



BYLAWS of AFS-USA National Council

PREAMBLE

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 three-fold. (1) 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. (2) The council is 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. (3) The Council must be a steward 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 Council on Standards for International Educational Travel standards. These policies and procedures must also be in accord with the policies and procedures of the National Volunteer Assembly.

ARTICLE I –Statement of Purpose

Section 1 – Organizational Planning and Oversight

- (a) Consult with AFS-USA management and board in: (1) strategic and operational planning, program implementation and identification of budget priorities; (2) addressing business challenges and maximizing opportunities; (3) evaluating the value, the impact, and the relevance of the programs in the larger society; (4) tracking trends that represent opportunities and threats to AFS-USA and recommend appropriate national responses; (5) monitor overall quality of AFS-USA in relation to programmatic audits.
- (b) Inform constituents about the financial realities of AFS-USA as a non-profit organization. Hold ourselves, Teams, Chapters, and individual volunteers accountable for financial stewardship.
- (c) Provide an orderly process for election of National Council members and officers.

Section 2 – National Volunteer Assembly (NVA)

- (a) Solicit volunteer input and contributions for the agenda of the annual National Volunteer Assembly.

- (b) Approve the proposed agenda for the annual NVA.
- (c) Approve the allocation of the at-large delegate invitations for each meeting and oversee the selection of those delegates.
- (d) 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.
- (e) Oversee standard procedures for the NVA in regards to any motions brought to the NVA for vote.
- (f) Support the implementations of motions passed by the NVA.
- (g) Evaluate effectiveness of the NVA and plan improvements.

Section 3 – Volunteer Development

- (a) Consult and support staff: (1) on changes to the volunteer registration process; (2) on plans for volunteer recruitment, integration and training; (3) when key staff positions which work with volunteers are filled, changed or abolished; (4) on selection criteria to be used in selecting volunteers for any special projects, programs, or travel.
- (b) Oversee and promote national volunteer training plans in relation to established measurable goals and assist in evaluation of effectiveness.
- (c) Develop and oversee implementation of national volunteer recognition plan.

Section 4 – Volunteer Organizational Development

- (a) Develop and approve volunteer governance guidelines and policies
- (b) Approve changes to the overall volunteer structure including but not limited to: (1) changes to requirements to be a Chapter; (2) changes to requirements to be a Team; (3) changes to the functions of volunteer bodies including Chapters, Teams, National Volunteer Assembly, or the National Council.
- (c) Oversee annual quality review of Chapters and Teams in accordance with the requirements for Chapter and Team Chartering.
- (d) Oversee the development and implementation of action plans for improvement with any Chapters or Teams not meeting established criteria and/or standards.
- (e) Approve changes to Team geographic boundaries.
- (f) Approve changes to Chapter status.
- (g) Approve the granting and/or revocation of Chapter and Team charters.

Section 5 – Programs

- (a) Determine the annual hosting and sending goals and work on cyclical distribution of hosting and sending participants among the Teams.
- (b) 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.
- (c) 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.
- (d) Consult with appropriate staff after seeking volunteer input on any possible improvements or significant changes on travel arrangements at least a year in advance of program operations, including expected costs, possible efficiencies or savings relating to domestic participant travel and orientations.
- (e) 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.
- (f) 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.
- (g) Promote the introduction of new programs to the volunteer body.

Section 6 – Financial

- (a) Approve co-payment amounts annually a minimum of six months in advance of any change.
- (b) Approve any procedural or policy change 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).
- (c) Approve any performance-related incentives payable to teams and/or individuals to ensure financially viable growth with quality after consultation with staff.
- (d) Approve the maximum or minimum balances able to be held in "volunteer" bank accounts and reporting practices related to volunteer finances.
- (e) Consult on any changes to guidelines, policies or procedures regarding local fund-raising efforts.
- (f) Consult with staff when the role volunteers can play in allocating scholarship dollars is re-examined.

- (g) Oversee the centralization of AFS funds of chapters to comply with federal regulations.

