

Fact Sheet:

Designing Effective Volunteer Positions



Well-designed volunteer positions ensure that volunteer programs contribute to the achievement of their organization's goals. A plan for involving volunteers allows volunteer programs to recruit from the pool of volunteers available in the community and to engage them in ways that effectively utilize their skills. Designing volunteer positions also plays a role in the strategic planning process of the volunteer program as well as the overall organization. Once designed, periodic reviews of volunteer positions and tasks help volunteer program planners make volunteer roles more effective and mission-oriented.

Turning the knowledge gained from developing volunteer positions into written volunteer position descriptions can also simplify some of the most challenging aspects of a volunteer coordinator's job- marketing, recruiting, screening, and training volunteers. Position descriptions can serve as a tool for recruiting people with the right interests, skills, and availability, and matching those individuals successfully with volunteer positions. Position descriptions make clear the volunteer's responsibilities to everyone- staff, volunteers, and volunteer coordinators- which simplifies supervision and clears away many areas of potential conflict.

Position Description Form Tips:

- View the volunteer position from the perspective of the volunteer.
- Is the program targeting the position towards potential long-term volunteers or episodic volunteers?
- Is the position meant to take advantage of the skills of a professional volunteer?
- Is it asking for multiple volunteers with varying experience that the program will train? Is the training component clearly offered?
- Will the position directly meet a need within the community?
- Will the position clearly support the work of the staff of the organization?
- What aspects of the position will most appeal to the selected volunteer pool: episodic, student, senior, etc?
- Are the benefits displayed prominently within the position description in order to enhance its attractiveness to potential volunteers?





Using Position Descriptions

The volunteer screening process is strengthened by well-written volunteer position descriptions. Early in the volunteer intake process, volunteers can use volunteer position descriptions to screen themselves by applying only for those positions for which they have the skills and interest.

A position description can also be a useful tool in the volunteer interview process. Volunteer Coordinators can easily prepare interview questions for each volunteer position because they have explored the needs of the organization and have outlined the major skills needed for each volunteer position. Having a ready list of interview questions for each volunteer position simplifies future interviews.

In the interview a volunteer coordinator will look for the applicant's

- Interests.
- Constraints, when relevant—for example, afraid of heights.
- Working style—for example, relative to supervisor, other staff, and other volunteers.
- Expectations.

When looking at this list, observe how the position description actually helps in the interview process. Before a volunteer even walks into the office, a well-written position description will have targeted volunteers most interested in the position to be filled, will have explained requirements which would help volunteers self-select themselves away from constraints, would have explained both supervision and evaluation requirements, and would have helped shape the volunteers expectations in terms of the purpose and benefits of the volunteer positions.

Time Saver: Create a list of interview questions for each volunteer position and keep them on file with a copy of the position description. When it's time to conduct an interview, share the position description and list of interview questions with the person who will conduct the interview. Using standardized interview questions will bring consistency to your screening process and simplify preparations for the interview.



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Volunteer Position Description Worksheet

Title/Position: _____

Goal of Position: _____

Sample Tasks/Activities: _____

Timeframe: _____

Length of commitment: _____

Estimated hours/month: _____

Scheduling: at discretion of volunteer
 at specified times:

Worksite: _____

Qualifications sought: _____

Training required: _____

Benefits: _____

Supervised by: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone: _____

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Drafted by:

Date:



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