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ASSOCIATION FOR



VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

PORTFOLIO WORKBOOK

in application for

Professional Certification in Volunteer Administration

**C.V.A.**

A Performance Based Approach

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The program and materials were developed by the  
Certification Committee.

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## COMPONENTS OF THE PORTFOLIO - LISTING AND KEY TO INSTRUCTIONS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Maximum Length</u>	<u>For Information Consult Page:</u>
Title Page	1 page	Appendix B
Table of Contents	2 pages	7
I. Autobiographical Outline	2 pages	7
II. Philosophy of Volunteerism Statement	1000 words	9
III. Management Performance Narratives	3 to 5 narratives	10
A. Management Narrative #1	@ 1000 words or less each	12
B. Management Narrative #2		12
C. Management Narrative #3, etc.		12
IV. Behavioral Performance Narratives	2 to 3 narratives	10
A. Behavioral Narrative #1	@ 1000 words or less each	13
B. Behavioral Narrative #2, etc.		13
V. Grounding in the Profession Narratives		10
A. External Regulation Narrative	1 narrative @ 500 words or less	13
B. History, Philosophy, Trends	1 narrative @ 500 words or less	14
C. Knowledge of the Profession	3 pages	14
VI. Individualized Competency Narrative-1	1 narrative @ 500 words or less (if not covered elsewhere)	14
VII. Career and Development Objectives	1500 words or less	15
VIII. Revised Self-Assessment Checklist		16



## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

### WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio, in this context, is a self-critical description of several of your professional experiences and accomplishments. Through a series of narratives, you present yourself for assessment by your professional peers.

As the title of this program of certification indicates, the focus in the portfolio is on **PERFORMANCE**, rather than on what you know or how you learned what you know (the focus of traditional education). AVA, as a professional organization, is interested in what you have been able to do with what you know. The focus of this portfolio is an organized, methodical review of how you have operated as a practicing professional, of how you have performed the work of volunteer administration.

In putting together your portfolio, you will have the opportunity to:

- Assess your professional skills and knowledge, identifying both your strengths and areas which can benefit from further development,
  - State your philosophy of volunteerism and volunteer administration.
  - Describe and evaluate your performance in several specific situations in order to illustrate demonstrated competence in the field of volunteer administration and an understanding of what could have improved your performance in those situations,
  - Chart career and development objectives,
- and, hopefully,
- Develop pride in meeting professional standards.

As you begin to prepare your portfolio, bear in mind that your work will be assessed against the following set of criteria:

### CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

- Evidence of satisfactory performance on 75% OR MORE of the 128 performance criteria defining the 21 AVA competencies, and on your ability to provide adequate documentation, including products and statements of verification of this performance, when these are requested.
- Evidence of the ability to accurately describe and assess in writing one's own performance, noting relative strengths and weaknesses.
- Evidence of a cohesive relationship between the candidate's philosophy of volunteerism and the candidate's on-the-job application of this philosophy.



- Evidence of the candidate's ability to relate sound management processes to professional action.
- Evidence of the candidate's ability to recognize and articulate his/her reason(s) for specific actions.
- Evidence of the candidate's understanding of his or her role and impact in the professional settings with which he or she is involved.
- Evidence of the candidate's ability to apply learning from professional peers, professional reading, and educational programs to the work situation.
- Evidence of the ability to effectively apply knowledge and skill in this field beyond the immediate job setting, as shown by responses to the Case Study Review and Analysis.
- Evidence of a commitment to continuing professional development, and the ability to formulate realistic career and development plans.
- Overall, evidence of clarity of thought, analytical thinking, cohesiveness of ideas, practical knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply one's knowledge and skills on the job in the field of volunteer administration.

The AVA Board of Assessment will review each portfolio and evaluate it against these criteria. The Board will request products, letters of verification, and clarification, when needed, from each applicant. These materials, along with the applicant's "Case Review and Analysis," and the written review from the candidate's advisor, will constitute the basis for the final determination concerning the award of certification.

