

## A Suggested Model for Contemporary Volunteer Management: Qualitative Research Bridging the Professional Literature with Best Practices

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Numerous volunteer management models have been suggested to guide volunteer administrators' daily professional practices. The earliest published models were based upon the actual day-to-day practices necessary to establish and sustain a volunteer program. Boyce's (1971) I.S.O.T.U.R.E. approach to volunteer leadership development suggested seven practices inherent in effective volunteer leadership and management: volunteer identification, selection, orientation, training, utilization, recognition and evaluation. Wilson's (1976) volunteer management model focused upon the respective roles of a salaried volunteer manager, including establishing a positive organizational climate for volunteerism; planning and evaluating volunteer programs; developing volunteer job descriptions; communications; volunteer motivation, recruitment, interviewing and placement; and communications. Navarre (1989) addressed management issues related to grassroots volunteerism, including writing volunteer job descriptions and motivating, recruiting, interviewing, orienting, training, supervising, and evaluating volunteers. MacKenzie and Moore (1993) identified fundamental principles and practices that they

translated into pragmatic worksheets, while Ellis (1996) proposed a professional approach to volunteer management, targeting agencies that utilized a volunteer corps. Stepputat (1995) identified ten overarching categories necessary for successful volunteer management: recruitment; screening; orientation and training; placement; supervision and evaluation; recognition; retention; record keeping; evaluation; and advocacy and education. Brudney (1990) addressed steps for public agencies to use in mobilizing volunteers for public service, and Safrit et al. (1994) used Boyce's (1971) conceptual model as the basis for an applied Ohio 4-H Youth Development volunteer management curriculum called B.L.A.S.T.: Building Leadership and Skills Together.

Other published volunteer management models have been based largely upon an author's conceptual ideas regarding volunteer management. Kwarteng, Smith and Miller (1988) identified eight conceptual components to volunteer administration within Cooperative Extension: planning programs; clarifying tasks; and the recruitment, orientation, training, support, maintenance, recognition and evaluation of actual volunteers. Pen-

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rod's (1991) L.O.O.P. model suggested that volunteer management involved locating and orientating volunteers, operating volunteer programs, and perpetuating volunteer involvement. Culp et al.'s G.E.M.S. model (1998) reorganized the earlier works by Penrod and Kwarteng et al. by suggesting four main concepts in volunteer management: generating volunteer opportunities and prospective volunteers, educating volunteers, mobilizing volunteers, and sustaining volunteer efforts.

Harshfield (1995) investigated the perceived importance of selected volunteer management components in western U.S. schools, while King and Safrit (1998) did likewise for Ohio 4-H Youth Development agents. However, no holistic research has been conducted that builds upon both published volunteer management literature and actual contemporary best practices in managing volunteers. Valid and reliable data resulting from rigorous applied research is needed in order to develop a contemporary model of volunteer management that is not restricted to a specific volunteer organization or program. However, before any quantitative research may be conducted investigating such a holistic volunteer management model, the authors believed that both the published professional literature on volunteer management and contemporary best practices in managing volunteers needed to be investigated in a scientifically objective, yet rigorous method.

## PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify components of volunteer management based upon both published literature and contemporary best practices. The researchers developed a qualitative methodology utilizing both deductive content analysis as well as inductive thematic development (Thomas, 2003.) According to Miles and Huberman (1994), "Qualitative researchers usually work with *small* [authors' italics] samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth" (p. 27.) Kuzel (1992) and Morse (1989) suggested that qualitative samples tend to be purposive (i.e., seeking out

specific individuals or types of individuals due to their direct connection or expertise with the focus of the research) rather than random as in broader, quantitative research. Consequently, the researchers utilized practitioner and action research concepts suggested by Jarvis (1999) as well as documented histories of national consulting, program management and professional leadership in volunteer administration to identify eight current managers of volunteers ("practitioners") and 11 current national/international consultants ("experts") to participate in the study. Seven individuals from each group agreed to participate.

