

# COMPETENCIES FOR MANAGERS OF VOLUNTEERS



## Overview

---

MANAGING SELF: TRAITS AND CORE COMPETENCIES

---

MANAGING PEOPLE: SUPERVISION & HUMAN RESOURCES

---

MANAGING PROJECT & PROGRAMS: MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS

---

LEADING ORGANIZATIONS: LEADERSHIP

---

Developed by  
The Maine Commission for Community Service, #38 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04330  
[www.MaineServiceCommission.gov](http://www.MaineServiceCommission.gov)

Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine  
45 Commerce Drive, Suite 11, Augusta, ME 04330  
[www.muskie.usm.maine.edu](http://www.muskie.usm.maine.edu)

# Competencies for Managers of Volunteers

## **Background and Research.**

The Maine Commission for Community Service contracted with Larry Ullian of the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service to identify competency-based models for Managers of Volunteers and to adapt them to the needs of AmeriCorps program directors. The project began with a review of the relevant literature, interviews with current Managers of Volunteers, and descriptions of Managers of Volunteers in other nonprofit settings (e.g. emergency preparedness, health care, and cooperative extension). This model is the result of synthesizing the research on a wide range of models, including existing college and university curricula, and the Points of Light Foundation. The Competencies for Managers of Volunteers of the Association of Volunteer Administration (AVA) came the closest to meeting the needs of the AmeriCorps program directors because that model is designed for practitioners in the field. This document is the result.

## **Assumption.**

A fundamental assumption is that well prepared and competent Managers of Volunteers are essential to the success of a program, as described quantitatively and qualitatively and measured by the program's processes, outputs, outcomes, and impact on the community and clients it serves. Individual effectiveness is essential to organizational effectiveness.

## **Value of Volunteer Management.**

The field of volunteer management lacks consistency and coordination. Some Managers of Volunteers are appointed to their positions with no experience as a supervisor or manager. Skills and experience of Managers of Volunteers vary greatly. Many report that what they know they 'picked up on the job'. The competence of the volunteer manager has a powerful effect on staff and volunteer morale, the work ethic of the organization, and the retention on the job. A competent volunteer manager sustains the program by providing rich, varied, useful experiences for volunteers that support the mission of organizations to meet the needs of the community.

## **Competencies Model.**

In developing this model, we realized that these broad areas of responsibility are neither developmental nor hierarchical. Some people begin their careers in leadership and over time may acquire skills in management, supervision, or technology. Not all Managers of Volunteers need the skills in all of these categories, but most do. They are not developmental across categories, i.e. a volunteer manager may have considerable expertise in community leadership and may never need to acquire the skills of financial management. Certainly not all Managers of Volunteers start their career in the same place. AmeriCorps program directors, and many other Managers of Volunteers, require the full range of these competencies with at least an intermediate level of accomplishment.

## **Using this Document.**

The material is organized so that the Competencies for Managers of Volunteers start with an overview of the broad categories of skills required of a typical volunteer manager. Then they move to increasing detail. Together these sections aid in understanding the broad categories of accomplishments that a volunteer manager must demonstrate, at the same time that they provide the detail necessary for a self-assessment or a professional development plan.

## **Competencies for Managers of Volunteers: Summary**

The Summary page provides a brief overview. This section includes personal traits that are inherent in the individual, core competencies that affect a person's ability to learn and acquire

## Competencies for Managers of Volunteers

the skills and knowledge necessary to advance in their field. Three broad categories of skills required of Managers of Volunteers are: Supervision and Human Resources, Management and Operations, and Leadership. They include a broad range of skills from managing self, managing people, managing projects and programs, and leading organizations.

### Competencies for Managers of Volunteers: Detail

The Detail section identifies the function that makes up the requirements of that process and provides a description of what that competency requires. The Detail section describes the Traits, Characteristics, and Core Competencies as well as breaking down the major categories of Supervision and Human Resources, Management and Operations, and Leadership.

### Competencies for Managers of Volunteers: Novice to Expert

This section breaks competencies into steps that move the person along a continuum from Novice to Expert. The path from Novice to Expert is developmental in nature, in that the knowledge base required of a novice is essential to developing the more sophisticated skills, adaptation and advocacy required to become an expert. In developing the continuum for Novice to Expert, we relied on much of the work of the Equipped for the Future model from the National Institute for Literacy developed to document competencies in adult education.

