

AFS USA Volunteer Structure Background, Changes and New Structure

The information below has been pulled together from a series of communications which went out to volunteers during 2008 in regards changes to the AFS USA volunteer structure. If your main interest is in understanding the concrete changes which have occurred over the past year, Part II contains this information. I have included additional information and more detail for those of you who are interested in Parts I&III.

- **Part I** contains some backbground for your information and in particular the initial broad decisions which were made early in 2008 by the Organizational Study Planning and Oversight Committee (The POC). These recommendations created the foundation for the specific structural changes to come.
- **Part II** contains highlights of the changes envisioned for the volunteer structure which were approved by the National Council in September 2008.
- **Part III** is a full description of the volunteer structure today as it appears on the AFS Wiki for all volunteers.

Part I – Background on the Planning and Oversight Committee Meeting 2008

Since the Organizational Study began in March 2007, we have gathered a tremendous amount of data, research, and input on our organizational structure, all of which have been posted and communicated on AFS Online and in the AFS-USA Inbox. These inputs include:

- **High level process review**

Completed a high level review of the core processes in AFS-USA which included; hosting, sending, volunteer development, sponsored programs, HR/training, fundraising, and business development

- **External research**

Surveyed and interviewed other volunteer based non-profit organizations based on criteria developed by volunteers and staff in AFS-USA, researched volunteer trends in the U.S and developed a profile of the 21st century volunteer. This was accomplished with assistance from the Rutgers University MBA Program

- **Volunteer and Staff Structure Review**

Reviewed and sought input on our current volunteer and staff structure in AFS-USA. Input and feedback gathered through online survey and in-person focus group discussions
In every step of the Organizational Study including all the various workgroups to support it, we have been conscious to engage volunteers and staff from all areas of the organization.

The POC (Planning and Oversight Committee) of the AFS-USA Organizational Study met Friday January 18 and Saturday January 19, 2008. The purpose of this meeting was to review all the data and research gathered relating to the Organizational Study and make final decisions on the organizational structure.

In reviewing all the background documents in preparation for this meeting, the POC identified the following areas that were commonly agreed to and supported by the data, research and input

to the Organizational Study. During our meeting we knew that we had to make sure that any decision we made regarding AFS-USA's organizational structure had to take into account these common areas of agreement. These areas of agreement are:

- We want to retain the passion for the mission shared by volunteers, staff, and participants
- We need to guarantee high quality support for our participants
- Our customers/participants would have a better initial experience with fewer people to contact prior to the start of the program – we should modify our system so that students and families are passed off from one person to another less frequently
- We need to simplify our core processes by reducing the number and complexity of the steps involved
- We need to increase cross-departmental coordination and collaboration
- We need to have a single, streamlined data system that helps us automate our processes and make them more efficient – this includes processes for accurately entering data
- We need to increase resources dedicated to technology
- We need more effective internal communication mechanisms to increase broad knowledge, cohesion, interpersonal relationships, understanding of roles, understanding of processes, and understanding of our programs
- Information and materials needed to do staff and volunteer jobs should be readily and easily accessible to all who need it
- Staff and volunteers want and need more interpersonal connections across the organization
- We want to develop a “culture of inclusion” where new people feel welcome
- The overall emphasis on volunteer development should increase, be more defined, and be more purposefully focused
- We especially need to improve the way we bring in new volunteers, orient them, and integrate them into existing volunteer teams
- We need to offer opportunities and information that create a long-term relationship between returnees and the organization
- We should modify the volunteer structure to match today's volunteer profile, needs, interests, and commitment level, including developing more opportunities for short-term and episodic volunteering
- We need to engage more volunteers in sending
- Volunteer unit geography needs to be realistic for the volunteers to manage
- Staff and volunteer roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities need to be clear to ourselves and to each other
- People need to have clear priorities that can be accomplished
- We want to retain competent and effective staff
- We need well-defined and healthy volunteer and staff leadership teams
- We need to maintain a positive reputation with international partners through the choices we make about how AFS-USA operates
- We need to lower overhead costs and reduce costly duplication of efforts
- We need to improve the overall financial health of the organization

Once the POC had identified these “common areas of agreement” we then addressed the key questions that came through the Organizational Study that needed to be resolved. The key

questions or issues were easily grouped into 4 main categories. The 4 categories and questions related to each category were:

1. Volunteer Structure

- Should AFS-USA attempt to cover the whole country's geography?
- Should Area Teams be the primary organizing unit for ensuring that the whole country's geography is covered by AFS programs?
- How many different volunteer structural models can the organization support?
- Should we modify the existing local/area volunteer leadership roles?
- How will volunteer arrangements support volunteer structures?
- How can we encourage the integration of returnees and young people as volunteers?
- How should we dedicate volunteer development resources to enhance our volunteer base?
- Who is responsible for facilitating the integration of new volunteers?

2. Centralization-Decentralization

- Should we strengthen the regional model by increasing regional autonomy under the leadership of the Regional Directors?
- Should we strengthen the national model by organizing staff departments on a national level with a single national director overseeing each specific function (hosting, sending, support, etc.)?
- Should we have different structures (regional or national) for different functions?
- Should we maintain a staff system in which people have specialized functions or increase the number of people who are generalists and can work across several functions?
- Should some or all roles in certain departments, including leadership roles, be spread around all offices rather than centralized in one office – IT, Admissions, Marketing, Development, HR, and Sponsored Programs?

3. Decision-Making

- How should volunteers be involved in strategic and operational decision-making at the regional and/or national levels?
- What formal structures, mechanisms, or bodies would best serve volunteer interests in strategic and operational decisions at the regional and/or national levels?
- How should annual hosting and sending commitments be set?
- How should staff at all levels be involved in strategic and operational decision-making?
- How do we increase transparency and clarity about what decisions were made and how they were made?
- How do we ensure we are more disciplined about implementing and enforcing decisions that have been made?

4. Geography

- If we maintain volunteer regions, what should be the boundaries of AFS-USA's volunteer regions?

- What criteria should we follow in locating offices and staff?
- Where specifically should we locate offices and staff?
- Where should we locate specific staff functions?
- How should resources be allocated to support different departments and geographic locations?
- How should market demographics and market realities impact our geographic locations?
- Should we maintain an office in New York City over time? If so, what functions would be best located there?

During the process of working to resolve the questions in these key categories, it became evident that the first area that we needed to focus our time and attention on was the volunteer structure. Changes to the staff structure could not be addressed until we first knew what changes we would be making to the volunteer structure. Simply put, the staff structure needs to support the volunteer structure.

At the end of our meeting time on Saturday, the POC made the following decisions related to the volunteer structure. It is important to stress that these decisions were made through a process of consensus. This was not an easy process and many of the decisions were not easy ones to make, but every member of the POC was committed to making decisions based on the data, research, input from the Organizational Study and what we perceived was the best criteria on the above, and not based on what we may individually like or felt most comfortable with.

