



Community Volunteer Ambassador Learning and Development Plan

Introduction

Program Background

The Community Volunteer Ambassador (CVA) Program combines the strength of a national leader in conservation service with the National Park Service (NPS) in order to train a diverse group of emerging leaders to assist park units in building lasting connections to local communities.

Public Purpose:

1. To expand volunteerism and community engagement at NPS sites to engage new audiences as stewards of their national parks.
2. To provide career development opportunities for youth participants, motivating them to be involved with their community and with natural, cultural, and historic resources protection.

CVA Program Support

The CVA program is supported by the Washington Support Office (WASO) VIP Program in partnership with Stewards Individual Placements (Stewards), a program of Conservation Legacy. Stewards and WASO provide national direction and strategy for the CVA program.

Regional Office Volunteer-In-Parks staff support WASO and Stewards in selection of NPS sites requesting to host CVAs through a semi-annual application process. Regions also offer localized policy support to NPS surrounding VIP program activities.

National Park Service site and offices host CVAs to support direct service within Volunteer-in-Parks programs. Each NPS site hosting a CVA provides direct supervision and mentorship to the CVA during service.

Stewards program staff and each assigned CVA supervisor will work together to support the success of the CVA. Stewards program staff provides formal training and learning resources over the course of the CVA's term. Site supervisors are the source for on-site and assignment specific orientation, learning, and ongoing support.

The CVA Learning and Development Plan serves as a guide to site supervisors and CVAs. It outlines the performance expectations, learning resources, and the process for periodic performance support check-ins to monitor, evaluate, and promote professional development and growth.

Your support of the CVA Program is incredibly valuable — providing resources for our national parks and developing young professionals for lifelong service.



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Overview

Overview of the CVA Competency Model

The CVA Program uses a competency model to define what successful performance should look like within the program and at each site. The model has four main components.

Core Objectives define the high-level outcomes of the CVA program. The three core learning objectives are:

- Create new or leverage existing community relationships.
- Expand volunteer opportunities offered at NPS site.
- Foster potential of CVA member and develop them as lifelong conservation stewards and future leaders.

Competency is typically one or two words identifying the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that are essential to achieve the core learning objectives. The CVA model has 13 competencies organized under the three core learning objectives.

Competency Definition is a descriptive phrase that adds additional detail to explain the competency.

Indicators: are a set of statements that describe the applied behaviors, discrete knowledge, beliefs and skills that should be observed in a CVA's performance and thus would contribute to successful performance of the competency on the job.

Stewards Individual Placements expects CVAs to be able to demonstrate the competencies outlined in this manual, as defined by the associated indicators, by the end of their service. In collaboration with the National Park Service, Stewards Individual Placements will give CVA members the training opportunities to be able to achieve these goals.

The following pages outline the competencies, as organized by core objective.



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Core Objective #1

Create new or leverage existing community relationships

Competency: Oral and Written Communication

Definition: Appropriately deliver relevant information that enhances understanding of program goals.

Indicators:

- Engage and reflect on feedback from your supervisor through regularly scheduled check-ins.
- Utilize Microsoft Suite to communicate with NPS staff, volunteers, and external partners in a timely manner.
- Participate in regularly scheduled cohort calls and participate in the planning and facilitation of those calls.
- Facilitate inclusive volunteer programs using public speaking and leadership skills.

Competency: Monitoring, Evaluating, and Reporting

Definition: Collect, report, and use relevant data to reflect on success and failure to improve program outcomes.

Indicators:

- Record and report out volunteer program data within mid-term/final reports and comprehensively at the end of the NPS fiscal year.
- Record and reflect on important milestones and stories throughout your service within mid-term/final reports.
- Use volunteer program data to evaluate effectiveness or performance of current outreach efforts and programming, and to inform decision-making.



Competency: Recruitment

Definition: Use a variety of techniques to recruit and perform outreach in the local community.

Indicators:

- Develop and utilize onboarding materials such as Job Hazard Analysis (JHA's), Position Descriptions, and Volunteer Service Agreements to recruit and retain volunteers.
- Use a variety of methods to conduct outreach in your local community and develop community partnerships and relationships.
- Follow Department of the Interior's (DOI) Focus Areas and initiatives to perform targeted recruitment.

Competency: Community Engagement

Definition: Form relationships and alliances with other individuals and organizations to enhance performance on the job.

