VSA
Visitor Studies Association

Board of Directors Meeting
Sheraton Raleigh Hotel
Raleigh, NC
July 25, 2012
8:42 a.m. – 4:38 p.m., Eastern

MINUTES

Present

President and Chair	Dale McCreedy
Past President	Kirsten Ellenbogen
President Elect	Joe Heimlich
Treasurer	Jessica Luke
Secretary	Elisa Israel
Vice-President, Organizational Development	Dave Ucko
Vice-President, Outreach Development	Matt Sikora
Vice-President, Professional Development	Kris Morrissey
Association Manager	Sarah Cohn

Members:
Marcie Benne, Rick Bonney, Kate Haley Goldman, Cheryl Kessler, Karen Knutson, Randi Korn, Troy Livingston, Laura Huerta Migus, Saul Rockman, Jessica Sickler, Kathleen Tinworth, Mira Zergani

Absent : None

Guest:
Senior Manager, La Piana Consulting   Vance Yoshida

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Board of the Visitor Studies Association, the President being in the Chair and the Secretary being present, was called to order at 8:42 a.m. Eastern.

E. Israel conducted a roll call to ascertain if any of the Members had a conflict of interest with any items on the agenda.

Name	Conflict
Dale McCreedy	None
Marcie Benne	None
Rick Bonney	Under contract through CAISE to produce the PI guide for managing evaluation
Sarah Cohn	None
Kirsten Ellenbogen	VSA PI on CAISE through Year 5; CAISE PI, not connected to VSA, for years 6-8; Co-PI on BISE
Kate Haley Goldman	None
Joe Heimlich	None
Elisa Israel	None
Cheryl Kessler	None
Karen Knutson	Co-PI on BISE
Randi Korn	None
Troy Livingston	None
Jessica Luke	Paid author on the CAISE PI evaluation guide
Laura Huerta Migus	On staff at ASTC (relevant for any CAISE discussions)
Kris Morrissey	None
Saul Rockman	None
Jessica Sickler	None
Matt Sikora	None
Kathleen Tinworth	None
Dave Ucko	None
Mira Zirgani	Board member on a foundation giving grant to VSA

Approval of Consent Agenda

E. Israel confirmed that the following items were part of the consent agenda.

Association Manager Report (S. Cohn)
President Report (D. McCreedy)
President Elect Report (J. Heimlich)
Past President Report (K. Ellenbogen)
Secretary Report (E. Israel)
VP for Organizational Development Report (D. Ucko)
VP for Professional Development Report (K. Morrissey)
VP for Outreach Development Report (M. Sikora)

E. Israel asked if anyone wanted to move any items from the consent agenda to the deliberative agenda for any reason.

M. Sikora requested that the Past President and VP for Professional Development reports be moved to deliberative the deliberative agenda. He identified that they would be relevant to discussions about the budget and the Membership Taskforce.

Motion: E. Israel moved *"That the Consent Agenda be accepted, with the Past President and VP for Professional Development reports moved to the deliberative agenda."* K. Ellenbogen seconded. The consent agenda was approved.

Deliberative agenda

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Board Meeting of May 2-3, 2012

E. Israel asked if there were any corrections for the minutes of the May Board meeting, which had been posted on Basecamp prior to the meeting. No changes were offered.

Motion*:* E. Israel moved *"That the minutes of the last meeting be accepted."* C. Kessler seconded*.* The motion carried.

2. Financial Quarterly Report
J. Luke reported on three items:

1) Review of recent IT issues
J. Luke reviewed that the laptop used for VSA's financial data suffered a hard drive crash. She reported that while no data was lost, the Quickbooks file did not back up properly resulting in the need for data since March to be re-entered. She reported that J. Johnson has agreed to re-enter that data, for which VSA is paying a stipend of $2,000 out of the CAISE grant because there has been a lot of CAISE activity during the affected timeframe and they need year-end financials.

Questions and Discussion:
- What alternative backup solutions are being explored?
  - J. Luke reported that possible options are being explored, including online storage options.

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- Why is the Quickbooks data hosted locally rather than on a secure server?
  - J. Luke indicated that an online option has not previously investigated it, but she will look into it now.

Action: A small group (S. Cohn, S. Rockman, and K. Haley Goldman) with work with the Treasurer further to explore possible alternatives.

