

Benefits & Responsibilities of VSA Board Members

About the VSA Board

The VSA Board is an all-volunteer board composed of current VSA members and an Executive Director, who is an ex-officio member of the board and designated by the third-party management company. The VSA board is responsible for shaping and stewarding the strategic direction of the association, ensuring effective and efficient operations, and providing fiduciary and legal oversight.

Mission: We are a membership organization dedicated to understanding and enhancing learning experiences in informal settings through research, evaluation, and dialogue.

Vision: The Visitor Studies Association (VSA) envisions a world where people embrace lifelong learning and where learning in informal settings benefits individuals, communities and society at large. VSA views the role of informal learning organizations as facilitators of these experiences and assumes that a respect for and understanding of visitors is essential.

Commitment to Equity: The Visitor Studies Association (VSA) stands in support of #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAAPIHate, strongly condemning the senseless acts of violence being perpetuated against the Black and Asian-American Pacific Islander communities. We condemn all acts of white supremacy, racism, fascism, and nationalist extremism, designed to threaten the very foundations of democracy, and commit to supporting a just, equitable, democratic society. It is our goal to promote informal learning centers as places of safety, hope, and peace for all by listening and responding to the voices of visitors and community members, including and especially people of color and marginalized communities. We support equity, inclusion, and racial justice in all of our communities and across the world.

History: VSA was founded in 1990 and held its first conference in 1988 when a small group of research and evaluation practitioners and museum administrators convened in Anniston, Alabama. Due to some dedicated work of a few individuals, visitor studies are now an increasingly accepted part of museum practice. Today, VSA has evolved into a dynamic professional organization. We are focused on meeting the growing demand for the tools and inspiration to better understand visitors, as well as best-practice strategies for how to attract, educate and serve them.

VSA's Strategic Priorities

1. Strengthening VSA's financial position
2. Helping association members to grow professionally
3. Building a sustainable program of activities
4. Providing year-round benefits for members
5. Positioning VSA as a leading voice for visitor studies

DEAI Priorities (Note that the DEAI task force recommended that strategic and DEAI priorities be synthesized and that equity work should be central to VSA's work)

1. Be an active and engaged leader around DEAI in evaluation and informal learning settings

2. Center DEAI throughout the organization and field,
3. Increase diversity of the VSA board and membership
4. Actively work to create career pathways, particularly for BIPOC individuals, into visitor studies and informal learning
5. Serve as an intentional, visible platform and network for disseminating strategies for DEAI implementation and accountability.

Benefits of VSA Board Service

VSA Board Members lead the development and implementation of VSA's overall organizational strategy and programming. Individuals who serve on the board have the opportunity to:

- Shape VSA's agenda and influence the visitor studies sector;
- Shepherd and steward the development of VSA programs, including membership, conferences, and professional development offerings; and
- Enhance their professional experience through board service.

Desired Skill Sets

The association relies on a diverse skill set to continue the growth of the organization. We also believe it is important that board members feel aligned with [VSA's core values](#), so that we can move the organization forward in a way that is productive and fulfilling for everyone.

All Board Members

- Commitment to advancing the practice of visitor studies in informal learning settings
- Commitment to building an equitable and inclusive board and association
- Commitment to using visitor studies, research, and evaluation to advancing diversity, equity, and access in informal learning institutions
- Strategic thinking/planning experience
- Ability to support collaboration and team-building
- Management experience (either people management or project management)
- Able to follow-through on projects and commitments

Additionally, we seek individuals with the following (optional) qualifications, which we have found helpful to the board (but are not a prerequisite for service):

- Experience with non-profit boards, especially working boards
- Willingness to fundraise on behalf of VSA
- Familiarity with reading and analyzing financial statements and budgets
- Ability and willingness to develop professional development experiences

In addition to the skill sets listed above, potential board members must have the ability to dedicate time and energy every month to supporting board work.

Board Member Responsibilities

Governance

- To ensure that the organization fulfills its legal and financial responsibilities and its responsibilities to the community.

