

How to Prepare for the CVA Exam

A Competency-Based Exam

The CVA exam is based on the [CCVA Body of Knowledge and Competencies](#). As a competency-based exam, there are 110 multiple choice questions (10 are always unscored). “Competency-based” means they are not based directly on any specific text, and instead you will be expected to choose the best answer among the four options provided for each question.

There are two types of questions on the exam (from the [Candidate Handbook](#)):

- **Knowledge** questions recognize specific information and facts that do not vary by situation. Such questions are predominantly an effort of memory and include the recall of specific facts, generalizations, concepts, and procedures.
- **Application** questions require comprehension, interpretation, or manipulation of concepts or data. They primarily test simple interpretations or applications of limited data. Questions may require recognition of more than one element or concept and the ability to apply knowledge to a specific situation.



Competency-based exams are characterized by a **set of standards for knowledge or skill**. Work-related tasks form the core of the professional's competencies, meaning that being a volunteer engagement professional is already a step toward the knowledge you need to succeed at the exam.

CVA exam questions are written by real volunteer engagement professionals. These individuals are themselves CVAs, and they test and assess questions regularly.



Note: The [Institute of Credentialing Excellence](#) explains that the assessment used (as in the case of the CVA exam), “is NOT linked to a specific class, course or other education/training program or to a specific provider of classes, courses, or programs. The assessment is NOT designed to evaluate mastery of the intended learning outcomes of a specific class, course or education/training program, nor is the certification program provider the sole provider of any education or training that may be required for certification.”

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Here are a few tips to help you prepare for the CVA exam as a competency-based exam:

Review each competency and associated task as an indicator of your areas of strengths and opportunities.

- The [Self-Assessment tool](#) can help you identify your level of knowledge in each area.
- A good way to identify indicators is to think of a time when you have done the listed task in your role as a professional. If you haven't done this task, then it's an area for more study or review.



Consider your approach to finding the “most right answer” to the question.

- Use a combination of your own judgement as a professional and an assessment of what the broad community of volunteer engagement professionals might answer to the question.
- In a scenario-type question, think about finding the “most effective” answer to a problem in any organization. Don't focus solely on your own approach, unless you feel that answer would be universal for the purposes of the exam.
- Use the [CCVA Sample Questions](#) to get a feel for how the questions are written.
Note: these are the ONLY official sample questions.
- The [Ethical Decision-Making process](#) can be a useful tool for practicing this approach for scenarios.



Build connections with other professionals in different sectors.

- Finding the “most right answer” requires you to consider different approaches to volunteer engagement. Connecting with people engage volunteers in a different sector or cause can provide this perspective.
- Joining a study group can enable you to make these connections. It can also help you better understand areas where you want to learn or grow further.
- Discuss competencies and specific tasks where you have less experience with others who may have more experience in these areas. It could reveal transferable knowledge and skills that you can apply to the exam.