Indicators:

- Identify areas for volunteer program expansion based on the needs reflected in your Early Service Project.
- Identify community liaisons to assist in developing new relationships for your site.
- Continually foster existing park relationships in a mutually beneficial way.
- Represent the NPS, Conservation Legacy, and AmeriCorps in a professional manner to external organizations and the local community.
- Record successful community engagement events as an accomplishment when completing your Salesforce timesheet, as well as in mid-term/final report metrics.



Core Objective #2

Expand volunteer opportunities offered at NPS site

Competency: Problem Solving & Critical Thinking

Definition: Work through obstacles to create or expand additional volunteer opportunities

Indicators:

- Use Creativity and Innovation to leverage limited resources.
- Cultivate self-sufficiency and being a leader in your own problem-solving (did you complete all Pre-NEST sessions, attend cohort calls, etc. to gauge).

Competency: Teamwork & Collaboration

Definition: Participate respectfully in joint efforts across and within divisions, external stakeholders, and the surrounding community to accomplish program goals

Indicators:

- Use effective and appropriate methods to resolve conflict.
- Appreciate and leverage the strengths of others.
- Establish trust across a range of people with a variety of identities.
- Clarify and share roles and responsibilities amongst team members.



Competency: Site Research & Volunteer Program Assessment

Definition: Conduct background site research to understand site history, resources, and inform a needs assessment

Indicators:

- Identify and expand site specific resources and assets.
- Practice Appreciative Inquiry: at its' heart, AI is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world around them; a model that seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change.
- Conduct research to create and/or update your Early Service Project and define action items for the site.

Competency: Project Design & Management

Definition: Successfully design, implement, and manage projects to benefit site and program goals.

Indicators:

- Work closely with site supervisor and volunteer management team to plan and facilitate trainings for new or expanded programs.
- Plan and implement events throughout your service to benefit site's volunteer program.
- Design programs to expand volunteer opportunities using resources from National Early Service Training (NEST), the Washington Support Office (WASO), and your site's previous CVA (if applicable).

Core Objective #3

Foster potential of CVA member and develop them as lifelong conservation stewards and future leaders

Competency: Leveraging and Understanding Technology

Definition: Use relevant software and social media platforms at site to support mission.

Indicators:

- Use Microsoft Suite to complete daily tasks.
- Draft or create social media content if accessible at site.
- Follow government regulations and requirements regarding Personal Identifying Information (PII) and use of government equipment and software.

Competency: Leadership

Definition: Lead others and assist in their growth and development as volunteers and stewards of our natural and cultural resources

Indicators:

- Exercise operational leadership by identifying and communicating safety issues and opportunities for improvement.
- Act with integrity and uphold AmeriCorps, Conservation Legacy, and National Park Service professional expectations at all times.
- Provide and accept constructive feedback from the greater park site community (present Early Service Project at NEST).
- Practice curiosity and exploration of others' experiences.

Competency: Career Management

Definition: Define their career path and recognize opportunities that can help them achieve their personal goals.

Indicators:

- Seek continuous self and organizational improvement opportunities and ideas such as networking with park staff and partners via informational interviews, finding mentors, and utilizing the NPS Common Learning Portal
- Conduct targeted professional development of 1-2 skills each quarter to support career path development.
- Engage in ongoing personal reflection to identify preferred interests and skills that relate to jobs or careers.

Competency: Organizational Knowledge and Behavior

Definition: Function effectively within the culture of the National Park Service and to be an effective team player.

Indicators:

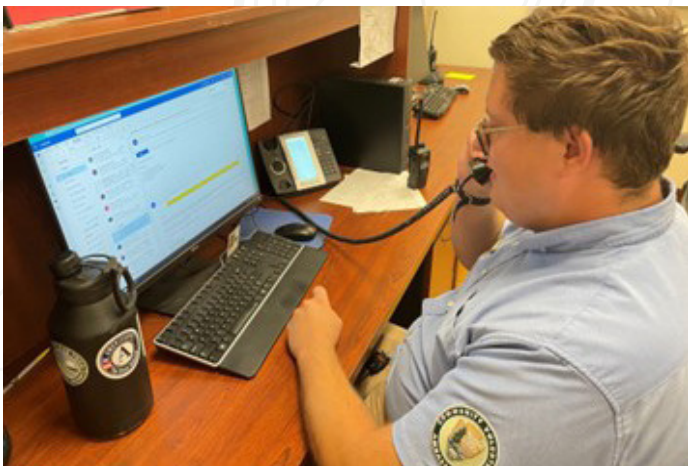
- Recognize and adhere to chain of command and appropriate communication channels.
- Establish effective and appropriate working relationships with all stakeholders.
- Participate in formal and informal activities with park staff and team members.
- Support and understand the mission, goals, initiatives, culture and organizational structure of the National Park Service and honor your AmeriCorps pledge.
- Access and utilize resources to maintain positive mental health and emotional intelligence.
- Recognize and understand the expectations of the NPS site, Stewards staff, and site supervisor.

