

Administrative Management  
Of  
VVA Chapters and State Councils



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## Prefix

This seminar provides updated information from the previous seminars presented at Biennial Vietnam Veterans of America National Leadership Conferences, Regional Conferences and State Council Conventions.

Communication between VVA Chapters, State Councils and the national office – high quality communications which leads to action – requires an exchange of information. There is no such thing as “over communication.” There must be a constant flow of mail, memos, media and minutes of meetings, and face-to-face conversations. When communication is working properly, VVA leaders can become awash in paper quickly, if they do not have a system for disseminating information and ultimately storing it. Keeping track of communication is the foundation of administrative management of Chapters and State Councils.

Secretaries of Chapters and State Councils have as one of their principal duties and responsibilities the maintenance of the records of their organizations. ***Presidents are responsible to assure their elected secretaries maintain records properly.*** It may be that some of the records are in other people’s hands, e.g., Treasurer, Committee Chairs; however they are the Chapter’s or State Council’s records. Secretaries can help all officers and committee chair in the maintenance of records.

This seminar is about management of communications and recommends a way to maintain records. When you go back to your Chapter or State Council, take this handout and inventory your records to make sure you are doing the right things. If you can’t find a record listed here, create it; contact the National Office or your State Council for help if you don’t know what your missing records look like.

What is presented here is called a ***Functional Records System***, as opposed to a “chronological records systems.” You want your files in such a condition that you can (1) safeguard them, (2) retrieve them quickly and (3) use them. Items are filed by their “function” within the organization; what they do for you.

There are three major categories of functional records:

- Permanent Records;
- Working Files;
- Archives.

Here's what you will find in each file.

**1. Permanent Records:** These records are called "permanent" because you will always have them and the records will not change often. They may change from time to time, such as the VVA Constitution or your by-laws; but, you will have the most current edition in the Permanent Records files. These are the minimum Permanent Records you need to have:

a. Incorporation File: *This file should be completely accurate, now!* You will use all of these records as back-up documentation if you apply to anyone for a grant, a loan, and, in some cases, if you sign a contract. These records are proof that you are a legal organization authorized to conduct business in your state:

- i. Letter applying for incorporation. It is written only once; also, on file at the National Office (Membership Department); this is a historical record for your information, you will not use it in any business activity.
- ii. Incorporation Certificate from your State Corporation Commission, Secretary of State or other state body responsible for monitoring non-profit organizations. It is issued only once; also, on file at the National Office (Membership Department).
- iii. Articles of Incorporation. This accompanies your Incorporation Certificate; also, on file at the National Office.
- iv. Record of your Chapter or State Council Resident Agent. You must know who this person is because he or she is the official person of record to receive official mail from your State. The mail is usually "time sensitive;" with dated day to respond before a fine may be assessed against your Chapter or State Council. Failure to act may cause your Chapter or State Council to become unincorporated and out of business.
- v. Charter. Sent to you when you have completed all the above requirements. It is on file at the National Office (Membership Department) if you cannot find one.

- vi. IRS Determination Letter & Group Tax Exemption Letter. This is a letter from the IRS to the National Office; it is your proof that you are exempt from Federal taxes. You may not be exempt from State or local taxes! Check the law; every jurisdiction is unique. Also ensure that your IRS status is a 501 (c)(19) – Veterans Organization.
- vii. Chapter or State Council FEIN tax ID authorization. You apply for it from the IRS, SS Form 4. It is not on file at the National Office.
- viii. List of current and past officers and directors, state council delegates and committee chairs; their address and phone numbers.

b. By-Law's:

- i. Current By-Laws. The special rules of how you conduct business in your chapter or state council that are not included in the VVA Constitution.
- ii. Old By-Laws. An historical record for your use in making future changes to current by-laws. They have no other value! They can be filed in the “Archives.”

c. VVA Constitution:

- i. Current Constitution dated after the last Convention (changes every two (2) years).
- ii. Old Constitutions (historical records, optional). They can be filed in the “Archives.”

