

## **AFS-USA, Inc. 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

  
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National Council Chair, AFS-USA