

Competencies for Contemporary Volunteer Administration: An Empirical Model Bridging Theory with Professional Best Practice

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INTRODUCTION

For more than two centuries, volunteers have played a critical role in shaping individual communities as well as holistic societies through service that addresses the needs of local citizens, both in the United States and around the world (Ellis & Noyes, 1990; Jedlicka, 1990). Since the early years of recognized and/or formal volunteering, there have been individuals or groups who have accepted responsibility for organizing and supporting volunteers' efforts. During America's birth and infancy as a nation, local citizens came together to discuss problems, propose solutions, and ultimately elect representatives to supervise the implementation of plans decided upon by the larger community. While those elected individuals had specific tasks, it would be appropriate to suggest that they also supervised and/or coordinated the efforts of others who helped implement the plans. Thus, it could be argued that the beginning of volunteer administration in the United States quite

possibly dates back to the early 1600s.

As a larger profession encompassing numerous disciplines, housed in diverse community-based organizations, and addressing a myriad of social needs and issues, volunteer administration has evolved dramatically as communities and societies continue to evolve and change. This evolution, by necessity, requires the ongoing identification and application of new and modified volunteer management and leadership strategies to meet the emerging needs of people in communities around the world. As the volunteer administration profession has evolved, so have interests in ensuring that managers of volunteers have the necessary updated management and technical skills to be successful in their respective roles and responsibilities (Fisher & Cole, 1993).

While still a relatively young profession, the volunteer administrator profession has nonetheless played an important role in the evolution of volunteerism around the world. Historically, managers of volunteers have

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accepted responsibilities related to the identification, selection, orientation, training, utilization, recognition, and evaluation of volunteers commonly referred to as I.S.O.T.U.R.E. (Boyce, 1971). Since the seminal work of Boyce, numerous authors and practitioners have suggested a myriad of foundational knowledge and skills for the effective and efficient administration of volunteer programs (Wilson, 1976; Navarre, 1989; Brudney, 1990; Stepputat, 1995; Kwarteng, Smith, & Miller, 1988; Penrod, 1991; Fisher & Cole, 1993; Safrit, Smith, & Cutler, 1994; Ellis, 1996; Culp, Deppe, Castillo, & Wells, 1998). An in-depth and thorough review of previously published volunteer management approaches and models has revealed both similarities and disparities among the authors' ideas (see Table 1, p. 11).

Recently, several researchers have investigated the level of competence and importance of selected competencies. King and Safrit (1998) based their research on the I.S.O.T.U.R.E. model of volunteer administration with Ohio 4-H Youth Development Extension agents. Utilizing adaptations of the King and Safrit instrument, Collins (2001) studied Michigan 4-H Youth Development professionals and Hange, SeEVERS, and Van-Leeuwen (2002) surveyed 4-H Youth Development professionals nationally. Most recently, Safrit and Schmiesing (2004) conducted research to identify competencies needed by contemporary managers of volunteers based upon both historical literature and contemporary practices of volunteer administrators, resulting in their suggested P.E.P. (Preparation, Engagement, Perpetuation) model. Based upon P.E.P., Safrit and Schmiesing (2005) subsequently described self-reported current levels of importance and competence by Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) members internationally for the specific volunteer management competencies identified in their earlier qualitative research. Similarly, Boyd (2004) conducted a Delphi study to identify those competency areas that would require managers of volunteers to be proficient in the future. However, no research exists that quantitatively investigates and identifies the core competencies needed for

managers of volunteers to effectively administer volunteer based programs and the individuals who serve therein.

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, AND METHODS

The purpose of this research was to investigate management and administrative factors comprising contemporary volunteer administration. Specific objectives included to (1) identify factors pertaining to the contemporary management of volunteers, and (2) identify specific volunteer management and administration competencies based upon the factors identified.