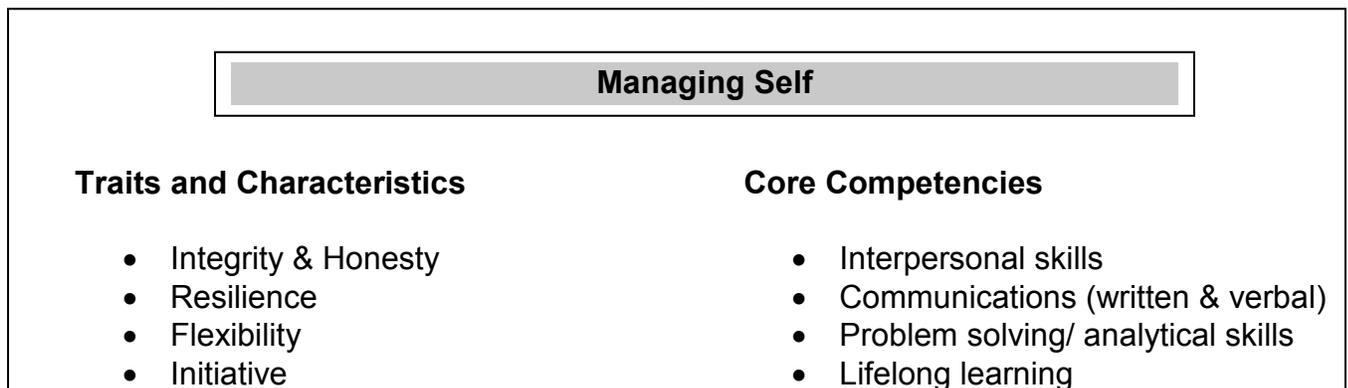
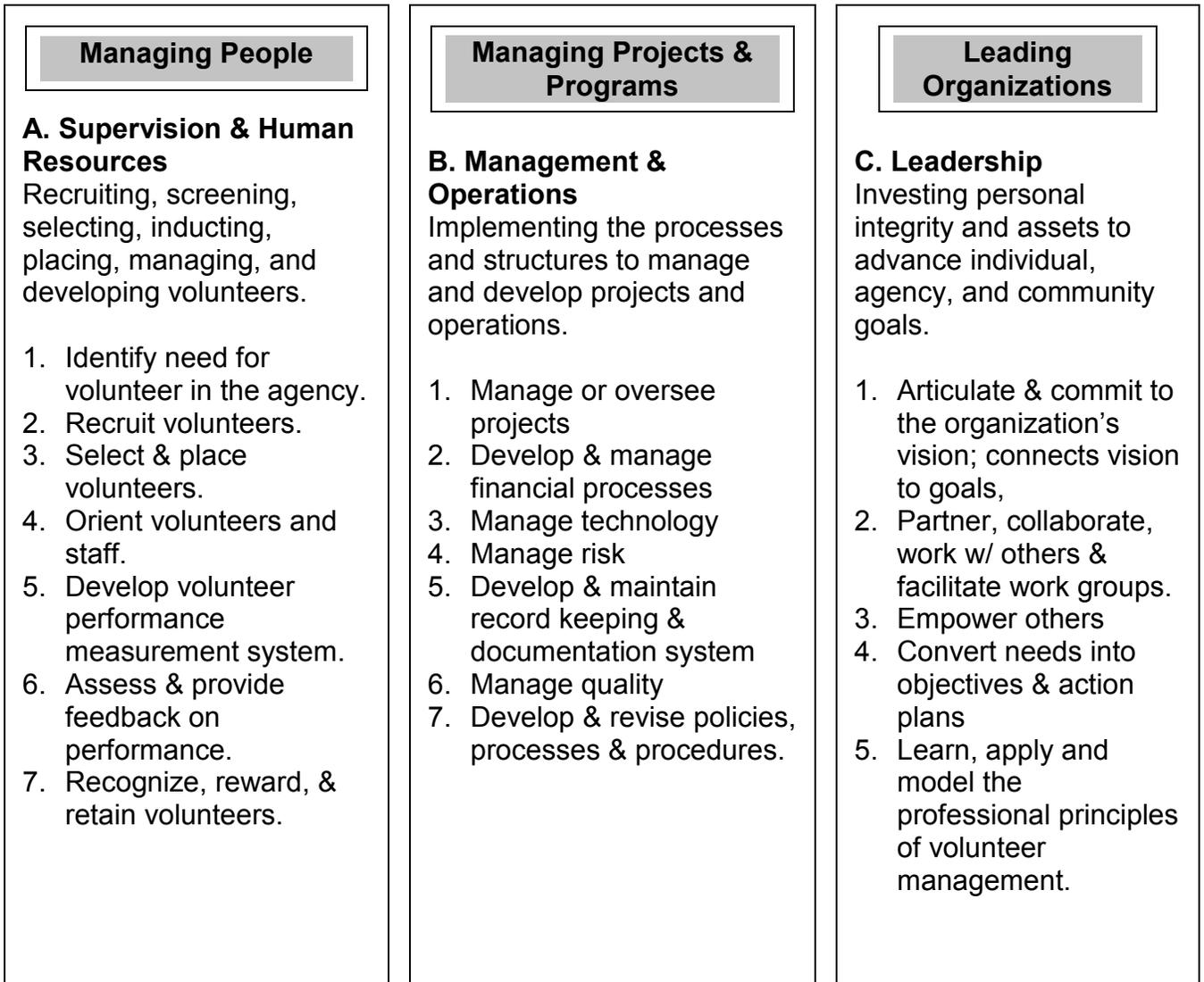
### Competencies for Managers of Volunteers: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Expert

This section separates out the competencies by skill level. This helps to create a tool that can be used to track accomplishments at each level.

## Sources

- Association for Volunteer Administration – Credentialing, retrieved online May, 2003 from [www.avaintl.org/credential/factsheet.html](http://www.avaintl.org/credential/factsheet.html)
- Boyd, BL (Texas A & M University) Monograph: “Competencies for Leaders of Volunteers During the Next Decade: A National Delphi Study,” 2002
- Bright, A & Sharpe, P. (US Office of Personnel Management), “A Leadership Model for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. Presentation to the NASPE Annual Meeting, July 22, 2003
- Culp, K & Nolan, MS. Trends Which Will Impact Volunteer Leadership Educators in the Next Ten Years, *Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 2001, 19, 10
- Hager, MA & Brudney, JL. “Volunteer Management: Practices and Retention of Volunteers,” Washington, DC, The Urban Institute, June, 2004
- King, J & Safrit, RD. Extension Agents’ Perceptions of Volunteer Management, *Journal of Extension*, 1998, 36 (3); Retrieved online at [www.joe.org/joe/1998/june/a2.html](http://www.joe.org/joe/1998/june/a2.html)
- Trimble, Nicole. “Preparing Tomorrow’s Leaders Today,” Corporation for National Service, National Fellowship Program, Summer 2000
- Voluntary Sector National Training Organization, “National Occupational Standards for Managing Volunteers”; retrieved from website – [www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk](http://www.voluntarysectorskills.org.uk), August, 2003
- Sondra Stein, Equipped for the Future Content Standards: “What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, National Institute for Literacy, Washington, D.C. 2000. <http://eff.cls.utk.edu/resources/default.htm>

## Competencies for Managers of Volunteers



## Competencies for Managers of Volunteers

<b>Managing Self</b>	Understanding, accepting, and developing oneself with awareness, control, and confidence
<b>Function</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Traits and Characteristics</b>	Traits and characteristics are intrinsic to the individual, are a deep and enduring part of a person's personality, and are consistent and predictive of behavior across situations and experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Integrity &amp; Honesty</b></li> </ul>	The quality of being reliable, ethical and truthful.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resilience</b></li> </ul>	The quality of being able to rebound and withstand chronic or episodic stress or pressure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flexibility</b></li> </ul>	Ability to adjust, change, or reconsider actions or decisions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Initiative</b></li> </ul>	The internal desire and ability to take the first step and originate action.
<b>Core Competencies</b>	Competencies are predictive of high performance, including an element of "intention" that causes action towards an outcome. They are consistent across the spectrum of a person's experience in their professional and personal life.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interpersonal skills</b></li> </ul>	Cooperate and collaborate with others; resolve conflict and negotiate; advocate, influence and guide others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communications (written &amp; verbal)</b></li> </ul>	Read with comprehension; convey ideas in writing; speak clearly and listen actively; observe critically.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Problem solving/ analytical skills</b></li> </ul>	Plan, analyze, and solve problems using a range of tools and data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lifelong learning</b></li> </ul>	Take responsibility for own learning, use information and communications technology; conduct research, reflect on and evaluate information, data, and resources.

## Competencies for Managers of Volunteers

<b>A. Supervision and Human Resources – Recruiting, screening, selecting, inducting, placing, managing, and developing volunteers.</b>	
<b>Function</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Identify need for volunteer in the agency.</b>	Know agency's priorities, plans, customer/ client needs, and describe how volunteers will add value. Recognize and advocates for a designated manager/supervisor.
<b>2. Recruit volunteers.</b>	Use creative marketing & communication skills to identify targets, articulate opportunity, and provoke response.
<b>3. Select &amp; place volunteers.</b>	Effectively use interviewing skills to elicit competencies. Use assessment skills to determine qualifications and suitability of applicant to assignment.
<b>4. Orient volunteers and staff.</b>	Deliver effective training for volunteer and staff, and include development opportunities for volunteer that require additional skills, knowledge, or abilities to perform service.
<b>5. Develop performance measurement system</b>	Link and document individual volunteer needs with organizational priorities, strategies, and operations. Use adult/youth development principles when supervising, training, and providing advancement opportunities for volunteers.
<b>6. Assess &amp; provide feedback to volunteer about performance</b>	Establish a system and keep a schedule of performance review for volunteers. Identify and articulate performance expectations of volunteers, targeted outcome & output indicators, and give both positive and negative feedback, as necessary.
<b>7. Recognize, reward, &amp; retain volunteers.</b>	Maintain communication and feedback loop with frequent and public praise as well as a detailed, quantifiable (if possible), and concrete report of accomplishments.

## Competencies for Managers of Volunteers

<b>B. Management and Operations – Implementing the processes and structures to manage and develop projects and operations.</b>	
<b>Function</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Manage or oversee projects</b>	Plan, document, implement, evaluate, train, and disseminate reports on work.
<b>2. Develop &amp; manage financial processes</b>	Identify and obtain alternate sources of funding; develop & manage budget accounts for both cash and in-kind resources; pursue fiscal sustainability.
<b>3. Manage technology</b>	Identify, obtain, and apply technology that is useful for training, record keeping, finance, evaluation, analysis, and service delivery.
<b>4. Manage risk</b>	Apply knowledge of risk assessment, prevention, identification, and financing to risk avoidance, reduction, and control programs and crisis planning/management. Address tasks, individuals (volunteers and clients), environment, organization, and laws or regulations.
<b>5. Develop &amp; maintain record keeping &amp; documentation system</b>	Understand the relationship between maintaining sufficient documentation and managing risk. Use a documentation system for supervising volunteers and program impact/evaluation that is efficient, comprehensive and cost effective.
<b>6. Manage quality</b>	Apply principles of continuous quality improvement and quality assurance and quality control to ensure volunteer services are responsive, consistent, valued, and of high quality.
<b>7. Develop &amp; revise policies, processes &amp; procedures as needed</b>	Ensure that guidelines for program operations, volunteer assignments, and program staff reflect best practices of both volunteer administration and service sector (health, education, public safety, etc.). Integrate changes in service sector into volunteer roles, training, etc.

## Competencies for Managers of Volunteers

<b>C. Leadership –Investing personal integrity and assets to advance individual, agency, and community goals</b>	
<b>Function</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1. Articulate &amp; commit to the organization’s vision and connects vision to goals</b>	Hold a systems perspective, an awareness of community context, and a strategic outlook.
<b>2. Partner, collaborate, work with others and facilitate work groups</b>	Build coalitions; share leadership and resources; and establish strategic alliances with mutual organizational benefits.
<b>3. Empower others</b>	Share power & give up control; promote policies and procedures that incorporate cultural competency and disability inclusion; see mutual benefits from empowerment.
<b>4. Convert needs into objectives and action plans</b>	Implement planning tasks and balance with the details of accomplishing the work. Articulate connections, opportunities, and advantages for internal and external partners and program participants.
<b>5. Learn, apply and model the professional principles of volunteer management</b>	Initiate a self assessment plan for professional development, make opportunities for formal and nonformal learning, and support the advancement of the field of volunteer management.