Competency: Inter-Cultural Competence

Definition: Practice a set of compatible behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable effective work across differences of all kinds.

Indicators:

- Perform community outreach to create inclusive and accessible volunteer programming.
- Develop your inter-cultural competence through active participation in all Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings and webinars.
- Build community with park staff, peers, and partners through exploration of shared and different social identities.
- Adapt your behavior to leverage differences and to promote an inclusive work environment.



Continuum of Learning

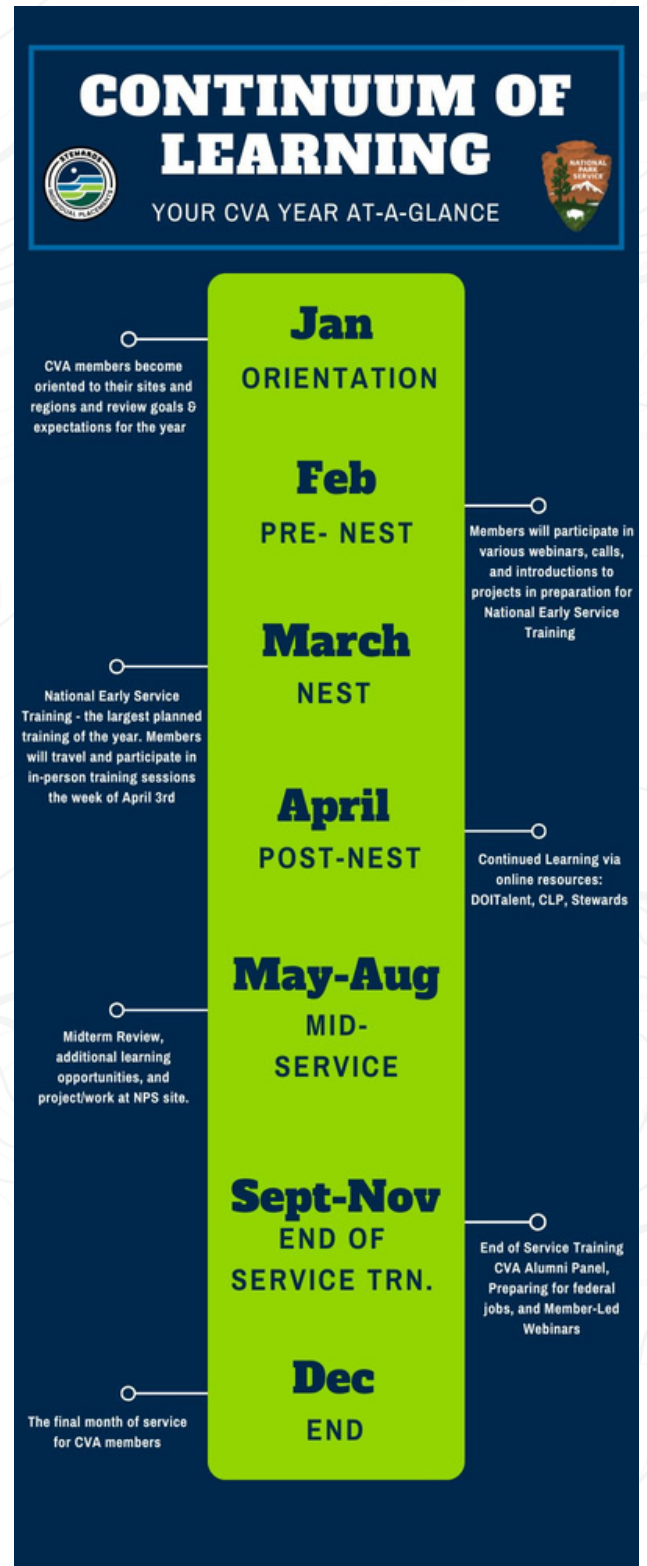
Stewards Program staff, in collaboration with the National Park Service, provides a full continuum of learning for the CVA's term of service.