The population for the study was the 2,057 individual members of AVA as of July 1, 2004. The population included 1,889 AVA members from the United States; 98 from Canada; and 70 from other countries. The researchers used a quantitative methodology approach consisting of a mailed questionnaire utilizing a census. A research instrument consisting of 140 individual volunteer management competencies was developed based upon Safrit and Schmiesing (2004). The questionnaire was organized into two sections. Section I investigated respondents' perceptions of the importance of and their current level of competence with each competency. Section II collected respondents' selected personalogical data. A pilot test provided Cronbach's alpha reliabilities for individual constructs that ranged from .73 to .93. Since all values were greater than .70, the researchers determined the responses to be reliable (Stevens, 1992).

A cover letter, the questionnaire, and a self-addressed return envelope were mailed to participants on August 10, 2004, with a requested return date of September 15, 2004. A follow-up e-mail reminder was sent one week later by the AVA office staff. The researchers e-mailed a final, personalized reminder to all members on September 10, 2004.

As of the September 15, 2004, deadline, 538 questionnaires had been returned with 522 usable responses, resulting in a final response rate of 25% (Wiseman, 2003). The researchers followed up with 150 randomly selected nonrespondents (Linder & Wingen-

bach, 2002; Miller & Smith, 1983) and found no significant differences between respondents and nonrespondents. The researchers analyzed the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 12.0, calculating appropriate descriptive statistics to satisfy the research objectives (Norusis, 2003).

To determine if the data were appropriate for factor analysis using the principle component analysis technique, a correlation matrix of volunteer management competencies was reviewed for intercorrelations greater than 0.301, and two statistics were computed. Bartlett's test of sphericity resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix was an identity matrix (Chi-Square 25,988; $df = 9,730$; $p < .001$), while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.87. Based upon the correlation matrix and the statistics calculated, the researchers concluded that the data were appropriate for component analysis.

Two criteria were used to initially determine the number of components to be extracted. First, only components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were considered for the analysis. Second, a scree plot of the component eigenvalues was used to identify breaks or discontinuity in determining the number of major components. After initial extraction, a third criterion for the determination of the number of components to extract was whether they possessed meaningful interpretation (simple structure and conceptual sense). The extraction procedure resulted in the identification of seven components underlying the conceptual constructs of volunteer management competencies. The components were rotated using a varimax rotation method with Kaiser Normalization to aid in interpretation. A maximum likelihood factor extraction procedure was also used to observe the stability of the components identified in the principle component analysis. This second technique resulted in the delineation of identical factors with similar loadings as the principle components analysis, reflecting stability in the results.

The component loadings in the rotated

component matrix were examined to understand and interpret the nature of the seven components. To assist in the interpretation, and reduce subjectivity and the likelihood of non-significant items loading on the components, only items with component loadings of 0.401 and higher were considered for naming the seven components (Stevens, 1992). The researchers utilized a qualitative triangulation methodology (Cohen & Mannion, 1985) with themselves and three nationally recognized experts in volunteer management and administration to name the components identified.

FINDINGS/RESULTS

The researchers identified seven components comprising contemporary volunteer administration based upon respondents' perceptions regarding selected individual volunteer management competencies. They include seven components: (1) Volunteer Recruitment and Selection (18 items); (2) Volunteer Administrator Professional Development (16 items); (3) Volunteer Orientation and Training (16 items); (4) Volunteer Program Advocacy (13 items); (5) Volunteer Program Maintenance (8 items); (6) Volunteer Recognition (9 items); and, (7) Volunteer Program Resource Development (9 items). Together, the seven components accounted for 39.2% of the total variance (See Table 2, p. 12-13).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The seven components identified in this study emphasize practically all of the volunteer management competencies identified during the previous 35 years by authors and professional leaders in the field (see Table 3, p. 14). The four components of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Volunteer Orientation and Training, Volunteer Program Maintenance, and Volunteer Recognition address the large majority of volunteer management concepts that have been identified traditionally for volunteer organizations and programs (Boyce, 1971; Wilson, 1976; Navarre, 1989; Brudney, 1990; Penrod, 1991; Fisher & Cole, 1993; Stepputat, 1995; Ellis, 1996; Culp et al., 1998).