d. Code of Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. Hopefully, you will not have to even refer to it, however, you need to know policies and procedures for filing of VVA disciplinary charges against a member, officer, director etc.

e. Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised: Read it; don't just file it. VVA requires you use the Newly Revised edition.

f. VVA National Resolutions. The current policy position's that were adopted at the last National Convention. The resolutions are the basis for all programs and activities that VVA undertakes. Chapter and State Councils should refer to the resolutions for guidance with programs. When you are doing any program, look here first.

g. Minutes. Record of all minutes in chronological order with the most recent on top; the minutes of your very first meeting on the bottom. *Do not put minutes in an archive!* The incorporation laws of most states require that minutes of meetings be a permanent record. Inventory them, read them, and make sure you are complying with the resolutions passed by your board of directors (Chapters) or delegates (State Councils). Keep your minutes simple; list the motions, who made them and the results of the vote. *Do not write down discussion points; they may bite you later on.*

h. Proof of Military Service File: Includes all DD Forms 214/215 or similar proof of military service showing eligibility for membership within VVA. Be careful of forms you don't recognize or copies of awards with no other back up. Use the Standard Form 180 (SF180), filling it in completely, making sure the member and an official of the Chapter/State Council sign the form, if the member cannot produce a DD 214. *The Chapter Secretary shall be responsible for the safe-keeping of all DD Forms 214 or other acceptable forms of military service tendered to him or her any member. He or she shall forward to the office of the Corporation a copy of said form for each duly elected officer and director.* (VVA Constitution, Article III, Section 6-Officers, Paragraph E).

i. Seal of the Chapter or State Council. See your incorporation document for what the seal should say. Examples: For Chapters – “Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 227, Arlington, Virginia Incorporated”; in a circle, with year of incorporation in the center; for Councils – “Vietnam Veterans of America Virginia State Council Richmond, Virginia Incorporated” in a circle, with the year of incorporation in the center. Seals are available in one (1) and two (2) inch styles.

j. Bond & Insurance File: It is sound business practice to have bond and insurance documents readily available for other to refer to. New officers and board members should be familiar with the provisions of the bond or insurance as their leadership role may make them personally liable in a lawsuit. Do not take the word of a prior officer or board member that you are covered and what the provisions of the coverage are. Demand to see and read the bond and insurance contracts. You may desire to have your Chapter or State Council covered against mysterious disappearance of funds and property, against loss or damage to equipment, and against incidents which may evolve from social affairs, meetings and other events you may sponsor. Put the documents here.

k. Elections Reports: Includes your annual or biennial elections report. The election report is required within 60 days of the election to be forwarded to the National Office (Membership Department) and to your State Council.

l. Miscellaneous: You will always have something that doesn't have a home. Put it in here until it seems better to put it somewhere else or develop a special file.

## 2. Working Files:

a. Suspense File: This file is where you put things for which you are awaiting an answer; e.g., your letter to the State Council which asks a question for which you need an answer, a National Resolution recommendation you sent to be considered at the next National Convention, a request for a grant sent to a potential donor. You may wish to have a separate file for each month or for each quarter to keep track of larger quantities of information.

b. Contracts File: Contains current contracts with which you are working.

c. Chapter or Council Officers Handbooks: Great information! Tells you the responsibilities for Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers.

d. Calendar of Events: Set up a calendar of events for your entire term of office immediately after you are elected. Don't wait for the first board meeting. This is your master guide to help you manage events and your own personal stress. Start the calendar by noting every board meeting, every general membership meeting. List the routine stuff you do, such as the annual picnic, the annual dinner, etc. Share it with everyone. Make it the foundation of your newsletter and your board meetings. Send a copy to the editor of your Chapter and State Council newsletter/paper. Keep a copy of your calendar of events and your budget together (see below). Take them to every meeting and keep them close by your telephone for your use when talking to others about business in your Chapter or State Council.

e. VVA Policies: Periodically, the National Board of Directors passes policies which affect your operations. Some policies facilitate your action; some policies prohibit your action. You need a place to store these policies. The VVA Strategic Plan is a good example of a document that belongs here.

f. State Council Policies: You may want a file for letters and minutes from the State Council.

g. Chapter Policies: You may want a single source for Chapter policies. These usually come from meetings and are also found in minutes.

h. Correspondence File: This is a miscellaneous file. You may have correspondence which cannot be placed under any other function; e.g., letter of thanks from someone who came to one of your meetings or who received an award from your Chapter or State Council. You need to put those miscellaneous letters in date order; most recent on top.

