

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee
Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**

The National Advisory Committee (NAC) of the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) was established by VA Circular No. 117, May 17, 1947, and became a federally chartered advisory committee on February 5, 1975.

The national VAVS office was renamed to VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) on January 26, 2021. The VAVS NAC operates within the framework of CDCE.

The Committee provides advice to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, through the Under Secretary for Health, on the coordination and promotion of volunteer activities within VA health care facilities, and on other matters relating to volunteerism; and keeps the officers and members of participating organizations informed of volunteer needs and accomplishments.

All recommendations approved by the NAC at its Annual Meeting are responded to in writing by the Under Secretary for Health. A majority vote of the NAC Service Member organizations constitutes the recommendations of the Committee. A member may file a minority report of the Committee's recommendations.

The NAC Executive Committee monitors and performs oversight of the NAC membership policies and procedures. CDCE, Central Office is responsible for implementation, recruitment and membership application processing.

The National Advisory Committee has seven (7) categories of membership:

1. Service Member organizations are those which maintain the provision of volunteers and participation on local VAVS facility committees at a minimum of twenty-five (25) VA facilities. Service Member organizations shall be the only category of NAC members having voting rights. Participation on a local VAVS facility committee is defined as having VA recognized representation on that committee. This definition relies upon the policy that any organization whose VA recognized representation misses three (3) consecutive local VAVS facility committee meetings will cause its removal from the committee.
2. Associate Service Member organizations are those which maintain the provision of volunteers and participation on local VAVS facility committees at a minimum of fifteen (15) VA facilities.

3. Donor Member organizations are those which donate at least 5% of total revenue to assist or benefit veterans at/to a minimum of twenty-five (25) VA facilities. Donor Members are expected to maintain such support at or above the twenty-five (25) VA facility minimum.
4. Associate Donor Member organizations are those which donate at least 5% of total revenue to assist or benefit veterans at/to a minimum of fifteen (15) facilities.
5. Adjunct Member youth organizations are those which maintain the provision of volunteers and participation on local VAVS facility committees at less than fifteen (15) VA facilities. These organizations (e.g. Boy Scouts; Girl Scouts; the 4-H; National Honor Society; Boys and Girls Clubs; etc.) must be sponsored by an NAC member organization which will mentor the youth organization in increasing its participation in the VAVS program. NAC Adjunct Member youth organizations may later apply for any other NAC membership category within criteria current at the time of application.
6. Strategic Engagement Members are non-traditional community service organizations or business/corporate entities which significantly contribute to VAVS programs nationwide. These organizations will be considered by invitation only to serve a 2-year term and must undergo due diligence vetting in accordance to VA Directive 0008. Each invited organization may have one National Representative and up to one Deputy Representative. These organizations will be non-voting members of the NAC. Current NAC members are ineligible for consideration under this category, as its intent is to foster new strategic partnerships to grow and enhance VAVS impact.
7. Honorary Member. The purpose of this membership category is to recognize past VAVS NAC service of those NAC member organizations no longer able to meet current minimum criteria for active membership. NAC member organizations with at least ten (10) consecutive years of NAC membership are eligible to apply for Honorary Membership. NAC Honorary Member organizations may later apply for any other NAC membership category within criteria current at the time of application.

For each application for membership on the NAC, the Membership Subcommittee, with the Voluntary Service Office, will determine the level of NAC membership, establish definitive NAC criteria for membership, and IAW guidance set forth in VA Directive 0008 and VHA Directive 1098 (Annex A) governing VA and VHA Public-Private Partnerships (P3). Prior to acceptance, due diligence will be conducted on the applicant organization for membership on the NAC using the factors delineated below:

- a. Whether the potential member can demonstrate pragmatic effectiveness through measurable outcomes and impacts;
- b. Whether there are allegations that the potential member is exploiting or misrepresenting Veterans, their families, or others;
- c. Whether membership on the NAC would result in any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict;
- d. Whether the potential member's materials and other communications appear accurate, truthful, and not misleading;
- e. Whether the potential member is a party to any pending legal action brought by or against a government agency (international, federal, state, local); and
- f. Whether the potential member is currently complying with all applicable laws, statutes, and regulations.
- g. Whether the potential member has a standing approved Code of Conduct and Ethics.

