



BACKGROUND:

AL!VE is the national membership organization for professional volunteer resource managers. AL!VE strives to enhance and sustain the spirit of volunteerism by fostering collaboration and networking, promoting professional development, and providing advocacy for leaders in community engagement.

In fulfilling this mission, AL!VE encourages adherence to a set of *Standards* which reflect effective practice for engaging and leading volunteers within organizational settings. These *Standards* have been shown to deliver value to both the organization and individual volunteers – the desired work gets accomplished, and volunteers have a positive, transformative experience.

These Standards were created by members of AL!VE who represent professional volunteer managers and program leaders.

PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK:

These *Standards* reflect the philosophy that volunteers are a human resource to address the organization's mission, and are often utilized throughout several areas within the agency -- governance, direct service, advocacy, administrative support. Volunteer involvement is rarely limited to a single "program" within the organization. Consider the case of a local neighborhood community center: volunteers serve on the board of directors, tutor children after school, mentor pregnant teens, advise the Executive Director on legal issues, transport seniors to medical appointments, and help answer the phones in the office. In this example, there is no single "volunteer program" that is distinct unto itself -- rather, volunteers are a community resource that has been recruited and applied to meet several types of organizational needs.

An organization has many resources to apply toward its mission: money, physical space, employees and volunteers, in-kind donations, equipment and technology. Management's task is to apply these resources appropriately throughout the organization in order to effectively address current goals and objectives. AL!VE promotes these *Standards* as a tool for building organizational capacity to mobilize and manage "volunteer resources" for maximum impact and value.

THE STANDARDS

STANDARD #1: Professional Volunteer Program Management

Volunteers are lead and managed by trained and professional volunteer management staff. Professional development in volunteer management and coordination is encouraged and provided to all staff that work with volunteers. Board and executive leadership recognize and support - culturally and financially - volunteer program staff.

You've achieved this Standard when your organization has volunteer management professionals dedicated to managing and leading all of the organization's volunteers and it provides continuous professional development for all staff.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #2: Organizational Readiness

Mission/vision statements make note of the organization's involvement in, and commitment to, volunteerism. Issues related to volunteer engagement receive regular attention and oversight at Board level and during strategic planning. Policies and procedures provide a framework that defines and supports the engagement of volunteers. Roles for volunteers are clearly defined, and based on the needs and priorities of the organization. Paid staff is prepared to work with volunteers in an atmosphere of mutual respect and commitment to excellence.

You've achieved this Standard when the role and management of volunteers is integrated into your organization's mission and vision statements, program assessment, strategic plan, organizational structure, and policies and procedures.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #3: Recruitment

Effective recruitment appeals and messages are realistic and clear. They accurately reflect the organization and its needs, and sound a “call to action” to the community-service or civic engagement minded. Volunteers ideally will come from a mix of age, race and gender groups.

You’ve achieved this Standard when your organization has developed and deployed a recruitment strategy that is tied to the needs of the organization, reflects target volunteer motivations, and builds appropriate diversity in the volunteer corps.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #4: Screening

Appropriate screening procedures are in place to ensure that goals are met, services are delivered, and that the organization and its clients are protected. Screening protocols are based on the requirements and potential risks of each volunteer role, and then established as policy by the organization’s leadership. This process is applied consistently to all potential volunteers.

You’ve achieved this Standard when the organization consistently uses appropriate processes, such as interviewing and background checks, that mitigate risk to the organization and volunteers and effectively match volunteers to assignments.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #5: Orientation

Every volunteer receives a structured and consistent orientation to the organization, to prepare for a successful relationship. Orientation content includes: the history, mission and structure of the organization; volunteer policies; organizational values and ethics, rights and responsibilities of volunteers; introductions to key staff; overview of how volunteers are engaged in the work of the organization.

You've achieved the Standard when your organization provides every volunteer with a comprehensive orientation that enlists each volunteer's commitment to the organization and to their volunteer role.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #6: Training

Training is job-specific, and equips volunteers to successfully – and safely -- perform the role they have accepted. Training content and process is provided appropriately as needed, depending on the complexity of the role and the level of skill possessed by the volunteer. Training ensures that the volunteer and the organization are efficient and professional, and is also a tool for continuous volunteer development and engagement.

You've achieved this Standard when your organization has implemented a regular, ongoing, and comprehensive training program designed to provide volunteers with the information and skills required to do their jobs with ease.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #7: Supervision and Support

Supervision increases the motivation of volunteers, helps ensure the organization's mission is met, gives volunteers a sense of engagement and belonging within the organization. Volunteers have a clear understanding of who they can go to for guidance, support, and feedback. Supervisors and volunteers meet initially, and communicate regularly to exchange information, assess progress, and address any problems. The organization develops the most effective model of supervision, ranging from the traditional “command and control” approach to a collaborative “coaching” style.

You've achieved this Standard when your organization provides a structured, effective organization chart with a clear and direct line of supervision that supports appropriate and effective two-way communication.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #8: Acknowledgement

Every volunteer feels appreciated for his/her contribution to the organization’s mission. The organization’s leadership acknowledges volunteers on a regular and consistent basis, providing feedback and recognition that builds loyalty and reinforces a sense of teamwork. The importance of volunteer engagement is highlighted internally and publicly.

You’ve achieved this Standard when your organization embraces and commits resources to an active and year round volunteer recognition program.

Self Review: Met Not Met

STANDARD #9: Continuous Improvement

The organization consciously assesses the effectiveness of volunteer involvement and documents the tangible and intangible value of this involvement. Volunteer activity is tracked in terms of impact and results. Similarly, individual volunteers are provided with feedback about their performance so they have the opportunity to learn and improve. Volunteer records are maintained in a secure manner, including volunteer contact information, length of service, training received, and hours worked.

You’ve achieved this Standard when results oriented measurement tools are developed and applied to continually evaluate volunteer performance and assess program effectiveness.

Self Review: Met Not Met

- *Footnote: The title Volunteer Resource Manager (VRM), as used in AL!VE’S Standards for Organizational Volunteer Engagement, also refers to the titles of: Director of Volunteers, Leader of Volunteer Engagement, Volunteer Leader, Volunteer Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, etc.*

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