#### **THE ROLE OF FIELD ADVISORS**

Each candidate will work with a qualified field advisor. This person will assist the candidate in developing a credible portfolio and will encourage the candidate to examine his or her performance critically.

By definition, the field advisor will be someone currently working in the field.

This individual must

- be recognized by his or her peers for the quality of his or her work,
- be knowledgeable about the field of volunteer administration and the role of the professional in the field,
- and be aware of the field beyond his/her immediate job setting.



Active membership and Certification with AVA is strongly encouraged.

The advisor must have the time and ability to meet with the candidate and assist him or her with the portfolio process.

Advisors may be recruited either by the candidate or by the AVA Certification Committee serving his or her area. Screening and selection of advisors is the responsibility of the local Certification Committee. AVA will endeavor to orient advisors to their roles, in person and/or through printed materials.

The advisor is responsible for reviewing the candidate's portfolio and provide a written assessment at two junctures. (See Appendix A: "Field Advisor's Assessment Commentary") The first will occur at the midway point in the portfolio development process. This formative (essentially, helpful) review will be given to the candidate with a copy sent to the national Board of Assessment. The second and final assessment, a summative evaluation, occurs when the candidate has completed work on the portfolio and is preparing to send it to the Board of Assessment. At the discretion of the candidate, revisions in the portfolio may be made based on the advisor's final review comments, prior to submission to the Board of Assessment.

NOTE: The advisor reviews the candidate's portfolio, and with the final assessment recommends for or against certification. However this person does not grant or deny certification. That right and responsibility is reserved for the Board of Assessment.

The advisor will receive token remuneration for his or her written assessments.

## PRESENTATION OF YOUR PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio should have a professional appearance: be typed; neat; well organized and arranged; correct with respect to spelling, grammar, and punctuation; and have appropriate headings and subheadings.

With exceptions as noted in the portfolio directions, following, all information should be double spaced.

All performance criteria should be cross referenced. In the column to the left on the Self-Assessment Checklist, the page number from the portfolio where the performance criteria appears should be listed. In the column to the left on the portfolio workbook page, the performance criteria (pc) should be listed by its alphanumeric identification, i.e. (pc I.A.3).

All pages should be numbered consecutively with the number appearing in the upper righthand corner of the page.



## COPIES AND MAILING

The **original** copy of your portfolio, along with **4 clear copies**, should be mailed to:

AVA  
Certification Program  
Board of Assessment  
P.O. Box 4584  
Boulder, CO 80306

## TIME LINES

Candidates may take up to three years from the date of their acceptance into the program to complete their portfolio. Candidates not able to complete their portfolio in that time frame may request extensions. However, it is the prerogative of the Certification Committee to hold candidates responsible for any new or revised criteria. Additional fees for the additional services required to support an extension will be set on a case by case basis by the Committee.

Following submission of your portfolio, a "Case Study for Analysis and Response" will be mailed to you. Your analysis and response to the case must be returned to the Board Assessment within 18 days from the postmarked date the Case is mailed to you.

## APPEALS

Candidates may appeal the denial of certification, in writing, to the AVA Ethics and Standards Committee, within 45 days of the receipt of formal notification of the Board of Assessment's decision.





CHAPTER TWO  
COMPONENTS OF THE PORTFOLIO - INSTRUCTIONS

PREPARING THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

The purpose of this page is to provide the reader of your portfolio with an easy reference to each section of the portfolio. Major headings, significant subheadings, and page numbers should be included.

Please follow this format closely, i.e. use the same major headings and insert your own subheadings and page numbers, as appropriate. You will greatly simplify the work of your advisors and of the members of the Board of Assessment by doing so.

