

TRAINING AND CURRICULUM FOR A 'NEW CAREER'—VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

THE ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTEER BUREAUS OF AMERICA
TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

by
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The need for the development of training and curriculum for the career of volunteer administration has been the concern of the Association of Volunteer Bureaus of America and its 161 Volunteer Bureaus throughout the United States and Canada over the past two years.¹ The purpose of the AVBA Curriculum and Training Committee is to stimulate programs in institutions of higher learning that provide residential and short-term workshops, academic courses and degree programs leading to a professional degree for coordinators, administrators and directors of volunteer services in all settings that use volunteers, providing them with consistent, systematic training designed to improve their knowledge, creativity and effectiveness and thereby improving the volunteer services which they supervise.

An underlying approach to a program of this type needs to be that the sequence of topics to be covered be both general and practical. "The concept of voluntarism, including its organization and administration is imbedded in a sociological framework which defines the place of the volunteer in our existing social system, how he got there, and in what ways he may be expected to develop. The concepts basic to administering any group of individuals working in the formal social structure of an organization are equally valid for the administration of volunteer services.² At the same time, these concepts must be applied to the immediate needs of the coordinator. In accordance with this approach experts in their respective fields present basic concepts which are then interpreted by experienced coordinators of volunteer services.

A plan has been suggested by Dr. Marvin Arffa on how to achieve the goal of a curriculum as follows:³

Define goal or mission of a volunteer coordinator—stimulate, integrate, coordinate volunteer resources with needs.

Analyze job.

Job description—only those duties that contribute to achievement of goal.

Agree on curriculum that will best equip a coordinator to organize duties into categories which would match courses that already might exist.

Establish standards; i.e., internship training. This is already required in some colleges in other professions.

Develop recommended job specifications that will spell out the mission, significant responsibilities and required qualification in terms of education and experience.

Volunteer Bureaus recognize, because of the increased demand upon their services, that there will be greater opportunity for employment in the field of volunteer services administration as volunteers rapidly move into new and varied settings. The National Program for Voluntary Action which calls for solutions to social problems through the creative effort of volunteers and a voluntary partnership between public and private agencies indicates the need further.⁴ It is also indicated in the implementation of the Harris Amendment which requires states to appoint volunteer coordinators for State Welfare Departments in order to set up volunteer programs in welfare departments on state and local levels. In courts and welfare alone, it is probable that at least 5,000 new volunteer coordinator or director jobs are opening up within the next year or so; as against an expected graduate-trained output of five.⁵ Those who are already in the volunteer service career have expressed their need for assistance in performing their jobs more effectively. A survey made by AVBA of volunteer bureau directors in 1968 indicated the need for training and curriculum for volunteer coordinators, directors, supervisors and staff working with volunteers to expand the profession and encourage staff and/or volunteers to move into supervisory positions.⁶ Currently organizations and agencies that have vacancies for the position of volunteer service coordinator have no recruitment pool to which they can turn, nor does the manpower exist to fill projected needs, thus leading to the underutilization of the many volunteers who seek the opportunities to offer their skills and talents. Because of this lack agencies have been forced to employ persons with no prior experience and no exposure to volunteers and volunteer programs. Volunteers and students are also expressing interest in educational opportunities to prepare themselves for a career in volunteer administration.

In reviewing studies done by others and materials written on volunteer administration relating to the job descriptions of volunteer services administration, the kinds of tasks and responsibilities they are assigned, and the kind of educational background experience they bring to the job, it is obvious to me that a wide variety of training, skills and abilities are included.⁷ In a sense I see this person as a generalist to the extent that he is required to know something about many things and unlike the situation with 'many professional' groups there does not seem to be any single existing body of knowledge--nor any one specialized area of training which would uniquely qualify him or better prepare him to function effectively in the career of volunteer services administration. To really ascertain what kind of skills, abilities, and educational background were needed for this career, I felt a beginning might be to ask the people who are involved what they want and how they acquired their unique body of knowledge. I had been asked to develop and lead a workshop on curriculum and training for volunteer administrators and used this as the opportunity for further investigation.⁸ As a springboard for discussion I developed a self-survey questionnaire to be utilized by workshop participants. The questionnaire covered the broad categories of job activities and responsibilities,

educational background including academic courses, practical experience and skills needed as seen by volunteer administrators in relation to the development of training for themselves and others in this field. Seventy-eight persons engaged in volunteer administration in a variety of settings from all over the United States and Canada responded to the questionnaire. Some major points brought out by this workshop and the questionnaire were that the majority felt that the most important skills and abilities for volunteer coordinators were:

Knowledge of the total community, its various agencies, organizations and programs. The ability to communicate effectively and work with people. Be able to work with and inspire other people—enabling them to realize their capacities—understanding their needs—work with professional and volunteer—get along with all segments of the community.

