

# **Guide for Creating Volunteer Position Descriptions**

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When well-written and well-conceived, your collection of Volunteer Position Descriptions is a compelling marketing tool to use in recruiting volunteers to the organization. Clearly articulated terms of service with the associated impact and benefit statements inspire volunteers to say “YES.” They also serve as a foundation for sustainable relationship.

Provide opportunities for different levels of volunteer commitment. Some volunteers look for episodic involvement that may not involve children directly. Others relish regularly scheduled shifts in classrooms and/or support functions. By providing options, you broaden your network of supporters while securing valuable contributions to your work. Moreover, “entry level” volunteers may assume more substantive roles over time.

To attract engaged, skilled volunteers, the language and content of your position descriptions need to reflect a flexible, supportive, and inclusive approach to volunteering. The following information should be addressed thoughtfully:

- Title
- Purpose
- Key Responsibilities
- Impact
- Commitment (location, schedule, duration)
- Support and Training
- Skills and Qualifications
- Benefits to the Volunteer

## ***Title***

The title is an eye-catching element of the description. It should be appealing yet accurately reflect the nature of the position. Use the title to communicate key aspects of the assignment – e.g., teamwork, subject matter expertise, creativity, playfulness. Get input from current volunteers to stimulate your thinking.

## ***Position Overview (or Purpose)***

This brief snapshot captures the primary focus of the position and places it in context with the rest of the organization.

## ***Key Responsibilities***

Capture key responsibilities with enough description that volunteers can image themselves in the designated roles. For a volunteer position, the list should be sufficient (4-6 elements) without being overwhelming.

## ***Commitment (location, schedule, duration)***

Be clear and up-front about needs and expectations when positions have specific time and place requirements. Classroom volunteers generally commit to *at least* 6 months of service with a consistent schedule. Steadiness and familiarity instill trust and confidence in children. Other opportunities may lend themselves to “position sharing.”

Be mindful of the fact that some volunteers like to work from home and contract for a specified number of work hours per week or project delivery by a particular date. Others are motivated by a desire to work collaboratively and would prefer to be on-site with staff and other volunteers.

Your volunteers' scheduling parameters and preferred modes of engagement need to be discussed and negotiated. Be open to re-imagining existing position descriptions or create new ones to encourage participation by committed community activists.

### ***Impact***

Impact statements help volunteers understand how their work advances the organizational mission. They should inspire action. After all, meaningful work is among the most potent volunteer motivators.

### ***Support and Training***

Training can be a persuasive benefit for volunteers who think of themselves as life-long learners. In addition to orientation and job-specific training, look for opportunities to deepen volunteer engagement in early childhood development. For example, by including volunteers in relevant staff trainings, you add a benefit for the volunteer and promote integration with staff.

Highly skilled volunteers desire support and collegiality rather than supervision. Use the position description to list the available resources to ensure success. Who is the staff liaison? Who can offer substantive input, suggestions, and feedback? How often will the volunteer meet with staff and/or other volunteers? Where does one go for supplies and supporting information?

### ***Skills & Qualifications***

As with key responsibilities, the skills and qualifications section gives prospective volunteers an opportunity to read themselves into the various service roles. It also gives you a chance to delineate your expectations.

Many volunteers want to apply their existing skills and expertise in new ways. As you craft a position description, it may useful to list *transferable skills* rather than specific experience and educational requirements – e.g., “mentoring skills and the ability to lead teams” rather than “two years of experience coaching basketball and a degree in physical education.”

### ***Benefits***

This section challenges the organization to look at the position with a volunteer's eyes and ask: “What's in it for me?” Most volunteers find fulfillment by having a positive impact on the lives of individuals and the communities. They like to serve in stimulating environments in which they continue to learn new things and sharpen their skills. They appreciate opportunities to connect with others who share their interests and sensibilities.