunteers

Point was made that saying our clients are “everyone” is too broad and hard to sell. We need to be more specific and clear.

***What are we really good at?***

- Networking
- Support: Mentoring, providing guidance, resources, and best practices – setting standards
- Advocacy and strategic thinking
- Work with all players
- Provide passion and vision
- Honest, inclusive, and open communication

***What is unique about our organization?***

- We are representative and inclusive

- We are professional
- We are transparent
- We are financially sound, strong and sustainable.

***How do we provide our product/service?***

- Internet – Web-based technology
- On-the-ground: regional / in-person
- Communicate through new or existing networks/channels in the field (ensure we reach people who aren't using Internet)
- Overall, use mechanisms that match/respond to our clients (using multiple methods to reach our diverse membership)

# Key Questions to Answer

## 1. What will we do really well?

*What:*

- Networking
- Support
- Resources
- Advocacy
- Strategic thinking
- Inclusive
- Passion/vision
- Setting standards for best practices
- Sustainability (financially as well as for the profession itself, legacy).

*How:*

- Using technology
- On the ground/in person
- Using existing channels
- Open communication
- Transparency
- Professionalism
- Promote/elevate profession
- International partnerships
- CVA.



## 2. Why join COVAA? / 3. How is COVAA different from others?

- Member driven/representative of people on the ground
- We're a PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION (pushing volunteer management as capacity building on par with development, grant writing, and other critical aspects of an organization)
- We would be a resource and provide expertise to other national organizations. We define the best practices as opposed to just teaching them. Nobody does the best practices better than us because our members are feet on the ground in volunteer management.

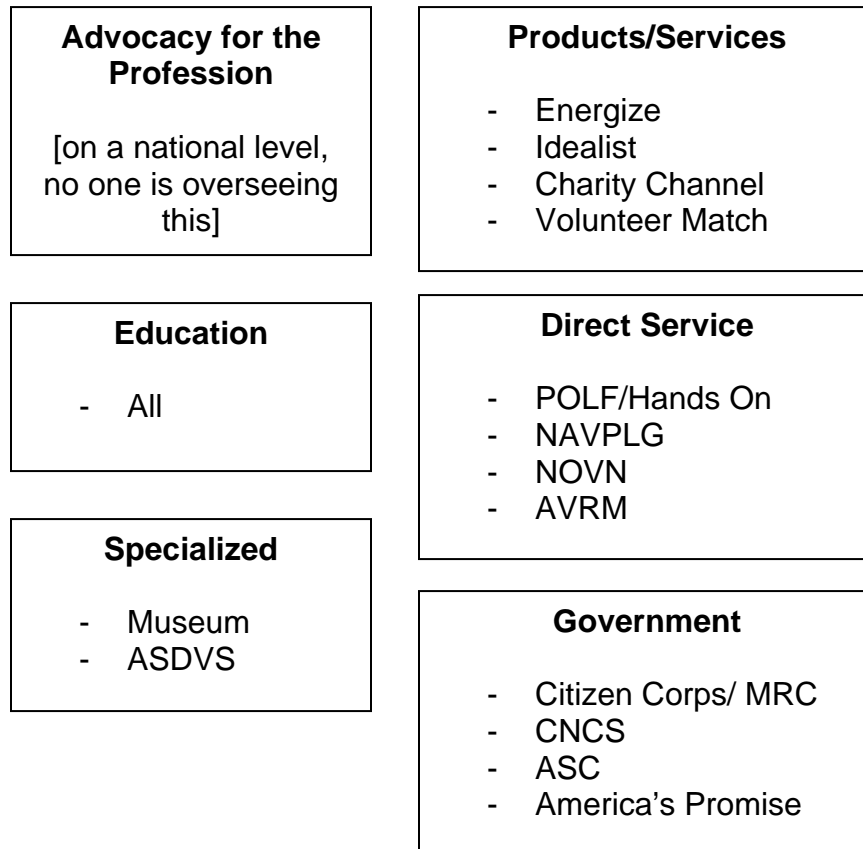
## 4. What's in it for me and how will COVAA help my job; help my profession?