Section 7 – Volunteer Communication

- (a) Inform the volunteer body of all National Council meeting activities through minutes summaries via the AFS Wiki/Volunteer newsletter.
- (b) Oversee the National Council pages on the AFS Wiki.
- (c) Consult with staff on best methods of communicating with volunteers across the organization and work with staff to implement consistent volunteer communication plans.
- (d) Oversee implementation and analysis of a national volunteer satisfaction survey on an annual basis.
- (e) Oversee & attend volunteer events to seek feedback & give information to the general volunteer body.
- (f) Ensure consistency in AFS communications to the volunteer body from all National Council entities.

ARTICLE II – National Council Membership

Section 1 – Number

There will be nine voting volunteer members on the National Council.

Section 2 – Election of Members

(a) Method of Election

The members of the National Council will be elected annually at the NVA and election will be staggered so that three National Council members will be elected each year. All candidates will be provided written material on the roles and responsibilities of the National Council and will have an opportunity to attend an orientation with questions and answers prior to doing a presentation at the NVA before elections.

(b) Qualification of Members

Council members must be registered volunteers, aged 18 or over and must continue to renew that registration during their time on the Council. They must complete an application and provide two letters of endorsement from AFS Volunteers. Volunteers on the National Council cannot simultaneously serve as a Team Chair or Chapter Chair. If a Team Chair or Chapter Chair is elected to serve on the National Council, s/he will be asked to resign that position upon election to the National Council.

Section 3 – Term of Office

Volunteer members can be elected for two consecutive three-year terms. Newly-elected members will be oriented during the period between their election and the first meeting in June and will be officially seated following that June meeting. Before the time they are officially seated, they will be entitled to attend all meetings, including the Council meeting after the NVA and the telephone conference calls, for the purpose of gaining familiarity with the processes and people involved in the National Council with the intent of making their integration complete.

Section 5 – Resignation

A member may resign at any time by sending a written resignation to the Executive Committee.

Section 6 – Removal

Members must act in accordance with the National Council By-laws and uphold the National Council Oath. Actions taken in contradiction of National Council By-laws may result in the censure or removal 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. Missing more than one in-person meeting or two conference calls per year, without prior notification, could also be cause for censure.

Section 7 – Vacancies

Any vacancy on the National Council shall be filled by appointment of the National Council based on the most recent NVA election results. Persons filling such an opening will serve the rest of the term of the person they replaced and are eligible to be elected for additional terms but may not serve more than seven consecutive years on the Council.

Section 8 – Regular Meetings

The National Council will have four in-person meetings per year. One will occur at the same place as and immediately prior to and/or following the NVA. Meetings will also include at least two conference calls. The Chair may cancel conference calls at her/his discretion. The Council will determine its meeting calendar for the following year at the meeting immediately following the NVA. The Chair may call special “volunteer-only” sessions during regularly scheduled National Council meetings, or as special meetings. Approval of a motion requires a majority of the voting members of the National Council present and voting.

Section 9 – Special Meetings

In addition to scheduled meetings, the Chair may call for special meetings via teleconference with 48 hours' notice. Such phone meetings may act on all matters before the Council, except for the revision of these by-laws, or the censure of a member.

Section 10 – Member Responsibilities

Members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings including teleconference meetings, attend a minimum of one volunteer conference or training event each year in order to provide National Council contact, and attend the annual NVA. They shall maintain a national leadership perspective for the benefit of the entire organization. Members will chair Committees as needed and are expected to participate in Advisory Group(s) and Task Force(s) according to their interests and the needs of the National Council.

Section 11 – Notice

Agenda items are due to the National Council Chair or her/his designee ten days prior to scheduled meetings. Proposed agendas for each meeting will be distributed to the National Council members, the NVA members, and to the Wiki one week prior to the meetings.

Section 12 – Quorum

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

Section 13 – Committees

- (a) The National Council may create one or more committees and appoint members of the National Council or such other persons as the Council designates to serve on the committee or committees.
- (b) A majority of any committee shall constitute a quorum.
- (c) Each committee may exercise the authority granted to it by the National Council or the Bylaws; provided, however, a committee may not: (1) Exceed the authority given the National Council; (2) Fill vacancies on the Council; (3) Elect, appoint or remove any officer or Council member; (4) Adopt, amend, or repeal the Bylaws.
- (d) Additional task forces 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. The Council may create and appoint persons to a task force, advisory group or any other such body which may or may not have Council members as members which may make recommendations to the National Council or to the officers.

