When it comes to working as an AFS volunteer team Recognition and Appreciation are a crucial piece of the team environment.

Distinguishing between recognition and appreciation is important. Very simply, appreciation is non-judgmental. It isn’t about whether someone did a good or bad job. It is simply about appreciating them, their effort or their willingness to help. “I appreciate you for staying late and chipping in to put the orientation materials together.” Note that there isn’t anything in that statement noting whether the contribution was significant or even if the work was great. It was simply a statement of appreciation.

Alternatively, recognition is doing something to call out positive performance or outcome. “I’d like to present Angela with this AFS coffee mug to recognize her time and dedication when working with the High School to secure the placement for our SH student last week.”

Knowing which is important to each volunteer will help to build the teams culture. The volunteer’s feeling of belonging and making a significant difference. Some volunteers value and want both, from not only AFS Staff but peers and Team leadership. Some volunteers only want one or the other. Finally, some don’t value either.

Top teams know to ask and respect what each volunteer’s preference is, as opposed to guessing or assuming that one size fits all. When a volunteer does value one or both, top teams make a conscious effort to satisfy that preference as another way to motivate and engage their volunteer base.

Recognition and Appreciation are simple to incorporate into the culture of the team. The first step is to have a conversation about how everyone feels about each and then put steps in place to move in the direction the team wants to go.