The seven components identified in this study also parallel closely the five Core Competencies identified by AVA (1999) in its Certified Volunteer Administrator (CVA) credentialing process. The component of Volunteer Administrator Professional Development addresses many of the certification topics included under "Professional Principles." The components of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Volunteer Orientation and Training, and Volunteer Recognition provide more focused detail to the topics included in the certification category of "Human Resources Management." The component of Volunteer Program Maintenance includes topics listed under the certification category of "Management," while the component of Volunteer Program Advocacy combines topics listed under the certification categories of "Leadership" and "Planning."

However, of the seven components identified, three are relatively new foci of volunteer management and administration and are reflected in only the most current of published academic literature. However, these three components support strongly AVA's (2004) most current Certified Volunteer Administrator (CVA) credentialing Core Competencies and Content Outline. The component of Volunteer Administrator Professional Development and its respective competencies reinforce AVA's focus upon "Professional Development," "Leadership," and "Accountability" while also emphasizing more contemporary competencies that are becoming increasingly critical to volunteer programs, such as self-assessing professional knowledge, skills, and abilities; balancing personal and professional responsibilities; calculating the cost-effectiveness of volunteer programs; and managing personal stress. The component of Volunteer Program Advocacy is directly comparable to AVA's "Advocacy" focus while also emphasizing the concept of a shared leadership team for a volunteer program; engaging volunteers to teach other volunteers and paid staff; and educating other paid and volunteer staff regarding program evaluation and its expanded usage. Volunteer Program Resource Development identified in this study addresses in much more detail the effective and respon-

sible stewardship of public and private funds used in volunteer programs than is addressed in AVA's "Fund Development," "Budgetary," "Financial Resources," and "Reporting" emphasis areas distributed throughout the CVA Content Outline.

Most importantly, the components identified in this study better reduce and focus the AVA constructs into basic management and administration competencies that are more easily considered and assessed. The authors suggest that while Safrit and Schmiesing's (2004) P.E.P. model remains valid for use in educating new managers of volunteers in the United States, Canada, and other countries regarding fundamental competencies involved in volunteer administration, the P.E.P. model proposed originally should be modified slightly, still focusing upon the three holistic professional competency domains of Personal Preparation, Volunteer Engagement, and Program Perpetuation (see Table 4, p.15). Subsequently, the three domains would encompass seven focused professional topic areas of (1) Personal Preparation: Professional Development; (2) Volunteer Engagement: Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Volunteer Orientation and Training, Volunteer Recognition, and (3) Program Maintenance; and, Program Perpetuation: Resource Development and Program Advocacy. Ultimately, each domain topic area encompasses specific professional competencies based upon fundamental knowledge, skills and attitudes that are the fundamental foundation of effective contemporary volunteer administration.

The authors suggest that this revised P.E.P. model would serve as a unifying, holistic foundation (based upon empirical data from AVA members internationally) for a unified, consistent basic and continuing professional education, training, and certification curriculum for all managers of volunteers. The revised P.E.P. model provides an easy-to-grasp (and remember!) overall conceptual framework for volunteer administration (i.e., "Personal Preparation," "Volunteer Engagement," and "Program Perpetuation") even for a relatively short tenured manager of volunteers to comprehend as s/he considers the fundamental aspects of the volunteer administration

profession. Secondly, the P.E.P. model's more narrow focus upon only seven domain topic areas allows individual managers of volunteers of any tenure to reflect upon and self-assess their current levels of professional competence in a manageable number of critical, focused aspects of our profession. Ultimately, the 62 individual and unique specific competencies that comprise the seven domain topic areas provides for an extremely focused and intense personal assessment of the core knowledge, skills and attitudes that are fundamental to the effective management of volunteers and administration of volunteer programs.

While this study investigated perceptions of AVA members, further research is needed to explore the components identified in this study in greater depth with paid and volunteer managers of volunteers working in specific targeted areas of service (e.g., health services, human services, youth programs) as well as focused contexts (e.g., other nations, identifiable ethnic groups, etc.). Such research would strengthen the P.E.P. model's content and construct validities and link the international profession of volunteer administration to its implementation in specific contexts of volunteer programs delivered by grassroots volunteers. According to Jedlicka (1990), "We as individual citizens operating in [international] development groups and organizations will largely have to create the pathway to a new world on our own... To make that change ourselves, we will need a newly educated citizenry that understands its place in global society and will do its duty in helping others" (p. 169).