Section 14 – Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the National Council Chair, the National Council Vice-Chair and the Chief Officer for Organizational Development. The President of AFS-USA is also a non-voting ex-officio member of the Executive Committee and will attend meetings of

the Executive Committee as needed and as schedules permit. 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 a decision is needed within 48 hours. Decisions made by the Executive Committee shall be submitted to the full National Council at the next meeting, for agreement.

Section 15 – Other National Council Members

- (a) There shall be a non-voting Secretary, appointed by the National Council, who will serve for a term of one year to attend all National Council Meetings, take minutes and assist with logistics during the meeting.
- (b) There shall be a non-voting Secretary-select, appointed by the National Council, who will serve in that position for a term of one year. At the end of that term, the Secretary-select shall become the Secretary. The Secretary-select shall fill in for the Secretary if s/he cannot attend any meeting during his/her term.
- (c) 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 and/or issues.
- (d) The National Council Representative to the AFS-USA Board of Directors, if not elected from among the voting members of the National Council, shall be a non-voting, ex-officio member of the National Council.

ARTICLE III – Officers

Section 1 – Number

The officers of the National Council shall be a Chair and a Vice-Chair.

Section 2 – Election and Term of Office

- (a) Election of officers will be completed at the National Council meeting held after the annual NVA.
- (b) Officers will serve for one year terms which will begin following the first meeting in June. Individuals will be eligible to serve a maximum of three consecutive years in one officer position. New officers will be oriented under the direction of the Chief Organizational Development Officer and the outgoing officers.
- (c) Nominations and voting:
Officers will be nominated from Members of the Council who have served at least six months on the National Council. Members eligible to vote for officers will be all volunteer Members who are on the National Council at the time of election. Newly elected members who have not yet been seated will not be eligible to vote in this election. Balloting may be

by written ballot or by internet vote and will be counted by the Nominations and Governance Committee. The officer nominee receiving the most votes will be elected. Voting for Chair will occur first, followed by voting for Vice Chair.

Section 3 – Removal

Any officer elected or appointed by the National Council may be removed by the National Council, whenever in its judgment the best interests of the Council will be served thereby.

Section 4 – Vacancies

Should the position of Chair become vacant, the Vice-Chair shall fill that office for the remainder of the designated term. The Chair or Vice-Chair will preside over the National Council meetings. If both the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent, then the Chief Officer for Organizational Development will preside.

Section 5 – Duties

(a) National Council Chair

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the National Council. The Chair-elect will assist the chair in the interim meetings, using this opportunity as orientation to the position. 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 and will work closely with the Chair to manage the work of the National Council. .

ARTICLE IV – Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the National Council in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the National Council may adopt.

ARTICLE V – Amendments

These By-laws can be revised with a three-fourths vote of the entire National Council. Suggested revisions should be given to the Executive Committee in a timely manner. National Council members must have at least 14 days to review the proposed revisions before the vote is taken.

Article VI – Definitions

- A. Consult: To seek advice from the National Council prior to the final approval of or creation of a plan, process, policy, or procedure as well as any changes to an existing plan, process, policy or procedure.
- B. Inform: To convey information from the National Council to another body of individuals.
- C. Approve: To make the final decision regarding a plan, process, policy, procedure or any implementation of such items.
- D. Oversee: To supervise or review a plan, process, policy or procedure.
- E. Develop: To create a new plan, process, policy or procedure.
- F. Provide: To supply or make available.
- G. Promote: To help bring into being, to contribute to the growth.
- H. Censure: To formally and publically reprimand a voting member of the National Council due to actions in contradiction of these by-laws or the National Council Oath.

Section VII – References

National Council Oath

Certified a true and correct copy of the Bylaws of the AFS-USA National Council

as of _____

(National Council Chair)