

How to Write a Job Description That Your Volunteers Will Love

Every Volunteer Deserves a Job Description

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Why Volunteer Job Descriptions Are So Important

No business or nonprofit would start hiring people before they figured out what they needed them to do. They write job descriptions in great detail because they are the blueprints for recruiting, managing and retaining employees.

The same principle applies to volunteers.

An incredibly useful tool, the volunteer job description helps your [volunteer recruitment efforts](#), the [management](#) of that volunteer, and retaining him or her. Setting expectations with a job description should be job number one for any volunteer manager.

You might balk at this requirement, thinking that you might need to write many job descriptions. In reality, you won't need job descriptions for some of your volunteers, particularly those doing a one time task of limited complexity. For instance, volunteers you enlist to sign up participants at your [annual charity run](#) probably don't need anything beyond verbal instruction on the day of the event. Nor do volunteers need much more for your yearly clean-up day to gather trash or pull weeds.

However, your charity probably also has several complex long-term volunteer jobs where specialized training might be necessary. In those cases, it makes sense to [handle those positions like you would a paid position](#). That includes a detailed job description that you can use to recruit those volunteers. The job description can also be helpful when you evaluate volunteers, helping both of you to remember what the job is all about.

Each job description should explain the assignment, plus the skills, abilities, and interests necessary to perform the volunteer task successfully.

Clarity is what every volunteer prefers. Before you even start recruiting volunteers, make a list of the jobs you want them to perform, and then describe those positions as clearly as you can.

A volunteer job description isn't very different from one that you prepare for a paid employee. Clear expectations can help avoid a [host of problems, including legal ones](#).

What to Include in a Volunteer Job Description

There are many ways to write the position description, but here are some areas it should cover:

1. **Job Title**

A descriptive title gives the volunteer a sense of identity and helps salaried staff and other volunteers understand this particular role. Steer away from descriptions that have to do

with pay. For example, why call the receptionist a "volunteer" receptionist? You don't say "paid" receptionist for a staff member.

2. **Work Location**

Where will the individual be working? Can the work be done at home or a particular site? Is there public transportation near your job site/s so you can recruit people who might not have personal transportation?

3. **Purpose of the Position**

How will the volunteer's work affect a project's [outcome](#), clients, or [mission](#)? State the expected impact for both direct service and administrative assignments so that volunteers understand how important they are to the organization.

4. **Responsibilities and Duties**

Explain the volunteer position's specific duties and obligations. Say clearly what is expected.

5. **Qualifications**

It pays to be very clear and concrete when listing qualifications for any volunteer position. Include education, personal characteristics, skills, abilities, and experience required.

6. **Commitment Expected**

How much time do you expect from the volunteer? Include length of service, hours per week, and hours per day. Include any special requirements such as weekend work.

7. **Training**

List what [training the volunteer will receive](#). Include general training that all positions require plus any position-specific training for this assignment.

Include the date of the description or the date that it was updated. List the volunteer supervisor's name and his/her contact information. Include information about how to get more information and whom to call if interested.

Sample of a Volunteer Job Description

Job Title: Day Chair

Purpose: The Day Chair serves as the receptionist for the Charles County Agency on Aging, supporting the Agency's mission of supporting the elderly population of Charles County. The Day Chair represents the agency to members of the public who visit its offices Monday, Weds, and Friday from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Location: The Day Chair works in the public reception area of the agency's central office at 567 N. Oak St in Tulsa, OK.

Key Responsibilities:

- The Day Chair answers the phone and directs calls.
- Greets guests and directs them to other offices or locations.
- Answers questions about the agency and provides forms when necessary.
- Prints out a list of activities that take place that day at the agency's offices and satellite locations.

- Makes reminder phone calls to other volunteers who assigned to projects for the following day.
- Opens the mail and distributes it.
- Enters donations received by mail in the database.
- Proofreads brochure copy when time allows.
- Aids in the preparation of bulk mailings.
- Prepares correspondence as needed.
- Other duties as assigned.

Reports to Assistant Director of the Charles County Agency on Aging

The Length of Appointment: The Day Chair serves one day per week for three months. After three months, the Day Chair may be reappointed for another three months at the discretion of the supervisor. After six months, the person who serves as Day Chair may rotate to another position within the agency.

Time Commitment: One day per week (M, W, or F) for six hours (9-12 am and 1-4 pm), for a minimum of three months.

Qualifications: Basic knowledge of computer and data entry. Pleasant manner, patience, problem-solving ability, dependability.

Support: Training for this position will be provided. Also, the Assistant Director will be available for questions and assistance.

Age Requirement: None

Dress Code: Business Casual

Other categories you might want to include in a volunteer position description are:

- Certifications/licenses required, such as CPR Certification or a Commercial Drivers License.
- Development opportunities, such as training and promotion to other positions.
- Security checks required, such as criminal history check or fingerprint check.
- Benefits, such as a certificate of service, free parking, or tuition remission.

Volunteer job descriptions are not only for the good of the volunteer but to make sure there are no legal problems as well. [Volunteers love clear expectations, training, and consistency](#) from their volunteer managers.

Writing good job descriptions is just part of [getting your nonprofit ready to receive and work with volunteers](#).