Sample Table of Contents

I. Autobiographical Outline	1
II. Philosophy of Volunteerism Statement	3
III. Management Performance Narratives	
A. Management Narrative #1	X
B. Management Narrative #2	XX
C. Management Narrative #3	XX
D. Management Narrative #4	XX
IV. Behavioral Performance Narratives	
A. Behavioral Narrative #1	XX
B. Behavioral Narrative #2	XX
C. Behavioral Narrative #3	XX
V. Grounding in the Profession Narratives	
A. External Regulation Narrative	XX
B. History, Philosophical Trends	XX
C. Knowledge of the Profession	XX
VI. Individualized Competency	XX
VII. Career and Development Objectives	XX
VIII. Revised Self-Assessment Checklist	XX

SECTION I: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

The candidate's applicable life experiences, to include work (salaried and nonsalaried) and education are to be enumerated chronologically in Section I, beginning with earliest experiences and moving forward (see example). While sufficient information should be provided to place the candidate's pertinent experiences into perspective, special attention



should be given to the work experiences which are to be described in the Performance narrative section of the portfolio.

For each work experience which will be described in the portfolio, the following information must be given:

1. Specific dates of the experience (month and year experience began, to month and year experience ended)
2. Name of organization with which you worked
3. Exact position title for each experience
4. Brief list of the major responsibilities entailed in each experience

This section should not exceed two pages in length. Single space type is acceptable.

### Sample Autobiographical Outline

- 1957-1961 Bucknell University, BA in psychology
- 1961-1971 Primary work responsibility was in the home, raising two children
- 1964-1968 Extensive volunteer work with Valleyview State Hospital. Worked directly with elderly patients as a friendly visitor.
- 1969-1971 Returned to school, part time. Completed 21 credits toward the degree of Master of Arts in Administration at Penn. State.
- 1972-1976 Administrative volunteer work at Jonesville Art Institute. Twelve hours per week as chair of Special Exhibits Committee.
- 9/76-4/79 Assistant Director, Jonesville Art Institute. Responsible for coordinating all service volunteer activities, as well as student intern placements. Managed public relations efforts. At the appointment of the Board, served as staff liason to the Site Selection Committee for the new building project. Reported to Adele Smith, Director.
- 5/78-5/81 Member, Board of Directors, Jonesville YWCA. Responsible for Capital Improvements Fund Drive. With a committee of six other volunteers and countless assistants, raised \$162,000 for construction of new indoor swimming pool. Received the Y's Volunteer of the Year Award for these efforts.
- 5/79-Present Director, Special Services Division of Deere county. Responsible for bringing cultural and recreational activities to all county agencies (youth home, juvenile detention center, county jail, transitional services, and home for older adults). Coordinate and supervise 70 volunteers and two salaried staff who assist with this project. Responsibilities include fund



raising, proposal development and general division management. budget \$136,000. Report to county commissioners and to a Citizens' Advisory Committee.

Note: Work situations Sept. '76 onward are the subject of performance narratives in this portfolio.

Footnotes to the autobiographical outline explaining "unusual" or "out of the ordinary" work assignments are acceptable.

## SECTION II: PHILOSOPHY OF VOLUNTEERISM STATEMENT

This section allows you to expand and develop the Philosophy of Volunteerism Statement you began working on in your application. In a statement not to exceed 1000 words, each candidate is to expand the personal statement on his or her philosophy of volunteerism and the role of the professional in volunteerism.

Areas to be covered in this statement may include:

- o An awareness of local, state, and/or national changes you have witnessed since you entered the field, along with significant causal factors.
- o The challenges you have faced or imperatives you have identified as you have worked within the field.
- o A working definition of the meaning of volunteerism for your community and the country.
- o An understanding of the concepts of "volunteerism" and "voluntarism," their likenesses, differences and relationship.
- o The evolution of the role of the professional in relation to the field.
- o An awareness of historical perspectives, current trends and projected changes in the field.

Leave space here so that you can come back later and indicate in which of your performance narratives you have provided examples of some of the more difficult and/or interesting efforts you have made to implement your philosophy in your work.



## SECTIONS III-VI: PERFORMANCE NARRATIVES

### Writing Narratives

A narrative is a written report of an event in which you were involved as a manager in volunteer administration with some responsibility for the outcome. The narrative is to be a self-critical record of your role in the event, including the decisions you made, the actions you took, what you did well and what could have been improved. The purpose of writing the narratives is to provide evidence of satisfactory or better performance on 75% of the performance criteria listed in the self-assessment checklist.