2) Draft of end of June financials
J. Luke emphasized that the financials are in draft form because May and June were done manually. She noted that discrepancies exist between activity reports and reported financials. She explained that the financial report only goes through the end of June so there is a lag in reporting activity. She noted that there is a lot of activity that has occurred in the weeks leading up to the conference that would not be reflected in the end of June financials.

Questions and Discussion:
- R. Korn reported that the Development Committee has over $22,000 pledged and over $17,000 received. She reported that this is better than 2011. She reported that the amount the Committee had promised to raise was $18,000. She noted that this does not include a $5,000 grant from a board on which M. Zergani sits to a minority scholarship program.
- J. Sickler noted that VSA loses money on conference student registrations and inquired how the new grant funds might be used. R. Korn noted that there are different options for how the fund might be used.
- R. Korn noted that the new silent auction is designed to offset the costs associated with student registrations.

3) Feedback on information about VSA finances that Board members would like to receive on a more regular basis
J. Luke invited suggestions from the Board about information on VSA finances that should be reported on a regular basis. Several suggestions were offered:
- Comparison to projections for that point in time
- Quarterly projections, which may be more realistic than monthly projections
- Real costs of the services VSA provides
- Year to year comparisons - either quarterly or by activity
- Pulling out grant and core expenses and income, to better distinguish between different parts of VSA's money
- Grant money being project-based, not year-based. K. Ellenbogen noted that the current format was used because it works better with the 990 form.

M. Sikora raised a question from the VP for Professional Development report. He noted that the silent auction offsets cost of student registration, but that the budget is not set up for that. He inquired if there is concern from an accounting standpoint of how to show that an activity is offsetting a cost. L. Huerta Migus noted that there may be a need separate lines for revenue and expenses for individual projects.

Action: J. Luke will work with K. Morrissey and S. Cohn to address this question from a reporting standpoint.

3. Setting the Stage for Board and Member Discussions

D. McCreedy reviewed the agenda items for the remainder of the meeting. She requested that Board members reflect on what they feel is the greatest concern for VSA, from their perspective as a Board member, not as individuals. Board members raised concerns and made comments in several areas:

Organizational Structure / Operational Capacity /Sustainability
- The disparity between VSA's aspirations and resources to accomplish the work.
- How to maximize the potential of organization in a sustainable manner.
- VSA has overextended volunteer "staff". We have lots of great ideas, but lack the human resources to put them into action, so we start things, but don't finish them well.
- Amount of time that volunteers need to take on to make the continuing, new, and potential projects happen.
- Infrastructure – maximizing what we can do and be sustainable. The Board and committees are overextended. VSA needs to align tightly the existing or desired infrastructure with the plan for moving forward.
- Being reflective of the committees while working from the board to grow or advance the organization. Making sure that as committees put together operational plans derived from the strategic plan there are more check-ins to make sure things are heading in the right direction as things progress and change.
- We don't let go of things; we either spin our wheels or leap off the cliff. We revisit things that don't need to be revisited or pursue new ideas without thinking them through.
- Conference is VSA's greatest product and strength. We should use it as a platform to strengthen the organization and build from it. We may want to do too much. Less is more. We need to do the things that are really important to do to serve our membership and the conference is the strongest product and what people want to come to.
- Conference is the thing that holds everyone together, but it's on the shoulders of a small number of people. The conference should be viewed as one of our core operations. Need to focus on keeping it sustainable. There is a sense that we are in a crisis mode, but it's not clear what the crisis is – numbers are good, people are happy with the conference and the journal.
- Revenue generation – Relying on volunteer resources is not sustainable. Membership cost is cheap and it shouldn't be. Even basic elements of revenue generation need to be reconsidered.

Identity
- Positioning and Identity – Who are we and how are we different from others? Sustainability – How do we see next 25 years?
- The website is an important facet of an organization's presence. VSA's website doesn't present what the organization is, what it does, or why it is important.
- Need to rearticulate VSA's values and work to keep those values visible and dynamic through the strategic vision and operational plan. Core values would be longer term than the strategic vision, i.e. being member-oriented and helping to develop the capacity of our field.
- VSA is not viewed as essential by the field. VSA's strength is in its people. Visitor

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studies needs to be important to everyone who works in an organization that has visitors, not just evaluators. We shouldn't just think of ourselves as an evaluation organization, but that is how the field views us. For VSA to grow, how the field views us needs to change.
- We need to recognize that we have a huge institutional history that gets lost or buried each time we have transition, which can be frustrating.
- The past is not necessarily where the future is going to be. The nature of museums is different than it has been. People learn in areas beyond museums.
- Does name of the organization reflect what we do and what we aspire to do?
- If VSA remains focused on visitors and museums, it may not be relevant for all, unless there is a shift to understanding learning across informal learning environments. Maybe VSA should just do what it does very well; maybe it should be broader to include learning research in more settings. No right or wrong, but there is a decision to be made.
- VSA is about the study of informal learning, but there are those who do that who study "audiences", not "visitors", so they don't see themselves in VSA.
- The term "visitor" implies going into a different environment, rather than the idea of learning happening around you all the time.
- VSA addresses "evidence" relative to informal learning.

