

Universal Declaration on the Profession of Leading and Managing Volunteers

As the international professional association for volunteer leadership, the Association for Volunteer Administration envisions a world in which the lives of individuals and communities are improved by the positive impact of volunteer action.

This vision can best be achieved when there are people who make it their primary responsibility to provide leadership in the management of volunteer resources, whether in the community or within organizations.

These “leaders of volunteer resources”^{*} optimize the impact of individual and collective volunteer action to enhance the common good and enable humanitarian benefit. These leaders are most effective when they have the respect and support of their communities and/or their organizations, appropriate resources and the opportunity to continually develop their knowledge and skills.

With the growth of volunteering worldwide there is a recognition that the time and contribution of volunteers must be respected, and that their work must benefit both volunteers and the causes and organizations they serve.

Thus, we affirm and support the Universal Declaration on Volunteering adopted by IAVE – The International Association for Volunteer Effort – which states “Volunteering is a fundamental building block of civil society. It brings to life the noblest aspirations of humankind – the pursuit of peace, freedom, opportunity, safety and justice for all people....At the dawn of the new millennium, volunteering is an essential element of all societies.” (The complete text is available at www.iave.org)

As volunteering has expanded globally, the need has emerged for strong leadership and management of volunteers. Increasingly, this is recognized as a professional role.

**This phrase applies equally to terms like administrators, managers, coordinators and directors of volunteers. For this declaration, the term “Director of Volunteers” was selected to represent these many terms.*

Value and Contribution of Directors of Volunteers

Directors of Volunteers promote change, solve problems, and meet human needs by mobilizing and managing volunteers for the greatest possible impact.

Directors of Volunteers aspire to:

- act in accordance with high professional standards.
- build commitment to a shared vision and mission.
- develop and match volunteer talents, motivations, time availability and differing contributions with satisfying opportunities.
- guide volunteers to success in actions that are meaningful to both the individual and the cause they serve.
- help develop and enhance an organizing framework for volunteering

Role

Directors of Volunteers mobilize and support volunteers to engage in effective action that addresses specified needs.

As Directors of Volunteers we strive to:

- be innovative agents for change and progress.
- be passionate advocates for volunteering.
- welcome diverse contributions and ideas.
- develop trusting and positive work environments in which volunteers and other resources are effectively engaged and empowered.
- ensure the safety and security of volunteers.
- develop networks and facilitate partnerships to achieve desired results.
- be guided by, and committed to, the goals and ideals of the cause/mission towards which we are working and to continually expand our knowledge and skills.
- communicate sensitively and accurately the context, rationale, and purpose of the work we are doing.
- learn from volunteers and others in order to improve the quality of our work.

Core Beliefs

As Directors of Volunteers, we hold these beliefs and seek to demonstrate them in our actions:

- We believe in the potential of people to make a difference.
- We believe in volunteering and its value to individuals and society.
- We believe that change and progress are possible.
- We believe that diversity in views and in voluntary contribution enriches our effort.
- We believe that tolerance and trust are fundamental to volunteering.
- We believe in the value of individual and collective action.
- We believe in the substantial added value represented by the effective planning, resourcing and management of volunteers.

We also believe that we share the responsibility:

- to manage the contributions of volunteers with care and respect
- to act with a sense of fairness and equity
- to ensure our services are responsible and accountable, and
- to demonstrate the practices of honesty and integrity

The complexity of the problems the world faces reaffirms the power of volunteering as a way to mobilize people to address those challenges.

In order for volunteering to have the greatest impact and to be as inclusive as possible, it must be well planned, adequately resourced and effectively managed. This is the responsibility of Directors of Volunteers.

They are most effective when their work is recognized and supported. Therefore, we call on leaders in:

- Non-governmental and civil society organizations, to make volunteering integral to achieving their missions and to elevate the role of volunteer directors within the organization
- Government at all levels, to invest in the sustainable development of high-quality volunteer leadership and to model excellence in the management of volunteers
- Business and the private sector, to understand the importance of volunteer management and to assist volunteer-involving organizations in developing this capacity
- Funders and donors, to support the commitment of resources to build the capacity of volunteer management
- Education, to provide opportunities for leaders of volunteers to continually expand their knowledge and skills

We call upon Directors of Volunteers worldwide to accept this Declaration, to integrate and embody it in our shared work, and to promote and encourage its adoption.

While we recognize that all countries in the world do not approach volunteer development in the same way, this Declaration is intended to encourage all those concerned with the advancement of this profession, to aspire to these statements.

Developed by the International Working Group on the Profession

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With representation from:
Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, England, Hungary, Israel, Mauritius,
Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Scotland, United States