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TABLE 1

A Summary of Competencies Suggested by Selected Published Volunteer Management Models

Boyce (1971)	Wilson (1976)	Navarre (1989)	Brudney (1990)	Penrod (1991)	Fisher & Cole (1993)	Stepputat (1995)	Ellis (1996)	Culp et al. (1998)
			Importance of volunteer management		Professionalism	Education		
Identification Selection	Establishing positive organiza- tional climate Volunteer job descriptions Volunteer motivation, recruitment, interviewing & placement	Volunteer job descriptions Recruiting Screening	Designing & orga- nizing programs Attracting & retain- ing able volunteers	Locating	Developing volunteer roles Establishing organi- zational climate Recruiting	Recruitment Screening Placement	Planning Staffing	Generating
Orientation Training		Orienting Training		Orienting	Training & development	Orientation & training	Legal issues	Educating
Recognition						Recognition		
Utilization	Planning Communications	Supervising	Planning & manag- ing volunteer pro- grams	Operating	Supervising	Supervision Record keeping	Volunteer/ employ- ee relationships Teamwork Legal Issues	Mobilizing
			Evaluating cost- effectiveness				Budgeting & allo- cating resources	
Evaluation	Evaluating	Evaluating	Improving service quality & impact Encouraging volun- teer involvement	Perpetuating	Evaluating	Evaluation Retention Advocacy	Evaluation of impact The dollar value of volunteers	Sustaining

TABLE 2

Rotated Component Matrix of Selected Volunteer Management Competencies

Item	Component Loadings							Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Factor 1: Volunteer Recruitment and Selection	.554							.486
Assess needed skills and abilities for specific volunteer positions	.541							.414
Assess organizational climate for readiness of new volunteers	.541							.446
Identify indicators of a successful program	.490							.434
Assess skills/interests of potential volunteers for other positions	.487							.438
Analyze data collected from the evaluation process for volunteers	.480							.386
Conduct targeted recruitment of volunteers	.478							.474
Reassign volunteers when they are unsuccessful in current positions	.476							.444
Communicate the results of the evaluation with stakeholders	.476							.346
Promote diversity in volunteer recruitment	.475							.508
Match potential volunteers with positions based on skills, abilities, & interests	.460							.397
Assess organizational needs for volunteers	.435							.411
Develop selection process consistent with position responsibilities	.429							.526
Develop a comprehensive evaluation process	.428							.294
Include other stakeholders in the volunteer selection process	.420							.256
Develop individualized plans of action with volunteers	.412							.382
Utilize principles of adult education in training volunteers	.408							.364
Design recruiting strategies with boards & administrators	.407							.334
Factor 2: Volunteer Administrator Professional Development		.679						.534
Participate in national professional organizations		.629						.501
Read newsletters, list-serves, & professional journals		.617						.545
Pursue sources of professional development		.599						.466
Seek out educational opportunities to enhance professional skills		.563						.488
Assess professional knowledge, skills, and abilities		.557						.371
Participate in local professional organization		.478						.406
Communicate professional development needs to supervisors		.467						.320
Attend professional conferences related to volunteer management		.457						.408
Develop a filing system to manage paperwork		.448						.332
Develop a personal philosophy of volunteer management		.427						.444
Calculate the cost-effectiveness of the volunteer program		.426						.354
Develop personal philosophy of volunteer involvement		.415						.340
Balance personal and professional responsibilities		.409						.441
Regularly update stakeholders on the results of evaluations		.402						.329
Manage personal stress resulting from professional responsibilities		.402						.300
Develop system for processing paperwork								
Factor 3: Volunteer Orientation and Training			.627					.484
Design training specific to volunteer responsibilities			.613					.479
Communicate orientation & training requirements to volunteers			.580					.444
Conduct ongoing training for volunteers			.569					.514
Identify teaching materials for volunteer training			.557					.506
Document volunteer training completed			.555					.556
Develop ongoing training for volunteers			.534					.477
Assess & manage risks associated with volunteer positions			.525					.470
Identify objectives for orientation & training			.520					.418
Design orientation program			.472					.438
Conduct performance evaluation of volunteers			.466					.299
Conduct organizational orientation for all new volunteers			.453					.515
Evaluate training/orientation program			.423					.394
Reject potential volunteers not meeting minimum standards/ qualifications			.421					.362
Develop policies to manage volunteer risks			.416					.406
Meet legal obligations related to volunteer selection			.414					.393
Conduct individual evaluations of volunteer performance								

