



PROPOSAL TO The 2010 National Volunteer Assembly

**Presented by:
Volunteer Structure Committee
March, 2010**

CORE TEAM MEMBERS:

- Damian Pisanelli (Chair – Volunteer Structure Committee)
Greater Puget Sound Area Team
- Volunteer Structure Committee
 - Brenda Dickison - Colorado Rockies Area Team
 - Susan Cherry – Friends Across New England Area Team
 - Naomi Erickson – E-Z Pass Unaffiliated Chapter
 - Becki Shawver – Cradle of TX Unaffiliated Chapter
 - Cristal Robinson – West TX Unaffiliated Chapter
 - Joanne Yokoyama-Martin – Volunteer Development Resource Manager
 - Keri Dooley – Vice President Sponsored Programs

OTHERS CONSULTED:

- Kerry McCollum – Vice President Organizational Development
- Scott Hume – Director Volunteer Development
- Lucas Welter – International Consultant AFS International
- Helen Lowman – Vice President Intercultural Education & Quality
- Stephanie Cashmore – Manager, Government and Legal Affairs

PART 1: MOTION SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST

MOTION – The Volunteer Structure Committee moves that the Team Assessment Tool be accepted as presented.

ACTION DESIRED FROM NATIONAL VOLUNTEER ASSEMBLY

We request the 2010 NVA delegates approve the tool for assessing the health of our Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters. The assessment process will begin in the fall of 2010 per the decision by the 2009 NVA.

BACKGROUND OF MOTION

In 2008 AFS-USA began the implementation of a new volunteer structure which was a result of a yearlong organizational study conducted in 2007. This organizational study engaged volunteers and staff from all areas of the organization gathering their input and feedback through in-person meetings, online surveys, and focus group discussions. In addition external resources such as consultants (AFS International and Energize Inc.) and research group from Rutgers University were engaged to provide outside perspective, input and research.

One of the decisions related to the new volunteer structure was to establish an annual assessment tool and process by which AFS-USA could monitor the health of our Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters. This process would enable AFS-USA to have a better understanding of the weakness and strengths of our teams and help determine exactly what resources and support our volunteers need in order to have healthy and vibrant teams.

At the 2009 NVA a motion was presented outlining a proposed process and tool for team assessments. That motion outlining the process & tool was defeated. The 2009 NVA delegates requested that the Volunteer Structure Committee take the feedback and comments from the 2009 NVA, conduct additional research and present another motion in 2009 for a process and tool for assessing the health of our Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters. **It is important to note that the 2009 NVA delegates voted to begin team assessment in 2010.**

The Volunteer Structure Committee began a process of reviewing the feedback and comments provided by the 2009 NVA delegates regarding an assessment tool and process. One of the comments from the 2009 NVA was that the assessment tool had to include a section on all the regulations (CSIET, AFS International, and U.S. Department of State) that volunteers have a responsibility to uphold. To this end, the Volunteer Structure Committee made sure to engage Helen Lowman and Stephanie Cashmore from our Education and Quality Department so that we have the most updated regulatory requirements.

In September 2009, the Volunteer Structure Committee held a face to face meeting in Portland, Oregon where along with the committee members we engaged Kerry McCollum (Vice President

Organizational Development), Scott Hume (Director Volunteer Development), Lucas Welter (Consultant AFS International), and Helen Lowman (Vice President Education and Quality – via conference call) in developing a revised assessment tool and process. During this meeting we reviewed how other AFS Partners assess the health of their volunteer structures, feedback and input from 2009 NVA delegates and reviewed the data from the most recent compliance audit.

As a result of our research and discussion the Volunteer Structure Committee identified that the assessment process should have two parts.

1. Compliance Assessment (to be done annually & subject to change based on Department of State regulations)
2. Complete Health Assessment which will include the compliance piece as well as additional indicators of assessing a team's health (to be done every 3 years)

The Volunteer Structure Committee felt that given the regulatory environment and the feedback from the 2009 NVA delegates, we needed to assess how our teams did from a compliance standpoint. Given that the US Department of State and CSIET require an annual compliance audit, the committee determined that AFS-USA also needed to conduct an annual compliance assessment for all Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters.

The Volunteer Structure Committee also identified other “health indicators” to assess teams on related to areas such as:

- Volunteer development/recognition
- Leadership & Communication
- Impact/Volume

It was the conclusion of the committee that these other “health indicators” could be assessed every three years.

In addition to creating two parts to the assessment process, the committee also outlined specific outcomes for Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters depending on their assessment. These are included in the attached documents.