Financial responsibilities

- Annual personal financial contribution to the organization
 - **As of 2023, the board is seeking \$7,000 from the board as a whole (approximately \$500 per Board member)**. This can be through personal donation, acquiring a sponsorship or donation from another individual or organization, or through organizing/facilitating a fee-based workshop and donating the 20% fee back to VSA.
- Supporting fundraising activities to support VSA, such as reaching out for conference sponsorships, end-of-year donations, or other fundraising efforts (e.g. silent auctions).

Membership

- Maintain an active VSA membership; recruit new members to VSA and committees

Meetings

- Attend scheduled virtual Board Meetings (Approximately 2-3 hours per meeting)
 - Monthly for Executive Committee Members
 - Quarterly for Full Board
- Participate in the annual Full Board Meeting (scheduled in tandem with the VSA Annual Conference), either virtually or in-person. (*in-person highly desired for in-person conference years*)

Conferences

- Attend VSA annual conferences, as able; we are currently on an alternating annual schedule between in-person and virtual (2023 is a virtual year, so no travel is required this year)
- Disseminate VSA materials and speak about VSA at other conferences you attend.

Committees and Taskforces

- Chair or participate in at least one VSA committee and/or taskforce.

Time Commitment

All Members; Approximately 3 hours/month, consisting of:

- Preparing for and participating in full board meetings
- Leading and/or participating in taskforces as required
- Supporting development activities

Committee Chairs; Approximately 8 hours/month, consisting of:

- Preparing for and chairing committee meetings and required follow up;
- Communication with the VP overseeing committee;
- Preparation of committee reports for full board meetings

Executive Committee Members; Approximately 8-10 hours/month, consisting of:

- Preparing for and participating in monthly Executive Committee meetings and follow up

- after meetings
- Additional tasks according to your office

Board Job Descriptions (Open positions are in blue highlight)

President (Executive Committee Member, 2-year term)

“Volunteer In-Chief” of the association. Provides leadership to the association and the board to ensure the healthy functioning of the association.

- Represents VSA to professional associations and government agencies as the official board voice
- Presides at all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee
- Has responsibility for general supervision and management of the association
- Signs checks and contracts on behalf of the VSA according to the terms dictated in the Bylaws
- Fosters a unity of purpose that unites VSA’s diverse constituents
- At the recommendation of the Board Development Committee, appoints chairpersons for each committee
- Appoints and oversees Task Forces
- Serves as an ad hoc member of all committees
- Oversees partnerships/collaborations with other associations

President-Elect (Executive Committee Member, 1-year term before stepping into President role for 2 years, Past President for 1 year)

The president-elect becomes the president of the board at the end of the president’s term of office or in the event of death, resignation, or removal.

- The President-Elect cooperates with and carries out the directives of the president and attends all sessions of the board of directors and meetings of the members.
- The president-elect also exercises the powers of the president on any specific issue on which the current president must excuse him or herself. The president-elect serves on the executive committee, board development committee (co-chair with the vice president of organizational development), finance committee, and VSA management office.

Past President (Executive Committee Member, 1-year term)

Provides general counsel and mentorship to the President during their first year of service, ensuring a smooth transition process.

- Facilitates the leadership transition with incoming president
- Completes any initiatives begun during his/her presidency
- Chairs the Nominations Taskforce
- Oversees legal matters in coordination with Management Office and President
- Attends all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee

Vice President, Professional Development (Executive Committee Member, 2-year term)

The Vice President of Professional Development serves on the executive committee and

provides overall guidance for the VSA conference and other professional development activities. The vice president of professional development oversees the efforts of the conference committee and professional development workgroup, working closely with the VSA management office as required.