Membership and Audiences
- Membership – VSA is trying to grow on a foundation of membership that isn't growing at the same rate as VSA's aspirations.
- VSA is a relatively small organization, but has multiple audiences, within both the current and aspirational audiences. Those audiences have different needs and as a small organization, VSA may not have the capacity to adequately address all the needs of its different audiences.
- Membership life cycle: recruitment for growth, retention for stability, and movement along a continuum of becoming more vested in the organization – committed to it with time, energy, and resources.
- Lack of integration with non-evaluator audiences.
- Positive comment: International people have commented that this is the conference they most look forward to attending. Issue: The professional look and feel of the organization is not where it should be in terms of the quality of conference and member services: website, purchasing, conference sign up process, etc. Members want services – need to be better.
- Capacity building and relevancy beyond ourselves. CAISE and BISE are good starting points. We are good at talking to ourselves, but VSA is inaccessible to everyone else.
- As we are developing new talent, we are bringing in diverse sub-groups and working on our own cultural competencies.
- Who does the work we do in other settings and how can we work collaboratively with them?

In response to questions raised during the course of the discussion, D. McCreedy and J. Sickler reported that in 2012, 28 of the conference attendees are international, about one-third of attendees are first timers, and approximately 59% of VSA members attend the conference.

D. McCreedy noted that the board has passion for the association and that the Board's comments are similar to those from the broader membership. She noted that there is a need to better communicate that VSA is a membership-driven organization.

M. Benne noted that because many VSA communications happen virtually, it can frustrating for both sender and receiver. She commented that the conference gives an opportunity for face to face communication, which is highly valued for personal relationship building. She encouraged Board members to reach out to and welcome both old and new members. She noted that in recruiting for the Membership Committee, she had success when she asked individuals, rather than the global requests through the newsletter. D. McCreedy reminded the Board that it is important to not only ask people you already know.

In response to a discussion about communications with members about the work of the current taskforces, D. McCreedy noted that the purpose of the committees is to meet the needs of the members, while the purpose of the taskforces is to focus on financial issues related to being a sustainable organization.

M. Benne commented that a member-oriented organization fosters relationships between individuals, communicates with a member orientation, and is user friendly for members. J. Sickler noted that doing those things costs money.

V. Yoshida described a membership organization as one that is owned by the members because they elect the Board, unlike other non-profit organizations in which the Board elects its successors.

K. Ellenbogen referenced the strategic plan and noted that one-third of it is about membership, one-third is about demonstrating value, and one-third is about operational capacity. She noted that the taskforces are focusing on the aspect of building operational capacity.

D. McCreedy noted that there is a need to do more with communicating information across multiple venues.

C. Kessler suggested thinking about ways to do small things rather than grand things and noted that building relationships is part of supporting membership. She commented that Board giving is set low and there hasn't been a discussion about asking the Board to give more or asking members to give more.

Review of Board Recruiting and Election Process
L. Huerta Migus, Chair of the Board Development Committee (BDC), provided an overview of how Board gets elected, which happens every other year:
- BDC uses feedback from the Board and EC
- BDC reviews who is rotating off and what are the strategic objectives and work plans for upcoming year
- BDC updates the Board application and nomination documents
- BDC sends announcements to the general membership to solicit nominations
- BDC requests nominations from current Board members
- BDC reviews the roles that need to be filled (e.g. committee chairs and officers)

- The Nominating Taskforce, a subgroup of the BDC, reviews potential nominees to determine willingness and interest, and develops the slate.
- The slate is reviewed by the EC and Board.
- Slate is put to the Membership for review. During a comment period, individual members can appeal to be write-in candidates to the slate, which requires support from 10% of members.
- The entire slate is voted on by membership.

