



# **PROPOSAL TO The 2011 National Volunteer Assembly**

**Presented by:  
the Volunteer Structure Committee  
March 4, 2011**

## **CORE TEAM MEMBERS:**

- Audrey Pinchock - Michigan Area Team
- Bill Callahan - One World Area Team
- Suzanne Reiss - MissTennKy Area Team

## **OTHERS CONSULTED:**

- AFS Staff: Jorge Castro, Joanne Yokoyama, Mary Jo Brock, Damayonti Rowe, Keri Dooley, Kerry McCollum, Rich Dollery, Paula Schmacher, Vicki Toepper, Paula McGrath, Scott Hume, Julie Baker, Jennifer Peck
- Volunteers: Dave Schrader, Debra Tholen, Esra Kucukciftci, Becky Shawver
- The National Council - Esra Kucukciftci served as a NC member also on the Volunteer Structure Committee
- Feedback was received from individual volunteers: Al Russell, Jane Howard, Deb Dahlberg, and Ted Thomas and from the Support Advisory Group and the Volunteer Development Department.

## **PART 1: MOTION SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST**

### **MOTION**

The Volunteer Structure Committee moves that distinctions between area teams and unaffiliated chapters be eliminated and that the requirements for chartering a volunteer team be limited to the following criteria:

1. Be in good standing with Compliance Standards as established by the NVA in 2010 or as amended by future NVAs, or as amended by the National Council in response to changes in the U.S. Department of State regulations or AFS-USA policies and procedures.
2. Having an elected team chair (2 year term serving no more than 2 consecutive terms)
3. Having a team treasurer not from the same household as the chair
4. Having a defined geography based on zip codes
5. Adhering to financial guidelines of AFS-USA
6. Making and keeping to the best of its ability commitments for hosting and sending numbers
7. A team may have affiliated chapters. If it does, it is responsible for ensuring that they are chartered.

Upon passage of this proposal, the moratorium on teams breaking into smaller teams will be lifted subject to the following:

If a team, in existence when this proposal is passed, desires to break into multiple smaller teams, it may petition the National Council for permission to do so by providing the National Council with a detailed justification for the break up and with a plan agreed upon by 3/4 of the team's registered volunteers to maintain the same total hosting and sending commitment levels.

### **ACTION DESIRED FROM NATIONAL VOLUNTEER ASSEMBLY**

The Volunteer Structure Committee requests the National Volunteer Assembly to approve the motion with implementation by the chartering cycle to be started in November 2011 for 2012 chartering.

### **BACKGROUND OF MOTION**

In 2008, AFS began a formal chartering process for volunteer teams. That process envisioned three types of team structures (Affiliated Chapters, Unaffiliated Chapters, and Area Teams) with different structural requirements. AFS proposed a two-year transition into the new volunteer structure with all volunteer teams expected to meet the structural requirements by 12/31/10 or be denied a charter. To be denied a charter would mean that a group was not an AFS team

and was not authorized to host students, to send students, or to raise money in the name of AFS.

A reconstituted Volunteer Structure Committee met in November 2010 to review the status of volunteer teams across the country with respect to the chartering requirements established in 2008. The results were discouraging. 43 of 59 area teams did not meet all the structural requirements. 8 of 37 unaffiliated chapters did not meet all the structural requirements. The vast majority of these 51 teams were missing only one or two or three of the requirements, but they were still missing requirements after two years of preparation.

As AFS moved toward full chartering of volunteer teams, it became clearer that chartering inevitably is about "inclusion in" or "exclusion from" AFS. More than half of the area teams not meeting all requirements did not have an Area Team Chair Elect. The Volunteer Structure Committee raised this question, "Do we think that an area team should be denied a charter simply because it does not have an AT Team Chair Elect? The answer was a clear "no." "Do we think that an area team should be denied a charter simply because it has no chapters?" No. "Do we think that an area team should be changed to an Unaffiliated Chapter simply because it has only 38 participants?" No. That led to the next question, "what are the things that should lead AFS to deny a charter to a volunteer group?" Ultimately, the Volunteer Structure Committee thinks that the requirements for a team charter should be limited to those things which are essential to AFS.

We see these essentials as:

1. Full compliance with DoS, CSIET, AFS-USA, and AFS-International Standards, including volunteer registration, volunteer training, support contacts, host family orientation, and student orientation requirements.
2. Full compliance with AFS Accounting Practices.
3. Clear communication paths from staff to volunteers.

The Volunteer Structural Committee recognized that for the most part these essentials are not about structure, but are about performance. We believe structural requirements should be minimal and performance requirements should be stressed.