[We did not answer this question during the retreat, but will revisit this.]

## Overview of Other National Groups

- \* Points of Light Foundation (POLF) - Volunteer Centers
- \* Association for Volunteer Resource Management (AVRM) – membership org
- \* Hands On Network – Another intermediary organization that works particularly with corporations (in discussion for possible merger with POLF)
- National Association Volunteer Professionals in Government (NAVPG) – government
- \* Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) – (AmericaCorp, SeniorCorp, Service Learning)
- American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services (ASDVS) – healthcare
- CitizenCorps: Medical Reserve Corp, Neighborhood Watch
- American Association of Museum Volunteers (AAMV) –
- Association of State Commissions (ASC)
- Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)
- National Organizations Volunteer Network (NOVN)
- Energize Inc. / Idealist / Volunteer Today / Charity Network
- Independent Sector
- Corporate volunteer networks (CVC, POLF)
- Charity Channel

\* indicates those we need to pay most attention to – most likely partners





## Values

To help you determine the foundation upon which your organization is based, identify what is most important to you in dealing with people, performance, and processes.

Leadership ✓✓✓✓✓  
Integrity ✓✓✓  
Quality ✓  
Learning  
Creativity ✓  
Service  
Catalyst ✓✓✓  
Communication ✓✓  
Collaboration ✓✓✓✓  
Credibility ✓  
Inspiration  
Relationships ✓  
Passion ✓✓  
Sustainability ✓  
Sensitivity  
Synthesis  
Competence  
Teamwork



*During our timeline discussion, the team realized the following concepts should be added to the values list:*

- Modeling Standards – “Walk the Walk”
- Engaging volunteers in the mission and work of our organization (part of “Walk the Walk”...must incorporate volunteers ourselves into the new association).

### Overall Top Words Based on Above Exercise:

1. Leadership
2. Collaboration
3. Integrity and Catalyst
4. Passion and Communication

# Vision

## ***What will we look like in five years?***

- Present at every table when it comes to volunteerism (a “no brainer” for us to be involved on all national levels)
- The source for best practices/clearinghouse
- Buy-in from corporations – large corporate support that gives us credibility
- We are the steward/caretaker – “go-to” resource – of the profession
- Representation from across the country
- Virtual organization with someone driving
- Differing membership levels – all welcome
- Practitioner driven – Which also serves as vehicle for leadership development
- “Because of unprecedented success we are now a financially viable, multi-million \$\$ advocacy and resource development group for volunteer professionals”
- We provide: Connection points – Conduit – Synthesis – Translate and disseminate trends – Linking/Collaboration
- Diverse funding streams

## ***How large is our membership in five years?***

- On par with Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)
- U.S. based but with strong partnerships with international associations with reciprocal memberships
- Tiered memberships?
  - Individuals
  - DOVIAs
  - Etc.
- A few projected figures from one of the retreat teams:
  - Corporate partners: 25
  - Nonprofit agencies and government partners: 25
  - Delegates pool: 500
  - Members at Large: 150

## ***What new activities/practices will we be pursuing?***

- Who ya gonna call? “Volunteer Busters”
- Providing support through regional resource providers who facilitate “train the trainers” workshops linking resources and access to “current” trends and best practices.
- Provide tailored advice/training/program development to members, ranging from CEOs to individuals
- International partnerships
- Collaboration/deliberate linkages with other national groups
- How to find and use/implement relevant information effectively

- Serving as change agent
- New level of advocacy and resources (more accessible – not really new, but HOW we do it will be different)
- Defining ALL standards for volunteer professionals (salary, training, etc.)
- Online wizard
- “Branching of one tree”
- Benchmarks

***What do we want to be remembered for?***

- Open door/all inclusive
- Resource clearinghouse
- Practitioner driven
- Positioned profession to higher level
- Rising above the divisiveness
- Putting volunteer leaders on the map (to level of AFP) / capacity building
- Known as change catalyst bringing volunteerism into 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Revolutionizing profession of volunteer management
- Integration
- Alliances