Definitive NAC membership criteria are set forth in the Membership Subcommittee Mission Statement and SOP of this NAC SOP.

New organizations accepted for NAC membership and all current NAC members must maintain the high ethical and legal standards delineated in VA Directive 0008 and VHA Directive 1098 (Annex A) and as outlined above or face possible administrative action, suspension, or termination.

Members must continue their activity at or above the qualifying level for each category in order to remain on the NAC.

All NAC members are appointed on a two (2) year basis to coincide with the NAC Charter renewal process (i.e. January 1st odd numbered years through December 31st even numbered years).

Each member organization may appoint one (1) National Representative, one (1) Honorary Representative, and up to two (2) Deputy National Representatives. Additional deputies, up to a maximum of eight (8) may be appointed when the need is justified and approved by the Director, CDCE.

The NAC Chairperson is the Director, CDCE, Central Office, Washington, D.C. The Deputy Director, CDCE, Central Office will be the Deputy Chairperson.

The National Advisory Committee holds one (1) meeting a year, attended by members at their own organizations' expense. The Executive Committee meets prior to the NAC Annual Meeting and one (1) time a year other than at the Annual Meeting. NAC and Executive Committee meetings are open to the public. Notice of the purpose, date, time and location of each Annual Meeting is published in advance in the Federal Register.

As described in a 1992 NAC adopted motion, if a NAC member organization (other than Honorary) does not have VA recognized representation at three (3) consecutive Annual Meetings, that NAC organization will be removed from NAC membership and is then eligible to apply for membership under the criteria existing at the time of application.

All NAC meetings will be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

Executive Committee of the VAVS National Advisory Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) shall be a working group selected from among member organizations of the VAVS National Advisory Committee.

The Executive Committee shall make recommendations to the VAVS National Advisory Committee in all areas of VAVS National Advisory Committee business and activities. The Executive Committee is designated as the governing body between Annual Meetings of the National Advisory Committee and is entrusted with the responsibility of fulfilling the National Advisory Committee charter. It shall also be available to the Director, Voluntary Service Office, for discussion, consultation, planning and coordination of VAVS National Advisory Committee programs and activities.

The Executive Committee is charged with the Annual Meeting site selection.

The Executive Committee shall be comprised of not more than twenty (20) members. Committee officers will be a Chairperson and a Vice Chairperson appointed by the Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee for a two (2) year term (effective immediately following the Annual Meeting in odd numbered years). If a Chairperson is unable to fulfill his/her appointed term, the Vice Chairperson shall assume that office for the duration. If a Vice Chairperson is unable to fulfill his/her appointed term, a new Vice Chairperson shall be appointed for the duration. VAVS National Advisory Committee Service Member organizations shall not serve consecutive terms in the position of either Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of the Executive Committee.

All Service Member organizations of the VAVS National Advisory Committee represented on one hundred and twenty-five (125) or more local VA facility VAVS committees shall be represented on the Executive Committee for a one (1) year term. The balance of the Executive Committee shall be comprised of the following membership categories:

- a. Service Member organizations represented on less than one hundred and twenty-five (125) but at least twenty-five (25) or more local VA facility VAVS committees
- b. Strategic Engagement Members

These additional members will be selected by the Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee for a two (2) year term. All qualifying organizations will be given fair consideration."

The EC Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee; assist the VAVS National Advisory Committee Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson as requested in conducting the meetings of the NAC; appoint members of the EC to serve as Chairperson of the Recommendations, and other Subcommittees of the EC as deemed necessary; and shall serve as ex officio member of all Subcommittees. Subcommittee members will be appointed by the respective Subcommittee Chairperson from qualifying EC organizations. All Subcommittees shall have mission statements approved by the Executive Committee. All Subcommittees shall report to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee Chairperson shall notify all VAVS National Representatives by letter, on VAVS letterhead, to submit organization reports for the upcoming VAVS NAC Annual Meeting.

Membership on the Executive Committee will be contingent upon the member organizations' support and concurrence.

The Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee, and the Director, CDCE Central Office will be ex officio members of the Executive Committee and its Subcommittees.