The researchers asked the seven practitioners to reflect upon their day-to-day successful practices in managing volunteers and, based upon their reflections and real-life contemporary experiences, to identify effective components of contemporary volunteer management. Similarly, the researchers asked the seven experts to read two or three entire documents of published literature on volunteer management, to reflect upon their readings, and (based upon their reflections and the literature read) to also identify effective components. The researchers developed a theme identification work sheet to facilitate participants' reflections in identifying resulting components of volunteer management and submission of them to the researchers in short words and phrases.

The researchers analyzed the data initially by using constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They read and reviewed the volunteer management components identified by both the practitioners and experts, and collapsed the initial data into reoccurring themes using a modified story boarding technique (Tesch, 1990.) The researchers employed triangulation (Cohen & Mannion, 1985) with two separate groups of volunteer administrators and one group of Ohio State University faculty familiar with volunteerism and qualitative research, in order to strengthen the integrity of the collapsed themes identified, resulting in valid volunteer management components and subcomponents.

## FINDINGS

Based upon the data from the consultant experts, three overarching categories of volunteer management encompassing nine components (and subcomponents where appropriate) were identified (Table 1). Category I: Personal Preparation, including Personal and Professional Development, Serving as an Internal Consultant, and Program Planning; Category II: Volunteer Engagement, including Recruitment, Selection, Orientation and Training, and Coaching and Supervision; and Category III: Program Perpetuation, including Recognition and Program Evaluation, Impact and Accountability.

Three overarching categories encompassing eight components of volunteer management (and subcomponents where appropriate), were identified based upon the data submitted by the volunteer management practitioners (Table 2). Category I: Personal Preparation, including Personal and Professional Development, Serving as an Internal Consultant, and Program Planning; Category II: Volunteer Engagement, including Recruitment, Selection, and Orientation and Training; and Category III: Program Perpetuation, including Recognition, and Program Evaluation, Impact and Accountability.

No further collapsing or consolidating of the two respective theme groups was attempted since the purpose of the study was to explore conceptual components of contemporary volunteer management based upon published literature and contemporary best practices, rather than to derive an ultimate conceptual model.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The close similarity of separate resulting themes from consultants and administrators is noteworthy and warrants discussion. It is interesting that the consultants', not the practitioners', responses resulted in the inclusion of "coaching and supervision" as a component of volunteer management. In all correspondence and instructions, both the practitioners and experts were asked to identify specific components of volunteer *management*; however, the authors would argue that the resulting data more accurately

embody components of (more holistic) volunteer *administration*. The researchers recognize the potential for criticism that this observation borders on a discussion of semantics; however, we would suggest that this finding may be a result of the maturity of the profession.

The researchers suggest that the study findings are congruent with the three most widely used and/or contemporary models of volunteer management. The earliest literature in volunteer management, Boyce's (1971) ISOTURE model, suggested that volunteer leader development can be considered as seven conceptual categories: identification, selection, orientation, training, utilization, recognition, and evaluation. These results expand upon the identification ("Program Planning") and evaluation ("Program Evaluation, Impact and Accountability") components while adding two new aspects: "Personal and Professional Development" and serving as an "Internal Consultant."

The findings concur most closely with the five holistic professional competency domains suggested by the Association for Volunteer Administration's Certification Technical Advisory Council (CTAC) in October of 1999. They included: (a) Program Design, Delivery, and Administration (similar to the authors' proposed Program Planning); (b) Volunteer Resource Development and Management (similar to the authors' proposed Recruitment, Selection, Orientation and Training, and Recognition); (c) Program Performance Monitoring and Assessment (similar to the proposed Program Evaluation, Impact, and Accountability); (d) Individual, Group and Organizational Development (similar to the proposed Serving as an Internal Consultant and Coaching and Supervision); and finally (e) Standards of Professional Practice (similar to the authors' proposed Personal and Professional Development.)