## **Presentation from Values Committee**

### **Work done at Denver Congress**

#### ***Who are we? Why do we exist? Who do we serve? What's our purpose?***

*(Highlighted words are those that were not captured in steering committee work and need to be added)*

- We serve as a collaborative catalyst for social well-being of the world through volunteerism one person at a time.
- The organizations that are strong and viable in their communities (and the world) have invested their people in this association
- Add value, **relevancy**, respected, have **impact**
- Attracts, retains, fosters and recognize best and brightest talent

#### ***Who are we?***

- We are diverse, inclusive, and **accessible**
- Our business is building and influencing leadership (might be advocacy)
- "COVAA" "It" [entity name] is an innovative and creative "**Elite**" group of passionate and proactive professionals.
- We are an organization that governs with integrity and accountability, visible to all members.

#### ***Value Characteristics***

Professional  
Inclusive  
Diverse  
Fluid & Flexible  
Transparent (open, proactive communication)  
Accountable  
Visionary  
Collaborative  
Financially sustainable  
Fiscal Responsibility  
Focused  
Excellence in Service  
Accessible  
Galvanizing  
**Thought leadership**  
Leaders of volunteers

## Discussion of process for broader surveying of delegation

- Offer both online and mailed surveys to ensure all are reached and can provide input/feedback
- Remind delegation of their SharePoint login
- Track how folks provide input (via internet or mail, etc.)
- Offer personal touch to our delegation
- Offer technical assistance and let them know how important they are and that they are valued
- Also include job descriptions of what positions we need for each committee
- We need folks to be web savvy, concerned about setting precedent that we will do this both via internet and snail mail. We need to help our delegation use the technology to expedite the process and ensure participation.



# Mission Statement Development

Feasible \* Motivating \* Distinctive

A mission statement states our reason for being:

- What business we are in
- Who are our customers

“We believe.... We serve.... Therefore we do.... “

Broad enough to increase our goals and services.

## Draft Mission Phrases

“To leverage the impact of volunteers in our diverse communities, COVAA serves as the catalyst to advocate, foster collaboration, and develop resources for professionals and leaders of civic engagement.”

“Promote and support the effective engagement of volunteers in our communities by acting as a conduit of information and resources.”

“through leadership, integrity, standards”

“serves as catalysts”

“collaborative catalysts”

“best practices”

“education and training”

“citizen engagement”

We should try to include some of the top words chosen during the vision exercise:

5. Leadership
6. Collaboration
7. Integrity and Catalyst
8. Passion and Communication

## An Example: Association of Fundraising Professionals

Mission: “AFP, an association of professionals throughout the world, advances philanthropy by enabling people and organizations to practice ethical and effective fundraising. The core activities through which AFP fulfills this mission include education, training, mentoring research, credentialing and advocacy.”

Vision statement: "Fundraising is viewed as a credible and respected profession for civic betterment throughout the world."

Quality Statement: "AFP is committed to excellence in providing the highest quality services and products for our members and other constituents. We are responsive to their needs and strive to exceed expectations."

### **Process for Finalizing Our Mission Statement (June????)**

- Erin will take first stab at word-smithing the mission with help from Idealist colleagues and with input from Values Committee and other steering committee members
- Send to key stakeholders to get their immediate feedback
  - Who are those key people? (Determine the list of stakeholders via email)
- Survey delegates on draft mission
- Finalize mission statement and publish online and via an email announcement to our delegation.



# Refine How We Will Work Together

## Committee Chairs Currently

### Advocacy

- Erin Barnhart

### Certification

- Rebecca Burton
- Sherry Davis

### Collaboration

- [vacant]

### Communication

- Karen Jackson
- Betsy McFarland

### Finance/Business Plan

- [vacant]

### Professional Development

- Vicki Bateman
- Tiffani Hill

### Resources

- Betty Aldworth
- Nora Simmons-Daly

### Standards

- Mary Kay Hood

### Structure

- Valerie Jones
- Karen McDonald

### Technology

- Dierdre Araujo
- Todd McMullin

### Values

- Vicki Leigh
- Kristen Leuth



## **Clustering Options to Build the Foundation for the Organization**

The Steering Committee discussed options for clustering the various committees to help with work flows.