Table 2

Rotated Component Matrix of Selected Volunteer Management Competencies (cont.)

Item	Component Loadings							Communa- lity
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Factor 4: Volunteer Program Advocacy				.575				.536
Promote leadership opportunities to potential volunteers				.559				.503
Provide additional leadership opportunities for volunteers				.539				.351
Engage volunteers to teach components of the orientation & training process				.514				.466
Develop ongoing training needs assessment for paid staff				.480				.423
Train staff to select volunteers using acceptable procedures				.447				.459
Identify future uses of volunteer program evaluation results				.443				.404
Conduct performance evaluation for those assigned to supervise volunteers				.422				.442
Identify leadership team for the volunteer program				.421				.364
Develop ongoing training needs assessment for volunteers				.420				.474
Educate others on how to evaluate components of the volunteer program				.413				.436
Conduct focus groups to identify program needs				.405				.446
Share progress towards goals with current volunteers				.405				.358
Represent volunteer interests in program development								
Factor 5: Volunteer Program Maintenance					.745			.629
Resolve conflicts between volunteers & paid staff					.701			.634
Support paid staff when working with volunteers					.686			.598
Support paid staff as they work with volunteers					.635			.513
Resolve conflicts between volunteers and paid staff					.610			.441
Recognize paid staff for participating & supporting the volunteer program					.608			.553
Educate new paid staff on volunteer management					.591			.545
Train & educate current staff to work with volunteers					.486			.470
Involve paid staff in the recognition of volunteers								
Factor 6: Volunteer Recognition						.645		.544
Identify volunteers who should be recognized						.615		.431
Plan and implement formal volunteer recognition						.549		.459
Implement ongoing recognition of volunteers						.530		.444
Determine how volunteers will be recognized						.520		.305
Keep records of those recognized						.517		.418
Support volunteers during challenging situations						.485		.402
Offer a wide range of opportunities for potential volunteers						.453		.411
Offer alternative opportunities to volunteers other than what they apply for						.401		.404
Resolve conflicts between volunteers								
Factor 7: Volunteer Program Resource Development							.760	.640
Identify fundraising needs							.745	.634
Develop fundraising plans							.713	.618
Solicit funds from prospective supporters							.556	.426
Build positive relationships with donors							.516	.427
Establish marketing plan for volunteer recruitment							.471	.425
Develop marketing tools for volunteer recruitment							.459	.326
Utilize a variety of media to recruit volunteers							.430	.376
Implement an ongoing recruitment plan							.424	.273
Research market for potential volunteers								
Eigenvalues	9.6	9.2	8.9	7.4	7.3	6.5	6.0	
% Trace	17.6	16.8	16.1	13.5	13.2	11.9	10.9	

TABLE 3

A Comparison of the Volunteer Management Competencies Identified in this Research with Selected Previously Published Volunteer Management Models

