

AFS-USA National Volunteer Assembly Bylaws

AFS-USA Mission:

AFS-USA works toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools, and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

AFS-USA Core Volunteer Development Principles:

1. AFS-USA will be an organization which seeks, tracks, and maintains enduring relationships with all its supporters.
2. AFS-USA will be an organization of continuous learning.
3. AFS-USA will be an innovative volunteer organization.
4. AFS-USA will be a well-managed volunteer organization.

The National Volunteer Assembly of AFS-USA will endeavor to promote and continue the work and spirit, and to perpetuate the ideals of AFS Intercultural Programs (AFS).

The National Volunteer Assembly (NVA) is the decision making body for volunteer-based program operations and governance of AFS-USA. As a central leadership body for AFS-USA, the delegates to the National Volunteer Assembly are committed to and recognize their responsibility in making decisions from a national perspective and what is best for the health of AFS-USA and the AFS International Network. The National Volunteer Assembly annually brings together the volunteer leaders of the organization for two distinct purposes.

1. The Assembly's main role is to direct the organization toward pathways that contribute to the mission of AFS-USA, maintain the financial viability of the organization, and support our commitment to quality and promote growth.
2. The secondary role of the National Volunteer Assembly is to elect the AFS-USA National Council.

The National Volunteer Assembly delegates will work together in an environment of shared responsibility and accountability in the delivery and support of our mission, programs and core volunteer development principles. The policies and procedures of the National Volunteer Assembly will be in accord with AFS International and AFS-USA standards, policies and procedures, the United States Department of State regulations and the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) standards.

I. Overall Responsibilities of the National Volunteer Assembly

A. Organizational Planning and Oversight

1. Bring forth business challenges to the National Council.
2. Review and approve changes to the mission and core values of AFS-USA.
3. Be accountable for the overall quality of AFS-USA in relation to the programmatic goals including compliance audits.
4. Review and question decisions, acts and omissions of the National Council.

5. Educate peers about the financial realities of AFS-USA as a non-profit organization. Hold each other, teams, chapters, and individual volunteers accountable for financial stewardship.
6. Exemplify professionalism in every AFS interaction. Hold each other, teams, chapters, and individual volunteers accountable for volunteer stewardship.

B. Volunteer Organizational Structure

1. Review and approve the governance by-laws of the National Volunteer Assembly.
2. Review and approve changes to the volunteer organizational structure.
3. Individuals or teams of individuals may recommend changes to team geographic boundaries for approval by the National Council.
4. Individuals or teams of individuals may recommend changes to team status from active to inactive or retired for approval by the National Council.

C. Programs

1. Participate in the development or revision of hosting and sending processes.
2. In conjunction with staff, assist in the development of program operational guidelines and policies in compliance with AFS International, CSIET, and the US Department of State standards and regulations.
3. Give input on any possible improvements on travel arrangements in advance of program operations; expected costs, possible efficiencies or savings related to domestic participant travel and orientations.
4. Give input on major changes to hosting or sending programs (such as sponsored program growth, new programs, new program delivery options, new scholarship programs, etc.) including any changes to services offered as part of these programs.

D. Financial

1. Review and give feedback on the organization's annual financial statements.
2. Suggest procedural or policy changes to the National Council which would have a direct or indirect financial impact on the ability of teams and chapters to provide key program services (sending, hosting, support, and orientations).
3. Suggest changes to or new guidelines, policies or procedures regarding local fund-raising efforts.

E. Volunteer Communication

1. Ensure distribution of summaries of all National Volunteer Assembly meeting minutes to all stakeholders via appropriate means such as the AFS Wiki, the AFS-USA volunteer newsletter or other current means.
2. Work with staff on best methods of communicating with all stakeholders across the organization and work with staff to implement consistent volunteer communication plans.

II. National Volunteer Assembly Delegates & Attendees

There will be a minimum of 75 and a maximum of 125 voting delegates each year to the National Volunteer Assembly. The term of office for each delegate shall be for one year commencing on the first day of the National Volunteer Assembly and terminating on the day prior to the start of the next National Volunteer Assembly. The delegates will be categorized as associated or at-large delegates.

A. Associated Delegates

Associated delegates represent a team or teams. Delegates may represent said team(s) for up to three consecutive years. After the third consecutive assembly, a delegate must take a minimum one year hiatus prior to representing the same team(s) again.

The first associated delegate that should represent a team should be the team chair. In the event the chair cannot attend, an alternate representative should be elected by the team. When an associated delegate is representing a group of teams the registered volunteers in those teams will elect their delegate(s).