It includes self-directed and facilitated virtual learning, as well as in-person learning when possible. The following graphic outlines the main periods and learning opportunities.

CVA Continuum of Learning by Month

CVAs are responsible for their own learning and professional development towards demonstration of the competencies. Supervisors are responsible to support and encourage active engagement with the competencies and the learning opportunities that are available and are encouraged to support CVAs in co-developing an Individual Development Plan.

The following table outlines each of the learning activities included in the 50-week continuum. The associated learning outcomes are listed for each as well as naming which competencies are developed in that activity. CVAs have a responsibility to complete tasks and demonstrate these competencies within the time frame to ensure they have a successful term.



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Continuum of Learning by Month

Timeframe	Learning Activity	Learning Outcomes	Competencies Supported	Facilitator
Orientation (1st Month)	Site Orientation (1st Week of Service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and discuss the orientation checklist within this document Identify emergency resources available at park site Tell Stewards Program Coordinator about three activities available at park Review and be able to discuss the NPS mission, goals, and organizational structure— and the role a CVA plays in supporting the NPS mission Review Member Resources and locate timekeeping and PD guidance 	Organizational Knowledge and Behavior Career Management	Site Supervisor and Self-Directed
	CVA Member Orientation (January 30th)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the history of the CVA Program Fill out the goal setting worksheet and/or Individual Development Plan and identify the skills you want to work on this year with your supervisor Identify resources available in the Learning and Development Plan 	Organizational Knowledge and Behavior	Stewards
	Regional Welcome (2nd or 3rd Week of Service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet each CVA in the region and learn at least one thing from their bios. Identify regional staff contacts and support available from regional office. 	Organizational Knowledge and Behavior	Stewards and Regional VIP Manager
	Information Management Training: DOI Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize cybersecurity, privacy, records mgmt. section 508 compliance, controlled unclassified information reference guides, and the DOI rules of behavior. 	Leveraging and understanding technology	Self-Directed
	Microsoft Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate regularly with your cohort using Microsoft Teams as a platform. Use SharePoint to find and house resources, for example: virtual volunteering. Understand how Teams, SharePoint, and Outlook support work 	Leveraging and understanding technology	
Pre-NEST Month (Feb-March 2024)	Early Service Project (February 15th)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand goals of Early Service Project and presentation at National Early Service Training. Locate and review volunteer program resources (service descriptions, recruitment plans, handbook/local policy). Identify existing volunteer opportunities and community relationships. Share findings at National Early Service Training with other CVAs. Demonstrate presentation skills during National Early Service Training. Connect with at least one other CVAs to monitor progress and share ideas/provide feedback. 	Organizational Knowledge and Behavior Site Research & Volunteer Program Assessment Community Engagement	Stewards and Self-Directed
	Implicit Bias Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define Implicit Bias and explain how to identify bias within the workplace. Reflect on personal biases to evaluate how you can promote an inclusive workplace. Understand diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and cultural humility. 	Inter-Cultural Competence	Self-Directed
	Service-Wide Volunteer Training Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate information and knowledge of Resource Manual-7 into your site's VIP Program. Utilize RM-7 and volunteer program building to create a more robust VIP program at your site. 	Organizational Knowledge and Behavior	
	Social Media & Communications Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name three best practices for drafting or creating social media content if accessible at site Identify two new tools and platforms for social media and marketing of NPS site events Identify three correct photos following Department of the Interior (DOI) rules regarding social media 	Leveraging and Understanding Technology	Self-Directed
National Early Service Training (NEST) (March 18-22, 2024)	Leadership in Service and Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain and identify behaviors that support professional relationships and build trust. Recognize the impacts and strengths of your own leadership style. Explain the best practices for conducting informational interviews. 	Leadership Teamwork & Collaboration	Stewards
	Non-Violent Community and Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand restorative approach to conflict management. Be able to practice techniques for self-advocacy and conflict management. Identify best practices in project management. 	Oral & Written Communication Project Design & Management	
	Cultural Humility Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with your peers and our inherent diversity as a group using aspects of our own identity Define basic terminology such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Bias, Prejudice, and Discrimination Use tools that will assist members in "checking your biases at the door" including Implicit Bias Tests Develop tools to confront microaggression and biases in the workplace Connect with other CVAs who have similar and different experiences to support shared learning 	Organizational Knowledge & Behavior Inter-Cultural Competence	

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Continuum of Learning by Month