Please select work projects or programs to describe which occurred during the past five years. (Written permission for exceptions must be obtained from the Board of Assessment.)

Sections III through VI of the portfolio correspond to one or more of the Functional Areas in the Self-Assessment Checklist. You must cross reference all performance criteria and page numbers.

### Required Format for Narratives

- A. The narratives may each be no more than 1,000 words (4-5 double-spaced pages). A concise style in writing your narratives is strongly encouraged.
- B. The narrative must have four parts, each appropriately labeled. The parts need not be equal in length.
  1. **Background:** Enough information to set the event in context. What community and/or organizational needs were involved in this event; when or how you became aware of /involved in the event; what pressures and/or persons precipitated the event.
  2. **Description:** What you did and what actually happened, and what role you played. (Report in as much detail as feasible, given the overall word count limitation.) Be sure to clearly and fully address the performance criteria as listed in the self-assessment checklist. Do not include performance criteria unless you can document satisfactory performance on the complete performance criteria listed.
  3. **Analysis:** Identify issues, and cause and effect relationships. Explain why you handled the situation in the way described. Try to answer the question: What was going on here?
  4. **Outcome and Results:** This section allows you to evaluate the event and your own effectiveness in managing the situation. Did you do what you set out to do? How do you know? What tangible and intangible results can you point to? In what ways did you



function effectively? In what ways could your performance have been improved? What factors or forces emerged which you did not anticipate?

- C. Make every effort to document each performance criteria only once, providing whatever description is necessary in only one location in the portfolio rather than sprinkling documentation for a given performance criterion across one or more narratives. Again, be sure to clearly and fully address each performance criterion as listed in the self-assessment checklist. Do not include a performance criterion unless you can document satisfactory performance on all parts of that criterion.

### Products and Letters of Verification

As you assemble your portfolio and develop your performance narratives, you are creating documentation of your work experiences. As you write each narrative, you will be pointing to the results or outcomes of the experience and you may also be describing products, i.e. booklets, forms, brochures, produced by you, by you and others, or under your close supervision (please specify which, for each product mentioned) in that work experience.

To attest to the truth or authenticity of your role and the quality of your work as described in each narrative, such products and letters of verification from those qualified to assess your work are selectively requested. At the end of each narrative, please list first, the products you could supply if requested to do so, and second, the names and relationship to you vis a vis that narrative, of one or more individuals who could write an independent letter of verification in response to that narrative.

IN NO CASE ARE YOU TO SEND ANY ACTUAL PRODUCT OR LETTER OF VERIFICATION UNTIL AND UNLESS IT IS REQUESTED BY THE BOARD OF ASSESSMENT. Desired information will be requested by Members of the Board of Assessment as they review your portfolio.

**Examples of Products:** Intake interview forms, volunteer personnel policies, a project plan, a project report, a budget, a grant proposal, an annual report, a written evaluation, a recruitment plan, promotional materials, position listings, position descriptions, form letters used with prospective and/or working volunteers, a recognition event program, materials used to organize or develop one or more meeting programs for a local association of those in volunteer administration, etc.

**Letters of Verification:** Always include the names of one or more individuals who, if asked to do so, would be a) competent to write and b) willing to write a letter of verification concerning your role and the quality of your performance in that narrative.

Most often the individual would be someone you reported to in



the project described in the narrative, someone in authority in your organization (such as the chair of the board) or an **experienced volunteer administrator or general manager** involved in or closely with the project. It takes a two step process to solicit such a letter. First, be sure to seek permission before putting an individual's name down at the end of the narrative. Second, if the letter is actually requested by the Board of Assessment, give the individual a copy of the narrative to look at and ask for an honest response, given his or her perspective of your role and the quality of your performance.

Such letters should be brief, running no more than one single spaced page or two double spaced pages in length. To be considered valid, such a letter must be written on letterhead; mention exact dates, your position title and their position title in relation to that project; and state the credentials of the individual writing the letter. For example:

The Executive Director, for three years, of the organization where the applicant has been employed for the past five years, direct supervisor of the applicant, and trained and qualified in public relations. or

The Chair of the Board of the organization (for two years) where the applicant undertook the project, who is vice president of a public relations firm.