When an issue occurs between meetings of the Executive Committee and a vote of the members is required, the vote and/or discussion may be held through electronic means.

Recommendations Subcommittee of the Executive Committee

Mission Statement

The Recommendations Subcommittee shall be a working group reporting to the Executive Committee and at other times as required by the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. The Recommendations Subcommittee is responsible to the VAVS National Advisory Committee for obtaining and processing recommendations for improvements in the VAVS program on the national level.

The Recommendations Subcommittee shall consist of three (3) members, one (1) of whom shall have recent experience on the Subcommittee to provide knowledge and continuity of the process. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee shall appoint the Subcommittee Chairperson, who shall be a National Representative or Deputy Representative from a NAC member organization. If a Subcommittee Chairperson is unable to fulfill his/her appointed term, the EC Chairperson shall appoint a replacement for the duration. The Subcommittee Chairperson's term of office will be for one (1) year, from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting, and may serve consecutive terms. Upon completion of the term of office, the Chairperson shall provide all Subcommittee documents and files to his/her successor.

The Chairperson of the Recommendations Subcommittee shall appoint two (2) members to serve on this Subcommittee. Members will begin service on January 1st following the Fall EC Meeting at which they are appointed.

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Responsibilities:

The Subcommittee is responsible to notify all the VAVS National Representatives, by letter, on VAVS letterhead, immediately after the Annual Meeting that recommendations for the next VAVS National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting are due, with a deadline of August 31st. The letter will include submission instructions. Format is to be in narrative style. Corrections will be made for grammar and punctuation in order to present a professional product. Recommendations for changes should include any and all references to source documents and should be submitted to VA Voluntary Service Office on the national letterhead of the sponsoring organization. Voluntary Service Office will then forward the submissions to the Subcommittee and arrange a conference call for its review and action on the recommendations (for EC approval/disapproval).

The Subcommittee shall monitor the implementation of VA approved recommendations, in text and practice; and shall periodically review recommendation submissions, tracking trends and/or repetitive topics, advising the EC and originating organizations of developing patterns, redundancies, etc.

The Subcommittee may generate recommendations originating from EC standing subcommittees, task forces, pilot studies, etc; Voluntary Service staff surveys; and the Subcommittee's own research initiatives. To accommodate real-time issues, this category of recommendations may be processed by the Subcommittee in the interval between the Fall EC Meeting and the NAC Annual Meeting, for consideration at that Annual Meeting.

Reporting:

The Subcommittee will review each organization recommendation in August and September and then present same to the Executive Committee at the fall meeting, who will act on these recommendations (for NAC approval/disapproval). The Subcommittee will then take these recommendations, with Executive Committee action statements, and prepare them for submission at the VAVS National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting, as well as any recommendations the Subcommittee may generate between the Fall EC Meeting and the NAC Annual Meeting. The Subcommittee shall also report to the NAC the VA's response to all recommendations approved by the NAC; and all matters pertaining to the recommendations' process.

Selection Subcommittee of the Executive Committee for NAC Volunteer of the Year (Male and Female)

Mission Statement

The NAC Volunteer of the Year (Male and Female) Selection Subcommittee shall be a working group reporting to the Executive Committee (EC). It is responsible to the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) for obtaining the appropriate nominations for volunteer recognition on the national level. This recognition program is not intended to be a lifetime achievement award. Rather, as the name implies, it is intended to highlight volunteer achievements over the course of the year prior to the NAC Annual Meeting at which it is presented. NAC affiliated nominees must participate in established VAVS assignments, serving as a Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteer, with emphasis on VAVS Representatives, Deputy Representatives; VA Medical Center and/or VA Nursing Home volunteers; and/or members who assist with veteran functions either within or outside Lodges, Posts, Chapters, etc.

The Selection Subcommittee shall consist of three (3) members: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Immediate Past Chairperson of the Executive Committee; and one (1) staff person, Voluntary Service Office.