In regard to educational and practical background the majority indicated at least four years of college and more, and extensive community volunteer service and knowledge of the community.

RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Of the seventy-eight respondents, fifty-six were volunteer bureau directors, thirteen were administrative volunteers connected with volunteer bureaus and nine were staff persons working with volunteers in settings such as public welfare, information and referral, medical, rehabilitation and giving service to the aged, children and youth.

The purpose and objectives of the volunteer service the respondents were engaged in, as seen by them, were for the majority:

To encourage development and expansion of services to the entire community through the use of volunteers, to coordinate people and jobs and coordination of services among agencies.

To give consultative service to agencies, develop workshops and plan volunteer training within agencies; to help agencies make the most effective use of volunteers and give volunteers a sense of being needed.

Train, recruit, and select volunteers for an information and referral function in various city neighborhoods and groups.

Educate the public as to needs of community and the value of volunteers, to involve as many people as possible in all areas of community service.

Some single responses included, innovator of new programs, to the "haves" with the "have-nots," to encourage agencies to use older persons and youths as volunteers and actively recruit them. Supplement agency programs with a volunteer program to meet unmet budgets and improve agency services through creativity. Help to centralize volunteer efforts to avoid duplication. Raise the standards for volunteers in agencies and programs. To offer channels for involvement of citizenry in agency affairs and to utilize their skills which can supplement agency

resources. Interpret, encourage, motivate and appreciate the place of volunteers in our society and the social changes they can effect for the betterment of all people.

THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS

The respondents included fifteen MSW's; six M.A.'s; and forty-two with undergraduate degrees of which four were working towards a graduate degree. Of the remaining fourteen, eight had from one to three years of college work. The majority (46) listed community volunteer service as practical experience that was helpful in their present job, and thirteen listed social work. The rest included knowledge of the community, board participation, agency experience, teaching, club activities, community organization, planning and field work in hospitals and social agencies. Direct work with volunteers in such agencies as Volunteer Bureaus, Girl Scouts, YMCA's, Camp Fire Girls, Red Cross, Travelers Aid, Head Start, were listed by thirty-five.

PRESENT JOB ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Contact and work with the community, particularly volunteers and agencies were given as job responsibility by fifty-eight participants. Recruitment, training and placing of volunteer came next (28) followed by administration (22), innovating and initiating volunteer program (20) and public relations (19). Other activities and responsibilities listed were:

Interviewing volunteers, consultation, developing training workshops, writing grants and working with Volunteer Bureau Board in planning and developing programs.

DIFFERENT ROLES INVOLVED IN THE JOB

The roles most often mentioned were public relations person, consultant-advisor, administrator, interviewer, liaison person with all agencies in the community, coordinator, evaluator, planner, organizer, teacher, trainer, recruiter, manager, leader, enabler, catalyst, mediator, and expeditor. Some saw themselves as interpreter of community needs and resources, employment specialist for agencies and volunteers, researcher, "Jack of all Trades," innovator, and fund raiser.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

The workshop participants were asked what skills and abilities they would have liked to have had when they started their career as volunteer coordinator or director. More than thirty indicated a need for knowledge of total community, its various agencies, further training in community organization, thorough knowledge of public relations including preparing publicity for mass media and public speaking, ability to communicate effectively and work with volunteers and professionals. Other responses included:

Knowledge of the goals, scope and objectives of volunteerism as seen and experienced through the Association of Volunteer Bureaus and its relation to citizen participation. Understanding

human behavior. More volunteer experience in practical applications in various areas. The awareness of current issues and how they affect the community. Skills in group dynamics. Knowledge of role and structure of a board. Program planning skills and techniques and workshops. Immediate recognition of abilities of others. Personnel training, more skill in supervision. Ability to motivate individual groups. Research techniques. Thorough knowledge of budgeting and accounting. Fund raising techniques and knowledge of available resources. Skills in interviewing. Being able to organize, plan and evaluate. Business management, typing and other office skills.

The respondents considered their most important ability the ability to work with and inspire other people—enabling people to realize their capacities—understanding their needs—ability to work with professional and volunteer—present good image of agency (63). Fifteen listed administrative and organizational ability and eleven, knowledge of community, agencies, organizations and needs. Other important abilities listed were:

Public Relations	Understanding
Enthusiasm	Objectivity
Common Sense	Flexibility
Public Speaking	Interviewing
Self-discipline	Set Priorities
Program Planning	Funding Procedures
Sense of Humor	Ability to learn and grow
Effective Communication Skills	Not afraid to make mistakes
Ability to delegate responsibility	Innovative ability and creativity
Knowledge of full meaning of volunteerism	
Knowledge of situations in which volunteers can be utilized	
Psychology and human behavior	
Being able to communicate excitement of volunteering and belief in agency's program.	