The situation that this person is verifying or the complete narrative in which the situation occurs must be duplicated from the portfolio and attached to the letter. Each page from the portfolio must be signed by the author of the letter. The letter must be sent directly from the verifying party to the Board of Assessment, P.O. Box 4584, Boulder, CO 80306.

**Other Examples of Verification:** Newspaper (and other media) accounts of a project, preferably mentioning you by name. Audio or video tapes of important meetings or of parts of a program, such as a training session, where you played a significant role.

### **Section III: Management Narratives** (Functional Areas I, II, and III)

Select not less than three nor more than five distinct examples of work projects or programs occurring during the past five years which you initiated, planned, and implemented. This could include creating a job and/or department where one did not exist before. Describe those actions which verify that you have performed at least 75% of the performance criteria (at least 73 of the total 98) included in these three functional areas (I. Program Planning and Organization, II. Staffing and Directing, and III. Controlling) at a satisfactory or better level of competence. Each narrative is to be limited to 1000 words or less. Be sure to use the prescribed format.



#### **Section IV: Behavioral Narratives** (Functional Area IV)

With a focus on your interpersonal behavior and human relations skills describe not less than two nor more than three actual work situations which verify your performance of 75% of the performance criteria (at least 9 of the 12) in this functional area (IV. Individual, Group and Organizational Behavior) at a satisfactory or better level of competence. Each narrative is to be limited to 1000 words or less. Be sure to use the prescribed format.

You may use the same or different work situations as those described in the Management Narratives; however, if you choose one of the same work situations the narrative must be described in such a way as to clearly emphasize the behavioral aspects of the situation.

#### **Section V: Grounding in the Profession Narratives** (Functional Area V)

The skills outlined in this section are among those which help to differentiate the technician from the professional in volunteer administration. The performance criteria involve a knowledge base which seeks expression in decisions made, actions taken, and time expended. Each competency area will be addressed separately. Conclude each of these narratives with the name of someone who could write a letter of verification supporting your knowledge in that particular area.

##### **Section V.A.: External Regulations Affecting Volunteerism**

Demonstrating at least three of the five performance criteria in this section, develop a narrative, not to exceed 500 words, recounting how you have applied this area of competence in your work.

**Example #1:** A volunteer administrator in a nursing home may want to cite knowledge of Federal Medicare Guidelines (performance criterion V.A.2), and where these guidelines may be secured (performance criterion V.A.3). Most important would be to articulate the practical implications of these guidelines for volunteer programming (performance criterion V.A.4) in his or her organization and in other nursing homes (that is, the nursing home industry, generally).

**Example #2:** A director of a voluntary health organization may choose to focus on performance criterion V.A.5, regulations governing lobbying done by voluntary organizations. The narrative could relate the implications of this knowledge to performance criteria V.A.2./3./and 4.



### Section V.B.: History, Philosophy, Trends

A focus on professional ethics in volunteer administration is the key task in this narrative. That is, performance criteria V.B.3. must be addressed. It is assumed that pc V.B.1 and pc V.B.4 are largely addressed in the Philosophy of Volunteerism Statement, Section II of the portfolio. In a narrative not to exceed 500 words, the candidate is to select a current trend or issue in volunteer administration and discuss it in relation to the AVA statement on professional ethics.

**Example:** The candidate might discuss volunteers replacing paid staff and relate this concern to Principle 3 - Self Determination, and Principle 5 - Staff Relationships, from the AVA Statement of Professional Ethics.

### Section V.C.: Knowledge of the Profession

Relate your work performance to at least five of the six performance criteria from this group of performance standards. The nature of these performance criteria lend themselves to brief outline formats. You may single space this material. Do not exceed three typed pages.

**Example:** Performance criteria V.C.3 concerns periodicals in volunteer administration. It could be satisfied by listing the periodicals you regularly read and briefly identifying the relationship between specific articles and aspects of your current (or past) positions in volunteer administration.