### Operations

- Structure
- Technology
- Communications & Marketing
- Finance / Business Plan
- Values

### External Relations

- Advocacy
- Collaborations

### Professional Development

- Standards
- Resources
- Professional Development
- Certification

After discussion, retreat attendees decided to table this clustering concept for now and see how things go with the current committee structure now that we have timelines and action steps in place. This clustering concept may be revisited in the future if needed.

## **Things We Need to Work Together**

- Need a task master – someone to stay on top of everyone and hold accountable to deadlines
- Need a volunteer recruitment and placement process (need to identify a volunteer director)
- Need assigned job descriptions and tasks for those involved and those we recruit
- Follow back up with people who expressed interest in helping who we may have lost along the way

Joanna will take the lead on recruiting a COVAA volunteer director.

- Overall volunteer manager to recruit and place new COVAA volunteers
- Administrative
- Task lists
- Job descriptions / use template from current programs we all run
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Recognition

## Communication Process after Retreat

- Survey – develop a survey as needed to ask for input and feedback from the broader delegation. We don't want to work in a vacuum.
- Craft flyer for POLF
- Directions on how to get involved need to be clearly on website
- Resources committee will draft linking policy for website (based on samples from others). It will include Erin's list. Resources will also include disclaimer. All this will be approved by the Steering Committee before posting.
- Review the list of people who've asked to get involved with COVAA so we can follow up with them again.
- Create better process online for recruiting volunteers verses signing up for more info, etc. Have folks complete different forms depending on what they want to do or how they want to be involved.
- Regular requests for feedback through SharePoint



# Timeline

## Foundation Complete (Target date – January 1, 2008)

- Signed by-laws
- Establish first Board of Directors
- Choose “headquarters” (physical or virtual)

## *Major Pieces that Must Be Tackled to Complete the Foundation*

- Finalize mission statement (Values Committee)
- Finalize values (Guiding principles) (Values Committee)
- Finalize value proposition (what makes us unique and relevant?) (Values)
- Write up final organization model (Structure)
- Name the entity (Values)
- Develop membership criteria and benefits (Structure)
- Exhibit at POLF conference (Steering Committee)
- Project budget for Steering Committee (Steering Committee Chairs)
- Develop initial business plan [executive summary]  
(blueprint of first floor of our building)
  - Include plan for future management of new entity (Structure)
  - Include communications plan (Communications)
  - Include marketing plan (Communications)
  - Include a budget (Finance/Business Plan)
  - Include a funding plan (Finance/Business Plan)
  - Include plan for initial program and service offerings
    - Standards
    - Professional Development
    - Advocacy
    - Certification
    - Resources
- Define Business Plan template (Standards)
- Recruit additional committee members (COVAA & Vol Director)

- Research which tax status to apply for (Structure)
- Submit tax paperwork (Structure)
- Draft of by-laws (Structure)
- File articles of incorporation (which state?) (Structure)
- Approve by-laws (Steering)
- Develop nomination process for Board of Directors (Steering)
  - Criteria
  - Nomination
  - Election
- Research headquarter options (Finance)  
(Pros and cons of locations and types – virtual vs physical, etc.)
- Research insurance needs and options (Finance)
- Develop transition process from Steering to Board of Directors – formal handover event/celebration (Steering)

## Ongoing Tasks

- Increased and continuing communication to stakeholders and delegates regarding progress
- Identifying partnerships/collaborate on an ongoing basis (include in monthly report)
- Gathering outside input
- Effectively engage, manage, motivate, retain, and recognize volunteers
- Develop COVAA Volunteer job descriptions
  - Steering Co-Chairs for Rita and Joanna
  - Committee chairs/steering members
  - Committee members

The Steering Committee was reminded that “Governance is our job.”