L. Huerta Migus reported that the BDC is about to start the nominations process for next year's election. She noted that it can be difficult to get nominees in response to postings on the listerv, in the e-newsletter, and on the website. She reported that last year the BDC did a webinar about board service, which received positive responses. She identified a need for clarifying the pathways for people to enter and grow into leadership positions within VSA. She noted that the BDC tries to ensure that the make up of the Board represents the current membership.

R. Korn noted that prior to electing members by slate, VSA Board members were elected individually.

J. Heimlich noted that, per the bylaws, the decision for the election process lies with the BDC, therefore, if the BDC felt it has enough people to create a competitive ballot, as opposed to a slate, the BDC could propose that process.

K. Morrissey, noted that, per the bylaws, the minimum Board size is sixteen and inquired as to the intended Board size when the BDC creates the slate. L. Huerta Migus reported that the BDC plans for both attrition and the need to add members.

V. Yoshida noted that most associations elect their Boards via a slate that is put forward for a vote of the membership.

K. Ellenbogen suggested sharing with the Board a document written by Beverly Serrell about the differences between individual elections and slate elections. R. Korn suggested posting it to the website so Members could also see it.

M. Benne inquired if someone could vote against an individual on a slate. L. Huerta Migus explained that that could not be done. One can either vote for or against the entire slate.

L. Huerta Migus reported that the BDC is working on starting their process earlier in order to engage the current Board in recruiting potential new Board members.

4. **Looking to the Future**
D. McCreedy reviewed a draft of her presentation for the Thursday morning plenary and solicited feedback from the Board.

5. **La Piana Plan of Work Overview**
D. McCreedy apologized to the Board for the delay in posting La Piana's notes from the May Board meeting. She noted that one item that had been identified in May as "a low-hanging fruit" was the silent auction, for which K. Morrissey has overseen the implementation, and has received many submissions.

D. McCreedy reported that she, D. Ucko, and J. Heimlich have been working as a steering Committee with V. Yoshida from La Piana. She reviewed the phases of La Piana's work as laid out in the contract:

Phase 1 – Gain familiarity with the organization
Phase 2 – Develop recommendations
Phase 3 – Identify strategic directions and initiatives

D. McCreedy noted that the order in which the work has actually been proceeding has been Phase1, Phase 3, Phase 2. She noted that the work of identifying key directions and initiatives is happening within the taskforces.

D. McCreedy reported that the next steps from La Piana will include:
- recommendations for a structure for VSA and a process for transition
- identifying roles and responsibilities in the recommended organizational structures
- preparing draft recommendations for an action oriented implementation plan (to follow after the Board meeting)

V. Yoshida noted that his presentation will be a preliminary recommendation, designed to engage the Board in thinking and conversation about various options. He also noted that the questions he provided to the taskforces were intended to starting points for thinking about how to make sure that what VSA is doing for its membership is of the most value.

6. **La Piana Preliminary Recommendations**
V. Yoshida provided the Board with a handout of his presentation, a copy of which was also posted to the Board area of Basecamp after the meeting.

V. Yoshida reported that the original project goal was to develop an operational and governing structure to enhance VSA's capacity to contribute to the further professionalization of the informal learning field and an action work plan for implementing the structure. He described that part of that goal was to look at how to VSA might move from being a primarily volunteer-driven organization to one that is more professionally driven, with paid staff.

V. Yoshida's presentation addressed:
- A review of best practices and strategies of associations:
  o Define and build core membership; do not try to serve everyone
  o Build on the things that are of highest value to the members
  o Importance of using technology to deliver programs and services
  o Focus on membership, products and services as revenue generators
  o Have a small board of 8-10 members to be more nimble in making decisions
  o Minimum of 1,000 members or significant market share to be attractive to funders and be recognized as a leader in the field
  o Focus on growing the organization
- Strategic focus recommendations:
  o Define core membership, as opposed to audiences
  o Determine how to attract and retain more members – explore other ways to engage members beyond the conference and journal

- o Focus resources on building and expanding the programs, activities, and services that will build ongoing revenues and are of greatest value to members
  - o Use social networking to engage membership, especially the next generation
  - o Be the "go to" place for understanding and enhancing experiences in informal learning settings through research, evaluation, and dialogue
- Three options for management structure:
  - o An Executive Director managing all operations
  - o A compensated manager managing only specific areas of the operation and volunteer managers managing all other operations (VSA's current structure)
  - o Volunteer managers managing all operations with contractors providing specific expertise
  - o Challenges:
    - Need revenues to sustain and hire people for options 1 and 2
    - Time to manage volunteers for options 1 and 2
    - Accountability of volunteers
    - Skills and expertise to manage operations
    - Most of the board's time is spent on operations, not on strategy and future direction.
    - Continuity of programs and operations; can become a bigger issue as an organization ages, history can be lost.
    - Challenges of using contractors instead of paid staff include higher turnover and less control over contractors' work.