### Section VI. Individualized Additional Competency Narrative (Functional Area VI.)

Documentation of this competency and its performance criteria may be submitted in one of two ways:

A. You may write a narrative not to exceed 500 words, describing a work situation which demonstrates your satisfactory performance of this self-defined area. Use the four part format required for narratives described earlier. Illustrate all three individualized performance criteria in this narrative.

or

B. You may integrate this competency and all three of its performance criteria with any one of the management or behavioral narratives you have already written. Please reference the columns appropriately.





## Section VII. Career and Development Objectives

This section asks you to prepare three written statements:

- A. A "**letter of recommendation**" for yourself, indicating both key strengths and limitations.
- B. A **statement of career and development objectives** for the next five years, indicating how you intend to enhance your strengths and how you will improve areas of relative weakness. (You are encouraged to include one or two alternative career plan scenarios, here.)
- C. A **self-assessment of the portfolio**.

Your submission for this section should not exceed 2000 words in length for all three parts, combined.

**A.** A competent professional is aware of his or her adequacies and inadequacies and utilizes this type of self-assessment information as a foundation for both general career planning and specific development planning to support the achievement of career objectives. The ability to capitalize on strengths is as important as the ability to overcome or accommodate relative weaknesses, in this process. Please write a "letter of recommendation" for yourself summarizing both your key strengths and areas of weakness, and how both are generally handled by you in your professional work.

**B.** Professionals in volunteer administration, as in any profession, should be involved in ongoing professional development activities. Part of this effort involves developing and continually refining career plans. Part of it involves developing specific skills and acquiring particular areas of knowledge. We ask that you demonstrate your commitment to and involvement in continuing professional development by sharing your career objectives and specific developmental objectives for the next five years. While not viewed as a rigid set of chains, these plans will serve as a springboard for (and context within which to view) your application for recertification, five years following the date of certification.

If you have never really taken the time to develop some career plans, we ask that you do so now. Or if you have done some planning in the past, but have not taken as much care or treated the whole question of career development with as much depth as you would like, this is an opportunity to take the care and pursue that depth.

It turns out that to do much in the way of career planning, it is necessary to do some in-depth self-assessment. Assessing your competencies with the help of a listing like the one that forms the basis for this program of certification is a start. But self-assessment also involves identifying your other strengths, your interests, your values, the things that have meaning for you, life style preferences, learning style preferences, and short and longer term life and career goals and objectives.

It is necessary to do another kind of assessment, as well, some research about the environment in which you are (or want to be) operating,



to find out more about what's needed, what's possible, and what other people think is important.

We recommend that you use some of the many resources available to support this kind of planning, such as the **I CAN Volunteer Development Resources**.\* The I CAN materials are published by the American Red Cross in behalf of an interorganizational collaboration of national voluntary organizations. The I CAN Collaboration, of which AVA is a member, developed these resources for use by the entire volunteer community. Though packaged so as to be attractive to volunteers, they are equally useful to paid personnel. Such resources are recyclable. That is, we can keep coming back to them again and again as we pursue our careers, for use in our own development efforts, and to support the development efforts of those we work with.

This section should be devoted to **the future** evolution of your career in this field, as best you can project that future. Providing two or three "alternative" scenarios is an acceptable and realistic way of approaching your description of "the future."

C. Give your self-assessment of your work in this portfolio. Rank order the six functional areas, the philosophy statement, and this section, from the area of greatest strength to the area of least strength, and defend the ranking.

#### **Section VIII. Revised Self-Assessment Checklist**

Include here, a revised copy of the entire Self-Assessment Checklist, on which both your current and your targeted competency levels are indicated. This request assumes that having gone through the process of putting your portfolio together, you may want to revise specific ratings in terms of current level of competence and/or the expectations you have for your development in the coming five-year period.

Use your original Self-Assessment Checklist. Simply cross out old ratings, and place the new (revised) rating next to the one you crossed out.