Over seventy-five per cent of the volunteer coordinators and directors replied that they acquired their most important skills and abilities through years of experience of working with people and thirty per cent through professional training and academic learning. The remainder acquired these abilities through business experience and organizational activities in PTA, Girl Scouts, Volunteer Bureau, YWCA, Junior League and civic clubs.

SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES NEEDED

The skills and techniques seen as necessary by the volunteer coordinators or directors for their jobs were pointed out as follows:

- Ability to get along with and work with all segments of the community (47)
- Knowledge and understanding of local community, its welfare programs, the agencies and their services, needs of the community and how they can be met (29)

Knowledge of principles that make volunteering effective, getting agencies to see value of good volunteer, mobilizing people and getting them involved (13)
 Resourcefulness, awareness, flexibility and efficiency (28)
 Diplomacy, sensitivity, patience, tolerance, like people (27)
 Leadership, management and organizational skills (20)
 Public speaking (17) Interviewing skills (16)
 Administrative and supervisory skills (12) Public relations (13)
 Understanding people and human basic needs (14)
 Publicity writing, journalism, editing, communication skills (19)
 Setting priorities and discipline (7) Teacher/trainer (6)
 Motivate volunteers and recruit suitable volunteers (8)
 Budgeting, accounting and fund raising (7)
 Business management and systems analysis (3) Typing (2)

SUGGESTED EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND ACADEMIC COURSES

Of the workshop participants, thirty stated that for this 'new career' a Bachelor of Arts would be needed as educational background with an emphasis on social, behavioral or political science; seventeen suggested an emphasis on sociology and psychology; and thirteen, liberal arts. A Masters Degree or graduate work in Social Work was listed by thirteen and three suggested a Junior College Degree.

Courses in the following subjects were recommended:

Community organization with an emphasis on health and welfare agencies and power structure (29)
 Administration and Communication (19)
 Social Work (13) Psychology (11) Sociology (110)
 Public Relations (8) Human Behavior (7)
 Fund Raising and Budgeting (3) Journalism (4)
 Group Dynamics (2) Business Management (2)
 Commercial Art (2) Leadership Training (2)
 Supervision (2) Logic (1) Secretarial Training (1)
 History and Philosophy of Volunteerism (1)

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Volunteer experience was listed by twenty-nine as practical experience that would be useful for a career of working with volunteers. Having worked in groups, with the community and with its agencies was cited by twenty-two, nineteen indicated working with people as practical experience. Others included experience in administration, social work, supervision, public relations, coordination, interviewing, personnel management, business and as secretary.

CONCLUSION

The workshop participants in their responses to the questionnaire pointed out that a curriculum or training program for the 'new career' of volunteer administration needs to be both general and practical. As agencies and educational institutions turn their attention towards vol-

unteer programs and to the people who will administer them, they can encourage members of their own staff and volunteers to seek training or provide training in volunteer administration taking into consideration the suggestions made by those who are presently engaged in this 'new career.' Educational curriculum embodying the essential accumulated knowledge for those desiring entry into this career and for those in practice, desiring to improve their knowledge and skills, needs to be based not on pre-conceived notions and traditional concepts but on a whole range of learning experiences from the formal university course to the short-term creative workshops and practical experiences including some actual volunteer work. In the planning for curriculum and training it is helpful to turn to agencies who have dealt with it and also know the field of volunteerism well, such as volunteer bureaus. The ultimate aim in the development of training and curriculum should be that of serving the volunteer better and to encourage volunteer administration as a new career for people in human services.

FOOTNOTES

1. Executive Committee Minutes, Association of Volunteer Bureaus of America, May, 1969; November, 1969 and May, 1970, New York.
2. Marvin S. Arffa, "A Continuing Education Program for Coordinators of Volunteer Services," *Volunteer Administration*, Volume 3, No. 1, Spring, 1969, Northeastern University, Boston, p. 20.
3. *Ibid*, p. 21
4. National Program for Voluntary Action, Washington, D. C., 1970.
5. Proceedings of Conference on College Curricula for the Leadership of Human Service Volunteer Programs, National Information Center on Volunteers in Courts, Boulder, Colorado, October, 1970.
6. Report of Training and Curriculum Committee of Association of Volunteer Bureaus of America, 1970.
7. Training and Curriculum for Volunteer Administration, Loan Folder No. 14, Association of Volunteer Bureaus of America, New York, 1969.
8. Proceedings of the Annual Workshop of the Association of Volunteer Bureaus of America, National Conference on Social Welfare, May, 1970, pp. 15-19.