

Building the Association of Volunteer Resource Management (AVRM)

A. Celeste-Sauls Marks, CVA
President and Founder
Association of Volunteer Resources Management
3100 MainStreet #155
Dallas, Texas 75225
Tel. 1-866-627-7643 * FAX 214-853-5880 * celeste.sauls@vrm-roundtable.org

Abstract

The author discusses the creation of a new national association for professional managers of volunteer resources. Conversations that were initiated on the Volunteer Resource Management (VRM) Roundtable listserv in early 2006 resulted in the formation of a team to construct an industry survey. Survey results gathered from 737 respondents clearly identified the areas that professionals felt it was important for a professional organization to address in terms of services and products, and also identified various aspects of the organization, such as geographic scope. Based on the survey results, a taskforce was developed to address a variety of issues and build elements necessary to become a sustainable, transparent organization that was incorporated on March 5, 2007 as the Association of Volunteer resource Management (AVRM). On October 3-5, 2007, the Association held its first national conference in Dallas, Texas. In January 2008, a new board of directors will replace the founding board and will guide the new organization through its continued development focused upon principles of transparency, sustainability, diversity and inclusion.

Keywords:

professional, association, volunteer resource managers

Introduction

Volunteer Resources Managers (VRMs) do very important work everyday. They move people and support nonprofit organizations that provide a wide variety of services. Their hands touch the lives of millions of people everyday. Given the uniqueness of the work they do, they need the best professional support available to them to develop and hone their skills. Without ongoing professional support, VRMs new to the field would not have the training and mentoring support they need. Also, experienced VRMs would not have the continued professional support needed to meet changing industry needs.

The Association of Volunteer Resources Management (AVRM) was created to meet the needs of VRMs in

today's world. AVRM was also created with a vision of the future. By developing a flexible organization that is able to adapt the changing industry trends, AVRM will be able to serve professionals well into the future. It all began one evening with a simple idea: Build the new national professional association for VRMs. I was connected with a donor who could provide the web solutions to support the project. That was the beginning of the VRM Roundtable and the journey to build the new association.

Conversations began on the VRM Roundtable listserv and by late March 2006, a team was formed to construct an industry survey. The focus of the survey was to identify and clearly define the types of support that VRMs wanted and needed

most. The survey was posted and drew responses from 737 professionals in the field. The results clearly identified the areas that professionals felt it was important for a professional organization to address in terms of services and products. It also identified various aspects of the organization, such as geographic scope, that would be key to how services would be delivered.

Based on the survey results, a taskforce was developed to address a variety of issues and build elements necessary to become a sustainable, transparent organization. The taskforce was composed on ten teams of 10. Each team was charged with specific tasks to accomplish. Also, each team elected a team leader. Together, these team leaders comprised the Leadership Team who guided the organization's development. Through the industry survey, the Leadership Team was able to develop the philosophical underpinnings that have driven the entire project. Teams continued to work through the summer and fall of 2006 on tasks such as developing the bylaws, governance structure and membership program.

The development of AVRVM has been guided by the principles of transparency, sustainability, diversity and inclusion. All discussions and information has been in open forums and shared through the website. Through the efforts of many, the new organization is emerging. Below is a discussion of some of the work that has been accomplished.

Organizational Name

The organization's name was drawn directly from the survey results. In the survey, respondents were asked to identify words they would like to have included in the name of the new association. These words were compiled and a variety of sample names were prepared from the list. These were presented to the members of the VRM Roundtable through a survey in which

they could vote on the names they identified with most or suggest alternate names. Ultimately, the name "Association of Volunteer Resources Managers" was selected. A broad spectrum of VRMs felt it was meaningful and correctly reflected their profession.

Mission Statement

The mission statement was developed through a process similar to the naming process. The Taskforce gathered information and posted the elements that had been suggested. After a final vote, the statement was presented to the VRM Roundtable members for a final review. The goal was to develop a mission statement that was narrow enough to guide the organization yet broad enough to encompass the diversity of the field. VRM Roundtable participants made it clear that it needed to be meaningful to all of the VRMs the organization would serve whether paid and unpaid.

The statement that was developed is as follows:

The Association of Volunteer Resources Management is a member-driven organization serving Managers of Volunteer Resources in the United States by providing professional development, leveraging resources and promoting effective volunteerism.

Incorporation

Just a year after the process began, the Association became a reality when it was incorporated on March 5, 2007. The organization was formed under the bylaws developed by the Governance Team. Day to day business elements, such as post office box, phone and fax lines, had been put into place. AVRVM has also filed for the 501(C)3 designation from the IRS.

Membership

In August, 100 Cornerstone, or founding, memberships were made available. These memberships represent those individuals who wish to fully support the new organization by building a solid foundation. General membership has also opened.

Conference

On October 3-5, 2007, AVRVM held the first national conference in Dallas, Texas. The 100 participants who attended, engaged in workshops and networking sessions that broadened their skills and discussed new industry trends. The conference will continue to be one avenue for VRMs to engage in cutting edge professional development opportunities.

The Road Ahead

AVRVM has an unlimited potential. In January 2008, a new board of directors will replace the founding board. Drawing on the vision and passion of the membership, they will guide the new organization through its continued development. The possibilities for future programming, such as online training, is broad. The avenues used to reach the goals of the organization, though, will be driven by the clear purpose for the association which is to leverage resources and serve the professional development needs of all VRMs, regardless of the geographic location, field subject matter or local DOVIA support. It is a tremendous undertaking but one that touch the lives of many people.

About the Author

A. Celeste Sauls-Marks serves as the Agency Relations Director for Dallas County Government Relations and Disaster Management at the Volunteer Center of North Texas (VCNT). As the Founder and Leadership Team Leader for the VRM Roundtable, she is leading the project to build the Association of Volunteer Resources Management. Ms. Sauls-Marks serves as the Editor-In-Chief of Volunteer Management Review and on the Steering Committee of International Volunteer Manager Appreciation Day. As a frequent speaker, Ms. Sauls-Marks' engaging style and insights offer participants the tools to develop and manage robust volunteer programs.