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Responsibilities:

Each September, the Executive Committee Chairperson shall notify all VAVS National Representatives by letter, on VAVS letterhead, that nominations for the next VAVS National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting are due, with a deadline of December 31st. The format for submissions is to be letter style, between 300-500 words. Letters of support from local VA facilities are allowed to accompany each submission. All local nominations must be submitted to the affiliated volunteer's VAVS National Representative who will select the organization's candidate to be forwarded to Voluntary Service Office on the national letterhead of the nominating organization. Voluntary Service Office shall distribute the nominations to the Subcommittee by January 15th; then arrange a conference call for the Subcommittee to review the submissions. Awards for winners shall be ordered by Voluntary Service Office. Criteria for the award can be found in VHA Handbook 1620.1.8.e (pages 24-25), and the National Representative and Deputy National Representative Guidelines, 4.e (page 22).

Reporting:

The Subcommittee shall review each nomination in January. Following selection of the male and female award recipients, the Executive Committee Chairperson shall immediately notify the sponsoring organization of each, followed by notification in writing to each NAC member organization. The awards shall be presented at the VAVS National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting.

Recruitment Subcommittee of the Executive Committee

Mission Statement

The Recruitment Subcommittee shall be a working group reporting to the Executive Committee (EC). It is responsible to the VAVS National Advisory Committee for providing recruitment strategies for the NAC member organizations.

The Recruitment Subcommittee shall consist of a maximum of four (4) members, one (1) of whom shall have recent experience on the Subcommittee to provide knowledge and continuity of the process. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee shall appoint the Subcommittee Chairperson, who shall be a National Representative or Deputy Representative from a NAC member organization. If a Subcommittee Chairperson is unable to fulfill his/her appointed term, the EC Chairperson shall appoint a replacement for the duration. The Subcommittee Chairperson's term of office will be for one (1) year, from Fall EC Meeting to Fall EC Meeting, and may serve consecutive terms. Upon completion of the term of office, the Chairperson shall provide all Subcommittee documents and files to his/her successor.

The Chairperson of the Recruitment Subcommittee shall appoint the additional members to serve on this Subcommittee. Members will begin service on January 1st following the Fall EC Meeting at which they are appointed.

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Responsibilities:

The Subcommittee is responsible for researching and submitting volunteer recruitment strategies that can be adapted by large or small organizations. These strategies should reposition VAVS as a dynamic, community-based organization that people want to join and support; increase the number of people who volunteer their time and energy for VAVS; and, increase the racial, ethnic, lifestyle and age diversity among VAVS volunteers.

Reporting:

The Subcommittee will present a report at Executive Committee meetings; and, to the NAC at the VAVS National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting.

Membership Subcommittee of the Executive Committee

Mission Statement

The Membership Subcommittee shall be a working group reporting to the Executive Committee (EC). It is responsible to the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) for the implementation and monitoring of all NAC membership policies and procedures.

The Membership Subcommittee shall consist of a maximum of four (4) members, one (1) of whom shall have recent experience on the Subcommittee to provide knowledge and continuity of the process. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee shall appoint the Subcommittee Chairperson, who shall be a National Representative or Deputy Representative from a NAC member organization. If a Subcommittee Chairperson is unable to fulfill his/her appointed term, the EC Chairperson shall appoint a replacement for the duration. The Subcommittee Chairperson's term of office will be for one (1) year, from Fall EC Meeting to Fall EC Meeting, and may serve consecutive terms. Upon completion of the term of office, the Chairperson shall provide all Subcommittee documents and files to his/her successor.

The Chairperson of the Membership Subcommittee shall appoint the additional members to serve on this Subcommittee. Members will begin service on January 1st through December 31st of the 2nd year of their 2-year term.

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Responsibilities:

The Subcommittee is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of all NAC membership policies and procedures. NAC members are appointed on a two (2) year basis to coincide with the NAC Charter renewal process (i.e. January 1st odd numbered years through December 31st even numbered years). When an organization submits its application for NAC membership, or to change its status, the application will be referred to the Membership Subcommittee for review of the application and the data provided and due diligence will be conducted as specified in the NAC SOP to determine if the organization meets NAC specific criteria, as outlined below, for membership and the membership category requested on the application. If so, the Subcommittee will recommend approval.