## Other Needed Discussions

### Links on the Website

- Erin drafted a list, she will send to list. Steering will approve it. Betty will develop a web policy outlining what we'll allow and promote (to be approved by Steering Committee). Betsy will post final list to the website. (Betty and Erin had a link farm concept developed to allow users to rate websites and recommend website. This will be explored in the future for COVAA.).

### POLF Opportunity

- Town Hall meeting – Sunday July 15<sup>th</sup>, 3-5 Wanda is presenting on behalf of COVAA as a volunteer.
  - What pieces must we have in place for Points of Light
    - Mission
    - Values
    - Value Proposition
    - Overall plan and timeline
    - Add to general PowerPoint created for NOVN
- UPS Impact Fund is interested in having some of their grantees attend on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> at POLF to meet to talk about how the funded projects may interrelate. COVAA anticipates receiving an invitation.
- Booth Opportunity
  - \$450 to exhibit + \$300 or more to develop booth materials.
  - What do we hope to accomplish? Will we get our money worth?
    - Recruit volunteers – job descriptions to help recruit
    - Create banners and handouts
    - Staffing
    - Show PowerPoint about the field shown at Congress in Denver
    - Business cards
  - Motion (Todd): “Set a budget of \$1,000 for exhibiting at the POLF conference in July with every effort to limit the cost.”
  - Betty seconded the motion.
  - Committee approved with no objections.
  - Resources will handle the logistics (Betty).

Committee had a discussion regarding volunteer recruitment process and how we need to better define it and how new people are getting involved who were not a part of the original delegation.

Vickie recommended we pull in a few individuals from her Professional Dev. Committee to help with other key pieces of the COVAA creation:

- Diane Hentges
- Mary Lynn Perry
- Donna Phillips

## **Sunday Morning, June 10, 2007**

Things the group wishes we could have gotten to:

- Organizational Structure! – Everyone felt that was a key piece we didn't have time to discuss in detail during the retreat. After some discussion, it was decided that we could increase our Steering Committee conference calls to once a week and have more focused, strategic discussions on the calls about these key pieces of the work still to be done.

### **General Suggestions**

- Joanna and Wanda suggested we start tracking volunteer hours for our group and assign a dollar amount to it
- Erin suggested someone draft a COVAA organizational structure model and provide it to the group for input to get the ball rolling since we all feel that is critical
- Increase conference calls to once a week for 30 mins. Hold monthly conference call for 1 hour. Betsy and Todd to check on use of conference call line. Make the calls more strategic thinking focused. Ensure we take good minutes of each call and post to SharePoint in order to keep everyone up to speed!!!

### **Follow up Pieces Needed**

- Roles of the committee / How we will work together
- Organizational Structure
- Name of entity
- Who is accountable
- Need to finalize the how to's / goals

## **Strategic Thinking Dialogue Topics**

- Structure models (Scheduled for July 27<sup>th</sup>)
  - Corporate
  - Tax status
- Name of Entity (scheduled for August)
- Membership Issues (July 20<sup>th</sup>)
- Funding Strategies
  - Dues structure
  - Sales/fees
  - Bundling/un-bundling
  - Direct services
  - In-direct services
- Staffing
- Governance
- Headquarters
- Who else needs to be at the table

## **Who Are Our Members?**

Retreat attendees were asked to brainstorm what the COVAA membership might look like. This topic will be discussed in more depth as part of the membership structure development, but a list of possible ideas includes:

- Volunteer leaders – all inclusive (paid or unpaid, formal or informal, grassroots, neighborhood)
- Non Profit Staff / national partners
- Corporate staff / partners
- Educational institutions
- Community organization volunteer leaders
- Volunteers
- Congress delegates
- State associations
- Government agency partners local, regional, federal)
- Volunteer centers
- Youth / young professionals / future clients
- Agencies that engage volunteers, schools, churches
- Local and regional associations
- Consultants
- Vendors