Safrit & Schmiesing (2005)	Boyce (1971)	Wilson (1976)	Navarre (1989)	Brudney (1990)	Penrod (1991)	Fisher & Cole (1993)	Stepputat (1995)	Ellis (1996)	Culp et al. (1998)
Professional development				Importance of volunteer management		Professionalism	Education		
Volunteer recruitment & selection	Identification Selection	Establishing positive organizational climate Volunteer job descriptions Volunteer motivation, recruitment, interviewing & placement	Volunteer job descriptions Recruiting Screening	Designing & organizing programs Attracting & retaining able volunteers	Locating	Developing volunteer roles Establishing organizational climate Recruiting	Recruitment Screening Placement	Planning Staffing	Generating
Volunteer orientation & training	Orientation Training		Orienting Training		Orienting	Training & development	Orientation & training	Legal issues	Educating
Volunteer Recognition	Recognition						Recognition		
Program maintenance	Utilization	Planning Communications	Supervising	Planning & managing volunteer programs	Operating	Supervising	Supervision Record keeping	Volunteer/ employee relationships Teamwork Legal Issues	Mobilizing
Resource development				Evaluating cost-effectiveness				Budgeting & allocating resources	
Program advocacy	Evaluation	Evaluating	Evaluating	Improving service quality & impact Encouraging volunteer involvement	Perpetuating	Evaluating	Evaluation Retention Advocacy	Evaluation of impact The dollar value of volunteers	Sustaining

TABLE 4**The P.E.P. (Preparation, Engagement, and Perpetuation)
model for contemporary volunteer administration**

Professional Domain	Domain Topic Area(s)	Domain Topic Area Competencies
(Personal) Preparation	Professional Development	Self-assess professional knowledge, skills, and abilities; Communicate professional development needs to supervisors; Participate in local & national professional organizations & conferences; Read newsletters, list-serves, & professional journals; Seek out formal educational opportunities to enhance professional skills; Develop a personal philosophy of volunteer management & involvement; Calculate the cost-effectiveness of volunteer programs; Balance personal and professional responsibilities; Manage personal stress resulting from professional responsibilities; Develop system for processing paperwork & maintaining files; Regularly update stakeholders on the results of evaluations
(Volunteer) Engagement	Volunteer Recruitment and Selection	Assess organizational climate for readiness of new volunteers; Assess organizational needs for volunteers; Assess needed skills and abilities for specific volunteer positions; Develop selection process consistent with position responsibilities; Conduct targeted recruitment of volunteers; Match potential volunteers with positions based on skills, abilities, & interests; Assess skills/interests of potential volunteers for other positions; Reassign volunteers when they are unsuccessful in current positions; Promote diversity in volunteer recruitment; Include other stakeholders in the volunteer selection process; Design recruiting strategies with boards & administrators; Evaluate selection process against best practices
	Volunteer Orientation and Training	Identify objectives for orientation & training; Communicate orientation & training requirements to volunteers; Design & conduct ongoing orientation & training for volunteers; Design training specific to volunteer responsibilities; Identify teaching materials for volunteer training; Document volunteer training completed; Assess & manage risks associated with volunteer positions; Evaluate training/orientation program; Develop policies to manage volunteer risks
	Volunteer Recognition	Implement ongoing recognition of volunteers; Identify volunteers who should be recognized; Determine how volunteers will be recognized; Plan and implement formal volunteer recognition; Keep records of those recognized
	Program Maintenance	Resolve conflicts between volunteers & paid staff; Support paid staff when working with volunteers; Train & educate current staff to work with volunteers; Educate new paid staff on volunteer management; Recognize paid staff for participating & supporting the volunteer program; Involve paid staff in the recognition of volunteers
(Program) Perpetuation	Resource Development	Identify fundraising needs; Develop fundraising plans; Solicit funds from prospective supporters; Build positive relationships with donors; Research market for potential volunteers; Establish marketing plan & tools for volunteer recruitment; Utilize a variety of media to recruit volunteers; Implement an ongoing recruitment plan
	Program Advocacy	Identify a leadership team for the volunteer program; Conduct focus groups to identify program needs; Represent volunteer interest in program development; Promote & provide additional leadership opportunities to potential volunteers; Engage volunteers to teach components of the orientation & training process; Develop ongoing training needs assessment for paid staff; Train staff to select volunteers using acceptable procedures; Identify future uses of volunteer program evaluation results; Conduct performance evaluation for those assigned to supervise volunteers; Develop ongoing training needs assessment for volunteers; Educate others on how to evaluate components of the volunteer program; Share progress towards goals with current volunteers