
BODY OF KNOWLEDGE & COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK



Council for
**Certification in
Volunteer
Administration**

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Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration
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PURPOSE

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 Certification 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.

THE CVA CREDENTIAL

The Certification in Volunteer Administration (CVA) is an international professional credential 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.

Successful candidates who earn the credential may use the designation “CVA.” An international CVA registry is maintained and publicly available on the CCVA website, 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:

- Complete an application form detailing their volunteer engagement experience and proven demonstration of 5 of the 7 competencies outlined in this document
- One letter of professional recommendation from a past or present supervisor, colleague, volunteer partner or community member verifying the candidate’s eligibility to apply for the CVA credential. The author should detail how they know the candidate and what they have observed about their competencies when leading volunteers.
- An update professional resume
- Paid exam fee

THE CVA CREDENTIAL CONT'D

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 fulfill the renewal requirements of a continued commitment to professional development 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. More information on renewal requirements can be found on the CCVA website.

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.

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.

JOB ANALYSIS

During 2025, the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration (CCVA) convened a task force and completed the logical analysis portion of a job analysis study for the CVA credential. The previous job analysis took place in 2014.

The existing competencies were sent by an electronic survey to practitioners for validation. The results validated these same seven (7) competencies. The task force recommended minor changes to verbs and grammar. They were presented to the CCVA Board and approved for use moving forward. The resulting competencies are found in the pages ahead.

Information and data about the validation survey work conducted in 2025, and how the Volunteer Management Competencies Framework may be applied to the real work of leading and engaging volunteers is available upon request. It is not required information for a candidate preparing to take the CVA exam.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

As validated by the survey conducted by the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration in 2025, this document outlines the seven competencies and related tasks necessary to develop, support, and sustain volunteer involvement. These competencies and tasks are designed to represent the average tasks and responsibilities of a leader of volunteers with three years of experience. The actual tasks and responsibilities of a leader of volunteers will vary based on the work and number of volunteers engaged by the organization. While many of the tasks included are written as single actions it is important to remember that the tasks outlined below may need to be completed regularly or on an as-needed basis. In some organizations some of these tasks may also be handled by external or third-party entities, but the responsibility to oversee the task is still managed by the staff responsible for engaging volunteers.

A note about terminology and language:

Because these tasks and competencies are meant to represent average responsibilities within a standard organization more general terms have been used. Many organizations use different terms to describe the work done to recruit, support, and engage volunteers. Every attempt has been made to outline the action and refer to the volunteers themselves rather than to define the titles of staff or the department engaging in this work. This document also includes the more general term stakeholder to describe others involved in, or impacted by, this work. While this term is often used as a more ambiguous term to disempower or minimize rights holders, because this document covers many roles - both internal and external to an organization - with a wide range of decision-making responsibilities from organization leaders to the volunteers themselves, the more general term feels appropriate for this document.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

A - Plan for Strategic Volunteer Engagement

1. Assess organizational needs and opportunities
2. Promote organizational readiness (e.g., commitment, capacity, competency)
3. Explore and consider similar programs and services for strategic insight
4. Align goals and objectives with organization strategic plans and mission
5. Develop policies and procedures in alignment with organization values and ethics
6. Develop supporting tools and resources
7. Confirm that volunteers are integrated into organization risk management plans
8. Establish benchmarks
9. Design evaluation plan
10. Implement evaluation plan

B - Advocate for Volunteer Involvement

11. Design communication plan
12. Implement communication plan
13. Evaluate communication plan
14. Inform stakeholders of volunteer opportunities
15. Engage stakeholders in promoting volunteer opportunities
16. Support the ongoing development of volunteers as advocates
17. Advocate for, and communicate the impact of, volunteers and volunteer services
18. Build and maintain stakeholder and partner relationships
19. Create and sustain pathways for collaboration

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK CONT'D

C - Attract and Onboard a Volunteer Workforce

20. Identify current needs for volunteers
21. Develop volunteer position descriptions
22. Develop measurable outcomes for volunteer roles
23. Design recruitment strategy
24. Implement recruitment strategy
25. Evaluate recruitment strategies
26. Respond to volunteer inquiries
27. Select applicants for interviews
28. Conduct applicant interviews
29. Complete appropriate screening processes
30. Match applicant with assignments
31. Evaluate placement of volunteers

D - Prepare Volunteers for their Roles

32. Develop orientation and training plans
33. Design orientation
34. Complete orientation
35. Evaluate orientation
36. Provide role-specific training
37. Provide training and development to support volunteers' skills and abilities
38. Evaluate training

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK CONT'D

E - Volunteer Involvement

- 39. Obtain permission to collect, use, and share personally identifiable information as required by law
- 40. Establish secure storage for volunteer records
- 41. Create volunteer records
- 42. Maintain volunteer records
- 43. Archive, destroy, or delete volunteer records
- 44. Verify ongoing eligibility
- 45. Generate statistical reports on volunteer services
- 46. Contribute to budget process
- 47. Monitor resources that support volunteer engagement
- 48. Provide information to support funding requests
- 49. Maintain partnership agreements
- 50. Maintain stakeholder and partnership records

F - Manage Volunteer Performance and Impact

- 51. Train and support staff to interact 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. Implement corrective action procedures
- 59. Conduct exit interviews/surveys

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK CONT'D

G - Acknowledge, Celebrate and Sustain Volunteer Involvement

- 60. Develop recognition plan
- 61. Implement recognition plan
- 62. Evaluate recognition plan
- 63. Develop retention and succession plan
- 64. Assess volunteer satisfaction
- 65. Implement and monitor retention plan
- 66. Evaluate and monitor retention plan
- 67. Provide references for volunteers

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.

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	

A UNIQUE AND COMPLEX ROLE

Those who lead, manage and support volunteer involvement on a daily basis ground their work in the competencies described in this document. Clearly, this role shares some commonality with that of other disciplines such as human resource management, community development functions, 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 Engagment
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
Passionate Leader	Acknowldege, Celebrate and Sustain Volunteer Involvement