### CHAPTER THREE CASE ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

Following the submission of your completed portfolio to the Board of Assessment, you will receive a case study for analysis and review. It will consist of a hypothetical situation which could be encountered in the practice of volunteer administration. You will be expected to carefully consider the situation and respond to it in writing, explaining how you would handle this situation if encountered in your work, and the rationale for the response you select.

Your response will be judged using the following criteria:

1. Clarity of thought evidenced
2. Analytical thinking evidenced
3. Ability to draw logical conclusions
4. Ability to express ideas in writing



## CHAPTER FOUR HOW TO AVOID PITFALLS

This chapter is meant to provide some help to you as you prepare your portfolio. The potential pitfalls covered here have been encountered by past candidates for certification. Some may not be of concern to you. If a section doesn't fit, simply skip it. But we do strongly encourage you to skim the entire chapter and to look rather closely at the section on narratives.

### GETTING STARTED

It is true that putting together a portfolio is a sizable task. For some people, the hardest part is getting started. Even if you do a lot of writing in your work, the portfolio probably calls for a different kind of writing, and for some that makes it harder to begin.

One good way to start is to outline each section of the portfolio. For the narrative sections, jot down ideas about projects that might be good to describe, points to be made, key events that relate to the performance criteria in that functional area of competence, etc.. Note also, things you are proud of, problem areas you encountered, products you could submit, and some of the people who might be able to write letters of verification. When a lot of answers are easy to come by for a particular project, it's probably a good one to choose for that set of competencies and performance criteria. Then go back and organize your thoughts according to the four part format described on page XX. Attempt to outline the information requested for each of the four parts.

Continue the outlining process for all sections of the portfolio. What it does is help you to get a sense of the overall project, what you have, and what you need (both what will be easy to come up with, and what will be difficult to come up with). The important thing is not to allow yourself to get blocked when you can't remember something or when you encounter a potential problem. Keep going. Finish the entire outline. Then go back and start to fill in the spaces.

To flesh out the details of a narrative, it often helps to do a more detailed outline before jumping in to craft sentences and paragraphs. When you do go back to fill in the holes, it can help if a friend interviews you, taking down your responses in your words and drawing you out with clarifying questions.

The same approach can be used with the actual drafting and redrafting of your narratives, philosophy statement, and career/development plans. "Bull" your way through early drafts. Make notes about wording problems and any missing information. Then go back and fill in the spaces.

### FOLLOWING THE FORMAT

The instructions ask that you follow the prescribed format closely. It is surprising how many candidates fail to do this. The rationale for the request is a simple one. Following the format, by the numbers, allows

advisors and reviewers to concentrate on the substance of your work rather than on finding things. If you make it easy for a reader to find things and to determine if you have done all of what you were asked to do, the reader will have more time to think about what you have said and done and you are probably going to get a better response and better feedback.

## EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES

**A Self-Critical Evaluation, Not a How To Manual:** Address your narratives to an experienced colleague, not to someone who doesn't know how to perform the function in question. Be sure to point out what could have been improved, not just what was done well.

**Written in the First Person, Not the Third Person:** We need to know what you did, why, and how well. Include how you worked with and through other people. Don't describe things as if they happened spontaneously without anyone making them happen. Keep background information to a minimum.

**Written Professionally, With a Sense of Options, Not As If There Were Only One Way to Do Things:** Share some of the options you considered and your reasons for making the choices you made. Describe problems as challenges and as opportunities to find creative solutions, not as wearisome burdens or ways you were victimized. Write in the past tense, describing actual rather than hypothetical performance.

**Gives Specifics and Examples, Not Vague, Unsupported Generalizations:** Examples can be especially convincing in this kind of writing. Keep them concise. Make sure they really do illustrate the points they are intended to support. And keep them coming.

**Specifies Results of Volunteer Administration, Not of Volunteer Services:** Be sure to specify results mainly in terms of the results of volunteer administration practices rather than the result of services to the public that such practices make possible.

**Products and Potential Sources of Verification are Listed:** Evaluation of your portfolio will be delayed significantly if you forget to list products you could share and people who could write letters of verification (along with their role and relationship to the situation described in the narrative).