The Board recessed for lunch at 12:25 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

V. Yoshida continued his presentation and reminded the Board that these are only preliminary recommendations for consideration, not final decisions.

- Governing structure recommendations:
  - o Eventually move to a smaller Board (8-12 members), with each member heading a key area of activities (e.g. membership, conference, contracts & fund development, admin, volunteer, governance, secretary, chair, chair elect, treasurer)
  - o Suggested committees: administration and communications, conference, membership, fund development, governance/volunteers, all of which have a chair and chair-elect. Avoid having too many separate committees, e.g. finance work could be combined under administration; programs could be combined with conference.
  - o 2 year leadership terms for all board members.
- Strategic restructuring options:
  - o Consider partnering with another organization if it is difficult or not desirable to grow. Examples include:
    - Administrative consolidation: Contract with another organization to provide services such as IT or accounting.
    - Joint programming: Partner with another organization to help manage programming.
    - Parent/subsidiary relationship or merger: Operate as a subsidiary of a larger organization or merging to become a program of a larger

  organization. Could continue forwarding mission and vision of the organization, but under an umbrella organization that can provide infrastructure and capacity support.
- ▪ Operate under the fiscal sponsorship of another organization, under their 501c3.
- Cost/Benefit of professional staffing:
  - o Staffing salaries:
    - ▪ Executive Director - $70-90/yr
    - ▪ Program Manager - $50-60/yr
    - ▪ Administrative Manager - $45-55/yr
  - o Benefits of professional staffing:
    - ▪ Professional management of operations
    - ▪ More time for board to focus on future
    - ▪ More capacity to build programs, services, and revenue activities
    - ▪ Less resources spend on securing volunteers
    - ▪ Greater accountability

Questions and discussion:
- M. Zergani commented that the recommended Board size seems small and may not provide a broad enough diversity of opinion.
  - o V. Yoshida responded that having a smaller board, especially for a national board, allows for greater ease in meeting and making decisions more quickly.
- K. Knutson noted that VSA has a small board in the Executive Committee.
  - o V. Yoshida noted that another option could be to give more power the EC in making major decisions, make the EC slightly larger, and allow the rest of the Board to meet less frequently.
- J. Heimlich suggested that engaging the membership more routinely in business decisions to allow for greater diversity of opinions.
  - o Several Board members clarified that membership on committees requires VSA membership (per policies, not the by-laws), but membership on taskforces does not require VSA membership.
  - o V. Yoshida suggested exploring the possibility of allowing those who are not VSA members to be on committees, to allow those with certain areas of expertise, e.g. IT, to serve on committees.
- K. Ellenbogen noted that the previous shift from a small board to a large board was an acknowledgement of being both a working board and a governance board. She noted that VSA may now need to be less of a working board and more of a governance board. V. Yoshida commented that the board still needs to coordinate operations until it gets to a point where it can have paid staff, but recommended streamlining the size of the board around decision making.
- M. Zergani noted that reducing the board size would affect the amount of revenue generated through board giving.
  - o V. Yoshida suggested the possibility of having a national advisory board with CEOs of key institutions that would provide visibility, advice, and financial support.
- L. Huerta Migus noted that recent additions to the board were put forward for their partnership abilities and that it may not be necessary to be a voting board member to fulfill that role. She suggested that there could be a partnership committee to provide

an informal or formal exchange of services, which could be as effective as actually sitting on the board.

