

Technology Tips for the Volunteer Report Form (VRF) 2.1 March 2011

Troubleshooting advice for some common technology roadblocks to completing your VRF

| | |
|---|----------|
| General VRF Guidance | 1 |
| Receiving the VRF | 1 |
| Opening the VRF..... | 1 |
| Saving the VRF..... | 2 |
| Copying & Pasting with the VRF | 3 |
| Submitting the VRF..... | 3 |
| Linux and the VRF..... | 3 |
| Further Issues with the VRF | 3 |

General VRF Guidance

The VRF is not web-based. You do not need the internet to complete it. However, you need to receive an electronic copy of the form, which is most commonly accomplished via email. If you do not have email access at least once or twice a reporting period, contact your APCD/PM to arrange for an alternative method of receiving the VRF (e.g., USB thumbdrive or CD). If you absolutely do not have computer access even, talk to your APCD/PM about the possibility of submitting your Activity and Outcome Tracking Booklet on paper instead.

The VRF 2.1 is an upgrade from the Excel-based versions of the VRF used from 2008 to ~Oct 2010. You no longer use Excel (and thus a Windows machine running Microsoft Office) to complete your VRF. The VRF 2.1 is Java-based and can run on Windows, Macintosh, or Linux machines – any system that can run Java 1.5 or later. Visit <http://www.peacecorps.gov/vrt/> to find links to determine which version of Java is installed on your machine.

If you keep notes throughout the Reporting Period on the details of your Activities, completing the VRF at the end of the Reporting Period can be a relatively quick and simple process.

This document contains quick tips for addressing technology issues that may arise in trying to complete your VRF. In depth instructions for understanding and completing the various sections of the VRF can be found in the VRF User's Guide chapter "Instructions for Volunteers" available online at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/vrt/>, via the link in your VRF, or from your APCD/PM.

Receiving the VRF

You can get the VRF via an email from your APCD/PM, on a Post website, on a USB thumbdrive, a CD, or a floppy disk. The VRF should be about 25-30 KB (so not very large) and should have a name in the format [reporting period]_[FY]_[PCV name].vrf (e.g., EdTrimester1_2011_JosephVolunteer.vrf). The VRF is unique to you and to the reporting period. Be sure to use only the VRF that is for you, for the current reporting period, and not one from another Volunteer or for a previous reporting period.

Opening the VRF

To open the VRF file, you need the **VReporting.jar** application file. This is a Java application and can be obtained from your APCD/PM during a training, meeting, or another visit; from another Volunteer (unlike the VRF); or from the <http://www.peacecorps.gov/vrt/> webpage. It is a large file (about 6 or 7 MB) and can be kept on your personal computer or a thumb drive and reused each reporting period.

If you download it from the website, *save* it, do not *open* or *run* it. If you run it directly from the website, you will have to download it again if you want to re-open your VRF, and it might not be able to save data in your VRF.

Make sure that you place the VReporting.jar file and the VRF file in a writable folder on your computer or USB thumbdrive to help avoid issues with saving. To run the VReporting.jar application, if the computer you are using has Java installed correctly, you can just double-click on the VReporting.jar file. It will open to the Warning window; click

OK and then the main window appears; click Open, find your VRF, and open it. You can begin to complete your VRF. (This should be true for a machine running Windows or MacOS.)

If when you double click the VReporting.jar file, an error message appears that says “Could not find the main class. Program will exit!”, and you have already confirmed that Java 1.5 or higher is installed on the machine you are using:

- Investigation into the issue has shown that sometimes the Java install has a problem. You can remove the Java install and reinstall it (if you have privileges to do so, which is likely on your personal laptop, less so on a machine in an internet café). This is for a Windows machine.
 - Go to Start → Control Panel → Add \ Remove Programs
 - Scroll to Java (e.g. “Java(TM) 6 Update 11”)
 - Remove the Java installation \ runtime
 - Download the latest java from Java.com and reinstall the Java (http://java.com/en/download/inc/windows_upgrade_ie.jsp)
- Alternatively, you can force Java to recognize the VReporting.jar file correctly. (again, for Windows)
 - Place your VReporting.jar file on your desktop
 - Go to Start → All Programs → Accessories → Command Prompt
 - Type: "C:\Program Files\Java\jre6\bin\java" -jar "C:\Documents and Settings\[username]\Desktop\VReporting.jar"
 - Use the quotes (because otherwise the spaces, e.g., in “Program Files”, are read as the end of a command or parameter).
 - The command (filename) is: "C:\Program Files\Java\jre6\bin\java"
 - This presumes Java is installed in that directory; if this doesn't work, you can check in a Windows Explorer window to find the correct path to Java. It is likely to be something similar.
 - The option is: -jar
 - Be sure to use the spaces between the command end quote and the option, and between the option and the target start quote.
 - The target (filename) is: "C:\Documents and Settings\[username]\Desktop\VReporting.jar"
 - You'll need to replace [username] with the user name on the computer. In an internet café, it may be something like “pc-01”, without the quotes; on a personal computer, it may be your name (“Jane Smith”, or “jsmith”, again, without the quotes).
 - This presumes you placed the VReporting.jar file on the Desktop. If you have it on a thumb drive or elsewhere, you'll need to enter that path as the target instead. (e.g., “E:\VReporting.jar”)

