Certified in

Volunteer Administration

Competency Framework

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Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration, 2015

www.CVAcert.org

- Plan for Strategic Volunteer Engagement
- Advocate for Volunteer Involvement
- Attract and Onboard a Volunteer Workforce
- Prepare Volunteers for their Roles
- Document Volunteer Involvement
- Manage Volunteer Performance and Impact
- Acknowledge, Celebrate and Sustain Volunteer Involvement

Purpose of this Document

Volunteers are a unique human resource for furthering an organization's mission and vision. Skilled and competent leadership ensures that results and impact are achieved and that volunteer involvement is sustained.

The CVA Competency Framework clarifies and defines the full range of tasks involved in the professional management and leadership of volunteer engagement. It also serves as the foundation for the *Certified in Volunteer Administration (CVA)* credential.

This document can be a useful tool for multiple audiences:

- Training programs and educators may be interested in the validated tasks and knowledge/skill statements to ensure their programs are up to date and consistent with the certification.
- Reviewing this Framework can help new practitioners better understand their management and leadership role.
- The Competency Framework provides a tool to assist executives and top management in supporting and strengthening the function of volunteer administration within their organizations.
- CVA candidates may better understand how the core competencies of their work are determined through the Job Analysis process, and form the basis for professional certification.
- The CVA examination committee uses this Framework to guide the writing of test questions.
- CVA certificants may use these statements to guide their own plans for continuing professional development.

Professional Management of Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer Administration is the practice of mobilizing, leading and supporting volunteer activity. It is inherently complex and diverse.

Volunteers can be found:

> … in virtually every type of community setting. (For example: arts and cultural organizations, prisons, places of worship, recreation centers, political parties, immigrant communities, senior daycare facilities, parks and botanical gardens, police and fire departments, self-help groups, neighborhood clubs, emergency response agencies, hospitals)
>
> … throughout all levels of policy-making, direct service and advocacy roles. (For example, providing leadership and influencing policy in the board room, performing administrative or strategic tasks in the office, working one-to-one with a client, advocating for change in a court room, making soup in a homeless shelter, constructing hiking trails)
>
> … in organizations with or without paid staff. (For example, organizations with a mixture of volunteers and paid staff, organizations entirely comprised of volunteers)

Individuals who practice volunteer administration:

> … come from very different backgrounds and careers and may or may not have received formal or professional preparation for their specific role of leading volunteers.
>
> … may be paid or be volunteers themselves.
>
> … may perform their role on a full-time or part-time basis, or as an addition to their primary role in the organization.
>
> … work at the local, regional, state/provincial, national/federal, and/or international levels.
>
> … hold a wide variety of job titles – volunteer coordinator, manager of volunteers, volunteer resource manager, director of community engagement, community outreach coordinator, team leader, chairperson, coach, board member, project manager, event coordinator, etc.
> **NOTE: For the purposes of this document the term "Administrator of Volunteers" refers to anyone who has responsibility for mobilizing and supporting volunteer involvement.**

Despite this extensive variety, breadth and depth of activity, there is a set of common elements and core competencies which form the foundation for effective volunteer administration.

"One year ago I was promoted to Director of Volunteer Services…A new requirement of that position was to hold a credential in volunteer administration. Completing the requirements was a journey of self-discovery, a valuable learning experience, and was extremely beneficial in my career growth."

Karen E. Stalvey, CVA, upon renewal
Columbia, SC

The CVA Credential

Certified in Volunteer Administration (CVA) is an international professional certification in the field of volunteer resources management. Sponsored by the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA), this credential recognizes practitioners who meet specified standards as measured through a process of testing and peer review. Successful candidates who earn the credential may use the designation "CVA." An international CVA registry is maintained and publicly available on the CCVA web site, www.cvacert.org.

Unlike "certificate" programs that involve classes or courses, the CVA is professional certification program that is competency-based. Intended for those with a strong foundation in volunteer administration, it is a self-study program that measures an individual's "knowledge-in-use" — the application of knowledge and skills as documented by this competency framework. The certification process includes assessment of a candidate's ability to structure tasks, process ideas, and solve problems related to volunteer engagement.