- K. Morrissey inquired about the difference between Board members and advisors and noted that the Board does not currently have many issues of policy on which it votes.
    - o J. Heimlich raised the question of whether VSA should have a policy-focused board or an operational board.
    - o V. Yoshida suggested that there could be one group of the board that focuses on operational work and another group that focuses on governance.
- M. Benne inquired if there are models that are more self-organizing, in which there is still a top-down operating group, but there is room to allow for more bottom-up work.
    - o V. Yoshida noted that some organizations are experimenting with social networking as a way for the Board to interact more with other constituents, but he noted that he has not seen any really good models yet.
- M. Sikora inquired as to the realistic timeframe for transitioning to the recommended structure.
    - o V. Yoshida suggested that the transition could take approximately one year and advised doing a phased in approach to implement the desired changes.
- M. Zergani inquired as to the process for restructuring the Board, in terms of the bylaws.
    - o J. Heimlich explained that if VSA wants to restructure the bylaws, the Board would vote to suspend bylaws for the purpose of membership restructuring and any new structure would have to be voted on by the membership at the annual business meeting.
    - o D. McCreedy noted that, within the current bylaws, it would be possible to go to the minimum size of 16 Board members next year and begin to make changes to committees.
- K. Ellenbogen requested more information about the Chair-elect position. V. Yoshida clarified that the role is important to have so that the next leader is known and will be able to get familiar with the role, and noted that this model would be useful for the committees, as well. He also recommended that a contract employee not report to board as a whole but to the chair, chair-elect, or a committee chair.
- M. Benne asked for more information about the recommendation of a strategic restructuring with a partnership.
    - o V. Yoshida explained that he would recommend this approach if VSA wants to stay at its current size (300-700 members) and noted that this arrangement could be in the form of a fiscal sponsorship.

7. **Membership Taskforce**
   J. Heimlich reported that the Membership Taskforce is working to learn more about the membership in order to make decisions and achieve clarity on the identity of the association.

   He reported that, during the conference, the taskforce is doing three data gathering tasks:
   1) Dialogue wall set up near the registration table with pens and paper, with four questions: Why are you a member?, What about the Conference do you most value?, What can VSA do for you?, What ideas do you have to help sustain VSA? R. Korn's office will transcribe the responses.
   2) Membership Committee and Taskforce will intentionally seek out first time attendees to welcome them and engage in casual dialogue. Judy Koke will take the information,

collectively shared during a post-conference meeting, and conduct follow-up interview calls with first timers to understand what would keep them coming back and what would be of value to them.
3) "Consultant is in" meeting times - set times during the conference when V. Yoshida will be available for people to stop in and talk about issues of membership in a casual setting. J. Heimlich encouraged Board members to attend and listen.

J. Heimlich reported that after the conference the taskforce will combine the data, share it with the Membership and Conference Committees, and make decisions on identifying the gaps in what we know, which will inform a Membership study to be done in conjunction with the Membership Committee.

J. Heimlich reported that drop off in membership happens at the 1 year and 3 year points and led a small group activity in which three small groups were asked to list out what we know and what we need to know from each of three groups: 1-3 year members, 4+ year members, and past leadership. Key points reported by each of the three groups included:
- 1-3 year members
A main trend involved understanding where these members are in their career, which may include those early in their career or those working on specific project that relates to visitor studies. This group's awareness of benefits and what they value may depend on where they are in their career and how closely their career aligns to what VSA is and does.
- 4+ year members
Key things that already known about this group are that they are less likely to lapse and that they tend to be evaluators/researchers as a large part of their job. Things that VSA needs to know pertained to needing information from the "lifers" (how their perceived value of VSA has changed over time) and from those who lapsed (what happened to cause the lapse).
- Past leadership
Need to understand if past leaders are feeling used up or if there are new skills/ideas that they would like to come back and share, that would require less time commitment.

8. Conference Taskforce
K. Haley Goldman reported that the charge of the Conference Taskforce was how to make the conference more revenue generating in order to do more vision-based work among the board. She reviewed the factors for deciding to attend the conference: time of year, location, money available, time available, and influence/decision by others.

K. Haley Goldman reported possible approaches for increasing conference revenue:
- Increase attendees
- Increase price
- Increase cost efficiency
- Increase sponsorship

She noted that VSA has extensive data about conference, but there is concern about increasing the burden of completing conference evaluation. She reported that the next phase of the taskforce will be a need to do document review of all the existing data.

K. Haley Goldman showed a chart comparing the member registration costs of other conferences that VSA attendees also attend. She noted that the distribution of price points is very wide and the costs to attend those conferences do not correlate to size of the organization. D. Ucko raised a question of comparing the cost of registration to the cost of all expenses associated with attending the conference. K. Haley Goldman noted that a key point is to understand who pays for someone to attend a conference – the institution, the individual, or a combination. She reported that the taskforce assumes that VSA is more of a self-funded conference than other conferences.

K. Haley Goldman reported that the taskforce identified five questions to add to the conference attendee survey:
1) Who pays for registration, hotel, travel, and meals – your institution/company or you personally?
2) Do you attend every year? Why or why not?
3) How can VSA make the conference valuable in a way that would make you come back annually and encourage others to attend?
4) Rate your agreement with the statement: If VSA had double the attendees it would be more valuable for me.
5) How expensive is VSA compared to the other conferences you attend?

