

## Before Writing Position Descriptions

It is important to remember there are many steps an organization takes before and after an effective volunteer position description is written. A catchy and well written recruitment ad may attract many volunteers, but is useless unless the organization is ready to use volunteers in an effective manner. The following steps should be followed before recruitment of volunteers is started.

**Asses the readiness of your organization to use volunteers:** Does your organization have a volunteer policy? Is there an appointed and appropriate supervisor for the volunteers to report to? How will your organization manage volunteers? How will your organization thank its volunteers? Even if your organization is currently using volunteers, it may be useful for you to go back and take the Organizational Readiness Assessment. You may find there are other things you could be doing to better support your volunteers and make the experience more rewarding for both the volunteer and you!

**Design Volunteer Roles that are useful for your organization:** What would your organization do if it had extra money? What specific skills would be useful for your organization to reach one of its goals? What needs does your organization have that are not currently being met? What additional services would your clients value most? Ask these questions and then decide how the use of a volunteer may help you meet these needs. Decide what type of volunteer, or what type of skills, are needed to help your organization.

**Develop positions descriptions:** Once the useful roles for your organization have been outlined you can now develop a position description. It is important to write concise and clear position descriptions. This information sets the stage for the volunteer to understand his/her place in the organization.

**Develop a Recruitment Message:** Why should this job be done at all? What will be the benefit to the community or to the client if the job is done? What are some possible fears or objections to this job which must be overcome? What will be the personal benefit to the volunteer? Developing a recruitment message will give you a framework to develop your actual recruitment ads. It will make the job easier and more effective as well.

**Source: Nevada 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 clear away many areas of potential conflict. (reference: Points of Light Foundation)

A well-conceived and well-written volunteer position description not only outlines responsibilities, support, and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities, it also strengthens recruitment efforts because it defines the assignment, skills, abilities, and interests necessary to perform the task successfully. Additionally, clearly defined position descriptions are the basis for fair and equitable performance evaluations. Once program managers have determined the roles volunteers need to fill, volunteer position descriptions should be created for each role. (reference: Hands On Network)

### **Volunteer Position Description Worksheet and Sample**

Consider using or adapting this worksheet to develop position descriptions for the volunteer positions in your nonprofit.

<b><i>Sections of the Job Description</i></b>	<b><i>Explanation and Example</i></b>
---	---------------------------------------

<b>Job Title:</b>	What title has been assigned to the position?
-------------------	---

<i>Example:</i>	After-School Tutor
-----------------	--------------------

**Purpose:** This section describes the specific purpose of the position in no more than two sentences. If possible, the purpose should be stated in relation to the nonprofit's mission and goals.

*Example:* The position of *After-School Tutor* support [Name of Nonprofit]'s educational program for high school students. The tutoring program is designed to help high school students achieve academic success and graduate on time.

**Location:** Where will the volunteer work?

*Example:* The After-School Tutoring Program is conducted at the County Library on Main Street

**Key Responsibilities:** List the position's major duties.

*Example:* The After-School Tutor:(1) works with an assigned high school student to provide assistance in one or more academic subjects;  
(2) assists a student develop a better understanding of in-class and homework assignments;  
(3) coaches the student in identifying resources to complete assignments;  
(4) reviews completed assignments and suggests ways to improve or supplement assignments; and  
(5) provides positive feedback on the student's progress and encourages the student's continued focus on academic excellence.

**Reports to:** Indicate the title of the person to whom the volunteer reports.

*Example:* Director of Tutors

**Length of Appointment:** Note the time period in which the volunteer will serve, and include restrictions, if applicable.

*Example:* The After-School Tutor will serve for the Fall 2001 and Spring 2002 semesters. The tutor is eligible to continue in the 2002/2003 school year with approval from the director of tutors.

**Time Commitment:** Indicate the approximate number of days or hours required per week.

*Example:* The After-School Tutor position requires a minimum commitment of two hours, and no more than four hours per week, for each week that school is in session. In addition, each volunteer must attend a two-hour orientation during the week before the semester begins. The program is held from 3-5 p.m. each Wednesday.

**Qualifications:** List education, experience, knowledge, and skills required. If a criminal history record check or other background check will be conducted, it should be indicated here.

*Example:* Eligible candidates for the After-School Tutor position include adults over 21 years of age who have earned a Bachelor's Degree and who pass a criminal history record check.

**Support Provided:** List resources that will be available to the volunteer.

*Example:* Training for this position will be provided at the four-hour orientation session. In addition, the director of volunteers is available on an ongoing basis to answer questions and provide other assistance as needed.

*Other categories that an organization would include, if applicable, in a volunteer job description are:*

- *appointed by*
- *development opportunities*
- *relationships*
- *age requirement*
- *benefits provided (i.e., lunch, T-shirt or opportunity to assist a young person achieve academic success). (reference: Nonprofit Risk Management Center)*

**Source: Lynch @ McCurley**