

A volunteer position description should mirror a job description in many ways. Position descriptions clarify roles, reduce ambiguity and confusion, manage expectations, and provide meaning and purpose. **Most importantly, position descriptions are a critically important foundation** for almost every aspect of volunteer engagement - budgets, staff structure, outreach, intake, onboarding, supervision, support, evaluations, etc.

Key Components of Effective Volunteer Position Descriptions

1. Title

Provide a creative and descriptive title that gives the volunteer a sense of identity. This will also help program staff and other volunteers understand the assigned role, make it easy for you to describe the position, and allow you to clearly track that role in your data systems. Do not use the word “volunteer” in the title.

2. Mission and Purpose

Include your organization’s mission statement and then create a brief purpose statement about how this volunteer role, which will be described below, connects and contributes to the larger mission and goals of the organization.

3. Responsibilities and Specific Duties

List the position’s responsibilities. Clearly define what the volunteer is expected to do as part of this assignment. Be as specific as possible so a prospective volunteer can determine if they can picture themselves in the role.

4. Qualifications

What does this person need to be, be able to do, or know to succeed in this role? Is this role accessible to people with disabilities? From an equity perspective, consider how the qualifications listed here might be inclusive or exclusive.

5. Time Commitment

Note the length of the assignment (short-term or ongoing), hours per week, morning/afternoon/evening, weekday/weekend, and/or other special requirements. Be open to ideas if volunteers think that they can succeed on a different schedule or timeline than you envision.

6. Location

Describe where the person will be serving - indoor/outdoor, air conditioned, neighborhood, natural light, proximity to other people, etc.

7. Training and Support Provided

Define the nature and length of all general and position-specific training required for the assignment. Also list resources and other support available to the volunteer, such as optional trainings to which they may have access.

8. Benefits

Describe benefits available to volunteers, such as meals, T-shirts, CPR certification, personal educational and professional development opportunities, recognition, or access to VIPs. Remember to include the less tangible benefits associated with this role. Ask current volunteers in this role how they define the benefits.

9. Application and Screening Procedures

Describe the process for people to apply and fill this role. If a background check or other screening is required, it should be indicated here. Consider how the screening procedures listed here might be inclusive or exclusive.

10. Supervisor and Contact Information

List the name/title of the staff person or lead volunteer who will directly support this role to provide a sense of where the role fits within the larger organization. Include phone/email for the **first** point of contact (EX: volunteer manager).

11. Signatures

Upon onboarding, some organizations turn the position description into a signed agreement that both the volunteer and the organization enter into to demonstrate their commitment to one another and the position as described. This may not be appropriate for all positions or organizations but might be something to consider for some volunteer roles, as it supports mutual performance evaluation down the road.

Volunteer Position Description

Use the worksheet below to outline the responsibilities, support, and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities. In the final version of each job description be as detailed as possible and use clear language. Avoid using jargon or acronyms that new volunteers may not understand.

Position Title	
Mission & Purpose	
Responsibilities & Specific Duties	
Qualifications	
Time Commitment	
Work Location	
Training & Support Provided	
Benefits	
Application & Screening Procedures	
Supervisor & Contact Information	

Key Questions to Consider When Developing Position Descriptions

Position descriptions should be living documents—they can and should be adapted regularly. Develop the position descriptions in collaboration with staff and current trusted volunteers. Use these questions to jump start the development discussions or when re-assessing existing volunteer position descriptions.

- Does this position description encourage exploration and understanding of the task?
- Does it clearly describe what is expected in this role and the necessary skills?
- Does it help the volunteer understand how that task will make a difference?
- Who should I ask for feedback on this description?
- What kind of feedback have you gotten on the job description?