Decisions on the Volunteer Structure

- We do not need to cover all U.S. geography in our hosting programs
- We do want to cover all U.S. geography in our sending programs and therefore need to develop ways in which to facilitate sending in areas that are remote from volunteer units.
- We recognize that Area Teams are not the sole viable way to organize volunteers in the U.S. and therefore want to establish and recognize multiple levels in the volunteer structure including:
 - Individuals
 - Independent Chapters
 - Districts (Clusters of Independent Chapters)
 - Areas (the term “Areas” is replacing the term “Area Team”)
- Students and Families will, going forward, be linked to the volunteer unit that is operating in their community, whether it is an area, district, independent chapter, or individual. We will look into the possibility of alternative methods for distributing co-support payments to the volunteer units
- Where they are currently functioning well, we want to maintain healthy Areas
- Areas must meet specific criteria to remain Areas and participate in an annual evaluation process to confirm that they meet these criteria
- We will ask the Regional Directors and Regional Council Chairs to list Area Teams in their regions that are currently considered “high functioning” and convene representatives from those teams to create the minimum criteria for an Area to remain an Area

- We recommend that the following be considered in setting the criteria for Areas: that the area has functioning local units, that the area has a minimum number of annual hosting and sending participants, that the area fill certain area-level positions, that the area meet specific quality standards, and that the area manage specific centralized functions such as orientations, finances, communications, and volunteer/chapter development
- Once the Area criteria have been established, we recommend the organization complete an analysis of all existing Areas in relation to those standards and determine which of our current volunteer units will remain Areas and which will be categorized into one of the other levels listed above. This analysis will also then determine what the specific geography will be for each area, district, and independent chapter.
- The organization will devote more resources to the development of local volunteer units, which can be either chapters or individuals
- Local volunteer units will be the primary units responsible for delivering hosting, support, and sending programs directly to our participants
- We recommend that the organization redefine the Area roles for hosting, sending, and support to ensure that the responsibility for program delivery is dispersed to the local units and not being accomplished directly by Area leaders.
- For participant travel, some orientations, and other functions where there are economies of scale and logistical considerations, the organization will need to group independent local volunteer units together
- While most volunteers will be affiliated with a local unit, individual volunteers can also choose to be affiliated only with a “national” function such as gateway orientations or departure day and not necessarily be linked to a local volunteer unit.
- All volunteer units would have assigned staff contacts for specific functions such as hosting, sending, support, orientations and travel, volunteer development, and finances

Volunteer Governance and Decision-Making:

- Volunteers must be involved in both strategic and operational decision-making
- We endorse the work that has already taken place in the National Council about the scope of their involvement in specific decisions. A copy of the document outlining the National Council’s role in decision making was posted on AFS Online and in the AFS-USA Inbox
- We want to preserve and build the volunteer-staff partnership through governance and decision-making bodies
- There will continue to be a National Council composed of a diverse group of volunteers and staff that helps to direct the strategy and operations of the organization
- There will be an annual General Assembly of volunteer representatives from across the country that helps direct the strategy and operations of the organization and where the volunteer representatives to the National Council are elected
- Representation to the General Assembly will be determined by criteria still to be determined – it is very likely that representation would be proportionate to the number of annual participants hosted and sent by a volunteer unit
- Representatives to the General Assembly might also have “virtual” opportunities throughout the year to be involved in strategic and operational decisions
- The number of National Council positions is still to be determined

- The demographic make-up of National Council members is still to be determined – positions could be based on geographic representation, functional representation and/or at-large representation using a system of designated seats. For example, there could be one seat reserved for a “young returnee” member, certain seats reserved for volunteers representing various functions like support, hosting, sending, or seats reserved for various geographic areas. Council members would have set terms and each year nominations would be sought for the specific seats that are coming open.
- There will be a nominating committee for National Council positions
- Once the General Assembly is established, Regional Councils will no longer operate and regions will no longer be the primary organizing unit for governance and decision-making

It is important to clarify this last point regarding Regional Councils. Although the decision by the POC is to no longer have Regional Councils as they currently exist, volunteers will continue to have representation and a voice in decision making through this new body which we are calling the General Assembly. Many of our AFS partner countries use a General Assembly model in their volunteer structure. The General Assembly is a volunteer representative body. In some partner countries these volunteer representatives are the AFS Chapter Presidents in some other partners, volunteer representation is determined through a different set of criteria. Possible functions for the General Assembly could include:

- Information sharing
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Identifying priorities for the organization’s annual plan

In terms of the staff structure, the POC was clear that we could not make any final decisions regarding the staff structure until the final volunteer structure is more defined. What the POC did decide concerning the staff structure is the following:

- Staff should be organized in a way that best supports the work of the volunteers
- We need to have staff positions specifically dedicated to volunteer development that operate at the field level

The process for defining the new volunteer structure, its operations and governance will include the following steps:

- Each of the Regional Directors along with their Regional Council Chairs will identify volunteer representatives from current well-functioning chapters/local units and Area Teams
- We will bring together these volunteer representatives to work with the National Council Committee focused on Volunteer
- Organization and Development to develop criteria, further define and develop the volunteer structure, including governance based on the decisions made by the POC
- National Council to review criteria and definition of the new volunteer structure and operations Feb 23-24, 2008 at their face-to-face meeting in Baltimore, MD
- Recommendations on volunteer governance and decision-making to be presented to the National Council May 31 – June 1, 2008 at their face-to-face meeting in St. Paul, MN

Once the new volunteer structure for AFS-USA has been defined, we will begin the process of exploring staff structure options. Implementation of our new organizational structure will be done over a period of time that will not negatively impact our current sending and hosting season.

The members of the POC felt very positive at the conclusion of our meeting. As a group we were able to accomplish a lot and recognize that there is still more work to be done. We also recognize that volunteers and staff may have questions about the decisions that were made and the process that we have put forward for finalizing the organizational structure. In the next few weeks the majority of the Regional Councils will be holding face-to-face meetings and these will be opportunities to further discuss the Organizational Study and decisions that were made so far. Additionally we would like to encourage any volunteer or staff to contact a member of the POC directly with any questions or concerns they may have.

Part II – Changes to the Volunteer Structure

The Planning and Oversight Committee for the organizational study charged the Volunteer Organization and Development Committee of the National Council with taking their decisions related to the volunteer structure and moving forward in further defining and developing the criteria for the volunteer structure and its governance.

In preparation for this project and in addition to the POC decisions related to the volunteer structure, the Volunteer Organization and Development Committee reviewed information gathered from the Organizational Study related to the volunteer structure, survey results and information from the 1st and 2nd National Leadership Summits as well as survey information gathered from Area Team Chairs who work in successful Area Teams in AFS-USA.