Individuals wishing to become certified must meet the following requirements in order to register as a candidate:

- Minimum of the equivalent of three years full-time experience related to volunteer administration. This experience can be a combination of several part-time jobs, and can include both salaried and non-salaried positions.
- Minimum 30 percent of current position is related to volunteer administration.
- Two letters of professional recommendation from supervisors or colleagues verifying the candidate's eligibility to apply for the CVA credential.

Any eligible individual from any country may earn the CVA credential. However, at this time CCVA conducts the certification process in English only.

Renewal is required every five years in order to maintain the CVA credential. Individuals are expected to earn Professional Development Units (PDUs) through a variety of activities that demonstrate they are active in the field and continuing to learn and develop as a professional in volunteer administration.

Ways to Earn Professional Development Units:

- Attending Workshops and/or Seminars
- Post Secondary Education
- Post Graduate Education
- Publishing
- Public Speaking/Teaching
- Volunteer Leadership
- Volunteer Management Narrative
- CVA Exam

CCVA also promotes the ethical standards for volunteer resources management as stated in *Professional Ethics in Volunteer Administration* and views these principles as an essential part of competence in the field. Candidates for the CVA credential are required to affirm their intent to uphold these ethical standards.

New candidates registered in 2014 = 266
Cumulative total of 1,355 CVAs awarded in 10 countries

Did you know?

The average candidate has 7-8 years of experience in volunteer management
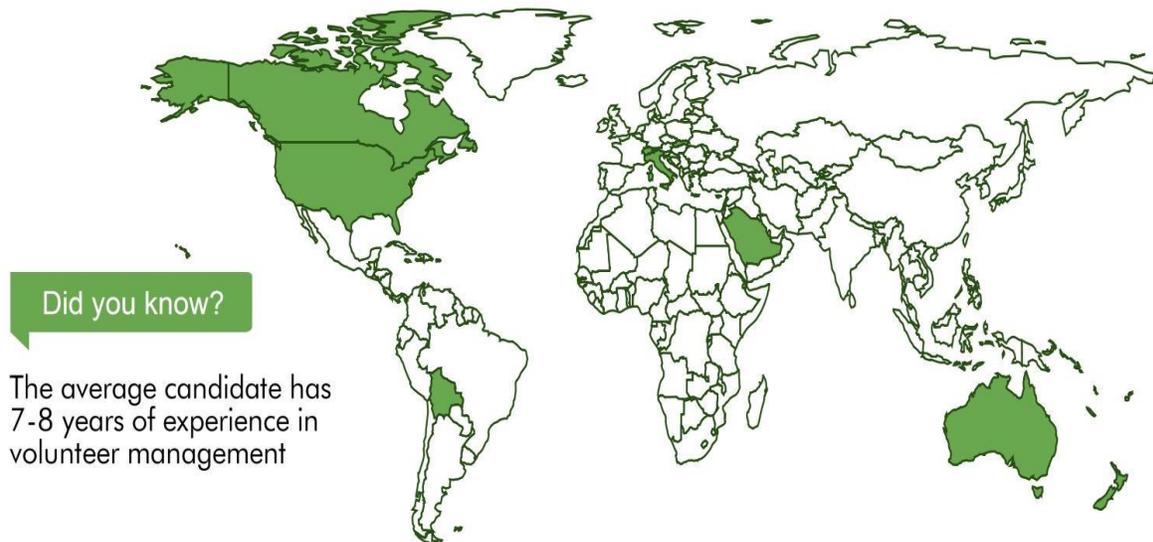
The following national and international organizations publicly support the CVA certification as a valuable professional development option.

- Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE)
- Energize, Inc.
- Habitat for Humanity International
- Idealist.org
- International Association of Volunteer Efforts (IAVE)
- International Volunteer Managers Day
- National Assoc. of Volunteer Programs in Local Government (NAVPLG)
- National Human Services Assembly

- Points of Light Institute & Hands On Network
- The Aging Network's Volunteer Collaborative
- United Way Worldwide
- Volunteer Canada
- Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC)
- VolunteerMatch
- Volunteer Today

"Habitat for Humanity International mobilizes volunteers as a key strategy to build programs with societal impact. Standards of ethical practice and professional development for everyone in the organization who work with volunteers is critical to our ministry. The CVA credential provides a consistent standard that can be used worldwide."