K. Haley Goldman noted that if doubling the conference size, increases the costs, it may not be possible get double the amount in sponsorships. She noted that the costs involved with doubling size of conference are an unknown.

K. Ellenbogen noted that past studies showed that VSA made more in the more expensive cities because it draws higher attendance.

K. Haley Goldman reported that the taskforce has several questions to explore:
- For the Board: How much money do we need to make to get to the next level?
- For attendees: What are the saturation points involved with growing the conference? What are their perceptions of the costs to attend VSA?

D. Ucko suggested benchmarking other conferences to understand their budgets and expenses to see if there are other strategies for raising revenue aside from doubling attendance.

K. Haley Goldman noted that the Conference Taskforce needs better integration with Conference Committee in order to narrow down the questions that need to be explored.

J. Sickler shared anecdotal data that the 2011 conference had double the numbers of attendees because it was combined with AMM. She noted that while there was more excitement with the larger numbers, there was also a sense of a loss of some of the intimacy. She noted that it could be different if VSA itself grows; she also noted that it could depend on how fast the growth happens.

L. Huerta Migus noted that the conference is the biggest revenue generator for VSA, but it is not enough for future plans. She noted that there are best practices about where to make money in conferences, but that, in general, conferences don't make profit. She suggested that clearing 20% is an amazing profit and therefore it may not be feasible to expect the

conference to generate the kind of profit that may be necessary to support the organization at a larger level.

K. Haley Goldman noted that VSA currently runs an efficient conference and may have reached a saturation point for growth.

V. Yoshida suggested that it will be important to determine if there are other ways to generate revenues out of the conference or if it is a break-even proposition that is one of the best benefits for members. He also suggested looking at other options for conference revenue growth besides attendance growth.

K. Haley Goldman reported that the Phase 2 work of the taskforce will include document review and gathering data, but noted that not much new data is needed from attendees.

9. **Grants and Contracts Taskforce**
R. Bonney reported on the grants and contracts taskforce and shared a handout that presented a vend diagram describing VSA's deliverables. He shared that without grants and contracts, VSA would not be able to do anything more than conference and journal and that VSA needs grants and contracts in order to grow and fulfill its broader goals.

R. Bonney reflected that work with through VSA and ASTC has started being able to create deliverables, such as the PI Guide for Evaluation and the Evidence Wiki. He noted that deliverables were not listed in the 2009 strategic plan. He described that the handout presents a draft of a list of VSA's deliverables, which will help determine what funding to go after.

He noted that the current grants and contracts are creating both products and indirect costs that help to balance the budget. He also noted VSA is currently under spent in indirect costs and revenue because the projects are not all moving forward.

R. Bonney reported that the first draft of the PI Guide for Evaluation is online and that a contractor is currently going through it to pull out key pieces of information that will feed the VSA website and will be linked to other resources. He noted that they are working to make it not discipline focused and in a flexible format.

R. Bonney reported that upcoming work includes discussing the services and products needed to make it easier to raise funds. He noted that there is a need for internal support to do grants and contracts.

Questions and discussion:
- R. Korn asked who in VSA would do the work described. R. Bonney noted that there is a need to open up the process more to get more review and feedback. S. Cohn added that the list is a reflection of what the Board generated at the May Board meeting of things VSA could do to provide services for members. R. Bonney noted that services provided through deliverables such as workshops, webinars, have a cost associated with them to pay those who are providing the services.
- D. Ucko noted that providing services externally can not only generate revenue, but in some instances could be self-funding and not require grants and contracts.