Criteria to be an associated delegate:

- Registered volunteer, aged 18 or over

B. At-Large Delegates

Delegates may also represent AFS-USA at-large during the National Volunteer Assembly. The National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee will coordinate the process of the selection of the NVA At-Large Delegates. The names of those selected will be forwarded to the National Council for approval. The number of at-large delegates in any given year will be determined by the National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee with approval by the National Council based on the total number of associated delegates attending the Assembly and the budget for the year's assembly. The National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee shall make every attempt to select at-large delegates that will add diversity to the greater volunteer assembly. Once a volunteer is an at-large delegate, he/she must take a minimum one year hiatus prior to re-applying to serve again as an at-large delegate.

Criteria to apply for an at-large delegate position:

- Registered volunteer, aged 18 or over
- Two references by registered volunteers

C. Assignment of Delegates to a Team

In December of each year, the National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee will assign the number of official voting delegates each team is eligible to send to the annual National Volunteer Assembly. The assignment of delegates will be based on the combined number of participants each team has sent and hosted for that calendar year divided by 40.

In certain instances, teams may receive a delegate (though they do not meet the 40 minimum participant total). The delegate list will be submitted to the National Council for review and approval prior to official communications to the teams.

Once delegate participation numbers are determined and announced, teams with representation have four weeks to confirm their attendees. All unused delegate spaces will then be made available to volunteer groups in AFS who are not already represented at the NVA. Acceptance of those candidates will be confirmed by the National Council based on their assessment. It is not required that all NVA delegate spaces be filled.

D. AFS-USA Staff

AFS-USA staff will be present at the National Volunteer Assembly as deemed appropriate by the National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee with the approval of the National Council.

Specific AFS-USA staff will be required to attend the National Volunteer Assembly:

- Partner Director of AFS-USA
- Senior Management Staff
- Representatives of the Volunteer Resources and Learning Staff

Staff members in attendance at the National Volunteer Assembly will serve as resources for information/questions. They will coordinate logistics for the assembly and facilitate discussion topics as needed.

Staff members will not have voting rights at the National Volunteer Assembly.

E. Other Attendees

The National Volunteer Assembly is open to all registered volunteers of AFS-USA. Volunteers who are not delegates may attend the assembly, comment on agenda items/motions, and participate in all activities at their own expense. Non-delegate volunteers at the assembly will be non-voting attendees.

Other invited guests may also attend the National Volunteer Assembly. These guests will be non-voting attendees. They may act as keynote speakers, presenters or overseers to the process.

The National Council representatives will attend the National Volunteer Assembly as non-voting attendees. Their role will be to facilitate the assembly.

The AFS-USA Board of Directors will send representatives to the National Volunteer Assembly to gather information on the vision of the volunteers; give feedback on the strategic direction of the organization; and be a resource to the delegates. Members of the Board of Directors will be non-voting attendees of the National Volunteer Assembly.

III. Delegate Responsibilities

- A. Be a registered volunteer with the organization.
- B. Attend the annual National Volunteer Assembly.
- C. Maintain a national leadership perspective for the benefit of the entire organization.
- D. Act in accordance with all National Volunteer Assembly bylaws. Actions taken in contradiction of National Volunteer Assembly bylaws may result in the immediate censure of a delegate by a majority vote of the National Council. A delegate may appeal the censure through the Volunteer Development Department's appeal process.
- E. Delegates will endeavor to represent the interests and desires of their constituent both at the assembly and throughout the year.
- F. Disseminate background papers and reports, solicit input, discuss and represent constituents.

IV. National Volunteer Assembly Leadership

The delegates of the National Volunteer Assembly will be responsible for electing the National Council of AFS-USA as the executive leadership body of the National Volunteer Assembly.

A. National Council

The National Council of AFS-USA shall be made up of nine elected members from the general volunteer body of AFS-USA. The National Council will operate in accordance with the policies and procedures set forth in the National Council guidelines.

The Chair of the National Council shall preside at all meetings of the National Volunteer Assembly. The Chair is an ex-officio member of all committees. The Chair has the authority to call special meetings to address acute concerns.

The National Council will act on behalf of the National Volunteer Assembly between meetings, and shall submit a report (meeting minutes) of all such actions to all registered volunteers within 14 days of the meeting or action through the AFS Wiki, the volunteer newsletter or other current communication forms.

The National Council supports the functions of the Assembly, prepares the work plan, and is responsible for ensuring that the National Volunteer Assembly fulfills its role and its duties.

For all regular meetings of the National Council, a notice and agenda for the meeting shall be sent to the National Volunteer Assembly delegates at least 7 days prior to the meeting. For all emergency meetings of the National Council, a notice and agenda for the meeting shall be sent to the NVA delegates.