Mark Andrews, Vice President Volunteer and Institutional Engagement
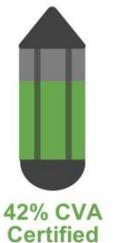**Habitat for Humanity International**

Background

During 2014 the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA) convened a task force to conduct the logical analysis portion of a job analysis study for the CVA credential. Composed of CVAs representing a variety of geographic locations and organizational settings, the task force participated in a series of web meetings managed by the Executive Director and facilitated by a highly experienced psychometrician.
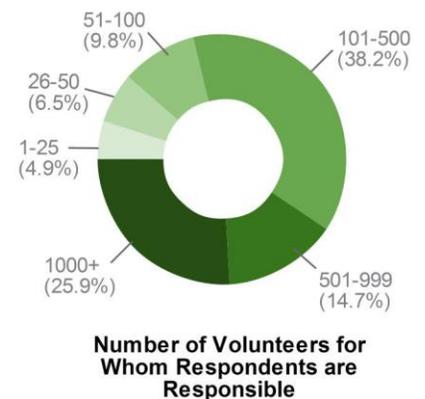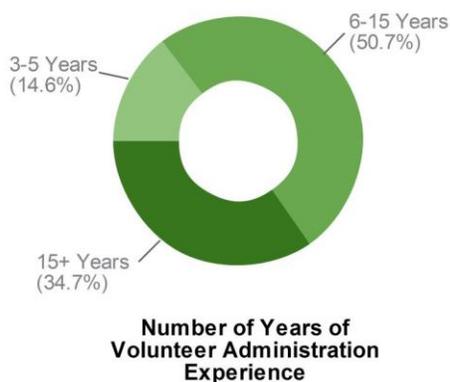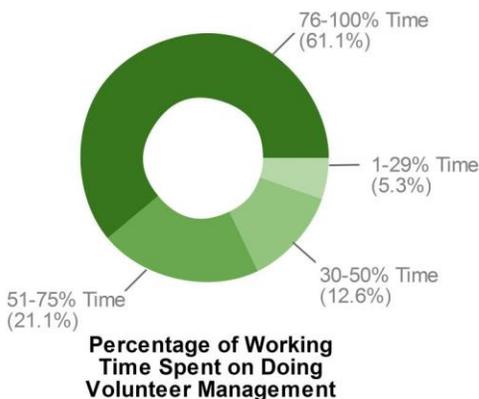
Because the CVA credential accepts candidates from multiple countries, the task force began by reviewing recent competency and standards documents from Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The *Canadian National Occupational Standards for Managers of Volunteer Resources* (2012) was accepted by the task force as a thorough and highly credible model for the CVA job analysis study. The task force made minor changes to the delineation of content in an attempt to focus on the tasks CVAs perform that are unique to the field and appropriate to cover in a certification examination. The modified delineation of content was then prepared for an electronic survey to validate the work of the task force.

Validation Survey Respondents

The survey was intended for people who have worked in Volunteer Administration for at least three years. Respondents who indicated that they have not yet worked in the field for three years were ushered out of the electronic survey. The survey was distributed directly and indirectly through an international network of organizations and individuals.   A total of 874 responses (80% response rate) were received.

42% CVA Certified

Demographic highlights of the survey responses include:

76-100% Time (61.1%)
3-5 Years (14.6%)
1-29% Time (5.3%)
30-50% Time (12.6%)
51-75% Time (21.1%)

Percentage of Working Time Spent on Doing Volunteer Management

6-15 Years (50.7%)
15+ Years (34.7%)

Number of Years of Volunteer Administration Experience

51-100 (9.8%)
101-500 (38.2%)
26-50 (6.5%)
1-25 (4.9%)
1000+ (25.9%)
501-999 (14.7%)

Number of Volunteers for Whom Respondents are Responsible

Although attempts were made to encourage a global response, the respondents were mainly from the USA (67%), Canada (20%), and Australia (9%).

