
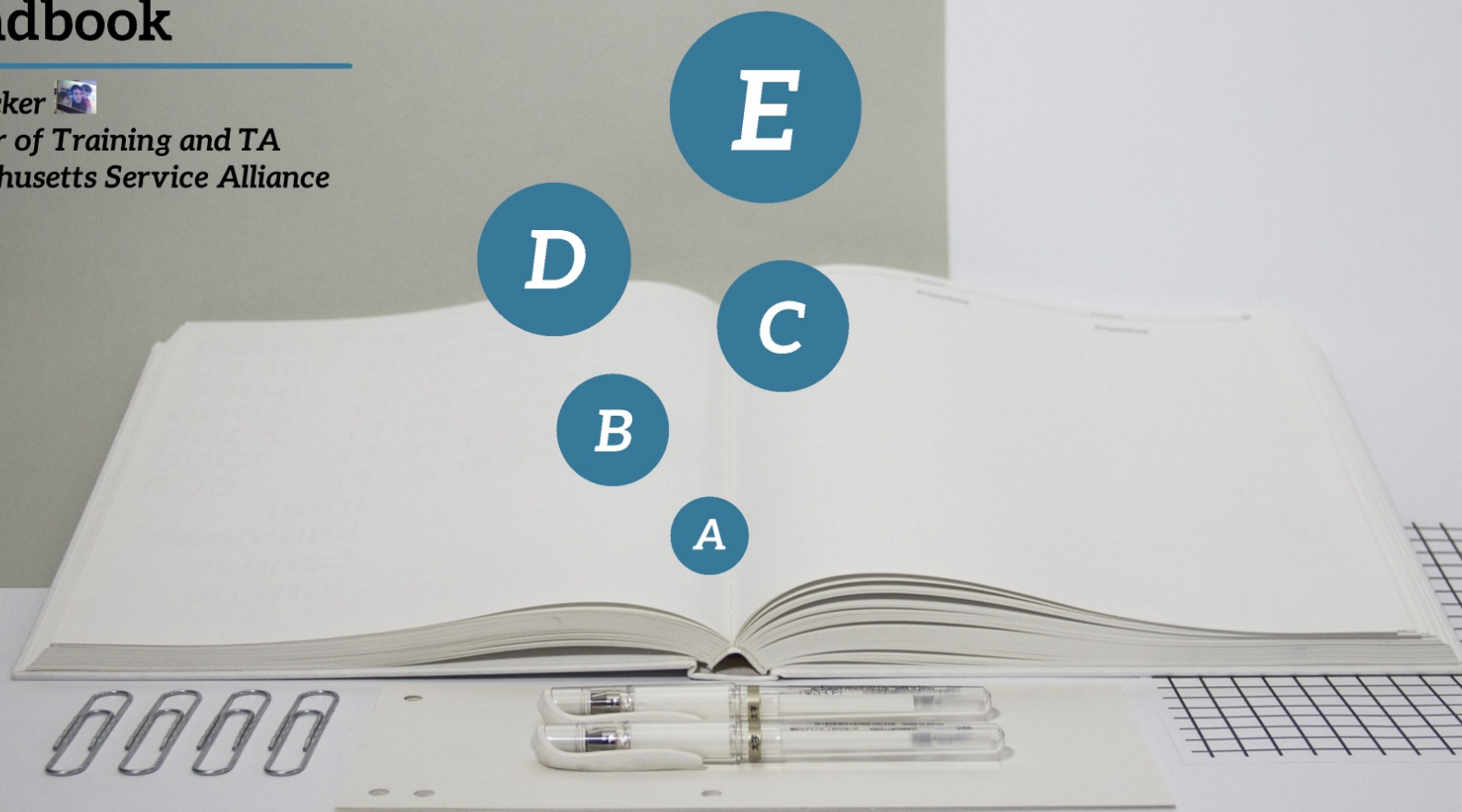


How to Write a Volunteer Handbook

Lisl Hacker 

Director of Training and TA
Massachusetts Service Alliance







MASSACHUSETTS
SERVICE ALLIANCE

The WHY...