Many of the current team structure requirements are things that the Volunteer Structure Committee considers "best practices." They are things that should be encouraged, that support the AFS mission, and that make AFS stronger. But we recognize that good and acceptable AFS activity can occur in a given community without all of these requirements being met and we do not want a stubborn dedication to good, but non-essential best practices to interfere with the creation or continuation of AFS activity in a given community.

**WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST ADVANTAGES TO THE PROPOSED MOTION? WHY SHOULD THE NVA APPROVE THIS MOTION? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC – ADVANTAGES TO THE NATIONAL**

**ORGANIZATION, TO AREA TEAMS AND LOCAL CHAPTERS, AND TO INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED.**

- If we were to follow the current volunteer structural rules as written, as of 12/31/11 we would have decertified 43 of 59 area teams and 8 of 37 Unaffiliated Chapters for not meeting structural requirements that don't matter. This proposal avoids that.
- The structure will be more flexible. A team can move from 38 participants to 42 participants or from 42 participants to 38 participants without worrying about changes in their chartering requirements. A team can make its own decisions about whether to have chapters or not have chapters. It will sharply reduce the time spent verifying that team chartering requirements are met.
- The time saved can be focused on meeting compliance requirements and working for growth.

**WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST DISADVANTAGES TO THE PROPOSED MOTION? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC – DISADVANTAGES TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO AREA TEAMS AND LOCAL CHAPTERS, AND TO INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED.**

- Eliminating the minimum participant number to be an area team could result in teams dropping their participant numbers. We believe that in the long term, participant numbers depend not on artificial minimums, but on the strength and enthusiasm of the volunteer base.

**WHAT ARE THE TWO OR THREE BIGGEST CONCERNS THAT HAVE ARISEN REGARDING THE PROPOSED MOTION AND HOW IT MIGHT AFFECT AFS-USA? HOW COULD THOSE CONCERNS BE ADDRESSED/RESOLVED?**

- Concerns have been expressed by some that this was a minimal change from what already exists and that it was change for the sake of change. We disagree. The proposal eliminates unnecessary requirements and avoids decertifying teams that are functioning properly without meeting all the current structure rules.
- Concern that the proposal does not address applying corrective action to teams that are not compliant. We disagree. Criteria #1 at the beginning of the motion includes performance as an element of chartering. The purpose of the proposal is to avoid focusing energy on structural features that don't matter so we can focus on performance issues such as compliance with DoS requirements.
- Concern that the proposal provides no incentive for growth. We agree. We don't believe that structural requirements create growth, but we believe that they can drain energy from volunteers and inhibit growth. We want to stop doing that.

**WHAT ARE THE TWO OR THREE BIGGEST CONCERNS THAT HAVE ARISEN REGARDING THE PROPOSED MOTION AND HOW IT MIGHT AFFECT THE LOCAL AFS UNITS AND/OR INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS? HOW COULD THOSE CONCERNS BE ADDRESSED/RESOLVED?**

- Concern that without specific position requirements such as hosting coordinator, some volunteers might try to take on too much or that some teams will have no one responsible for critical areas. We believe that AFS should focus on constant training of

volunteers about best practices without mandating those best practices. We trust volunteers to take best practices that fit their situation and use them profitably.

**COST IMPLICATIONS OF IMPLEMENTING THE MOTION:**

- The expenses already expended by IT and other staff to create the Unaffiliated Chapter category would be wasted. There will be some cost associated with re-casting area teams and unaffiliated chapters as one entity, but it should be minimal.
- The chartering process to begin in the Fall should be simpler.

**PART 2: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND TIMELINE**

Action	Timeframe for Completion
• Approval of the Proposal by the NVA	April 2011
• Communication to volunteers and staff	May 2011
• Communication to IT about details and adding to the GL Priority call	May 2011
• Chartering process and checklists must be changed to recognize the changed structural requirements	November 2011

**PART 3: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

The following background papers are incorporated as a part of this proposal:

1. Current volunteer structure
2. Evaluation of the volunteer structure - summary (current)
3. Evaluation of the Volunteer Structure – details (current)
4. Summary of staff and volunteer response to VS survey (October 2010)
5. Summary of VSC in person meeting and decisions (November 2010)
6. Summary of feedback to preliminary proposal (February 2011)

**PART 4: CONCLUSION**

We believe that structural requirements on volunteer teams are impediments to AFS activity. Some requirements are justified by valid AFS needs, but others just get in the way. The proposal eliminates many of the chartering requirements implemented in 2008 in favor of focusing on true needs such as compliance with DoS standards.