As shown below, the settings in which the respondents work were quite varied, reflecting the diversity of organizations where volunteer activity occurs.

Where Survey Respondents Work	
Type of Organization	*Percentage of Survey Respondents*
Arts and culture	5.5%
Association	.2%
Animal-related	4.4%
Corporate (for profit)	1%
Education	6.1%
Faith-based	2.4%
Government / community development	3.2%
Health care and hospice	25.3%
Human services	25.7%
International development	.4%
Natural resources/environmental	7.7%
Public safety and military	4.8%
Senior-focused	6.1%
Volunteer infrastructure (e.g. volunteer centers)	2%
Youth-focused	5.1%

Validation Survey Results

The volunteer administration tasks that comprised the main portion of the survey were organized in seven content areas, or competencies. Respondents indicated how frequently they perform the tasks and how important the tasks are. The *frequency* and *importance* of responses were combined for a singular variable of *criticality*. The tasks were validated strongly in that 97.8% of respondents indicated that the tasks completely or adequately covered their work in volunteer administration. The survey also included knowledge and skills required to do the tasks that comprise the competencies, and they were strongly validated through importance ratings.

The methodology and findings of the Job Analysis Study were endorsed by the CCVA Board of Directors in September 2014.

As validated by the 2014 Job Analysis, the following section details the seven competencies and related tasks necessary to develop, support and sustain volunteer involvement.

A. Plan for Strategic Volunteer Engagement

1. Assess organizational needs and opportunities for volunteers

2. Promote organizational readiness (e.g., commitment, capacity, competency)

3. Research and analyze related programs and services

4. Develop goals and objectives for volunteer services

5. Develop policies and procedures for volunteer services

6. Develop supporting tools and resources for volunteer services (e.g. forms, databases)

7. Develop evaluation plan for volunteer services

8. Develop risk management plan for volunteer services

9. Establish benchmarks for volunteer services

10. Implement evaluation plan for volunteer services

B. Advocate for Volunteer Involvement

11. Design communication plan for volunteer services

12. Implement communication plan for volunteer services

13. Evaluate communication plan for volunteer services

14. Inform stakeholders of volunteer service opportunities

15. Enlist stakeholders in promoting volunteer service opportunities

16. Develop volunteers as advocates

17. Advocate for volunteer services (to stakeholders and community)

18. Cultivate stakeholder and partner relationships

19. Collaborate with stakeholders

C. Attract and Onboard a Volunteer Workforce

20. Identify current needs for volunteers

21. Develop volunteer position descriptions

22. Develop performance objectives for volunteer roles

23. Design recruitment strategy for volunteers

24. Implement recruitment strategy for volunteers

25. Respond to volunteer inquiries

26. Select applicants for interviews

27. Conduct applicant interviews

28. Administer screening process

29. Match volunteers with assignments

30. Evaluate placement of volunteers

31. Evaluate recruitment strategies

D. Prepare Volunteers for their Roles

32. Develop volunteer orientation and training plans

33. Design orientation for volunteers

34. Conduct orientation for volunteers

35. Provide role-specific training

36. Support on-going development of volunteers' skills

37. Evaluate volunteer orientation

38. Evaluate volunteer training

E. Document Volunteer Involvement

39. Obtain permission to share volunteer information

40. Establish secure storage for volunteer records

41. Create volunteer files

42. Maintain volunteer records (such as hours, activities, personal information)

43. Update external screening processes

44. Generate statistical reports on volunteer services

45. Archive, destroy, or delete volunteer records

46. Contribute to budget process

47. Monitor resources that support volunteer engagement (financial, physical, human)

48. Provide information to support funding requests

49. Maintain records on partnership and stakeholder contacts and relationships

50. Maintain partnership agreements

F. Manage Volunteer Performance and Impact

51. Train staff to work with volunteers

52. Monitor progress on volunteer performance objectives

53. Delegate tasks to volunteers

54. Supervise volunteers

55. Coach volunteers

56. Conduct volunteer performance reviews

57. Provide feedback to volunteers

58. Conduct corrective action procedures

59. Conduct exit interviews/surveys

G. Acknowledge, Celebrate and Sustain Volunteer Involvement

60. Develop volunteer recognition plan

61. Implement volunteer recognition plan

62. Develop retention plan

63. Assess volunteer satisfaction

64. Monitor retention plan

65. Provide references for volunteers

66. Evaluate recognition plan

67. Evaluate retention plan

"From the reading and studying I gained a sense of confidence in my present work with volunteers, and designed a program of volunteer management at my church of 3000 members! I was able to cite statistics, develop a proposal, present it to council and get it approved – and now I am a volunteer manager. I do not think I could have done this without the CVA experience. Also, while presenting my proposal I mentioned that I was pursuing the credential, and that definitely lent credibility to everything else I said."

Debbie Rothe, CVA
Watertown, WI

Enabling Knowledge and Skills

Competent performance of the tasks listed above requires a wide variety of knowledge and skills, including:

Knowledge Of:	Ability To:
Budget and Financial Analysis	Use Interpersonal Skills to Build Relationships
Collaboration Principles and Tools	Ensure a Fair and Inclusive Work Environment
Communication Methods and Principles	Develop and Disseminate Written Communications
Community Needs	Analyze Work and Delegate Tasks
Volunteer Motivations	Facilitate Training Activities
Evaluation	Share Stories to Illustrate a Point
Ethics	Present to Groups
Goal and Objective Setting	Analyze Data and Make Recommendations
Human Resource Laws	Convey Enthusiasm for Volunteerism
Training Design	Resolve Conflict
Marketing	Motivate Others
Needs Assessment	
Partnership Development	
Policies and Procedure Development	
Project Management	
Public Relations	
Record Keeping	
Recruitment Principles and Strategies	
Research Methods	
Risk Management	
Strategic Planning	
Screening and Placing Volunteers	

"I have learned so much by taking time to get certified and have made several improvements to our processes. Going through this process has given me more confidence as a volunteer administrator. I highly recommend the process to all volunteer managers!"

Lee-Ann Scott, CVA
Ottawa, ON

A Unique, Complex Role

Those who lead, manage and support volunteer involvement on a daily basis ground their work in the competencies described in this report. Clearly, this role shares some commonality with that of other disciplines such as human resource management, community development function, project management and even economic development.

Yet despite some similarities, few other professions encompass the sheer quantity of tasks as this one. And few require such a challenging balance of organizational strategy, operational detail, human relations and passion for service. In the 21st century, the profession of volunteer administration is as complex as volunteering itself, as practitioners mobilize and sustain this precious, unique human resource.

To help practitioners connect the formal competencies to their day-to-day work, easy-to-remember functional names have been assigned to each competency. This additional language is intended to:

- give administrators of volunteers a new lexicon for describing their roles
- spark new ways of thinking about the impact of volunteer administration on individual volunteers, the organization, and the community
- inspire administrators of volunteers to approach their work with fresh perspective drawn from other fields, and
- connect volunteer administration to other professions with which it shares common roles and practices

The table below matches a descriptive role with each of the formal competencies of volunteer administration.

Role	Competency
Strategic Architect	Plan for Strategic Volunteer Engagement
Articulate Ambassador	Advocate for Volunteer Involvement
Relationship Builder	Attract and Onboard a Volunteer Workforce
Talent Cultivator	Prepare Volunteers for their Roles
Data Manager	Document Volunteer Involvement
Champion of Quality	Manage Volunteer Performance and Impact
Passionate Leader	Acknowledge, Celebrate and Sustain Volunteer Involvement

CVA Certified in Volunteer Administration

- Strategic Architect
- Articulate Ambassador
- Relationship Builder
- Talent Cultivator
- Data Manager
- Champion of Quality
- Passionate Motivator

The CVA Competency Framework organizes the tasks involved in volunteer administration into a framework of professional competencies. In addition to providing the foundation for the *Certified in Volunteer Administration (CVA)* credential, it also offers professionals in the field a fresh perspective on the many roles that volunteer administrators play.

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