GPS

*Risk
Manage-
ment*

Avoid

Organization's GPS System (inform, educate, support)

- Guide through the experience
 - Where they are in the org
 - Where they are going
 - How long it takes to get there
- Get familiar with the environment
 - Managing Expectations
 - Sets Tone
- Smooth transition
 - Taking guesswork out
 - Engagement



- Documents that you shared the rules, roles, expectations, grievance procedures, policies, procedures, etc. with your volunteers
- Reduces risk - ensures safety for volunteers, staff & clients
- Neutrality, equality & consistency (esp important for staff to reference)
- Informational/resource (disclosure)
- Ensures everyone starts with same knowledge

Risk Management




Mistakes to Avoid

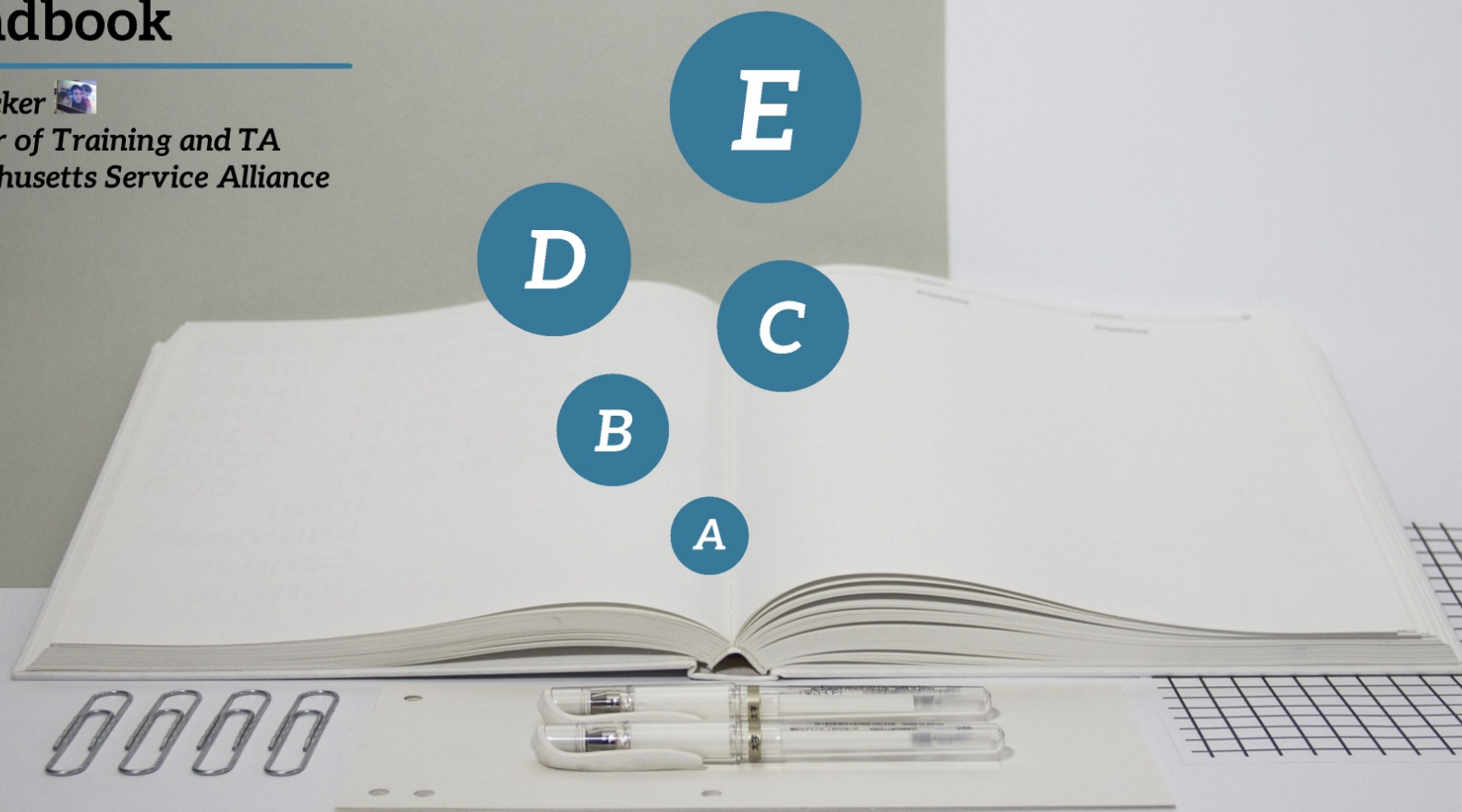
- "They are just volunteers"
- Not just about policy
 - Does this organization have the capacity to make a difference in the world? •
 - Can I make a difference here?
 - Will I fit in?
- Not seeking legal advice or review
- Jargon, technical terms, acronyms



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The WHAT...