## EFFECTIVE PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS

**Are Substantial, Not Motherhood and Apple Pie:** Take a stand in relation to issues facing the field. Again, address experienced professional peers, not people who are new to the field. Address volunteer administration, not just volunteerism.

**Are Well Qualified, Not Full of Extreme Overgeneralizations:**



Overgeneralizations often betray disrespect for people you should be able to understand and work with, lack of knowledge, or sloppy thinking. The effect can be most unprofessional. Otherwise insightful statements can be undermined by a lack of just one or two words of qualification.

**Are Personal Statements, Not a String of Quotes:** Share your opinions here. Include what motivates your own personal involvement in the field. Deal with the issues you most care about.

#### **SOUND ADVISOR/ADVISEE RELATIONSHIPS**

**Deal With Time Problems, Don't Avoid Them:** Whether it is the candidate or the advisor, time problems need to be shared and negotiated as soon as you become aware of them. It is far better to change meetings times, change advisors, or modify your schedule of completion than to continue with a series of canceled or missed appointments.

**Are Characterized by Ample, Useful Feedback; Not by Avoidance of Feedback, Particularly Avoidance of Critical Comments:** It is evident that no matter how much we emphasize its importance, some advisors find it hard to confront candidates with glaring deficiencies in their portfolios. As a candidate, this does you no good whatsoever. We recommend you do everything in your power to be receptive to honest feedback and to convey that receptivity to your advisor. It can help to negotiate how feedback and particularly difficult feedback will be exchanged, at the outset. For example, do you prefer feedback in writing or orally; in a sequence where strengths are pointed out first and blocks to strengths second, or some other sequence? Let your advisor know. If you don't seem to be getting the feedback you need, even after such negotiations, ask for it. And if necessary, change your advisor.

**Are Characterized by Advocacy, Not Good Wishes:** If you are having trouble securing products or verification letters, ask your advisor for help in dealing with individuals who don't seem to understand what's wanted or aren't being cooperative. Ask them to play the role of advocate in relation to AVA, if you feel a lack of understanding on our part.



**APPENDIX A**

**FIELD ADVISOR'S ASSESSMENT COMMENTARY**

(form)



FIELD ADVISOR'S  
ASSESSMENT COMMENTARY

Name of Candidate for AVA Certification \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are the narratives credible?
2. Are the practices described in the narratives consistent with basic practices in the field?
3. Is the relationship between the performance standards and the content of the narratives clear?
4. Have the directions for writing the narratives been followed in respect to: description of a specific situation; description of the candidate's role; description of specific action taken by the candidate, description of results, and identification of products and verification that could be submitted upon request?
5. What concerns should the candidate be addressing?



FIELD ADVISOR'S COMMENTARY

page 2

Name of candidate:

Name of advisor:

6. To what extent does the candidate's practice appear to be congruent with his/her professional philosophy?
  
7. Does the applicant demonstrate the ability to manage an activity from beginning to end? (Please give examples)
  
8. Does the portfolio demonstrate adequate sensitivity to key issues in the field of volunteerism? (Please give examples)
  
9. Do the narratives reflect respect for, and the ability to win respect from volunteers?
  
10. Does the portfolio appear to reflect ethical practice?
  
11. Midpoint assessment: Is the portfolio, as it is developing, appear likely in your judgment to be approved?  
Endpoint assessment: Would you recommend that the portfolio be approved?



**APPENDIX B**

**PORTFOLIO COVER PAGE**

**and**

**NARRATIVE FORMS**

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ASSOCIATION FOR



VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

PORTFOLIO

in application for

**Certification in Volunteer Administration**

**C.V.A.**

A Performance Based Approach

\*\*\*

**Submitted by:**

(please print  
name, address,  
and day & eve  
phone numbers)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I fully understand that my signature verifies that I performed the work as stated; that I have presented my experiences accurately and honestly to the best of my ability; and that I am sole author of this portfolio. I understand that falsification or misrepresentation are grounds for the denial or revocation of certification.

**Performance  
Criteria**

**AVA Certification Portfolio**

(duplicate paper as necessary)

Performance  
Criteria