Previous models of volunteer management (with the possible exception of Fisher & Cole, 1993), have not adequately addressed the personal and professional growth of the individual volunteer manager, this being further supported by the Points of Light Foundation (Allen, 1999):

... as we have discussed before [regarding volunteer management], volunteer coordinators were, in a way, a missing element. This is not to say that volunteer coordinators are not important—indeed, in an earlier piece we argued that the research leads to a more important role of internal consultant and change agent for volunteer coordinators. Rather, it underscores that it is not the mere presence or absence of a staff position with that title that makes the difference. It is the way the person in the position thinks, what he or she does and what the system is prepared to allow him or her to do—those are the critical differences between the “more effective” and “less effective” organizations. (p. 17)

The respective components of volunteer management identified in this qualitative research could serve easily as a conceptual foundation for subsequent and more pervasive quantitative research investigating the importance and competence of selected volunteer management competencies as perceived by contemporary volunteer administrators.

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**TABLE 1**

**Components of contemporary volunteer management as identified by consultant experts in volunteer administration.**

**(Personal) Preparation**

Personal & Professional Development	Participating in professional development opportunities
Internal Consultant	Understanding the organization; Managing risks; Staffing a volunteer program; Developing volunteer boards; Budgeting; Educating and working with colleagues; Creating an effective and positive climate for volunteers; Creating and nurturing a supportive work environment; Identifying supervisors of volunteers; Assessing the organization's readiness for volunteer program development
Program Planning	Understanding volunteers today; Assessing needs; Developing volunteer program standards; Planning/designing volunteer programs; Designing volunteer positions; Designing volunteer program tasks

**(Volunteer) Engagement**

Recruitment	Marketing volunteerism; Recruiting potential volunteers; Screening volunteer applicants
Selection	Interviewing volunteer applicants; Screening volunteer applicants; Placing volunteer applicants into appropriate assignments
Orientation & Training	Orienting volunteers; Supervising volunteers; Managing volunteers; Training volunteers
Coaching & Supervision	Coaching volunteers; Supervising volunteers; Managing volunteers

**(Program) Perpetuation**

Recognition	Recognizing volunteers; Rewarding volunteers
Evaluation, Impact, & Accountability	Evaluating individual volunteers; Evaluating volunteer program services; Evaluating impacts of overall volunteer program; Keeping records; Reporting accomplishments; Retaining/dismissing volunteers based upon evaluations

**TABLE 2.**  
**Components of contemporary volunteer management as identified  
 by volunteer management practitioners.**

**(Personal) Preparation**

Personal & Professional Development	Networking; Advocating for volunteerism and volunteer administration; Managing stress; Participating in professional development;
Internal Consultant	Maintaining filing system; Solving problems; Managing finances; Using technology; Raising funds; Managing conflicts; Training professional staff; Identifying budget needs; Acting as an internal consultant; Preparing professional staff to work with volunteers; Developing volunteer opportunities; Establishing leadership roles
Program Planning	Assessing needs; Planning for volunteer involvement; Developing volunteer programs to address organizational mission; Organizing volunteer programs; Designing volunteer positions

**(Volunteer) Engagement**

Recruitment	Recruiting potential volunteers; Promoting volunteer opportunities
Selection	Matching volunteers to appropriate roles; Screening volunteer applicants; Interviewing volunteer applicants
Orientation & Training	Orienting volunteers; Training volunteers; Supporting and supervising volunteers; Communicating with volunteers

**(Program) Perpetuation**

Recognition	Recognizing volunteers; Organizing informal volunteer recognition; Establishing award process; Rewarding volunteers; Organizing a formal volunteer recognition function
Evaluation, Impact, and Accountability	Monitoring ongoing volunteer program; Measuring program impacts; Reporting program impacts; Evaluating volunteers' effectiveness; Evaluating overall volunteer program; Collecting data; Retaining/releasing volunteers