I. Standing Committees: You should maintain a file of documents produced by your committee or received from other sources in each committee's functional area of responsibility. You may authorize the current committee chairs to maintain current activity files. These files must be turned over to the new officers immediately after Chapter or State Council elections. *State Councils and Chapters have the ability to establish any of the Standing Committees as deemed necessary to the conduct of business relative to the issues that are important to their membership.* (Appendix II to the Constitution) Files may include:

- i. AVVA Member Liaison. Includes recommendation from local members of AVVA for liaison; activities for and about AVVA members.
- ii. Community Affairs. Includes activities you have done for and with the community. Who did them, how much the events cost.
- iii. Constitution and By-Laws. Includes information about your recommendations to changes in VVA's Constitution and your by-laws.
- iv. Employment, Training and Business Opportunities. Includes information about veteran employment and economic conditions, State employment commissions and local office addresses, phone numbers and contacts such as Disabled Veteran Outreach Specialists (DVOPS), Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER's) and local Private Industry Councils (PICs). If you have a veteran's unemployment or under-employment situation in your area, you need to do some work with these people.
- v. Government Affairs. Includes information about local, state and federal government. Names of contacts, etc. Includes information about VVA's local, state and federal legislative issues.
- vi. Legal Affairs. Includes information about on-going legal issues of interest to your Chapter.
- vii. Membership Affairs. Your membership records. Names, address, phone numbers.
- viii. Minority Affairs. Includes your plans for identifying membership and promoting minority involvement.

- ix. POW/MIA. Include the VVA resolutions and your plan for Chapter and State Council observance of National POW/MIA Day in September of each year.
- x. Public Affairs. Include newspaper clippings; names, addresses and phone number of media contacts, copies of articles you have written.
- xi. Veterans Affairs. Includes information about specific veterans programs.
- xii. Veterans Benefits. Includes information on local, state and federal benefits available.
- xiii. Agent Orange/Dixon. Includes information on service programs in the handling of Agent Orange related problems.
- xiv. Woman Veterans. Includes information on issues and needs relevant to women veterans.
- xv. Veterans Incarcerated. Include information on various state and federal agencies and programs available.
- xvi. Health Care. Includes information on program and services available at the federal, state and local levels to assess quality of health care and strategies and policies to assure adequate access for veterans and their families to timely and quality health care.

Ad Hoc Committee Records: These are referred to as “Special Committees” and are committees of your organization which are not contained within the VVA Constitution. They may be required by your by-laws or you may decide at a meeting to create a committee to handle a project. Examples include, but not limited to, Speakers panel, education, annual dinner, and annual picnic, social etc.

- L. Financial records: These are usually kept by with the Treasurer. Examples of records are:
- i. Annual financial report sent to National Office, and IRS Form 990 (if over \$25,000.00 annual income). This could go in the “Archives” instead of the “Working File,” it’s a judgment call.
  - ii. Checks and checks register. Make sure you can account for every single check, whether used, unused or voided. Never throw away a check, not even a voided check. Your annual audit should include counting all your checks to make sure they are in numerical sequence and all present. ***Keep them all. Demand it! It’s a control measure.*** Don’t worry about accounting for unused deposit slips. The only thing a person can do with them is make deposits.
  - iii. Monthly bank statements, deposit slips and cancelled checks for the current fiscal year.
  - iv. Receipt and disbursement records. Show how you got money and how you spent it. Set up a voucher system. No voucher; no payment. You must keep receipts for every dime that comes in and goes out. If you don’t have one of these, it’s a sure signal there may be fraud in your organization. Check it out!
  - v. Property/Inventory Records. Go count the stuff; put on hands on it; make sure it’s all there: Computers, product sales inventory. All items that were paid for by the Chapter or State Council must be turned in to the Chapter or State Council at the end of the term of office of all officers, board members or committee chairs.
  - vi. Annual budget. Make one and use it. Keep a copy of your budget and calendar of events, see above, together. Take them to every meeting.

m. Miscellaneous.

