Handout 1: VRF QuickStart Guide for Volunteers

The VRF 3.1 Quick Start Guide contains instructions and tips for opening the VRF and accurately completing the form. Additional resources are available on the VRF Resource Center at vrf.peacecorps.gov.

Instructions for the Peace Corps VRF:

- Download the VRF Application
- Open the VRF
- Save the VRF
- Navigate the VRF
- Complete the VRF Sections
- Add or Update Activities and Indicator Results
- Delete An Activity
- Conduct a Final Review
- Submit the VRF

Peace Corps VRF

Tech Tips:

- VRF App runs on Windows and Macs
- VRF App runs offline without Internet
- VRF App requires Microsoft Silverlight, version 5.1.20125.0 or later
- VRF file has built-in help text

How to Download the VRF Application:

Volunteers only need to download the VRF Application once, unless the application is uninstalled between reporting periods. The initial download is the only time an Internet connection is required.

1. Go to the VRF Resource Center (vrf.peacecorps.gov).
2. Go to the section Download Peace Corps VRF Application Here
3. Follow the directions on the webpage to:
    a. Verify you have Microsoft Silverlight downloaded and installed on your computer.
    b. Select the operating system version of your computer
    c. Follow the instructions for your operating system to download and install the VRF Application

> Mac users should move the VRF App from their Download list to the Applications folder for easier access. Users with Mac OS 10.7.5 or later need to follow the additional steps provided on the VRF Resource Center before the VRF App will open on their computers.

How to Open the VRF:

To open the VRF, Volunteers need to have downloaded the VRF Application and received their VRF file from staff.

1. Save the VRF file to a secure place on your computer (e.g., “My Documents” folder) or USB.
    > Staff will send the VRF files to you each reporting period. Staff typically emails the VRF files. If accessing email each reporting period is not possible, contact staff to make alternative arrangements. Please note: Each VRF that staff emails you for each reporting period is a unique file. Always verify that you open and fill out the most recent VRF for the most recent reporting period.
2. Open the VRF Application by clicking on the Peace Corps VRF icon displayed on the desktop.
    > If using Windows, you can open the app by going to your Start menu, clicking “All Programs” then “Peace Corps VRF.” Mac users can use the Finder folder to locate the application.
3. Click the blue **Browse** button and navigate to where you saved the VRF file OR select the VRF file from the **Recently Opened** list.
    > You need to open the VRF file using the VRF Application. The VRF file will not open by double-clicking on it directly.

How to Save the VRF

Volunteers should save the VRF often and before closing the VRF to ensure their work is not lost. Since the VRF runs offline, the program's auto-save has delays between when it saves.

1. To save, simply click the blue **Save** button at the top on the screen.

****Always click save <u>before</u> closing the VRF****

How to Navigate the VRF

Volunteers can navigate the VRF using three methods:

1. Click the green **Begin VRF** button on the **Start** page and subsequent green **Next** buttons at the bottom of each page to sequentially move through the VRF.
2. Click the linked section headings on the **VRF Checklist** to return to incomplete sections.
   Update the VRF Checklist by checking the checkbox at the bottom of each section.
3. Click the section headings on the black menu bar OR tabs displayed on the Activity entry's side bar to manually move to different sections.

How to Complete the VRF Sections

Volunteers should complete all sections of the VRF each reporting period. As Volunteers complete the VRF, sections and questions will adjust to only display what is relevant for the Volunteer to report.

Tell Your Story

Tell Your Story questions help staff learn about your service. The responses you give can help inform future training events and may be shared with other Volunteers as invaluable learning opportunities.

Your previous **Planned Activities** will appear in your next VRF for your reference. Update your plans appropriately to keep staff informed of your anticipated work. Staff may use this information to connect you with others who have done similar work.

Your **Success Stories** may also be used in your post's annual reports to stakeholders or shared publicly by the Peace Corps to depict the results of Volunteers' work. If your responses are used, the Peace Corps will not disclose your name unless you have given permission. Spend time to thoughtfully share about your experiences as a Volunteer.

Other Information

Respond to the **Other Questions**, which are created specifically by your post. These questions may change over time to collect time-specific information from Volunteers for upcoming training events or to follow up on any items from previous events.

Contacts

The **Contacts** section allows you to enter and save information about the community partners that work with you. This information is for your reference and to help staff know more about the counterparts and organizations present in your community to build a better profile about your community and identify contacts for future Volunteers.

Provide as many details as you can for each contact, including how you collaborate with the individual/group.

Activities

The **Activities** section is where you report the work you have done to support the Peace Corps' goals:

(1) To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.

(2) To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
(3) To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

Each New Activity entry will be added to the **My Activities** table and can be updated over time. Your entries capture the results of the work you conduct with your community during service. Your results combine with other reports to help the Peace Corps demonstrate the value of our work.

(See below for more specific instructions on completing the Activities section)

Indicators

The **Indicators** section is where you will report your progress towards meeting the objectives in your project framework, CSPPs at post, or agency Initiatives. Enter the total number of unique subjects (for output indicators) or total number of unique subjects achieving the indicator (for outcome indicators) across all relevant activities entered in the VRF during that reporting period.

(See below for more specific instructions on completing the Indicators section)

Volunteer Feedback

Use the **Volunteer Feedback** section to provide any additional information to your APCD/PM or other staff member about the reporting period. For any timely requests, concerns, or issues, contact the appropriate staff member directly.

Final Review

The **Final Review** section highlights missing information and confirms that your VRF is ready to submit.

(See below for specific instructions about the Final Review section)

How to Add or Update Activities and Indicator Results

Each Reporting Period, Volunteers should report new activities and relevant indicator results, and update any ongoing activities to report new results.