- C. Kessler suggested identifying what deliverables on the list have already been explored. S. Cohn noted that the taskforce needs assistance determining what are they unaware of that have already been explored and what is the background on any past work. C. Kessler noted that documents exist on some of the previous work done, including the certificate program and the IRB taskforce.
- R. Bonney noted that VSA hasn't written proposals for doing work that has been previously discussed. K. Ellenbogen noted that, in VSA's current system, it can be hard to get things approved.
- K. Morrissey commented that the Board is very analytical and needs to get better at making decisions and moving forward. She noted a need for identifying and supporting a decision maker. She also suggested needing to focus on one or two deliverables.
- V. Yoshida commented that if VSA is successful at doing this work, it will generate more interest and will lead to more active members. He noted that growth may come naturally, which may change the culture and atmosphere.
- L. Huerta Migus noted that granting can take a long time to happen and it may be advantageous to explore partnership opportunities for certain services and products, where VSA could reuse someone else's infrastructure rather than create its own. She also noted a need to mindful about how we choose and solicit people to deliver these opportunities, such that there are not too many board members getting paid to do work on behalf of the organization. She commented that the services should provides opportunities to build value for membership.
- M. Zergani noted that the deliverables on the list are oriented to evaluators and it is not clear what the priority areas of research in the field are that VSA should focus on. S. Cohn noted that this is a question the taskforce has for the Board.
- K. Knutson noted that the list does not include improvements to conference and journal.
- J. Sickler raised a question for the taskforce of examining the cost/benefit analysis of starting something new versus shoring up existing resources.
- R. Korn noted a need to identify potential partners and funders.
- S. Cohn reviewed questions the taskforce has for the Board:
    - What are the content areas of interest to the Board?
    - What are new services or extension of existing services that VSA can provide?
- M. Sikora raised a question about the source of the money needed to hire the necessary staff.
- V. Yoshida commented that a cost/benefit analysis should address both whether an activity will bring in revenues to cover its own cost as well as additional unrestricted revenues to help build the organization.
- V. Yoshida noted that an important next step will be to identify potential partners, funders, contractors and begin conversations with them.
- S. Cohn reported that the taskforce welcomes input from the Board on other thoughts and history. R. Korn suggested locating the previous IRB taskforce work.
- S. Cohn reported that the taskforce is still in the information gathering stage. D. McCreedy noted that Phase 2 will involve working more closely with the committees.
- J. Heimlich noted that the issues raised related to this taskforce are ones of high level policy and fiduciary decisions, which are different than operational decisions

and that there is a need to differentiate between how the Board makes those different kinds of decisions.

10. Discussions and Next Steps

D. McCreedy reported that the steering committee set the goal of completing Phase 1 by the end of September, at which time the taskforces would have recommendations to share with the Board to get buy-in. The next step would be to integrate the information into the work of the committees. She noted that V. Yoshida's structural recommendations will come prior to the December Board meeting, at which budget and structure will be the primary agenda items. She noted a need to ensure that the dialogue continues leading up to the next Board meeting.

L. Huerta Migus suggested a need for a series of decision points, which may require Board votes. K. Knutson suggested allowing for experimentation and innovation.

D. McCreedy noted that there is currently a small amount of money available from BISE and the Executive Director line that could be used for some activities.

V. Yoshida noted that the Board needs to work with committees to make sure they have the resources to carry out the work they are being asked to do.

V. Yoshida reported that by the fall, La Piana will have recommendations for VSA's structure and that each taskforce will need to provide tangible recommendations for the Board. J. Sickler noted that the recommendations should include action plans for finding the necessary human or financial capital for implementation, to assist the Board in prioritizing decisions.

K. Knutson asked what "low hanging fruit" actions could be taken in the short term.
- D. McCreedy noted a need for new communication strategies. E. Israel noted that the EC has generates a large amount of paperwork each month and that there is a disconnect between what is communicated within the EC and what is communicated between the EC and the Board as a whole.
- M. Benne noted a need for additional conversations before the December Board meeting. D. McCreedy suggested having an additional Board meeting in October.
- M. Zergani offered to do prospect research on potential funding agencies for VSA and report back at the next Board meeting.

R. Bonney noted a need for closure on how to transition from the taskforces back to committees. D. McCreedy commented that the process may be different for each taskforce. V. Yoshida made suggestions for each taskforce:
- Grants and contracts: Prioritize list of products, identify potential sources of funding, and identify the needed resources to do the work.
- Membership: Determine if VSA should be looking to enhance membership numbers and if so, how.
- Conference: Determine if VSA should be looking to increase conference attendance or looking for other sources of revenue through the conference.

L. Huerta Migus suggested that the next step for the taskforces should be talking to their committees, which would lead to collectively developing recommendations and a plan of action for presentation and discussion at the Board meeting in October and approval in

December, and then those committees would be empowered to do that work in next year's budget.

J. Sickler inquired if it would be helpful for members from the relevant committees to join taskforces in Phase 2. D. McCreedy noted that Phase 1 will end soon and then it will be a dialogue between the taskforces and the committees to determine how to proceed in Phase 2.

J. Heimlich moved *"That the Board Meeting be adjourned."* D. Ucko seconded. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m. Eastern

Elisa Israel
Secretary
August 19, 2012