- Provides strategic oversight and support for the work of Conference and Professional Development committees
- Works with committee chairs to identify opportunities for VSA to increase its visibility with respect to its professional development services.
- Communicates regularly with committee chairs and attends committee meetings as necessary
- Provides cross-organization perspective and supports cross-organization work of its committees
- Attends all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee
- Fulfills other duties as assigned by the president

Vice President, Outreach (Executive Committee Member, 2-year term)

- Provides strategic oversight and support for the work of the Membership committee and other task forces as assigned
- Identifies opportunities for VSA to increase its visibility nationally and internationally
- Communicates regularly with committee chairs and attends committee meetings as necessary
- Provides cross-organization perspective, supports cross-organization work of committees
- Attends all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee
- Fulfills other duties as assigned by the president

Vice President, Organizational Development (Executive Committee Member, 2-year term)

- Provides strategic oversight and support for the work of Development and Board Development committees or task forces as assigned
- Works with committee chairs to identify opportunities and resources that will allow VSA to better serve its internal and external audiences
- Communicates regularly with committee chairs and attends committee meetings as necessary
- Provides cross-organization perspective and supports cross-organization work of its committees
- Attends all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee
- Fulfills other duties as assigned by the president

Secretary (Executive Committee Member, 2-year term)

- Ensures the safety and accuracy of all board records
- Reviews agendas and information for all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee

- Reviews minutes of all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee, as prepared by the Management Office
- Ensures that all notices are given in accordance with the bylaws
- Coordinates reporting and record keeping functions with the Management Office
- Drafts documents and special reports as needed
- Serves as liaison to the *Visitor Studies* journal, working collaboratively with the co-editors, editorial board, and journal publisher
- Attends all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee

Treasurer (Executive Committee Member, 2-year term)

- In partnership with the Management Office, provides oversight for the financial operations of the association.
- Works with the Management Office in developing and implementing financial procedures and systems
- Reviews and leads discussions of financial reports at Executive Committee and full board meetings
- Works with the committee chairs, Vice Presidents, and Executive Committee to develop the annual budget
- Presents the budget to the board of directors for its approval
- Attends all meetings of the general membership, the board of directors, and the Executive Committee

Committee Chairs (2-year term)

- VSA Committee Chairs are responsible for assuring the committee fulfills its operational mandate
- Work closely with appropriate VP and in partnership with other committee chairs to achieve the mission of the Association
- Optimize the relationship between the board and committees
- Appoints (with VP approval) the Vice-Chair for their committee
- Participates as a member of the Board of Directors, attending all board meetings, quarterly committee chair meetings, and special meetings as schedule
- Schedules and convenes meetings (at least 6 times per year) of the committee
- Maintains communications with committee members and keeps records of committee activities/meetings using Basecamp
- Facilitates cross-committee work to ensure successful implementation of VSA's Strategic Plan. Knows the charges of other committees
- Ensures the cognizant VP has appropriate information to report to the Executive Committee on a monthly basis. Prepares reports for full board meetings
- Participates, monitors and administers the implementation of the committee's budget along with the cognizant VP
- Develops the skill sets of the vice-chair and committee members as a means for supporting smooth transitions across the lifetime of the committee

Conference Committee Chair

The conference committee chair serves as an at-large member of the board and oversees the work of the volunteer conference committee. The conference committee assists in the development of the content and offerings for the annual VSA conference. The VSA management office handles all logistics for the conference. The conference committee chair and VSA management office work closely together to ensure a successful conference.

Membership Chair

The membership chair serves as an at-large member of the board and acts as a voice for members, advocating for membership issues with VSA's board and management office, reporting to the vice president of membership on a regular basis. The membership chair provides insights to the VSA management office, reviews membership campaigns and initiatives created by the VSA management office, and supports member-only programs, such as the mentorship program. The membership chair provides oversight and management of the focused interest groups (FIGs).

At-Large Member (2-year term)

- Provides strategic oversight and support for the work of the board, particularly for any assigned task forces or special-interest projects
- Supports activities to identify opportunities and resources that will allow VSA to better serve its internal and external audiences
- Provides cross-organization perspective and supports cross-organization work
- Attends all meetings of the general membership and the board of directors
- Participates in or leads at least one committee or task force
- Fulfills other duties as appropriate

Ideally one at-large member each board term is a current or recent graduate from a program with content or expertise aligned with the professional field. At-Large Membership positions filled by a student would be flexible in nature and can be co-created with interested and/or elected parties.