July 15, 2024

Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
New Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in response to the request for comment for Federal Register Document Number: BLS–2024–0001 related to comment requests on whether to consider the addition of new detailed occupations or occupational groups. AL!VE proposes the addition of the occupational group “Volunteer Engagement Professional” to the SOC.

AL!VE (Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement) is a national membership organization of leaders and professionals in volunteer engagement, representing over 2,600 Volunteer Engagement Professionals, including 850 individuals and 37 Local Association of Volunteer Engagement Professionals, representing over 1,800 individuals. AL!VE serves to enhance and sustain the spirit of volunteering in the United States by fostering collaboration and networking, promoting professional development, and providing advocacy for leaders in community engagement.

The addition of a new occupation within the SOC will allow the Bureau of Labor and Statistics to more accurately reflect the current workforce, as demonstrated by several national studies conducted during the past ten years (see data sources, below). Additionally it will provide valuable guidance to thousands of employers (especially in the government and nonprofit sectors) who hire workers into this occupation. As described below, Classification Principle 2 is met because the occupation’s work is sufficiently different from work performed in existing occupations. Additionally, data can be collected from households and employers related to this classification of workers, and is large enough to be detected in sample surveys, meeting
Classification Principle 9. Lastly, the Volunteer Engagement Profession has been in existence since the mid-20th century, meeting Classification Principle 10 in its continuity and expected continuity moving forward.

The following outlines the information needed by the SOC for the Volunteer Engagement Professional to be split out as a distinct occupation.

1. **Proposed occupation title: Volunteer Engagement Professional**
   Although terminology used to label this occupation has changed over the decades, the key functions of this work have existed since the mid-20th century. What began as an unpaid role has now evolved into a legitimate field of paid professionals. This history is summarized in the *Ellis Foundation Archive on the Professional Leadership of Volunteers* which documents the early and long evolution of practices and body of knowledge for this occupation which brings us to where we are today as a legitimate profession.

   Though the occupation includes many levels and job titles, as outlined in the 2023 Career Pathways Survey, all workers in the occupation may be identified by Volunteer Engagement Professional regardless of job title.

2. **Description of the nature of the work performed**
   The 2014 Job Analysis Study of this occupation 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. The Study identified 66 specific tasks categorized within 7 primary functions:
   - 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

   The 2023 Career Pathways Study further documented 9 similar job competencies and duties (listed below) as well as competencies required for each level of this occupation:
   - Recruitment
   - Recognition and Retention
   - Program Coordination
   - Training
   - Program Design and Development
   - Database Management and Recordkeeping
   - Communication
   - Volunteer Program Administration
   - Relationship Building
All competencies are required for all job levels within the occupation, however the duties performed vary by job level, with some levels having supervisory or management duties, as outlined below in the Career Pathways for the Volunteer Engagement Professional job leveling document, located here:

AL!VE_Career_Pathways_for_the_VEP-Job_Leveling_Document.pdf (volunteeralive.org)

The document is also presented below:

3. **Description of the relationship to other SOC occupations**

The role of a Volunteer Engagement Professional is distinct in the expanded scope of work performed as compared to the current SOC classification within Human Resources Specialist. The following provides examples of these distinctions, including both competencies unique to the Volunteer Engagement Professional and unique in how they are conducted or applied within the profession.

- Organizational Strategy - Leads the identification of opportunities to incorporate volunteer support into all levels of the organization. Participates in strategic planning to identify ways volunteers can support strategic initiatives. Supports the identification of roles during new program planning, regularly meeting with departments to conduct needs assessments of additional roles to support the
organization’s mission, and supporting the project scoping of Pro-Bono and Skills-Based opportunities.

- **Position Development** - Crafts position descriptions based on staff feedback and ensures that positions developed are mission driven. Reviews totality of volunteer positions available in the organization to ensure a range of roles are available, such as one-time events, short-term opportunities, group or family events, off-site and/or virtual service, and ongoing assignments.

- **Orientation** - Provides overview of the organization, history, and mission as part of onboarding all new volunteers. Scales orientation to length of volunteer role to ensure all volunteers are prepared to serve as advocates for the organization in the community.

- **Training** - Trains paid staff, and volunteers who supervise other volunteers, on how to work with volunteers effectively. May also provide task-specific training to volunteers.

- **Fund Development and Donor Cultivation** - Develops tailored approaches to inviting volunteers to donate dollars as well as time. Develops strategies for inviting financial donors to also engage as volunteers.

- **Tracking** - Develops and maintains systems to collect not only hours volunteered, but also return on volunteer investment (ROVI), the outputs and impact of the volunteer activity, and descriptive and outcome data.