From all of this information, the committee identified the following goals for the new volunteer structure and governance systems:

- Revitalize our volunteer force
- Empower our volunteers to be the decision makers
- Attract a new and more diverse group of volunteers
- Allow volunteer leaders to emerge
- Promote chapter growth and encourage program delivery to be done at the local level
- Maintain and support current well-functioning Area Teams and Chapters
- Create a process for broad volunteer decision making and innovation
- Better serve our mission, our volunteers, and our participants
- Allow for more flexibility, more suited to the needs of busy volunteers

The Volunteer Organization and Development Committee presented their initial recommendations to the National Council at their face to face meeting in May and their final recommendations at the National Council face to face meeting in September. From those two meetings the following key concepts regarding to the volunteer structure were agreed to.

Introduction

The volunteer restructuring and development plan currently being implemented by AFS-USA represents a recommitment to our roots as a volunteer organization and a determination to increase the capacity of our current volunteer network. The volunteer restructuring and development plan is based on four core principles identified by staff and volunteers as critical to creating the kind of volunteer organization we aspire to be.

1. AFS-USA will be an organization which seeks, tracks, and maintains enduring relationships with all its supporters

We will actively work towards a model of volunteer development whereby any individual who supports AFS in any way has the opportunity to maintain a relationship with the organization. This relationship can include, but is not limited to being a participant on an AFS program, host family, natural family, volunteer, donor, school official, and/or community leader. In order to support this relationship, we will have a database and process that allows us to capture all AFS

supporters and track their involvement with the organization. We will recognize and encourage all AFS supporters to contribute to AFS based on their desires and abilities and recognize that the ways in which supporters may wish to contribute may change over time.

2. AFS-USA will be an organization of continuous learning

We are committed to continuous learning throughout the organization. We recognize that one of the reasons why people volunteer with us is for the opportunity to learn and gain new skills and to develop their intercultural awareness. We will ensure that all volunteers are provided with the ongoing training and resources they need for their positions, as well as to support our mission of intercultural education and understanding. Our commitment to learning and training extends to staff as well. We will ensure that all staff as well as leadership volunteers are trained in basic volunteer management practices.

3. AFS-USA will be an innovative volunteer organization

In order for AFS-USA to continue to grow we need to be innovative in our approach to volunteer development. This means that we are committed to experimenting and trying new strategies to strengthen and diversify our volunteer base by recognizing the changing nature of volunteerism in the U.S. and continually adapting the ways we recruit, integrate, train, and communicate with volunteers. In addition as an organization we will work with volunteers to continuously identify new and /or better approaches to supporting and delivering our programs. We recognize that having fun as well as providing time and space for creativity are key elements to supporting innovation in an organization and we will work towards making sure that these elements are not lost. We are committed and will continue to develop the means and the programs to support the needs of the 21st and 22nd century volunteer.

4. AFS-USA will be a well managed volunteer organization

We are committed to being a well managed volunteer organization. This means that we will have clearly defined volunteer policies and the processes in place to support them. All volunteer roles will have specific position descriptions, and volunteers will be provided with the training, support, materials and information they need to fulfill their roles. Volunteer positions will be linked to a career ladder which will enable individuals to move to higher levels of responsibility according to their own interests and continue to build upon their experience in the organization. Along the way they will receive performance feedback and recognition on a regular basis, in order to encourage their ongoing development. In exchange, AFS will hold volunteers accountable to accomplishing what they commit to do and to perform in accordance with the same quality standards and expectations that it has for its staff.

In the new structure we have agreed to the following definitions:

Volunteers:

- Typically, volunteers either volunteer within a chapter or an area team. This will continue.
- We will also create a way for volunteers who are not members of a chapter or an area team to volunteer. “Independent Volunteers” will be assigned to specific roles and responsibilities designed for these individuals such as gateway orientation, travel, e-volunteering tasks, assisting with special projects, etc. Volunteers working “independently” will have specific

assignments and be supervised by specific staff or volunteers. These volunteers will not be allowed to place or host students.

- In order to be a volunteer, individuals must complete the registration process.

It is important to note that volunteers who are not linked to a chapter but with an Area Team can place or host students, just as is currently done.

Chapters:

- Chapters will be “affiliated” or “unaffiliated.” This means that each chapter will either be a part of an Area Team or exist outside the boundaries of Area Teams.
- All chapters will be expected to hold elections each year for the Chapter Chair position.
- All chapters within an Area Team will participate in the election of the Area Team Chair and other leadership positions.
- All chapters will be required to complete the chartering process each year which includes consolidation of any funds they have in bank accounts opened by the chapter.

Area Teams:

- Current well functioning Area Teams will continue to operate. Specific criteria for being an Area Team are still under review; however, current teams will be allowed a two year transition period to allow them to meet any new criteria that they do not currently meet.
- Going forward each Area Team will define its own geographic boundaries and will be able to review and revise these boundaries on an annual basis.
- All Area Teams will hold mandatory annual meetings including all Chapter chairs and other volunteers at which time Area Leaders will be elected and other decisions relevant to the Area Team will be voted on.
- Area Team Chairs will serve for two years first as the “Chair-elect” of their team and then two years as the Chair. After serving for four years in this way, a volunteer must leave the Chair position for at least one year before s/he can be re-elected.

National Council:

- National Council members will be elected by delegates who attend the National Annual Volunteer meeting
- The National Council will have increased decision making authority.
- Only volunteers on the National Council will have voting rights. There will still be staff members who will participate in National Council meetings, but they will not have voting rights.
- The National Council will oversee the work of several committees and functional advisory groups which will be comprised of volunteers from the National Council, other interested volunteers from across the country and staff.

National Annual Volunteer Meeting:

- AFS-USA will hold a National Annual Volunteer Meeting each year. Volunteer groups across the country will elect “delegates” to attend these meetings. While other volunteers will be invited to attend these meetings, only delegates will be able to vote on issues that are brought to the National Meeting.
- The National Volunteer Assembly (“NVA”) will be 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 will be committed to and recognize their responsibility in making decisions from a national perspective and what is best for the health of AFS-USA. The National Volunteer Assembly annually will bring together the volunteer leaders of the organization for two distinct purposes.
 - 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 and
 - to elect the volunteers to the National Council.
- The first National Annual Volunteer Meeting will occur by the end of April 2009.

Advisory Groups:

- Volunteer Advisory groups will be formed to work directly with the key functional departments of AFS-USA including hosting, support, sending, volunteer development and other areas as needed.

Part III

AFS USA Volunteer Structure

I. Volunteers

Thousands of individuals throughout the United States are engaged in the delivery of AFS programs. Volunteering for AFS means that you are willingly giving your time, skills, labor or ideas without seeking any remuneration to promote the AFS mission and programs. In order to be an AFS-USA volunteer, you must complete a formal Volunteer Registration process (including a criminal background check and acceptance of the AFS-USA Volunteer Agreement), abide by all AFS-USA program policies and procedures as well as the AFS-USA Volunteer Policy and respect the mission, vision and values in performing your duties. Volunteers will be trained, organized, managed and supported by assigned staff and/or fellow volunteers.