Essentials

Extras

Mission

Volunteers like to know what their efforts are going towards, the mission is a great way to start a Volunteer Handbook.



History

Growth of an organization feels like a success. It is important to highlight the history of the organization and the mission efforts!



Organization

The organization of the volunteer programs, committees, and leaders of the volunteer programs are important to outline.



Programs

If there are multiple ways someone can volunteer, let them know in the Volunteer Handbook!



Safety

Safety procedures, first aid kits, and emergency evacuations should all be written down to be studied by the volunteer.



Requirements

Be sure to highlight requirements that volunteers must complete.



Disclaimers

Photo release forms, and agreement disclaimers are great to add in the Volunteer Handbook.



Code of Conduct

To cover all your bases, be sure to mention conduct and behavior that will not be permitted in the organization.



Track It Forward presents:

What to Include in Volunteer Handbooks

Creating volunteer handbooks can be a tough task, but it is definitely a necessary one! Volunteer Handbooks help walk a volunteer through their experience and training. They also help organize a volunteer program and allow organizations to be credible. If you are searching for an editable template, download our forms in this article! But, you can also create one from scratch using these contents!



Conflict Procedure

Outline the procedure to report conflict, or to bring up any issues that may be occurring in the organization.



Expenses

If volunteers may be spending money towards the organization, outline which ones can be reimbursed in this section of the Volunteer Handbook.



Different Program Roles

Specific volunteer programs can have different tasks. Be sure to fully explain the tasks and roles a volunteer may have in the Volunteer Handbook.



Guidelines

General guidelines that the organization follows, like confidentiality or just respectful behavior can be explained in a General Guidelines section.



Signing Up for Events

How a volunteer signs up for events or shifts needs to be a large part of the Volunteer Handbook. This is an important part of the Volunteer Handbook to retain volunteer activity.



Logging Hours

Post-volunteering acts can be outlined efficiently in the Volunteer Handbook. It would be great to highlight the importance of this tool!



Risk Assessments


If there is risk involved in the volunteer activity, be sure to clearly list these and how they can be prevented or solved.



Signature Forms

Lastly, if there is anything you want volunteers to sign or agree to, add a copy or two to the Handbook for reference points!

Also Important to Include:

- Welcome/Thank You Letter from CEO/ED/Board President
- Visuals, testimonials, quotes
- Impact of the volunteers 
- Customer Service - how we act with clients/cultural competence
- Training that volunteers will receive
- Supervision structure
- Benefits/Perks
- How to give feedback to org
- Helpful resources
- Key advocacy points about the org
- FAQs
- Maps, calendars
- Acronyms



In 2014 Volunteers Made an Impact on Patient and Family Experiences

8000 Active Volunteers
Volunteer Services,
Patient Family
Advisors,
Foundation



500

TBRHSC Volunteers

103,019
Info desk
inquiries



400

TBRHS Foundation



42,215

Hours
volunteered
at HSC

90 Patient
Family
Advisors

10,200

Activity
Cart visits
to patients




37,440
Goodnight
Program visits

20,800


Gift Cart visits

Also Important to Include:

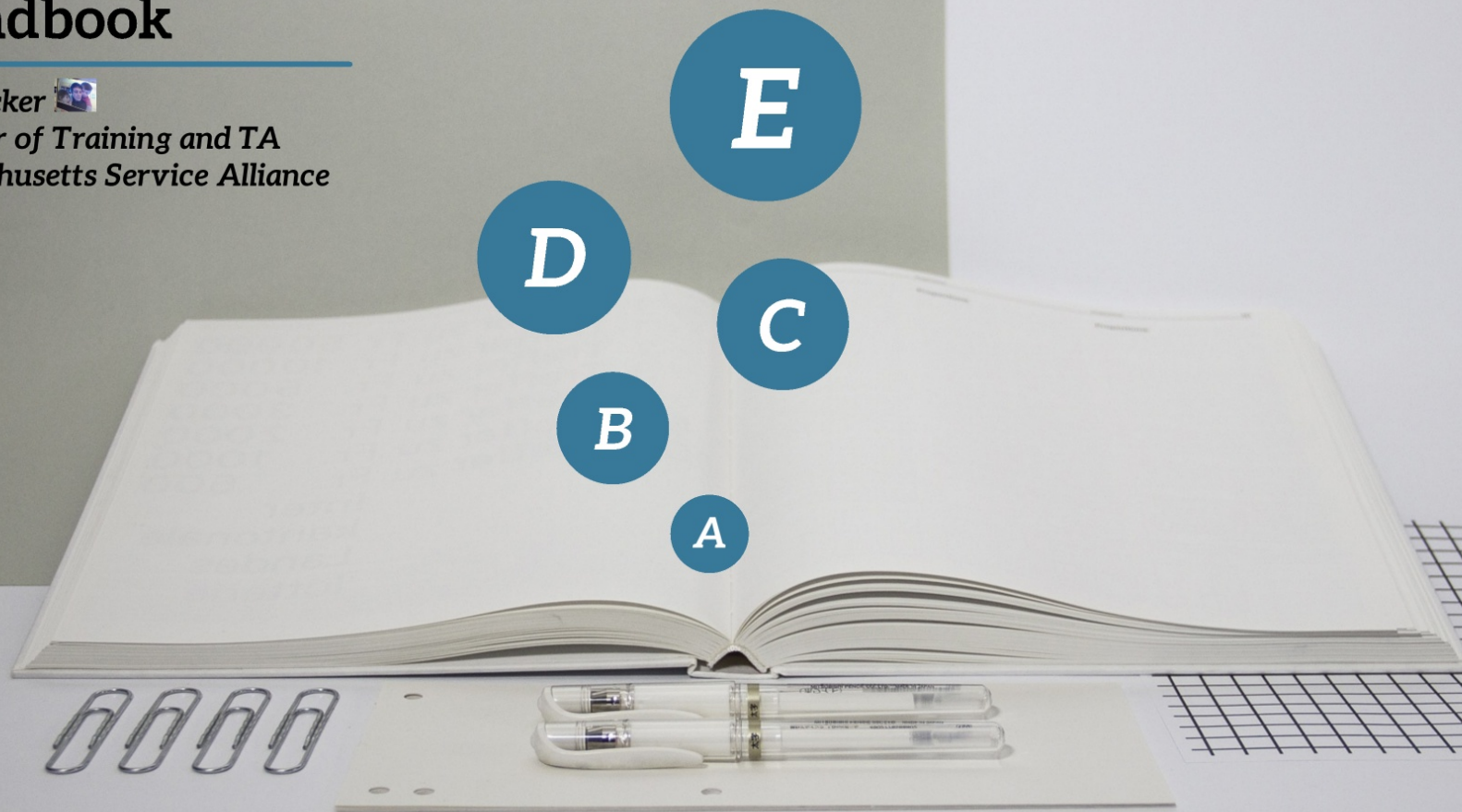
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The HOW...



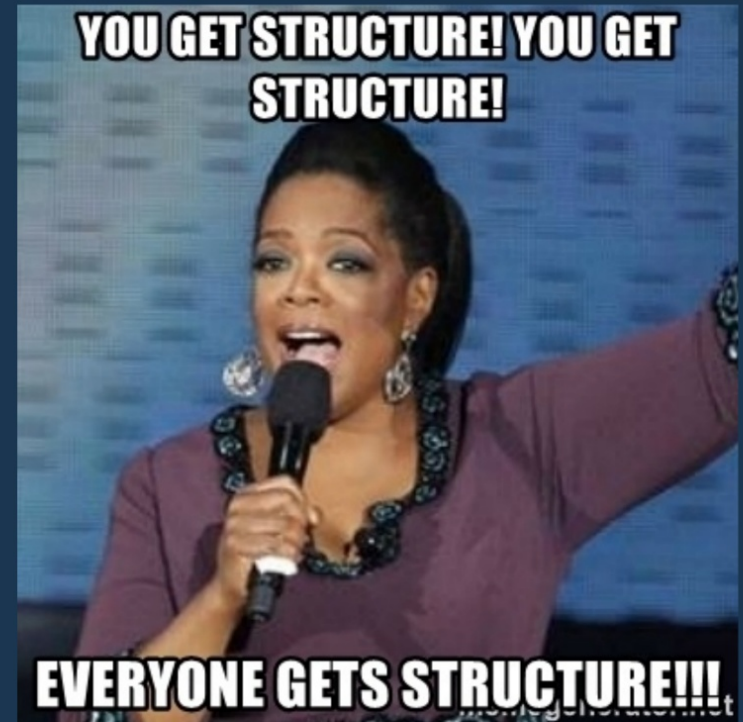
Structure

Online

Don'ts

Structure

- A clear title with all relevant information (name, address, contact information)
- A table of contents
- Page breaks between sections
- Simple, easy-to-read content
- Easy-to-read font and colors
- Program coordinator contact information for secure communication



Benefits to Online

- Add videos/multimedia
- Accessible from anywhere
- Cost effective
- Easy to make changes that are effective immediately
- Eco-friendly
- Keep all of the documents in one place
- Increased productivity/efficiency
- Volunteer Portal




Avoid

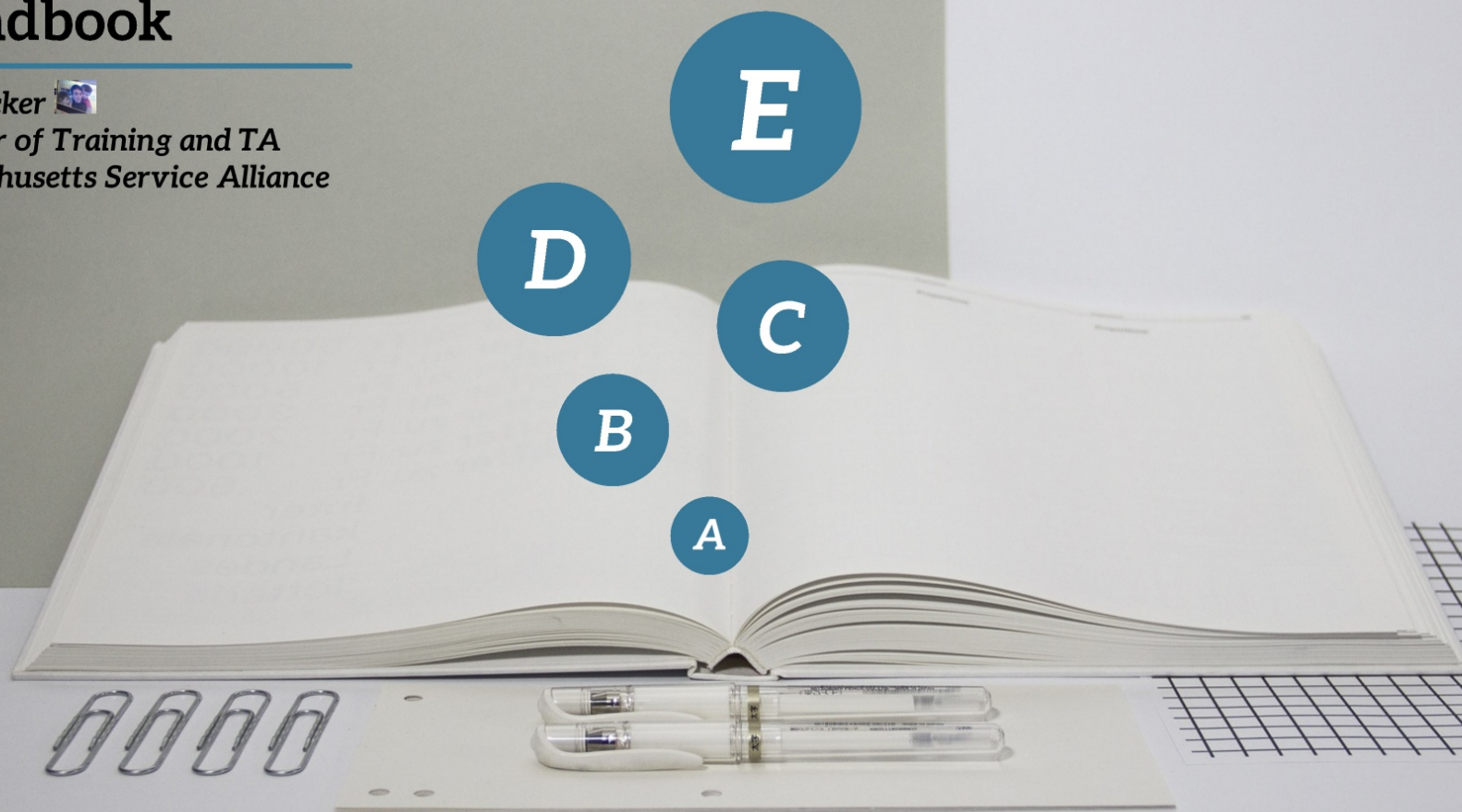
- Word of mouth for info that should be in a Handbook
- One size fits all - consider different learning styles
- Don't have to start from scratch - use Staff Handbook as a guide
- Don't have to do it alone - even recruit volunteers to help build it
- Don't be afraid to borrow from other orgs (Google, templates)



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*Best
Practices*


The WHEN...



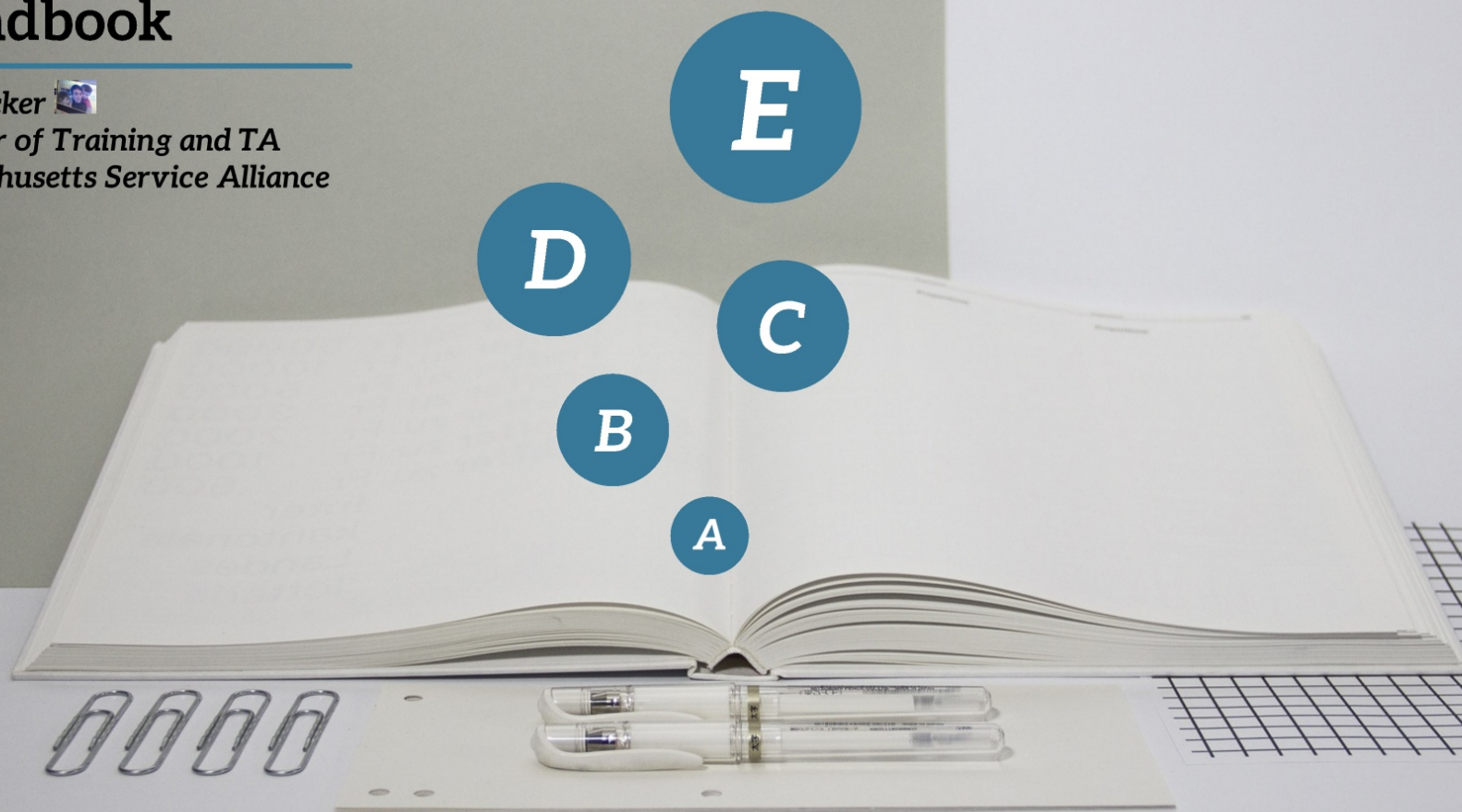


- Always accessible
- At the interview
- Part of orientation/ training
- Revisit as needed (i.e. annually, little bits at a time)
- Update and reshare as needed (dynamic document)

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*Best
Practices*


The WHERE...





- Always accessible (for volunteers & staff)
 - Online
 - Hard copy available on site
- Reference it in communications
- Reviewed by HR/Legal professionals
- Designated person in charge of it

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