- 3. Archives:** These are files you save and store at the end of each fiscal year. File them by year. Don't save everything; save only stuff you could possibly use again. Get rid of the garbage. Have Committee Chairs send you their old files so they don't get lost from Chapter leader to new Chapter leader. Periodically, review your prior-year archives. There may be stuff you want to throw out or bring forward to the current file. Some examples of records you may want to keep are:
- a.** Old contracts: You should keep all of them. They are legal documents.
  - b.** Historical File: This is the Chapter's or State Council's history. You should develop one to be used in grant requests, to develop brochures, at community services events you are part of, at annual dinners, etc. Include pictures with names of the people and the events photographed.
  - c.** Correspondence File: The file of letters with no other home to file.
  - d.** Committee records.
  - e.** Membership reports you generate or that come from the National Office. You don't need to keep them all. Reports that are two (2) to three (3) years old may be unimportant; you will have to decide.
  - f.** Awards you have given to people and organizations (copies). It's good to have an awards program in your Chapter and State Council. Because we're a volunteer organization, we should want to give out awards often to our members who do good work for us.
  - g.** Awards you received (e.g., letters, certificates) you may need them to support your grant proposals.
  - h.** Financial Records.
    - i.** Annual financial report sent to National Office and IRS form 990;
    - ii.** Checks and check registers;
    - iii.** Monthly bank statements, deposit slips and canceled checks;

- iv. Property records;
- v. Annual budgets;
- vi. List of special donors.

i. Miscellaneous

Using the Records:

The quantity of records for a VVA organization is no indication of how well the records are being maintained. Experience shows that for a Chapter that has been around for about five (5) years, it will accumulate about one (1) file drawer of records that is about three (3) feet of records. A VVA State Council Secretary, with about ten (10) Chapters in the State Council, will have about two (2) file drawers, or six (6) feet of records. If the size is much larger, it's time to clean out the files. If the size is much smaller, it's time to go hunt for your files.

Is it necessary to take all files to meetings? Generally, no. A board meeting will need the record of minutes, the by-laws, the VVA Constitution, National Resolutions, the seal, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, and the mail received since the last meeting. This is a judgment call for the Secretary and only experience at meetings will tell you what to bring.

In conclusion:

This booklet describes a basic set of functional records for VVA Chapters and State Councils. Each Chapter and State Council may have additional records which are unique to their organizations. Add what you believe you need. We have attempted to give you some things to think about in getting a grip on your records system.

***There's only one thing left to consider....."Where do I put all this stuff?"***

## RECORD RETENTION

<i>RECORD</i>	<i>WHERE KEPT</i>	<i>FOR HOW LONG</i>
Annual Budget Plan		Permanent
Annual Financial Report		Permanent
Articles of Incorporation		Permanent
Audits (Financial Reviews)		Permanent
Bank Statements		3 Years
Budget Requests		3 Years
Canceled Checks		3 Years
Cash Receipts Vouchers		3 Years
Chart of Accounts		Permanent
Check Duplicates (Carbons)		3 Years
Check Registers		7 Years
Check Request Forms		3 Years
Contracts/MOUs		Permanent
Deposit Slips		3 Years
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes		3 Years
Financial Correspondence		3 Years
General Ledger		3 Years
Investment Account Statements		7 Years
Insurance Policies		Life of the Policy
IRS Group Tax Exempt Letter		Permanent
IRS Tax Forms (Filings)		7 Years
Application for Tax Exemption		Permanent
Payroll Records		7 Years
Product Sales Records		3 Years
Property Tax Records		7 Years
Travel Expense Vouchers		3 Years
Travel Request Forms		3 Years
BOD Minutes		Permanent
Disciplinary Records		Permanent