1. Go to the **Activities** tab in the VRF.
2. Click the **+ Add a New Activity** button.
3. Select a **Start Date** and enter an **End Date,** if known. If an activity is ongoing, then either enter an anticipated end date or leave blank until complete.
4. Enter a **Description** that provides enough detail so staff, stakeholders, and other Volunteers can understand, replicate, and learn from your efforts. Enter a **Title** that will easily identify the activity to you, staff, and other stakeholders.
5. Click the green **Next** button to proceed to the **Activity Questions** tab and continue to complete the questions as they appear.

What's an Activity?
The VRF is an activity-based reporting system.

An activity is a group of tasks undertaken to achieve a specified result. Activities can be one-time events or a recurring series of events, conducted with the same people and for the same purpose.

When you collaborate with community or external partners to conduct longer-term projects that involve and benefit different groups of people, you should enter the project's different components as separate activities. Each activity should be associated with a distinct group of people.

Specific Notes for the Activity Question Tab:

Peace Corps' Goal One

If your activity contributes to **Goal One**, select a relevant work area or **Project** that your activity supported. When no work area or project is applicable, proceed to the next questions and/or tabs (i.e., when the activity falls outside of your primary assignment, but contributes to a CSPP or initiative at post).

The **Partnerships** section helps post identify which of their partners are collaborating with Volunteers and identify new potential partners. If you collaborated with an organization to implement the activity, select the name of the organization from the dropdown list or enter a new organization to share with post.

CSPP/Initiatives >

Indicate which, if any, of the Peace Corps' six **Cross-Sector Programming Priority (CSPP)** areas or current Peace Corps **Initiatives** that your activity supported. Respond to any additional questions that appear.

Participants >

Report the number of **individuals** participating in the described activity by sex and age. Report any **Service Providers** who provided direct training, education, or services during the activity. When applicable, report **Organization**(s) whose capacity was strengthened or **Communities** whose development was the focus of the activity.

Other Questions >

Respond to the questions that staff have included in your VRF to collect post-specific data about this activity.

Objectives >

Select the appropriate **Objective**(s) that your activity supported. The objectives on the table are associated with the **Project(s)** you selected on the **Activity Questions** tab. Hover over the question mark ? to see the full objective statement.

Peace Corps' Goal Two

If your activity contributes to Goal Two select "Yes." Additional questions will then appear to answer. You will not be asked project-related or CSPP/Initiative questions unless you also indicate the activity supported Peace Corps Goal One, but you should report on the **Participants** involved and respond to any relevant **Other Questions**.

Peace Corps' Goal Three

If your activity contributes to Goal Three select "Yes." Additional questions will then appear to answer. You will not be asked project-related or CSPP/Initiative questions unless you also indicate the activity supported Peace Corps Goal One, you may report on the **Participants** involved, if applicable, and respond to any relevant **Other Questions**.

Note: Repeat the steps above for each activity you are reporting for this reporting period before moving to the Indicators tab.

Update Ongoing Activities

1. Click on the linked **activity title** on the **Activities** tab to open the entry.
2. Update the End Date, if known.
3. Update any *new* participant numbers on the **Participants** tab and any relevant **Other Questions**.

Enter Indicator Results

After entering all of your activities you will go to the **Indicators** tab to report on the relevant indicators (both output and outcome) associated with the activities carried out during the reporting period.

1. Click on the **Indicators** tab.

2. The indicators that appear in the table are based on the objectives, CSPPs, and/or Initiatives you selected when entering your activities. You will not report on every indicator that appears, you will only report on the ones relevant to the Activities that you reported.
3. To filter the indicators by the reasons they appear in the table, select the reason (e.g. All Reasons, Primary Project, Other Project, or CSPPs/Initiatives) from the dropdown box. The search box can also be used to find a specific indicator. To select a relevant indicator, click on the hyperlinked indicator code ED-004-C in the **Indicator Code** column to report the results or progress towards this indicator from all the relevant activities conducted in the reporting period that were entered in the **Activities** tab.
4. Select the activities that contributed to this indicator during this reporting period. You must select at least one activity before you can report any results.
5. For Output Indicators: Enter the output, or total number of subjects that directly resulted from the activities entered for this reporting period or are additions to the subjects previously reported for any ongoing activities. If the same subject (individual) participated in more than one activity they should only be counted once towards the output indicator.
   For Outcome Indicators: Enter the outcome, or total number that achieved the outcome of this indicator as a result of all the activities you have reported to date. **Note:** If you have previously reported outcomes for this indicator in an earlier reporting period, only report additional results. If the same individual achieved the outcome in two different activities they should only be counted once.
6. Answer additional questions as applicable. **Note:** If an indicator has follow-up questions, the questions will appear below the table where you enter the total number of unique subjects.

Note: For **ongoing activities**, update the indicator results reported on the **Indicators** tab, entering only *new* results since the last Reporting Period. New results will combine with previous results to display a new grand total.

How to Delete an Activity

1. On all pages under the Activities tab, Volunteers can click the red "Delete this Activity" button at the bottom of the page to delete an activity entry that is new to the current reporting period. This will permanently delete the activity from the VRF. Activities that were originally entered in a previous reporting period cannot be deleted.

How to Conduct a Final Review

The Final Review section helps Volunteers to quickly identify any incomplete sections in their VRF.

1. After completing the VRF, click on the **Final Review** section and select the **[Yes]** button.
2. Return to any incomplete sections listed as quick links in the **Final Review** box. These incomplete sections will remain highlighted until you enter the missing information.
3. Once you complete all required sections, the Final Review box will turn green and you can check the **"I am finished with Final Review"** box.

****Always click save <u>before</u> closing the VRF****

How to Submit the VRF

1. Once the VRF is complete, click the blue Save button and close the VRF app.
2. Attach the VRF to an email or USB to send the staff member designated to collect VRFs.