Volunteers are connected to the AFS-USA volunteer structure in the following ways:

- **Volunteers:** Individuals who register to volunteer for AFS-USA.
- **Chapter Volunteers:** Individuals who wish to volunteer their time with AFS as part of a local volunteer chapter.
- **Area Team Volunteers:** Those individuals who are part of a chapter within an area team, or individuals who wish to volunteer for the area team but who are not necessarily connected to a chapter.

Volunteers may choose to register without or without a chapter or area team affiliation. However, volunteers who register without a chapter or area team affiliation will have some limitations on the roles they can fulfill. Volunteers not affiliated with a chapter or area team will not be able to recruit host families, make host family placements or provide support to individual AFS participants. There are however many roles that individual volunteers can take on. Volunteer roles which do not require a chapter or area team affiliation include, but are not limited to:

- Sending recruitment and sending interviews
- Sending mentors
- Web Development Volunteers
- Blog monitors
- Logistics volunteers - assist at arrival and departure events
- Travel volunteers - assist with participant travel (e.g., airport meet & greet)
- Newsletter volunteers
- AFS Wiki Volunteers
- Marketing/PR Volunteers
- Hosting & Sending orientation volunteers
- Fundraising Volunteers (e.g., assisting AFS-USA event planning or logistics, calling or mail campaigns)
- School Representatives- introduce AFS to schools

- Chapter building
- Volunteer Trainer
- Governance body membership, such as the National Council and the Board of Directors

Volunteer Leadership Positions

Volunteers will only be allowed to serve in one “leadership” position (defined as chapter chair, area team chair, or national council representative) at a time, in order to ensure a diversity of volunteers and perspectives in the various leadership roles of the organization.

Volunteers can take advantage of tax benefits for eligible, AFS-related expenses.

II. Chapters

Since our founding over 60 years ago, AFS programs have been promoted and delivered by groups of caring volunteers in communities across our country, and our partner countries around the world. AFS-USA encourages volunteers to organize locally into chapters to act on behalf of AFS-USA to deliver programs and services. In order to become a chapter, groups of volunteers must meet the Chapter Charter requirements and submit a chapter charter application to the National Council for approval. Approved local chapters act on AFS-USA’s behalf to promote AFS in their communities in accordance with the policies, procedures and standards of AFS-USA.

Types of Chapters

Unaffiliated Chapters

Unaffiliated chapters operate as stand alone local volunteer units. Unaffiliated chapters must follow the Chapter Charter and Annual Chapter Review process established by the National Council. Unaffiliated chapters will be supported, nurtured, and supervised by assigned staff as they build their capacity.

Affiliated Chapters

Chapters located within the same geographic area are encouraged to work together in larger teams called "Area Teams" for mutual support and economies of scale. Being affiliated with an Area Team will have associated privileges such as more direct representation in governance structures and limited control of co-support funds as part of the Area Team. Affiliated chapters will be supported, nurtured, and monitored by Area Team volunteers and assigned staff.

Chapter Criteria

- Have two or more registered volunteers, not from the same family or household listed on a chapter roster.
- Have, at minimum, a Chair and a Treasurer (not in the same family or household).

- Host or send at least one student per 3 year period
- Complete an annual chapter report
- Participate in an Annual Review of performance and quality standards
- Have all local funds accounted for in accordance with AFS-USA corporate financial requirements
- Have the AFS-USA Chief Administration Officer entered as co-signer on all local accounts
- Have all local funds in excess of \$500 on deposit with AFS-USA

Chapter Responsibilities

Administration

- Conduct annual election of Chapter Chair
- Participate, with staff (in the case of unaffiliated chapters) or area team leaders, in the annual commitment setting process for hosting and sending
- Maintain compliance with AFS-USA policies, procedures, and standards
- Participate in the selection of representation to the National Volunteer Assembly, either as part of an area team or in conjunction with other unaffiliated chapters
- Participate in the chapter annual reporting and assessment process

Hosting AFS Participants

- Recruit and interview host families and ensure that all host families are fully screened and have all required paperwork on file.
- Make placements of hosted participants with families
- Obtain written school approvals and placements
- Recruit, train, assign, and monitor liaisons
- Provide support to hosted participants, host families and schools after arrival, including the management of local crisis or emergency situations involving AFS participants and including documented monthly contact for all participants and host families.
- Provide activities for students while in the US

Sending AFS Participants

- Recruit, screen, and select applicants to go abroad on AFS programs
- Provide application completion assistance to participants
- Advise participants about fundraising
- Conduct participant interviews
- Provide support to natural parents while participants are abroad
- Incorporate participants in chapter activities prior to departure and upon their return

Volunteer and Community Development

- Recruiting, training, integrating, and recognizing volunteers within the chapter.
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with schools and within the community
- Fundraise for the chapter

Orientations

- Conduct or ensure participants attend the following local orientations:
 - Host Family Pre-Arrival Orientation
 - Post-Arrival Orientation for hosted participants
 - Mid-Year Orientation for hosted participants and host families. Note: The Mid-Year Orientation is optional, but encouraged.
 - Pre-Return Orientation for hosted participants and host families
- For affiliated chapters, contribute to and support as part of an Area Team the organization and implementation of Arrival and End of Stay Orientations for hosted participants and Pre-Departure Orientations for sending participants.
- For unaffiliated chapters, contribute to and support, either in collaboration with other unaffiliated chapters or with a nearby area team, the organization and implementation of Arrival and End of Stay Orientations for hosted participants and Pre-Departure Orientations for sending participants.

Annual chapter report

Unaffiliated Chapters are required to submit an annual report providing the following information:

- Roster of chapter leadership
- Roster of volunteers
- Roster of schools
- Commitments to host
- Commitments to send
- Report of chapter funds raised and spent during past year

On an annual basis, chapters will be provided with all information currently in our system for review and update.

Affiliated Chapters will need to submit all required chapter financial accounting documents.

Annual Chapter Assessment

Unaffiliated chapters will be evaluated annually using objective quality standards which reflect clear, articulated expectations in areas such as on-time placement, paperwork completion, liaison assignment, monthly contact documentation, orientation requirements, and volunteer registration and training. The annual review will also include data from the customer service evaluations.

All data will be reviewed and compared to a 3-year average to determine trends. If the review results trigger concern, a committee of the National Council, will make recommendations regarding next steps. Affiliated chapters will be evaluated in the context of the annual area team evaluation.

Affiliated chapters will be evaluated annually as part of their Area Team.

Chapter dissolution

- A chapter may choose to dissolve.
- If a chapter has no activity in a consecutive 3 year period, AFS-USA reserves the right to close the chapter and reallocate any funds.
- Chapter charter may be revoked at any time by the National Council if rules, standards, laws or regulations are not followed.
- At the time of dissolution, all funds held in the name of AFS belong to AFS-USA.

Travel

Arrival and departure sites for hosted participants will be negotiated based on input from the Travel & Logistics Department. This is an area that is still being researched and a proposal will be developed Fall 2008.