- **Evaluation** - Develops and implements evaluation plans including process and outcome evaluations. Develops and implements valid and reliable evaluation tools to measure program effectiveness, volunteer performance, and volunteer satisfaction and engagement.

- **Impact Reporting** - Facilitates regular communication about volunteer value, impact, and outcomes to internal staff, Board members, volunteers, funders, stakeholders, and the public at-large.

- **Partnership Development** - Develops and maintains collaborative relationships and partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, businesses, and funders to expand the reach of volunteer activities, opportunities, and/or efforts. Utilizes community input and feedback to develop new program ideas.

- **Communication** - Ensures communication to and between volunteers, organizational leadership, staff, Board members, and the community.

- **Supervision** - Provides direct supervision to volunteers in addition to placing volunteers for supervision by other staff and volunteers.

- **Recognition** - Develops recognition of employees effectively engaging volunteers in their work as well as acknowledging volunteers for their service to the organization and their accomplishments.

- **Volunteer Development** - Discusses with volunteers their progress to date and additional opportunities for learning and/or volunteer advancement.

- **Ensures positive staff/volunteer relations** - Ensures both staff and volunteers understand their respective roles through the use of handbooks, training, and ongoing communication.

- **Advocacy** - Prepares volunteers to serve as ambassadors and advocates in the community, which may include lobbying efforts.

- **Ethics** - Demonstrates professional ethics ([https://cvacert.org/professional-ethics/](https://cvacert.org/professional-ethics/))
when working with colleagues, volunteers, and external partners.

Furthermore, activities related to “recruiting, screening, interviewing, and placing individuals within an organization” have significant nuance when comparing processes for paid and unpaid (volunteer) human capital. In HR, specialists seek potential candidates for a specific, pre-identified job position that needs to be filled, and will recruit based on education, current skills, abilities and experience. The specialist is also constrained by the compensation they can offer the candidate. On the other hand, the Volunteer professional is actively working to identify more volunteer opportunities and potential volunteers in order to support the mission of an organization. They are not limited by the potential volunteer’s current employment status or salary level.

Another foundational difference is the motivation of a volunteer vs that of a potential employee to engage with an organization. The job seeker is looking to utilize their skills in a paid capacity, seeking benefits and a possible career ladder. Volunteers will often have a variety of reasons to volunteer, from an effort to show gratitude, as a way to live their faith, for an enhanced sense of wellbeing or self-esteem, to support a personal cause or a desire to make a positive impact in their community, their country, or the world. In many cases they are not interested in utilizing the same skills they use in their career, but prefer to volunteer in an entirely different capacity. The volunteer professional will need to utilize different methods to attract, interview, place and retain volunteers, since financial compensation is not part of the equation.

Though the Volunteer Engagement Professional engages in similar work as HR Specialists, Fundraisers, Training and Development, and even Event Planners, Marketing Specialists, Data analysts, and Communication specialists, as described the work is unique in the breadth of activities, skills needed, and the distinct nuances in similar activities. As such, a new category for the occupation is needed to adequately capture the work performed.

4. **Job titles:**

Job titles commonly used across the occupation include the following, often listed with additional words to identify their connection to the volunteer labor force. For example: “Coordinator of Volunteers”, “Manager of Volunteers”, “Volunteer Engagement Associate”, or “Director of Volunteer Engagement”.

- Assistant/Associate
- Specialist
- Coordinator
- Supervisor
- Manager
- Senior Manager
- Director
- Senior Director
- Executive
- Chief Engagement Officer
5. **Indications of the number of jobs or workers in the proposed occupation:**
   Without a distinct occupation within the SOC, there is no data source to document the number of jobs or workers in the profession. However most nonprofits utilize voluntary efforts to support their mission, and per the National Council of Nonprofits, there are over 1.3 million charitable nonprofits and over 12 million people are employed within nonprofit establishments.

6. **Types of employers:**
   The occupation of Volunteer Engagement Professional is found within a variety of types of employers including nonprofits, government, and within private, for-profit organizations when for a civic, charitable or humanitarian reason (such as a for-profit hospital or hospice).

7. **Education and training:**
   Education and training required for the occupation varies, however a number of trainings, certificates, and college-level courses exist to prepare workers for the occupation. While there is not a standard degree required, based on the results of the Career Pathways Survey, 87% of the volunteer professionals have a Bachelor’s Degree or higher. Examples of well-established educational programs for this occupation are listed:

   - **University of North Texas Volunteer and Community Resource Management Certificate** is designed for those who want to gain a professional level of competencies in volunteer and community resource management. It requires the successful completion of 12 hours in undergraduate volunteer and community resource management courses.