Saving the VRF

You should save often while completing the VRF. However, **sometimes the VRF indicates it saved, when it can't**. So run a test before entering all your information:

- Click on the “Tell Your Story” tab
- Type something (e.g., “save test”) in the Community Integration text box
- Click Save (then OK in the popup) and then click Exit (you can click Yes or No in the warning popup)
- Reopen your VRF
- Click on the “Tell Your Story” tab
- Confirm that the something you typed is still there in the Community Integration text box
- If so, continue completing your VRF
- If not, Exit and then move the VRF file to a folder where you know you have write-privileges.
 - You may need to do the same for the VReporting.jar file

Why: Currently (VRT 2.1), the VRF will indicate that it saved, even if the VRF file was read-only or on a write-protected drive or in a write-protected folder. (To check for read-only status on Windows, right click, select

Properties, then under Attributes, the Read-Only box should be blank, not checked.) When the VRF file is re-opened, any material that was entered has been lost. This might commonly be encountered when the VRF (and likely the VReporting.jar file) is distributed on a CD, or is on a USB thumb drive that has had the write-protect switch flipped. It may also occur if you ran (opened) the VReporting.jar application directly from the website, instead of saving it and running it locally.

Copying & Pasting with the VRF

It is possible to Copy and Paste in the VRF by using the keyboard combinations of **CTRL-C** (for Copy) and **CTRL-V** (for Paste) (or CTRL-X for Cut). *Even on a Macintosh, you use the CTRL key, not the Command key.* There is no menu option or right-click to find Copy and Paste in the VRF; you must use the keyboard commands. The ability to Copy and Paste is useful if you capture your work or spell check your text in another program, such as Microsoft Word, iWork Pages, or GoogleDocs.

Submitting the VRF

Once you have completed and saved your VRF, click Exit (you can save again at this point). If you followed the test steps above for ensuring your VRF was actually saving, you can submit it. Otherwise, open it again to make sure the information you entered was truly saved before you submit it.

When you submit your VRF, do NOT include the VReporting.jar file.

To submit your VRF to your APCD/PM, you can email it, send it back via a USB thumbdrive, burn it to a CD, or whatever other method your post utilizes. Be sure you send the VRF you just completed, from the proper reporting period.

Linux and the VRF

As the VRF is a Java application, it should be platform independent and run anywhere that Java can be run. And Java does run on Linux. However, PC/Washington has not done extensive testing on a Linux system. Here is some feedback from a PCV who was running Linux:

Working with Ubuntu 10.04 LTS - Lucid Lynx

While .jar files are java files, made to be run with java programs, Ubuntu does not automatically do this with .jar files. Instead, Ubuntu uses an archive manager to open the file and view its contents. You must instruct the system to open with a specific java program.

Ubuntu also features a security detail that renders all downloaded files un-executable, unless they are downloaded and installed via the Ubuntu Software Center. This means that opening the file results in an error.

In order to overcome the error, **a user must access the .jar file permissions (right-click on the .jar file, select 'Properties', select the 'Permissions' tab) and change the permissions on the file to allow it to be recognized as an executable file. Once the permission is changed, the program opens as expected.**

Further Issues with the VRF

If there is still an issue, contact your IT Specialist and provide a complete description of your issue.

A complete description of the issue should include as much of the following as possible:

- the computer you were using (e.g., personal Mac, internet café, etc),
- the Operating System (e.g., Windows XP student, home, professional; Windows 7 student, home, professional, etc; Max OS X; Linux; etc),
- the complete pathname and filename of the VReporting.jar and VRF files used,
- a step-by-step description of what you were doing when the issue occurred,
- and a screen shot or the text of any error message that appeared

Thank you for working hard to report thoroughly on your Peace Corps service!