III. Area Teams

Groups of AFS chapters and individual volunteers in a defined geographic area are encouraged to organize and apply for an Area Team Charter. With approval from the National Council of AFS-USA, chartered Area Teams act on AFS-USA's behalf to promote AFS in their geographic area in accordance with the policies, procedures and standards of AFS-USA. The volunteer leadership, mutual support, and economies of scale provided by Area Teams are valued as important benefits to AFS-USA. In order to become chartered Area Teams must meet the following criteria and fulfill the following responsibilities.

Area Team Criteria

- Have a minimum of 2 chartered chapters
- Have a defined geography based on zip codes, to be determined by the area team volunteers , and subject to review and approval by the National Council
- Have a minimum of an AT Chair, AT Chair-Elect and AT Treasurer . (none of whom are from the same family or live in the same household)
- Host and send combined at least 40 program participants
- Ensure all chapters within the area team boundaries are chartered with AFS-USA
- Complete an annual area team report (formerly the Area Team Agreement)
- Participate in an Annual Review of performance and quality standards
- Submit report from the annual area team meeting
- Account for all local funds according to AFS-USA corporate financial requirements

Responsibilities of Area Teams

Administration

- Conduct annual area team meeting and election of Area Team Chair
- Provide representation to the National Volunteer Assembly
- Communicate and meet hosting and sending commitments

- Monitor use and reporting of co-support funds
- Provide a forum for communication among chapters, individual team volunteers, and the greater organization
- Fundraise within the area
- Manage public relations and marketing within the area
- Provide additional back-up, oversight, and coordination of participant and host family support
- Coordinate orientations for compliance and quality
- Complete an annual Area Team Agreement and Report of Cooperation and participate in an Annual Area Team Assessment process.

Hosting

- Coordinate, monitor, and communicate about the host family recruitment and participant placement process with chapters and area team volunteers as well as with assigned staff throughout each hosting cycle.
- Ensure that all host families are fully screened and that all host family paperwork including the complete host family application, signed School Placement Acceptance Form (PAF), and references are sent to the Hosting Staff in the Regional Service Center prior to the students' arrival.
- Provide support for participants and host families in conjunction with chapters and assigned staff, including the documentation of all monthly contacts throughout the program period.

Sending

- Coordinate, monitor, and communicate about recruitment and selection of outbound participants for departures (Year, Semester, Short Programs and Teacher Exchanges) with chapters, area team volunteers and assigned staff.
- Provide support to all outbound participants and their natural families throughout the application process and in conjunction with chapters and assigned staff during the program year.

Orientations

- Conduct or ensure that participants attend the following local orientations:
 - Host Family Pre-Arrival Orientation
 - Post-Arrival Orientation for hosted participants
 - Mid-Year Orientation for hosted participants and host families. Note: The Mid-Year Orientation is optional, but encouraged.
 - Pre-Return Orientation for hosted participants and host families
- Organize and implement the Arrival and End of Stay Orientations for hosted students
- Organize and implement Pre-Departure Orientations for sending participants in conjunction with the local chapters
- Conduct re-entry orientation for outbound participants returning to the area.
- Please note: The number of participants required for hosting and sending orientations will be based on input from the Education and Quality Department. This is an area that is still being researched and a proposal will be developed Fall 2008.

Volunteer Development and Training

- Coordinate recruitment, selection, orientation, training and recognition of local team and Area Team volunteers.

- Plan, strategize, and facilitate new and existing chapter development within the area team. In the case of existing chapters, this should be done in conjunction with the current chapter volunteers.
- Plan fun for returnees, volunteers, and program participants

Communications and Community Development

- Create ongoing and active communication, support, and coordination of chapters and other local units existing within the area team.
- Provide active support of hosting and sending schools, and coordinate recruitment and development of new schools to support the expansion of program activity in the area.
- Promote connections and relationships with other organizations and stakeholders that will further the implementation of the mission of AFS.

AT Membership & Leadership

All active volunteers for AFS USA need to be registered. It is the responsibility of the Area Team to not knowingly allow individuals to participate in any AFS activity as volunteers without being registered.

Membership on the area team will be open to all registered volunteers who live within the defined geography of the team. All volunteers within the area team who have been registered for at least one month will have voting privileges and will elect the Area Team Chair.

The AT Chair will appoint or elect an AT Treasurer and a contact person for the primary functional areas of hosting, sending, support, and volunteer development. The role of these contact people is to be a resource for team volunteers, and also serve as a contact point for staff. Rather than assign or elect a "contact person," as outlined above, area teams may choose to appoint and/or elect volunteers to fill one or more of the following leadership positions:

- AT Hosting Coordinator
- AT Sending Coordinator
- AT Support Coordinator
- AT Volunteer Coordinator
- AT Returnee Coordinator
- AT Orientations Coordinator
- AT Fundraising Coordinator
- AT Publicity Coordinator
- Liaison Coordinator

All Area Leadership members listed in the annual area team annual agreement and report of cooperation should understand that their roles are to train, lead and coordinate other volunteers in the Area, performing those functions outlined in the job descriptions for each position.

Area Leadership Team members should attend scheduled training for their positions and should recruit several other volunteers to assist them in their respective roles.

AT Elections & Term Limits

Volunteers interested in becoming Area Team Chairs must commit to four years of service. Chairs will be elected to serve for two years as the AT Chair-Elect and two years as the AT Chair. Once completing these four years of service, a volunteer must leave the chair position however s/he can be re-elected as Chair-elect after at least one year off. The AT Chair will serve as the first representative to the National Volunteer Assembly.

Area Teams who host and send more than 80 participants combined will be able to send more than one representative to the National Volunteer Assembly. Area Teams sending more than one representative to the National Volunteer Assembly will elect these additional delegates each year at the Area Team annual meeting.

Travel

Arrival and departure sites for hosted participants will be negotiated based on input from the Travel & Logistics Department. This is an area that is still being researched and a proposal will be developed Fall 2008.

Co-Support Funds

Area teams will be provided co-support funds based on the number of hosted and sent participants in their team. Accounting and reports of expenditures are required. As of Fall 2008, the current co-support funds are as follows:

- Hosting: \$215 for Year Program and \$190 for Semester Program
- Sending: \$115 for Year Program, \$95 for Semester Program, and \$50 for Summer Programs

Access to National Funds

- The area team can draw on co-support payments from AFS-USA to sustain its efforts in providing programs. Co-support payments are termed as such in recognition that these amounts will likely only partially cover the actual costs of program and recruitment activities in the area team. Supplemental fund-raising activities conducted by the area or local teams may be necessary to meet the actual financial needs of planned activities
- Co-support payments will be calculated based on the National Co-Support Payment Calculation Sheet submitted as part of the Area Team Annual Agreement and Report of Cooperation, and will be disbursed quarterly upon receipt of the prior quarter's three monthly financial reports. The participant numbers are determined by the area teams, in conjunction with the Hosting and Sending Department staff. The Field Finance Department is responsible for distributing area team funds, based on these numbers, but is not involved in the negotiations to set these numbers.
- The distribution of co-support funds is known as the 30/30/30/10 policy and the initial payment will be 30% of the total annual co-support funds minus any remaining funds in the primary bank account at the end of the previous year
- The maximum amount to be forwarded to an area team in any given year cannot exceed the committed amount (after adjustment - see adjustments to original commitment amount below) stipulated in the area team's Annual Agreement
- Co-support payments for hosting and sending will only be issued upon completion and submission of complete paperwork for each host family and participant; and does not preclude incentives or payments for January year program students.