   - **Volunteer Engagement Training Program (VETP)** consists of modules created by the national Points of Light and offered in local communities. Classes are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the major components of a nonprofit volunteer management program including volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition strategies and methods of offering projects for diverse audiences. Example: **Lehigh Valley VETP**

   - **Arizona State University’s Master of Nonprofit Leadership and Management** includes a course on Volunteer Resource Management. In this course, students explore issues relevant to volunteer management, as well as how to maximize resources in the effective management of volunteers, while carrying out the mission of organizations and ensuring volunteers have good experiences with community organizations.

   - **LBJ School of Public Affairs at University of Texas Austin Public Administration** program includes courses in volunteer engagement.

   - **VolunteerMatch Learning Center** offers an extensive webinar library including four educational mini-series that delve into essential tenets of volunteer management.
Modules are designed to meet the needs of practitioners at 3 levels: Introductory Approaches, Core Components, and Advanced Practices.

- **VQVolunteer Strategies** is a comprehensive online resource for free innovative tools, cutting-edge knowledge, webinars, insights, and more with comprehensive publications to templates, tools, and tactics.

- Educational Conferences: For decades the [Points of Light national conference](#) has attracted hundreds of practitioners from government, nonprofits and corporations to learn about volunteer engagement practices. Many states also offer annual conferences aimed at educating these professionals (e.g. Minnesota, Virginia, California, Texas, Iowa)

- Textbook: The [Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA)](#) first published a comprehensive textbook in 2010, **VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION: Professional Practice.** It has been updated regularly, with the 4th edition published in 2021. This book has been used in several college courses and certificate programs.

- Professional Journal: [The International Journal of Volunteer Administration (The IJOVA)](#) is a professional peer reviewed publication of the Department of Agricultural and Human Sciences at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. Published only in digital formats, IJOVA is offered in recognition of the critical role of professional managers of volunteers in mobilizing human resources to address serious human, community, and social needs through volunteerism.

8. **Licensing:**
   While licensing is not required for this work, some employers give preference to individuals who have earned the [Certified in Volunteer Administration (CVA)](#) credential. This competency-based program has been in existence for over forty years and has certified over 3,000 leaders of volunteer engagement. Candidates must have at least three years of experience in leading and managing volunteers, pass a proctored exam, submit letters of reference, and commit to honoring the profession’s code of ethics.

9. **Tools and technologies:**
   Workers in the occupation use a variety of technologies to support the work. A 2021 TEVA study found that although the majority of volunteer engagement professionals use some form of technology platform or tool, the field has not converged on one specific tool. Some use proprietary tools built specifically for volunteer administration while many others make do with common database software like Microsoft Excel. The study also found the use of technology increased significantly as a result of the pandemic. Examples of resources used include:
   - Recruiting platforms: Volunteer Match, Just Serve, Hands On
   - Company Website
10. Professional trade associations and unions:
The Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) served as the national professional association for this occupation for over 40 years, starting in the 1970’s. During this time it pioneered formal training for practitioners, offered an annual conference, published an applied journal, established the Certified in Volunteer Administration (CVA) credential, and developed the code of professional ethics.

In 2009 AVA was succeeded by the Association for Leaders of Volunteer Engagement (AL!VE) which now supports professionals through professional development, networking, mentoring and advocacy. As mentioned earlier, current membership is over 2,600.

The National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Government (NAVPLG) is another national professional association. Membership is open to individuals and groups associated with administering volunteer programs in the public sector. Members range across many levels of government, including city, county, state, and Federal, along with special districts, school districts, universities, and those supporting these programs. NAVPLG provides leadership, education, advocacy, networking, and information exchange.

Starting in the 1980’s dozens of local associations of volunteer engagement professionals sprang up as additional resources for education and mutual support. Over 90 of these groups continue today nationally as valuable peer networks – especially important for individuals entering this occupation. Examples include:

- Greater Richmond Association for Volunteer Administration
  https://greaterrichmondava.com/
- New York Association for Volunteer Administration
  https://www.facebook.com/NYAVA.org/
- Volunteer Managers of Central Iowa Home | VMCI (volunteermcia.org)
- Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement Home - Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement (mavanetwork.org)

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed CSG application instructions. We welcome further dialogue on this topic. Questions regarding this comment can be sent to Cathy Thoma, AL!VE Board President at President@volunteeralive.org.
DATA SOURCES:
Information provided in this request is largely based on data from the following national studies and surveys: