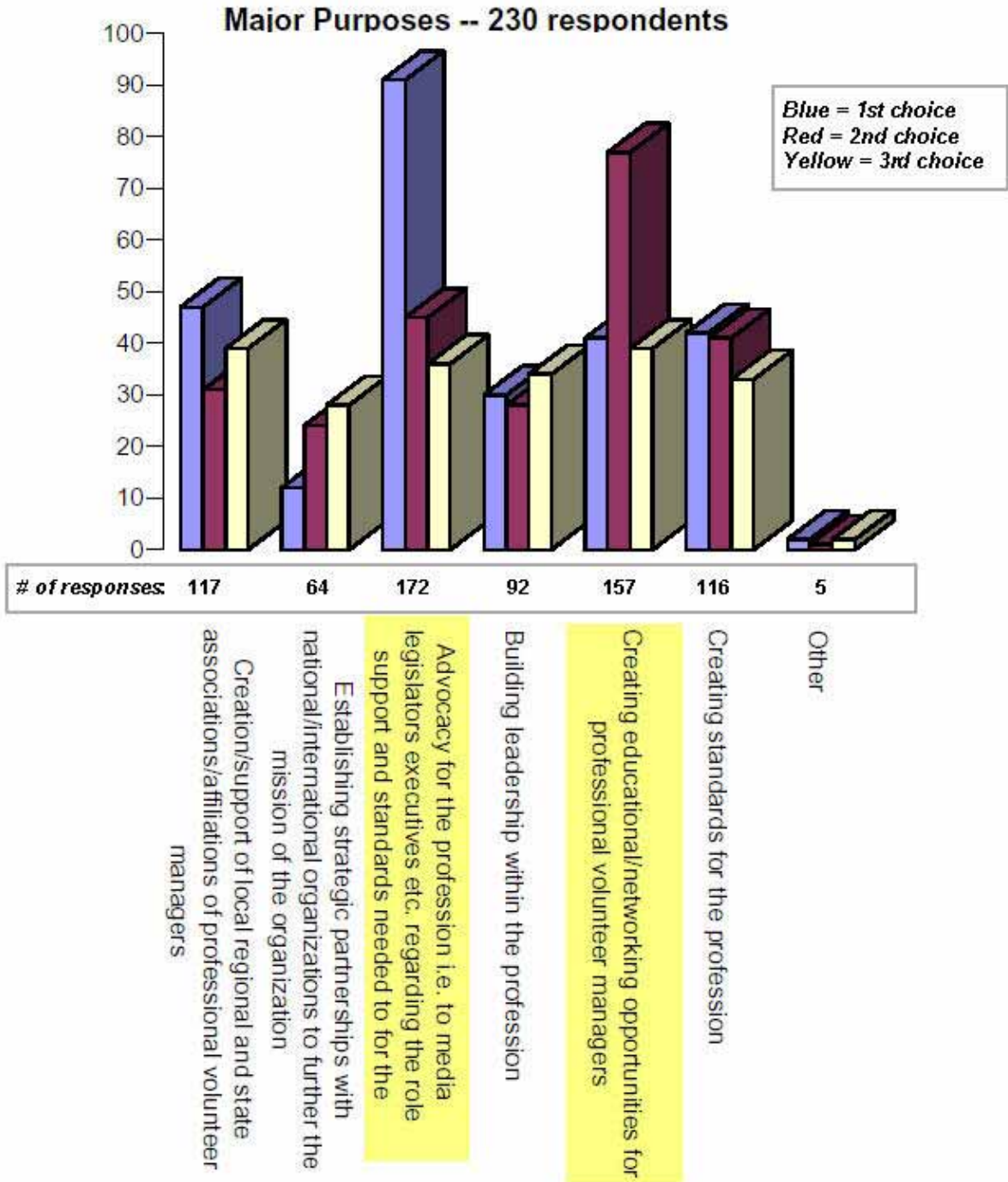


**COVAA Pre-Congress Survey to the Field
November 2006**

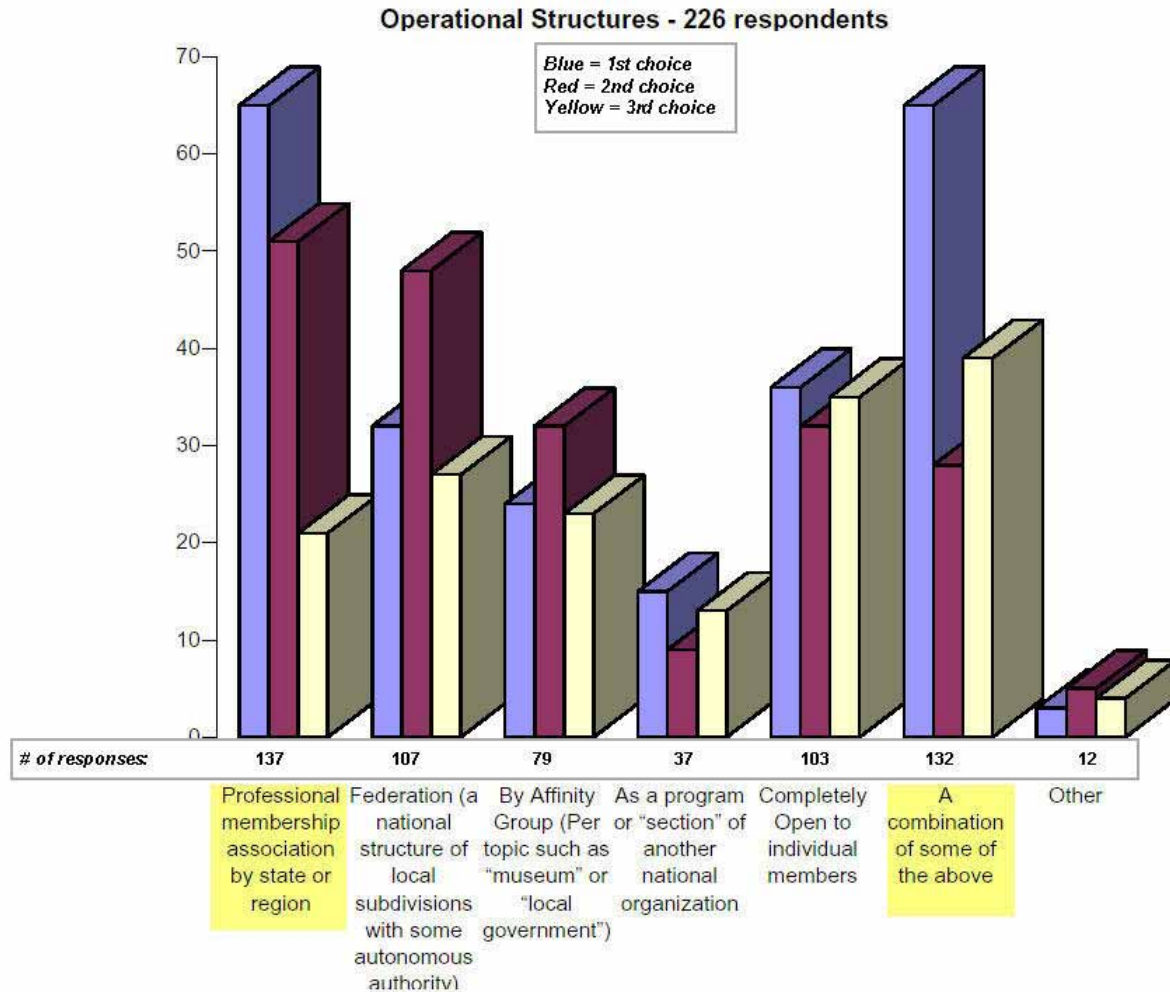
Question 1: *What should be the major purpose(s) of a new national entity established to serve leaders of volunteer engagement/initiatives? (Please do not focus on services/products such as conferences, journals and web sites but rather, why the organization should exist). Choose up to THREE, in order of priority.*



“Other” responses:

- Reaching out to the disabled community as large base for volunteers.
- Advocacy and relationship building within the for-profit community.
- Recruiting volunteerism to our organization. Showing the importance of mutual benefit to volunteers.

Question 2: What operational structures should be explored to carry out the purposes of such a national structure? Choose up to THREE in order of priority.

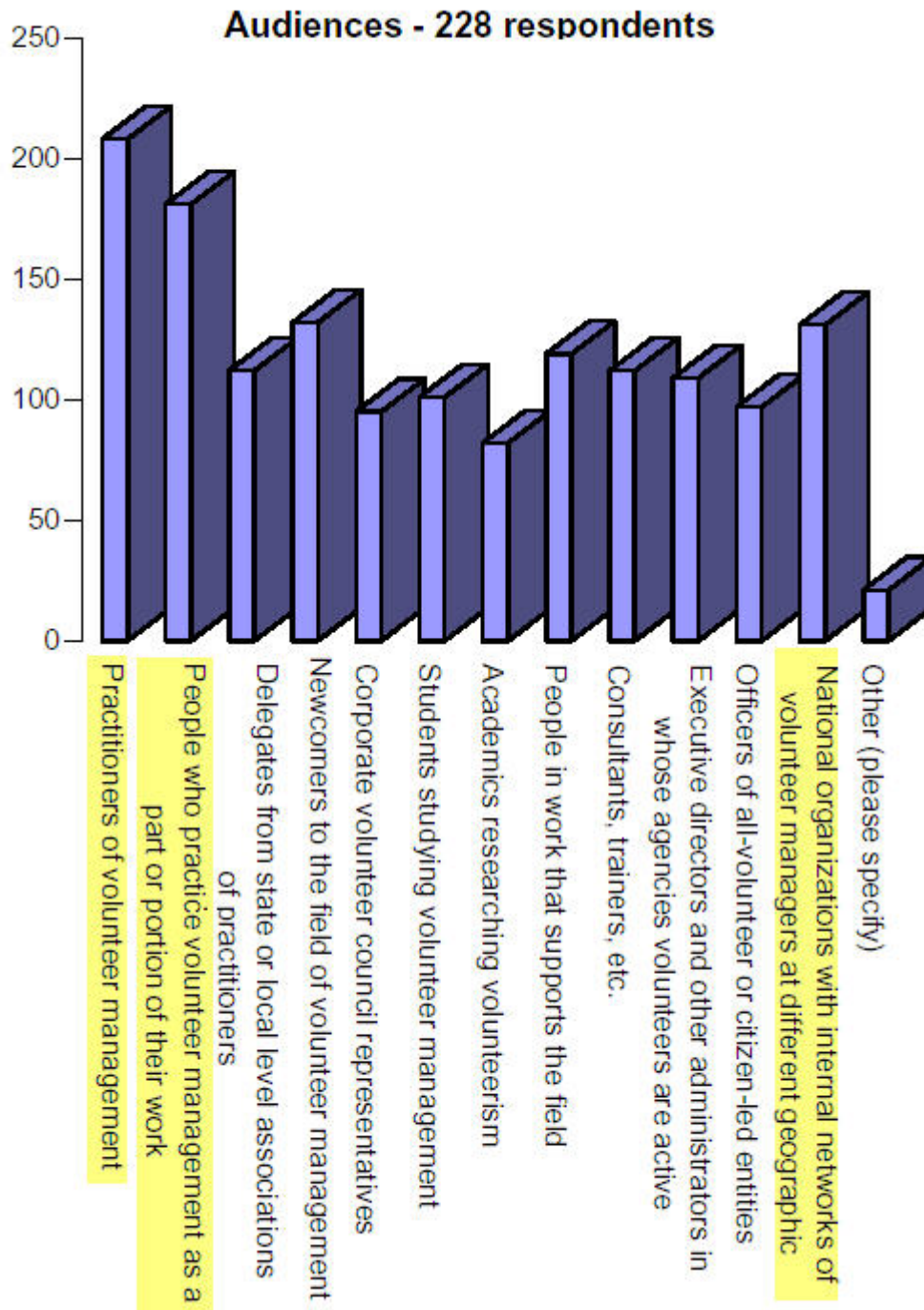


“Other” responses:

- For financial reasons this "structure" may have to be a part of another national organization. Being one of many tracks at Points of Light seemed quite satisfactory to me. Has there been any discussion of this?
- I didn't answer "other," but by choosing "a combination of some of the above" I would not include "by affinity group" or "as a program or section of another national organization." I think this would be too exclusionary.
- We find a lot of people are not wanting to *belong* to something, professional memberships are not paid for by their organization, often travel is not allowed (especially out of state, but often just out of the metropolitan area) and education budgets are very limited. Time to think "outside the box."
- Group membership of any size which promotes the professionalism of volunteerism.
- I think this is one of the issues that should be discussed at the congress. I want to hear what others feel is important and why they would prefer various structures.
- This should be a minimal administrative organization giving feedback at the state level to government officials that are engaged in our mission. Support state and local organizations like MAVA throughout the country through networking and promotion of the profession.
- A structure like National PTA centered around local PTAs - where members can participate in trainings at local, regional, state, and national level. Board structure might be comprised of delegates of affiliate organizations but individual members should have access to resources.
- An alliance of organizations with a flat rather than hierarchal structure, that is fully open to individual members.

[Question 3: See next page.]

Question 4: Please choose the audiences for whom a national structure should begin its focus in order to best enhance the profession. Check all that apply.



“Other” Responses:

- CEOs and senior staff who have a relationship with ANY volunteers in GOVERNANCE ROLES B. Senior appointed government officials at the local, state & federal levels who have relationships with ANY elected or appointed volunteers.

- Those of us in healthcare settings frequently find that while we are seen as valuable, our superiors do not support education. Targeting those who use our services such as health care administrators would enhance membership.
- Volunteer Centers
- If you seriously mean "begin its focus" then I would start by focusing on those already most engaged, and work out to include all those others (who are all relevant) after discussion and planning
- Persons participating as volunteers in any entity. Every volunteer is a potential volunteer manager and plays a major role in understanding the "volunteer" today.
- Dovies
- National Service organizations (AmeriCorps/ RSVP, etc.)
- Grass roots organizations -volunteer coaches -volunteer fire fighters -non-profit board members
- Boardmembers....all should be included
- I think the others can be pursued after the new structure is established.
- Just a comment, that this Congress, if successful, could be the FIRST of its kind to eliminate segregating the non profit field into parts. Everyone working in this large and growing industry needs to meet, learn and grow from each other.
- We need targeted outreach to many audiences to build the organization. One aspect of the organization could be the certification or specific support of those who are considered professionals in the field
- See previous responses about whether or not there is a need for a national association.
- Service Learning practitioners; volunteers serving in the role of volunteer management
- Faith-based organizations
- I also it would be a great idea to bring young people into such a group. As they will be our next upcoming leaders of volunteers.
- Do not forget that there is a lot of work being done in the Churches and in MN we partner with the corporate world.
- National lobbyists that have ability to promote and strengthen the need for volunteerism in all aspects of life.
- All of the above but with a grain of the proverbial salt for the "consultants, trainer, authors" who may use the association as a method to improve their financial situation. We don't need to be a marketing tool for them.
- Please, please keep any governmental association relationships OUT of this national organization!!!
- Media and legislators (to advocate for the profession).

Question 3: *Please list your thoughts on the creation and sustainability of a national structure's funding and support (i.e., Grant-seeking/fundraising, strategic alliances with other organizations, and so on).* [91 respondents wrote answers – and most included more than one source of funding. Compilations and specific examples are numbered below for ease of discussion.]

1. **31 respondents included member dues in their answer; 1 respondent**, however, said: discourage membership fees/dues (hard for smaller affiliations).
 - Should include membership in the national and state organization.
 - Perhaps there can be a fee schedule for state DOVIA's or individual members.
 - Three tier membership based on members financial picture; separate from workshop, conference or self education costs.
 - Many members will increase resources.
 - Many people in this profession are volunteers themselves. They do not have high budgets for professional association dues. An association has to have dues, but they need to be moderate and affordable.
 - Every other profession has a national organization which requires dues. We should begin to consider ourselves a professional organization just as others (journalism, fund raisers, architects, etc). Until we get away from the attitude that "volunteerism" is free, we will never achieve the degree of professionalism we desire.

- I think it's reasonable to ask for either individual membership fees, partner with other organizations as an added benefit to their own membership fees, and/or ask for other organizations to pay a membership to the national structure in order to secure membership for their own members.
 - If those belonging won't put up the appropriate dues then it isn't worth doing.
2. **24 respondents included:** Seek **Federal grants and foundation support.**
 3. **3 respondents included:** seek **sponsorships;** **6 respondents included:** seek money from **large for-profit companies;** **1 respondent included:** **underwriting from professionals/vendors** who serve the field..
 4. **10 respondents included some form of earned income:** **Fees from credentialing, conferences, products, educational materials, and training opportunities.**
 - An earned income element (membership, etc) would help sustain the organization and prove fiscal stewardship to potential funders.
 - A national organization is only sustainable when it is viewed as valuable to the members. Funding via educational offerings to the membership provides value. The catch in this is the expense to participate; if too costly, your own membership is unable to support the organization.
 - A large conference attracting 1-2,000 people. Set a goal for having a conference 1 year from the Congress
 5. **8 respondents included:** **Partnerships and strategic alliances** with other groups.
 - A strategic alliance with other organizations is paramount in order to seek a cohesive comprehensive and productive solution(s) to anticipated challenges such as fundraising for supplementing large volunteer management events.
 - Concerned that a certain organization will assume full leadership and dwarf the efforts of smaller entities.
 - I think we should be affiliated with perhaps MANY national organizations - for instance those of us in government might seek out support from the National Association of Counties - a "beefy" national organization that could be supportive and SHOULD be supportive to development/expansion/enrichment of volunteer programs in government! Volunteer programs not only spread support of that particular government organization, they stretch their dollars.
 - ...align with ASDVS, as well as other national and international volunteer management organizations.
 - Alliances with existing volunteer associations would make sense -- even connecting with the international sector!
 - Partnerships with other organizations with similar strategic alliances such as the Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach & Service Programs (ANRSOP), Aquatic Resources Education Association (AREA), and the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) which all deal with volunteers
 6. **4 respondents warned against strategic alliances.**
 - Do not like the idea of strategic alliances!!! Grantseeking/fundraising/dues lend to an autonomous and neutral organization. Alliances might lead to an organization that does not necessarily reflect its membership but does reflect the alliances!
 - Strategic alliances are advantageous, but it's important not to align the organization with a sector that is at political odds with our constituency. Maintaining neutral political and religious stands are critical to having a diverse organization where all feel their constituencies are respected. (For example, some faith based initiatives are anti-choice or anti-gay.)
 - Do not lose identity through alliance/collaboration with another group ie. fundraising associations, Volunteer Centers, etc.
 7. There should be **an annual appeal to members.**

8. A fundraiser event that honors those who would "draw" guests to a high \$\$\$ award event - there must be a US Senator that would attend & accept an award at our newly inaugural and prestigious event. Include a corporate CEO that 'get's it' and a philanthropist or foundation.
9. I think working with Gov't agencies such as FEMA, CDC, Red Cross aligning with these organizations that use volunteers on a national scale would bring much needed weight and bring the field to the forefront.... Example --Hurricane Katrina and the out pouring of folks wanting to help, but there was no organized central Volunteer agency for people to find out what they could do. Aligning w/ these organizations could lead to federal funding and major grants.
10. I believe most certainly that a new national organization for volunteer associations should have a diversified process for funding, however, because of the current situation a new organization would have to work hard to create a positive image to the community. Although this would be a new organization there are still some that would be hesitant to support an organization that stemmed from the dissolution of another. Thus we will need strong leadership and good solid support from volunteer associations nationwide. We need a clear strategy and processes for delivering that strategy to encourage support. Everyone needs to have input and perhaps a representative from each association can (as we are preparing for this conference) have a solid voice in the planning for a new organization. If people have some buy in they are more likely to work hard to help sustain a new organization. Bottom line is the dollars will initially be generated through a strong following of national organizations working together to improve the profession of volunteer administrators.
11. **Financial relationship with local level:**
 - If one should exist then standards that are fair across to board should be in place to distribute funding to local affiliates. This would provide a great support to the statewide associations and position the COVAA as a true "parent" organization for the field.
 - It would be easier for a national organization to have local chapters be autonomous so that they can form their own local collaborations and fundraise for their own chapter.
 - Regional conferences in partnership with existing DOVIAS, state organizations, etc.
 - Affiliation to a national organization by local chapters (or some such name). Membership in the national organization creates automatic membership in the local. Local orgs will be allowed to do additional fundraising to meet their own local objectives.
 - Support by state organizations only. Don't build a mountain and the need for excessive funding. This should be an organization that local and state sees and benefits from the visibility and promotion of the profession as necessity in today's world. A fact of life that public and private sectors rely on volunteers to succeed.
12. **Important general comments:**
 - I believe we need a year's funding to support one salary to facilitate the creation of the new entity and to engage many who were not formerly engaged in any national effort.
 - Although the current administration started out their time in office with strong volunteerism support, it would not be wise to count on continuing support from future administrations.
 - With so many national organizations in the volunteer sector, finding funding for another new one, when AVA after 40 years struggled, seems very difficult.
 - The AVA experience shows that membership dues alone will not be enough to sustain such an organization, so other funding sources will be essential. Why not start something as a "nestling" within an existing organization to avoid lots of overhead and start-up costs?
 - High emphasis on professional ethics, benchmarking, outcome measures and strategic planning.
 - Because the financial support was difficult to sustain AVA, a new process must be established. It seems that UPS and POL would help start this new organization financially and that we could hope that we were not indebted to them--especially POL. I want us to be separate from POL for they encompass other types of non-profit professionals.
 - Set up a committee to examine how other large organizations support their national structure. Most of us in the field have little knowledge of how the national structure works. Membership dues where the largest proportion goes to the national support structure could be one of a multiplicity of ways to build ownership and financial support among the membership. Grants should be a must. But clear

articulation of what the organization hopes to accomplish should come first. With a strong mission statement and proposal, the money will follow.

- Being part of another organization may have appeal from the standpoint of sharing expenses and fundraising. I think we have to determine just what we want our offices to look like, and what we have to do to fund it. i.e., how much can we bring in to support the organization by having an annual conference? What do membership fees bring in, what kind of grants could we go after, and who would write them. We should look at how the AVA was funded and whether it was generally successful, or were we in trouble long before the final blow?
- I believe a national structure is very important especially if it could make things easier on the local states legislators. Laws aren't being passed that really should. i.e., an insurance coverage for organizations that offer rides to people like elderly or cancer treatment.
- I think such an effort would be easy to fund through corporate grants, member fees and consulting fees. But only if the organization is the polar opposite of AVA -- it should be fully transparent, and have only those with a great deal of volunteer management experience in leadership positions.
- We should first focus on our mission statement and then plan accordingly.
- Be part of POLF - set strategic goals that can be funded by corporate members of POLF
- My only thought is that other professional associations exist and thrive, such as organizations for social workers, doctor's, and dentist's. I am not sure exactly how they did it but it would be worth researching and exploring. Perhaps even enlisting help from an organization like that to strategically plan how to make a volunteer administrator professional organization.
- Serving primarily as an advocacy organization, I don't see COVAA competing for funds with a significant amount of other orgs. Y'all should join forces with the National Nonprofit Congress.
- You really need to ask do we need a national structure (not assume it is needed) and if so why? If so, who will support it? Who would benefit from a partnership? Who would write grants, raise funds, etc? Who would perceive a benefit of membership?
- Would be easiest if this were part of another organization - you wouldn't have to start from scratch.
- I think the COVAA needs to focus on the profession of volunteer managers and building that structure. We should work with other organizations, but in my experience in the last couple of years it appears we focused on service learning, AmeriCorps, etc, and everything but professional volunteer managers. It is not good for the profession to have people coming in without experience , and leaving after their two year stipend time is up.
- Should have a minimum standard or credential criteria to be eligible. In other words a "standard of excellence" needs to be maintained by meeting certain criteria or training to be considered.
- With non-profits struggling already to meet budgets and with volunteer programs especially hard hit, do we really want to do more fundraising for an affiliation of members? It seems to me it would be difficult to support financially.
- Due to the most recent scandal, make certain that it is transparent with plenty of checks and balances to ensure there are no problems. Make an effort to ensure that the Board reaches out to all members of the community, not just those with professional volunteer management experience - HR would be a good match.
- As a hospital volunteer director I am involved with state , regional, and national organizations for hospital volunteer director. It would be great to a national organization for all in volunteer management. I also am involved with the Corporation for National Volunteer and Community Service (AmeriCorps, etc) if we could pull all of these many resources together and use it as a clearing house for all it would be so beneficial. That way each would know what the other was doing. Not duplicate efforts but multiply opportunities.