Area Team Agreement and Report of Cooperation

(formerly the Area Team Agreement)

Annually, area teams must submit an Area Team Agreement and Report of Cooperation to the Volunteer Development Department providing the following information:

- Roster of area team leadership

- Roster of affiliated chapters
- Roster of individual volunteers who work with the area team but are not affiliated with any chapter
- Roster of any schools in the area team not affiliated with a chapter but which are served by the area team
- Commitment to host
- Commitment to send
- Reports of any area team funds raised and spent during the year
- Financial/legal area team documents as required by AFS-USA
- ZIP code list outlining the geographical boundaries of the area team

Teams will be provided with all information related to the above items currently in our system on an annual basis for review and update

Annual Area Team Assessment

Area teams will be evaluated annually using objective quality standards which reflect clear, articulated expectations in areas including but not limited to on-time placement, paperwork completion, liaison assignment, monthly contact documentation, orientation requirements, and volunteer registration and training. The annual review will also include data from the customer service evaluations.

All data will be reviewed and compared to a 3-year average to determine trends. If the review results trigger concern, a committee of the National Council, will make recommendations regarding next steps.

Administrative Oversight

- Area teams are expected to operate under the provisions of these criteria and responsibilities and under the terms of the Annual Agreement and Report of Cooperation to ensure program quality and continuity.
- The National Council may revoke the area team charter and dissolve the team if rules, standards, laws and/or regulations are not followed.
- An area team may choose to dissolve. All funds held in the name of AFS-USA belong to AFS-USA.

IV. National Council

National Council By-Laws

The National Council is the volunteer policy-making body for program operations and volunteer governance of AFS-USA. As a key leadership body, the National Council is committed to acting from a national perspective to make decisions for the good of the organization. The role of the National Council is twofold. The council is to be the voice of AFS-USA's volunteer body within the organization, representing volunteer needs, views, and opinions to the AFS executive management and the board. The Council is also responsible for communicating the vision and direction of the organization including the perspectives and decisions of executive management and the board back to the AFS-USA volunteer body. National Council members must be stewards of the volunteer-staff partnership and will seek ways to ensure that the staff and volunteers of the organization work together in an environment of shared responsibility and

accountability in the delivery and support of our mission and programs. The policies and procedures of the National Council will be in accord with AFS International and AFS-USA standards, policies and procedures, the United States Department of State regulations and the CSIET (Council on Standards for International Educational Travel) standards.

Overall Responsibilities of the National Council

A. Organizational Planning and Oversight

1. Assist the AFS-USA management and board in:
 - a) strategic and operational planning, program implementation and identification of budget priorities.
 - b) addressing business challenges and maximizing opportunities.
 - c) evaluating the value, the impact, and the relevance of the programs in the larger society
 - d) tracking trends that represent opportunities and threats to AFS-USA and recommend appropriate national responses.
 - e) Monitor overall quality of AFS-USA in relation to programmatic audits.
2. Educate constituents about the financial realities of AFS-USA as a non-profit organization. Hold ourselves, Area Teams, Chapters, and individual volunteers accountable for financial stewardship.

. B. National Volunteer Assembly

1. Establish the agenda, plan and implement the annual National Volunteer Assembly (NVA) soliciting input from the volunteer body at large.
2. Determine the allocation of the at-large delegate invitations for each meeting and oversee the election/selection of those delegates.
3. Oversee creation and distribution of background materials for the NVA to ensure all delegates and all other volunteers are informed in advance regarding the topics on the agenda and the decisions to be made at the meeting and have an opportunity through their delegates to have input into those topics and decisions.
4. Establish and oversee standard procedures for the NVA in regards to any motions brought to the NVA for vote.
5. Establish an orderly process for election of National Council members and other positions as appropriate.

C. Volunteer Development

1. Consult and support staff :
 - a) on changes to the volunteer registration process
 - b) on plans for volunteer recruitment, integration and training
 - c) when key staff positions which work with volunteers are filled, changed or abolished.
 - d) on selection criteria to be used in selecting volunteers for any special projects, programs, or travel.

2. Monitor the results of national volunteer training plans in relation to established measurable goals.
3. Develop and oversee implementation of national volunteer recognition plan

D. Volunteer Organizational Development

1. Develop and approve volunteer governance guidelines and policies
2. Approve changes to the overall volunteer structure including but not limited to:
 - a) Changes to requirements to be a chapter,
 - b) Changes to requirements to be an Area Team
 - c) Changes to the functions of volunteer bodies including chapters, area teams, national volunteer assembly, or the national council
3. Oversee annual quality review of Chapters and Area Teams in accordance with the requirements for Chapter and Area Team Chartering.
4. Oversee the development and implementation of action plans for improvement with any Chapters or Area Teams not meeting established criteria and/or standards.
5. Approve changes to area team and unaffiliated chapter geographic boundaries
6. Approve changes to chapter status from affiliated to unaffiliated
7. Grant and revoke Chapter and Area Team charters.

E. Programs

1. Determine the annual hosting and sending goals and work on cyclical distribution of hosting and sending participants among the Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters.
2. Develop, in conjunction with staff, program operational guidelines and policies in compliance with AFS International, the Council on Standards for Educational Travel (CSIET), and the US Department of State standards and regulations
3. Approve any new activities volunteers will be asked to carry out which would have costs attached, such as increasing orientation lengths, volunteer registration, etc. In the event that a new activity is imposed by an external regulatory body the National Council would not decide whether to do it but how best it might be done.
4. Consult with appropriate staff after seeking volunteer input on any possible improvements on travel arrangements at least a year in advance of program operations: expected costs, possible efficiencies or savings relating to domestic participant travel and orientations.
5. Consult with appropriate staff 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.
6. Oversee the functional advisory group structure to ensure that appropriate volunteers are involved in the improvement of processes in areas such as hosting, sending, support, field finances, etc.

F. Financial

1. Approve co-payment amounts annually 6 - 12 months in advance of any change.

2. Approve any procedural or policy change recommended by staff which would have a direct or indirect financial impact on the ability of area teams to provide key program services (sending, hosting, support, and orientations).
3. Approve any performance-related incentives payable to area teams and/or individuals to ensure financially viable growth with quality after consultation with staff.
4. Review and make recommendations as needed on the maximum or minimum balances able to be held in "volunteer" bank accounts and reporting practices related to volunteer finances.
5. Consult on any changes to or new guidelines, policies or procedures regarding local fund-raising efforts.
6. Consult with staff when the role volunteers can play in allocating scholarship dollars is re-examined.
7. Support the centralization of AFS funds of chapters to comply with federal regulations.