B. Election Process of National Council

1. Each year at the National Volunteer Assembly, three National Council representatives will be open for election based on the guidelines of the National Council. Each representative will be elected by the voting delegates of the National Volunteer Assembly.
2. All National Council positions will be at-large positions.
3. Each candidate will participate in a question/answer session before the entire congregation of the National Volunteer Assembly prior to the election.
4. Voting will be done through secret written ballot.
5. Each delegate will be permitted to vote for up to three candidates from the official ballot.
6. Elections of the National Council representatives will be completed at the mid-point of the National Volunteer Assembly.
7. Ballots will be tallied by the Nominating Committee of the National Council. If a nominating committee member is up for election, he/she may not be involved in the counting of ballots.
8. Any vacancy on the National Council shall be filled by appointment of the National Council based upon NVA election results.

V. Meetings.

- A. The National Volunteer Assembly will meet each year in the spring. The exact date and location will be determined by October 1 of the previous year by the National Council and senior staff.
- B. The National Volunteer Assembly may only be cancelled by a majority vote of the current year's delegates at least 90 days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- C. In addition to scheduled meetings, the National Council may call for special meetings in rare instances where major changes in the organization's direction, policy or mission are called into question. Special meetings may take place via teleconference or video conference. Such meetings may act on all matters before the Assembly, except for the revision of these bylaws.
- D. In order to convene a meeting, two-thirds of the voting delegates are required for a quorum.
- E. Agenda items (of motions for the floor) are due for submission to the National Council's NVA Planning Committee Chair by January 15th of each year for the upcoming Assembly. (See Section VI for motion submission process).
- F. Agenda and background papers will be distributed 30 days prior to the Assembly.
- G. Additional agenda items may be added at the discretion of the National Council.
- H. The Chair or Vice-Chair of the National Council will preside over the National Volunteer Assembly.
- I. Meeting minutes for the National Assembly will be taken by the National Council Secretary with assistance from the Volunteer Development staff if needed.
- J. Voting on action items will be by hand count or voice vote unless a motion for a written ballot is made and approved.

VI. Action Item Submission Process

- A. 90 days prior to a National Volunteer Assembly meeting of each year, individuals, chapters, teams, AFS-USA staff; or National Council representatives may bring forth an action item for the National Volunteer Assembly by submitting a proposal using the standard format provided by the Nominations and Governance Committee. The proposal must include as a minimum the following information:
 1. Name of Sponsor
 2. Name of at least three additional supporters, be they individual or team
 3. Proposal brief
 4. Pros and cons to the proposal
 5. Cost implications of implementing the proposal to the best of the knowledge of the sponsors
- B. A screening committee made up of delegates (number to be determined each year by the National Council based on the number of submissions) from the previous year's assembly and a member of the National Council's nominating committee will review and screen all proposals submitted.
- C. Proposals will be screened using the following criteria: strategic impacts to the organization, appropriateness of proposal, and benefit to the greater good of the organization.
- D. The screening committee will present their recommendations of action items to be presented at the National Volunteer Assembly to the National Council by the first National Council in-person meeting of the year for review and approval.
- E. Background papers for the action item will be created as needed and included in the background materials sent to the delegates 30 days prior to the Assembly.
- F. Action item sponsors will be expected to take an active role in the creation of all background materials and discussions at the Assembly.
- G. Agenda items requiring a decision will be voted on with the results being recorded in the minutes. Approval of an action item requires a majority of the total voting delegates of the National Volunteer Assembly quorum.

VII. Committees

- A. Standing Committees
The National Volunteer Assembly may establish standing committees as deemed appropriate. These committees shall be comprised of Assembly delegates, National Council representatives and other volunteers and staff, as necessary.

There shall be the following standing committee: The Diversity Committee
The Diversity Committee is charged with the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of diversity initiatives across the organization.

VIII. Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern this organization in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws.

IX. Amendment of Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended by any National Volunteer Assembly meeting by a two-thirds vote of the delegates provided that the proposed amendment has been submitted to the National Council at least 90 days prior to the meeting and to all National Volunteer Assembly delegates at least 30 days prior to the meeting.

Procedural Addendum

In the event that the National Volunteer Assembly is held as a virtual event, wording in the above such as “will meet”, “will attend”, etc. will be interpreted appropriately. In addition, wording such as “voice vote”, etc. will be accomplished using technology appropriate to the method of such virtual event.

History of Changes

April 2009 – Originally adopted at the first NVA

April 2010 – Diversity Committee added

April 2011 – As a result of the adoption of a proposal to replace the terms “Area Team” and “Unaffiliated Chapter” with the term “Team”, the bylaws were implicitly also modified

January 2012 – Due to staff reorganization, “Volunteer Development Department” was replaced by “Volunteer Resources and Learning Department”

January 2012 – Procedural Addendum added

Certified a true and correct copy of the National Volunteer Assembly Bylaws of AFS-USA, Inc.



National Council Chair, AFS-USA

January 23, 2012

Date