- NAC Membership Specific Criteria

Applicants for NAC membership must meet all criteria established in VA Directive 0008 and VHA Directive 1098 Annex A, and are required to submit the following items with their application for review:

- a. Articles of Incorporation
- b. Bylaws
- c. IRS form 990 for preceding three years
- d. Positive rating from a non-profit “watchdog” organization (i.e., Platinum level Guide Star, Charity Navigator, BBB, etc.)
- e. Narrative on the organization’s intent for joining the NAC
- f. Code of Conduct and Ethics

All fees for providing the requested documents and information will be paid by the applicant organization.

All applicant organizations will demonstrate the following:

- a. Must have existed for at least three years,
- b. Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and narrative must not conflict with the mission of the VA, VHA, or NAC,
- c. Must be in good standing with the IRS, and
- d. Must have received positive ratings - i.e., minimum of 50% of all revenue to the support of Veterans or from bona fide charity watchdog organization.
- e. Must provide Code of Conduct and Ethics along with application.

All organizations accepted for membership on the NAC will serve a two-year probationary term.

The Subcommittee may nominate for NAC Honorary Membership any organization having served at least ten (10) consecutive years on the NAC, but currently unable to meet criteria for any other category of membership. NAC Honorary Member organizations may later apply for any other membership category within criteria current at the time of application.

CDCE, Central Office will notify the Subcommittee of any organization nearing membership eligibility, as well as verification that current members are maintaining the minimum membership qualifying requirements for their assigned category. The Subcommittee or CDCE Central Office will notify potential new member organizations, as well as send notices to those organizations in danger of losing their membership status, thereby adversely impacting their reappointment to the NAC at their current, or any, membership level.

The Subcommittee will be provided the NAC Annual Meeting attendance records so as to verify that NAC member organizations are complying with the attendance requirement. If an organization, other than Honorary, does not have VA recognized representation at three (3) consecutive NAC Annual Meetings, that organization will be removed from NAC membership, and will have to

reapply for membership within criteria current at the time of application. The Subcommittee or CDCE Central Office will send a letter, on CDCE letterhead, to any and all organizations that have missed two (2) consecutive NAC Annual Meetings, citing the attendance requirement, and urging the organization to have VA recognized representation at the next NAC Annual Meeting.

Reporting:

The Subcommittee shall report to the Executive Committee and the NAC on the status of outreach initiatives to potential new member organizations; organizations whose membership is in transition; those eligible for Honorary Membership; and organizations' attendance at NAC Annual Meetings.

Partnership Subcommittee of the Executive Committee

Mission Statement

The primary purpose of the VAVS NAC Partnership Subcommittee shall be to increase communications and enhance the overall effectiveness of the National Advisory Committee and the VA Voluntary Service Program. The Partnership Subcommittee shall be a working group reporting to the Executive Committee (EC).

The Partnership Subcommittee shall consist of six (6) members. The Partnership Subcommittee will be comprised of three (3) NAC members and three (3) VAVS Program Managers. The Chair of the EC shall appoint the NAC members of the Partnership Subcommittee and designate one (1) NAC member to serve as Co-Chair. The Director, CDCE Central Office will designate three (3) VAVS Program Managers and designate one (1) VAVS Program Manager to serve as a Co-Chair. All Subcommittee documents will be maintained by the Co-Chairs and the CDCE Central Office.

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Responsibilities:

The Partnership Subcommittee will provide advice and counsel to the Executive Committee and collaborate with the Recommendations, Recruitment and Membership Subcommittees. The Partnership Subcommittee will review VA, VHA and VISN Strategic Plans in order to identify mechanisms whereby VAVS and the NAC can plan specific initiatives and programs to support these strategies for the welfare and benefit of Veteran Patients cared for by VA. This Subcommittee will review VAVS Key Indicators and performance measures. The Partnership Subcommittee will also work to enhance overall volunteer recognition programs conducted at the NAC.

Reporting: The Subcommittee will report recommendations and significant regulatory, administrative and operational changes that impact VAVS NAC procedures since the last meeting. Strategies for implementation and integration of these changes will also be reported.

Note: The Subcommittee will develop background material and prepare strategic level recommendations for submission to the Recommendation Subcommittee to process for deliberation and consideration by the Executive Committee before presenting to the entire National Advisory Committee.