G. Volunteer Communication

1. Distribute summaries of all National Council meeting minutes to the volunteer body via the AFS Wiki/Volunteer newsletter.
2. Maintain the National Council pages on the AFS Wiki.
3. Consult with staff on best methods of communicating with volunteers across the organization and work with staff to implement consistent volunteer communication plans.
4. Oversee implementation and analysis of a national volunteer satisfaction survey on an annual basis.
5. Attend volunteer events to seek feedback & give information to the general volunteer body.

National Council Membership

There will be nine volunteer members on the National Council, each elected for a 3-year term. The members of the National Council will be elected annually at the National Volunteer Assembly and election will be staggered so that three new National Council members will be elected each year.

Volunteer members can be elected for two consecutive terms. Terms will begin on the day following the last day of the National Volunteer Assembly and end on the second day of the National Volunteer Assembly in the year their term ends. Any vacancy on the National Council shall be filled by appointment of the National Council based upon NVA election results.

Membership criteria

- Registered volunteer
- Completion of application to join the National Council
- 2 letters of endorsement from AFS Volunteers
- Age 18 or over

- Volunteers on the National Council cannot simultaneously serve as an Area Team Chair or as a Chapter Chair. If an AT Chair or Chapter Chair is elected to the National Council, s/he will be asked to resign the AT or chapter position upon election to the National Council.

The National Council will seek applications and select a volunteer to fulfill the role of secretary. The National Council secretary will attend all scheduled National Council meetings as a non-voting member to take minutes and assist with logistics during the meeting. A “secretary-elect” will also be selected to fill in for the secretary should s/he not be available to attend meetings. The secretary-elect will then take over as secretary when the incumbent secretary finishes his/her 2 year term and a new secretary-elect will be chosen.

Senior Management staff will attend National Council meetings as non-voting members. Additional staff members may be invited to attend specific National Council meetings as needed for specific agenda topics/issues.

Member Responsibilities

A. Be registered volunteers and attend all scheduled meetings including teleconference meetings. Missing more than one face to face meeting or two conference calls per year, without prior notification, could be cause for censure.

B. Except for the Chair, Vice Chair and Board representative, all other members will chair one Standing Committee and all members will participate in one Advisory Group.

C. Attend a minimum of one per year regional or national volunteer conferences and training events in order to keep volunteers informed of National Council initiatives and progress.

D. Attend the annual National Volunteer Assembly.

E. Maintain a national leadership perspective for the benefit of the entire organization.

F. Act in accordance with all National Council guidelines. Actions taken in contradiction of National Council guidelines may result in the censure of a member by two-thirds vote of the National Council membership. Such action can be taken after 30 days’ notice by the chair to the member that such an action is contemplated.

Member Orientation

New members of the National Council will be oriented by the National Council Chair and the members of the Board Education and Development Committee. Officers will be oriented under the direction of the Vice President for Organizational Development and the outgoing officers. The Volunteer Representative to the Board of Directors will be oriented by a committee of the Board of Directors.

National Council Leadership

The volunteer members of the National Council will be responsible for electing a Chair, Vice Chair and for nominating a volunteer representative to the AFS-USA Board of Directors.

A. National Council Chair

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the National Council. The Chair is an ex-officio member of all committees. The Chair has the authority to call special meetings to address acute concerns. On occasion, the Chair may act on behalf of the National Council between meetings, and shall submit a report of all such actions to the full National Council at the next meeting.

B. National Council Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair shall preside in the absence of the Chair. Should the position of Chair become vacant, the Vice-Chair shall fill that office for the remainder of the designated term.

C. National Council Representative to the AFS-USA Board of Directors

The Volunteer Representative to the Board of Directors (aka Board Representative) shall represent the National Council as a full member of the Board of Directors, per the request of the Board. This position requires confirmation by the Board of Directors. The Board Representative is responsible for increasing understanding between the two national bodies and acts as a representative of the total National Council rather than as a representative of a region.

D. Election of National Council leaders and Length of Terms

1. All continuing members of the National Council will be eligible to vote in the election of a new National Council Chair and/or Vice Chair. In order to be elected, officer candidates must receive a majority of votes from among the continuing members. If both a Chair and Vice Chair are being elected in the same year, the member with the most votes will be elected as the Chair and the member receiving the second highest number of votes will be elected as the Vice Chair.
2. Balloting may be by written ballot or by internet. Method of voting will be determined by the Nominating Committee.
3. Elections of officers will be completed at the National Council meeting held at the conclusion of the National Volunteer Assembly.
4. The term of office for the Chair is two years or the remainder of their current term. The term of office for the Vice-Chair is two years or the remainder of their current term. The term of office for the AFS-USA Volunteer Representative to the Board of Directors is three years, in order to coincide with the standard Board term.
5. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Board Representative will be eligible to serve two consecutive terms in their leadership roles, if re-elected to the National Council and if re-elected by the council to continue serving in a leadership position.
6. A vote to remove any officer may be requested by any member at any time. Such a vote will take place within 30 days of the request, with the Nominating Committee

establishing the procedure. Removal of an officer requires a three-fourths vote of the Council. An election will be scheduled to take place within 30 days after the removal.

Meetings

A. The National Council will have 4 in-person meetings per year, one of which will occur at the same place as and immediately prior to and following the National Volunteer Assembly and at least 2 conference calls.

B. The Chair may cancel conference calls at his or her discretion. Face to face meetings may be cancelled at the Council's discretion.

C. The Council will determine its meeting calendar for the following year at the meeting which takes place immediately following the National Volunteer Assembly.

D. In addition to scheduled meetings, the Chair may call for special meetings via teleconference with 24 hours' notice. Such phone meetings may act on all matters before the Council, except for the revision of these guidelines or the censure of a member.

E. In order to convene a meeting, two-thirds of the voting current members are required for a quorum.

F. Agenda items are due to the National Council Chair 10 days prior to scheduled meetings.

G. Tentative agendas for each meeting will be distributed one week prior to the meetings. Additional agenda items may be added to the agenda at the discretion of the Chair.

H. The Chair may call special "volunteer-only" sessions during regularly scheduled National Council meetings or as special meetings in accordance with the guidelines detailed above.

Committees

A. **Executive Committee** The Executive Committee consists of the National Council Chair, the National Council Vice-Chair and the Vice President, Organizational Development. The Executive Committee supports the functions of the Council, prepares the work plan, and is responsible for ensuring that the National Council fulfills its role and its duties.

The Executive Committee may act on behalf of the National Council, when necessary. Decisions made by the Executive Committee shall be submitted to the full National Council at the next meeting, for agreement.