Timeframe	Learning Activity	Learning Outcomes	Competencies Supported	Facilitator		
National Early Service Training (NEST) (March 18-22, 2024)	Early Service Project Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present site's resources, current program scope, partners, and needs in the VIP Program. Use peers to problem-solve, and share ideas on opportunities at site. 	Site Research & Volunteer Program Assessment	Peer-Led		
	Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish ground rules with your CVA cohort. Identify and explore topics of interest based on site needs and CVA workplan. Connect with NPS staff, Stewards program, and CVAs to share in learning. 	Problem Solving & Critical Thinking			
	VIP Local Policy and Handbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand role of local policy supporting volunteers and NPS staff. Recognize how local policy can evolve as new circumstances or needs arise. Identify the VIP structure at their site, including the role of VIP Manager, VIP Supervisors, and other staff supporting VIP program. Define CVA role in VIP program structure and reviewing policy/handbooks. 	Organizational Knowledge & Behavior Site Research & Volunteer Program Assessment Community Engagement Project Design & Management	NPS Facilitators		
	Planning a VIP Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand tools to strategically determine needs of VIP program. Distinguish between appropriate vs. inappropriate work for volunteers. Explain the importance of well-designed service descriptions. Define CVA role in creating a new or reviewing volunteer opportunities. Gain skills in creating/reviewing service descriptions. 				
	VIP Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop effective recruitment strategies and tools for diverse audiences. Consider how to make your volunteer program recruitment efforts more inclusive. Define CVA role in recruitment, screening, and onboarding at NPS site. 				
	VIP Orientation & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the importance of making the right first impression on volunteers. Discuss the difference between orientation and training. Review existing orientation and training plans to identify opportunities. Define CVA role in volunteer orientation and training. 				
	Volunteer Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand policies surrounding recognition in RM-7 Identify multiple types of volunteer recognition opportunities Define ways you can support volunteer recognition at your site. 				
	Community Engagement and Event Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand community relationships and engagement in CVA role. Explore differences and similarities between planning and offering group volunteer events and supporting individual volunteer opportunities. Learn steps to coordinating parkwide for impactful stewardship activities. Conduct evaluation and document event planning processes to standardize approach 				
Mid-Service (Month 6-8)	Cultural Humility with NPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand NPS Relevance, Diversity, and Inclusion (RDI) efforts Connect site activities/efforts with service-wide RDI initiatives. Recognize how RDI efforts interact with VIP program efforts. Provide feedback to NPS on efficacy of current RDI efforts and opportunity for development. 			Organizational Knowledge and Behavior Inter-Cultural Competence	NPS Facilitators
	Mid-Service Check-In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about 3-5 CVA projects occurring at other NPS sites. Collaborate with CVAs on lessons learned and challenges. 			Teamwork & Collaboration	Stewards
End of Service (Months 9-12)	Member-Led Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and facilitate a webinar for peers and the general NPS staff Demonstrate engaging public speaking and presentation skills 	Oral & Written Communication	Peer-Led		
	Public Lands Corps (PLC) Hiring Authority and Federal Hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact the appropriate staff to receive PLC paperwork and instructions Complete and submit paperwork to receive PLC certificate Identify federal jobs that accept PLC Create USA Jobs alerts Understand the different between USA Jobs and federal hiring vs. private sector 	Career Management	NPS Facilitators		
	CVA Alumni Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to leverage experience as a CVA into your next position Network with alumni and peers 	Career Management	Stewards		
	Exit/Transition Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify best practices for providing transition documents on work projects Develop method for keeping professional contacts and network Finalize AmeriCorps and NPS exits on-time 				

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Performance Support Resources

The site supervisor and CVA have a responsibility to be in regular dialogue to support member performance.

In addition to regular 1:1s and casual check-ins, you are expected to engage in formal conversations to identify professional development goals at the start and end of service, as well as on a quarterly basis during service. This page is an outline of the purpose and requirements of each conversation. The appendix contains an outline for each necessary document.

Service Week 1: Onboarding/Site Orientation

This week is about getting to know the site and one another. The Site Supervisor and CVA should discuss and complete the:

- [Site orientation checklist](#)
- [Creating Shared Expectations and a Working Relationship Document](#)

Service Week 2: Initial Goal Setting

Now that you have established a foundation, it's time to set some goals for the work. Share the questions and the competencies with the CVA ahead of time and ask them to come prepared to discuss and set goals.

- [Goal Setting Worksheet](#)

Monthly Check-In

Each month you should check-in with your CVA to track progress towards their goals, review the competencies, and identify opportunities for the future.