In conclusion, this revised assessment tool and process takes into account the input and feedback provided by the 2009 NVA delegates and from the perspective of the committee members addresses the concerns and issues raised about the previous process & tool presented in 2009.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST ADVANTAGES TO THE PROPOSED MOTION? WHY SHOULD THE NVA APPROVE THIS MOTION? PLEASE BE SPECIFIC – ADVANTAGES TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO AREA TEAMS AND LOCAL CHAPTERS, AND TO INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE HIGHLIGHTED.

One of AFS-USA's strengths is our volunteers. As an organization, particularly in 2009-2010 AFS-USA has committed to supporting, growing, and empowering our volunteer base. This also comes during a time when our external environment is facing increased regulation and monitoring. Having a tool and process by which we can assess the health of our volunteer teams is therefore increasingly important at this point in time. As an organization we need to have the resources necessary to support healthy volunteer teams, and to make that happen we need to have a way to measure our volunteer team health.

This assessment tool and process would enable us to:

- **Mitigate our risk from being de-listed by CSIET and losing our ability to host AFS participants**
- **This is a critical tool to ensure compliance**
- Nationally identify the strengths and weaknesses of our Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters
- More clearly define what specific resources and support is needed to improve the health of our volunteer teams
- Better identify the why's and how's. Why are things working or not working? How can we make improvements and learn from our challenges?
- Work together (volunteer-volunteer, team-team, volunteer-staff) to develop the best plan to support making improvements in areas where we are weak
- Ensure that we continue to maintain and support program quality
- Identify areas in our organization where improvements are needed

In conclusion, the biggest advantage to this proposed assessment tool and process is that it takes into account the input and feedback provided by the 2009 NVA delegates and from the perspective of the committee members addresses the concerns and issues raised about the previous motion presented in 2009.

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

There are no obvious disadvantages. However, there could be challenges to implementing this assessment tool and process. If this motion is approved by the NVA delegates, we would need to work with the National Council in developing a robust plan for communicating and implementing the assessment tool and process to volunteers and staff. Volunteers and staff would need to have a solid understanding of the assessment tool and the process prior to the proposed implementation date of fall 2010.

It is important to acknowledge that an annual assessment process with feedback and an action plan for improvement is something that as an organization we (volunteers and staff) all agree and support on a conceptual level. However, actually implementing an assessment process with an action plan for improvement will result in a cultural shift for our organization. This

process will require our organization (volunteers and staff) to be more accountable and responsible for ensuring the health of our Area Teams and Unaffiliated Chapters.

The Department of State may change the regulations for Secondary School Programs at any time. A change in these regulations could significantly impact a team's ability to host/send participants. Being flexible as an organization will be a key factor in our ability to be nimble.

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

The biggest concern for AFS-USA is not implementing the tool in a way that empowers the volunteers and ensures they have ownership of this process. If we are not in compliance, we risk the chance of being de-listed with CSIET and not passing our Department of State audit. Ownership of the tool and the process needs to be had by ALL volunteers.

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

One of the concerns that was been raised in discussions with the Volunteer Structure Committee is that we could lose volunteers from this process. On one hand we ensure that we are in compliance but on the other hand we could lose volunteers who feel disenfranchised from this experience, which in the end could impact our hosting and sending program capacity.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

None

COST IMPLICATIONS OF IMPLEMENTING THE MOTION:

The only potential costs for the implementation of this motion, is if there is a need to create additional reports and or enhancements within Global Link to support the assessment tool as well as staff time in collecting data for the assessment.

PART 2: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

DESCRIPTION OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND TIMELINE

Timeline for Assessment:

- Team assessment period is based on the academic program cycle which in AFS-USA would be July 1 – June 30
- Compliance audit would be conducted annually by the Volunteer Development Department starting in mid-September and concluding by October 31

- Full assessment of the team's health will be conducted every 3 years to help teams identify needs and resources for improvement
- For those teams that did not do well in their assessment, they will have a mid-year review which will be conducted in February/March

PART 3: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

*Attached is a copy of the actual assessment tool as well as the process and actions that occur following the assessments.

PART 4: CONCLUSION

We hope that the 2010 NVA delegates support the assessment tool and process. The intent behind assessing the health of our teams is focused on providing support and resources to improve the quality of the delivery and support of AFS programs locally through volunteers. We hope that the motion we have proposed adequately reflects that intention and we look forward to the input and feedback from the 2010 NVA delegates.