B. **Standing Committees** The National Council may establish standing committees, as deemed appropriate. These committees shall be comprised of National Council members and other volunteers and staff, as necessary. Current standing committees include:

1. National Council Development & Education Committee

- a) Ensure on-going education and development of National Council members
 - b) Improve National Council communication with stakeholders
 - c) Annual evaluation of the National Council and recommend plans for improvement.
- 2. National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee:::**
- a) Logistics planning– site selection, etc.
 - b) Draft volunteer communications regarding the NVA
 - c) Gather organization wide input and propose agenda to the National Council
 - d) Recommend procedures for NVA motions and voting
- 3. Volunteer Structure Committee**
- a) Area Team and Chapter Annual Assessments
 - b) Area Team and Chapter chartering
 - c) Provide support and assistance to teams for improvements and/or growth
 - d) Oversee chapter development projects
 - e) Oversee volunteer structure policies and make recommendations for changes when/as needed: AT, chapter requirements, co-support, travel, orientations, etc.
- 4. Volunteer Recognition Committee**
- a) Annual Gallati nomination/ selection process
 - b) Flight chaperon selection process
 - c) Other selection processes as needed for special events, travel, etc.
 - d) Propose an annual volunteer recognition plan to the National Council
- 5. Nominations Committee**
- a) Nominations process for National Council candidates
 - b) At large NVA delegate selection process
 - c) Process for the National Council election of Chair, Vice Chair
 - d) Process for keeping the NC Secretary position filled for the Council
- 6. Wiki Policy and Procedures Committee**
- a) Recommend policies for wiki postings, editing, protection, etc

Ad Hoc Committees Additional committees may be established and appointed at the discretion of the National Council, in order to develop and implement action plans surrounding specific, short-term issues or concerns that come to the Council's attention.

C. Advisory Groups In addition to the above standing committees, the non-voting staff members of the National Council will establish volunteer advisory groups for their specific functional areas to include but not be limited to:

- National Hosting Advisory Group
- Sending
- Sponsored Programs
- Support
- Compliance/Government Relations
- Volunteer Development
- Fund-Raising
- Orientations
- Training

Advisory groups would be organized by the staff member of the National Council or someone s/he designates from within their departments and have at least one National Council member. Membership on the advisory groups would be by invitation to volunteers nominated by staff or other volunteers due to their specific experience in the functional area under consideration.

Advisory groups meet on a regular basis to:

- Be consulted in regards to any changes, improvements to be made in processes and procedures within that functional area that impact volunteers
- Contribute to and be asked to review new materials created within the functional area for volunteers and participants
- Contribute to the on-going planning of the department
- Bring innovative ideas or ideas for improvement to the department
- Forward relevant new ideas, policy/process changes, etc. to the NVA planning committee as appropriate for inclusion on the NVA agenda.

Any work done by advisory groups or staff departments which lead to changes, additions or revisions to policies, procedures, or structure which would fall under the National Council's decision making authority would be presented to the National Council for input and final approval before moving forward.

Parliamentary Authority

A. The Chair or Vice-Chair will preside over the National Council meetings. If both the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent, then the Vice President, Organizational Development will preside.

B. Agenda items requiring a decision will be voted on with results being recorded in the minutes. Approval of a motion requires a majority of the total voting members of the National Council. Voting will be conducted using Roberts Rules of Order –Newly Revised.

C. With the exception of elections, the Chair will only vote in the event of a tie.

D. Guidelines of the National Council can be revised with a three-fourths vote of the entire Council. Suggested revisions should be given to the Executive Committee. Before the vote is taken, National Council members will have 30 days to review the revisions.

V. National Volunteer Assembly

National Volunteer Assembly By-Laws

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, area teams, chapters, and individual volunteers accountable for financial stewardship.

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6. Exemplify professionalism in every AFS interaction. Hold each other, area 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 individual may recommend changes to area team and unaffiliated chapter geographic boundaries for approval by the National Council.
4. Individuals or teams of individuals may recommend changes to area team status from active to inactive or retired for approval by the National Council.
5. Individuals or teams of individuals may recommend changes to chapter status from affiliated to unaffiliated or vice versa 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 relating 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 area 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.

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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 an unaffiliated chapter(s) or an area team. Delegates may represent said chapter (or group of chapters) or area team 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 chapter (or group of chapters) or area team again.

The first associated delegate that should represent an area team should be the chair. In the event the chair can not attend, an alternate representative should be elected by the area team.

The first associated delegate that should represent an unaffiliated chapter should be the chapter chair. In the event the chair can not attend, an alternate representative should be elected by the chapter.

When an associated delegate is representing a group of unaffiliated chapters the registered volunteers in those chapters 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. At-Large delegates will be selected by the National Council nominating committee each year using a process approved by the National Council. The number of at-large delegates in any given year will be determined by the National Volunteer Assembly's 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 nominating 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 an Area Team or Unaffiliated Chapter

In December of each year, the National Volunteer Assembly Planning Committee will assign the number of official voting delegates each unaffiliated chapter or area team is eligible to send to the annual National Volunteer Assembly. The assignment of

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delegates will be based on the combined number of participants each unaffiliated chapter or area team has sent and hosted for that calendar year divided by 40.

In certain instances, unaffiliated chapters or area 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 unaffiliated chapters and area teams.

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 Development 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.

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- D. Act in accordance with all National Volunteer Assembly by-laws. Actions taken in contradiction of National Volunteer Assembly by-laws 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 constituents 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.

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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 by-laws.
- D. In order to convene a meeting, two-thirds of the voting delegates are required for a quorum.
- E. Agenda items (or 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. Agendas 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.

VI. Action Item Submission Process

- A. By January 15 of each year, individuals; chapters; area 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 National Volunteer Assembly Planning 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, chapter or area 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.

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- 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.

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.

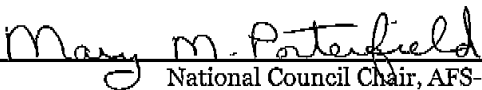
B. Ad Hoc Committees

Additional committees may be established and appointed at the discretion of the National Volunteer Assembly in order to develop and implement action plans surrounding specific, short-term issues or concerns that come to the Assembly's attention.

VIII. Parliamentary Authority

- A. The Chair or Vice-Chair of the National Council will preside over the National Volunteer Assembly.
- B. Meeting minutes for the National Volunteer Assembly will be taken by the National Council Secretary with assistance from the Volunteer Development staff if needed.
- C. Agenda items requiring a decision will be voted on with 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. Voting will be conducted using *Roberts Rules of Order – Newly Revised*.
- D. Voting for the National Council representatives will be by written ballot. All other voting will be done by hand or oral comment unless a motion for written ballot is made and approved.
- E. By-laws of the National Volunteer Assembly can be revised or amendments added with a two-thirds vote of the current year's delegates of the Volunteer Assembly. Suggested revisions should be given to the National Council at least 90 days prior to a meeting. Before the vote is taken, National Volunteer Assembly delegates will have 30 days to review the revisions.

Certified a true and correct copy of the National Volunteer Assembly Bylaws of AFS-USA, Inc. as of April 26, 2009.



National Council Chair, AFS-USA