- [Monthly Check In Worksheet](#)

Service Weeks 46-48: Closure

As the CVA's service draws to a close, it is important to reflect on and intentionally name learning, growth and success. This is particularly helpful for them to be able to identify their own skills and interests as well as be prepared to communicate their work to future employers.

- [End of Service Closing Questions Document](#)



On-Site Orientation Checklist

DIRECTIONS: The following is a checklist for your CVAs On-Site Orientation. The tasks listed below indicate materials that should be covered during your CVA Member's first two weeks of service.

Welcome to the NPS Site; Getting Started

- Tour of NPS site
- Introduce the CVA member to NPS Site staff
- Show CVA member his/her work area
- CVA Member attends regular staff meeting.
- Take time at the staff meeting to remind everyone of the CVA member's new role.

Discuss the basic terms of work, policies, procedures:

- Hours of work, holidays, and leave days
- NPS rules about absenteeism, tardiness, process for reporting an absence
- Salesforce timesheets
- Use of telephone, mail services, copier, fax machine
- Provide phone list(s)
- Standards of conduct, including rules of dress, personal grooming, smoking policy, housekeeping rules, etc.
- Parking practices and provide (or arrange for) office keys to building

Explain safety procedures:

- CVA Member is trained on the agency's safety policy
- CVA Member is given the materials and knowledge to perform tasks safely
- Proper signs, emergency exits, and safety protocols are visibly displayed
- CVA Member knows the process to report/document accidents to staff
- First aid kits are available and locations identified
- Fire extinguishers are located on site and inspected regularly

Purpose/Mission of NPS Site and CVA Project

- Discuss in more detail the mission and background of your NPS Site
- Explain the history of the NPS Site
- Review the NPS Site mission, structure, goals, and objectives
- Explain departmental and divisional functions, goals, team structure, major projects
- Introduce and review the CVA Work Plan
- Review past CVA's work (if applicable)

Expectation Setting Worksheet

Creating Shared Expectations & Working Relationship

Healthy working relationships come from clearly defined and shared expectations. Intentionally designing how we will work together upfront will lay a strong foundation to navigate the inevitable bumps that come our way. Please take some time to reflect on what you know about yourself and yourself in the workplace using the following questions as a guide. I'll come prepared to listen as well as share tips for working well with me. We'll talk through these together as a way to learn about one another and start .creating a successful relationship

What do you need/want from me as your supervisor?

What is important for me to know about you?

How do you like to be recognized when successful?

How do you like to receive feedback? (ex: immediate, verbal, written, heads up that we'll talk about it in a 1:1 later, etc.)

What's the best way for you to give me feedback on something? (ex: I will reflect on what I know about myself and together we'll jointly decide on best methods/lead in phrases, etc.)

What things at work tend to stress you the most? (ex: relationship with deadlines, differing work and communication styles and habits, etc.)

What will we do when we disagree on something? (ex: we will jointly discuss, taking into account conflict styles and preferences)

What kind of professional growth are you looking for in the next year?

What else is important for us to discuss?

Goal Setting Worksheet

Appendix 2: Goal Setting Worksheet (Individual Development Plan—IDP)

Looking at the competencies, which ones do you feel you are strong on? Which ones are areas for growth?

What is one goal you have for each core objective?

Core Objective	Goal	Needed Resources
Objective 1: Create new or leverage existing community partnerships		
Objective 2: Expand volunteer opportunities offered at NPS site		
Objective 3: Foster potential of CVA member and develop them as lifelong conservation stewards and future leaders		

What do you need in order to achieve these goals?

What might get in your way? How can you mitigate that?

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Check-In Worksheet

Monthly Check-In - Date: _____

How is your progress on your goals?

What went well?

What have you learned?

Looking at the competencies, which ones do you feel you are strong on? Which ones are areas for growth?

What do you need in order to achieve that growth?

For the upcoming month, what is one goal you have for each core objective?

What do you need in order to achieve these goals?

What might get in your way? How can you mitigate that?

Core Objective	Goal	Needed Resources
Objective 1: Create new or leverage existing community partnerships		
Objective 2: Expand volunteer opportunities offered at NPS site		
Objective 3: Foster potential of CVA member and develop them as lifelong conservation stewards and future leaders		

Check-In Worksheet

Final Check-In and Closing Questions—Weeks 46-48

What went well for the year?

What have you learned?

What are you particularly proud of?

What accomplishments can you list and use for your resume and future interviews?

What are you taking forward with you?