

Crafting Good Job Descriptions for Your Volunteers

Ask these questions to create powerful job descriptions.

By Steve McCurley & Rick Lynch

All volunteers need clear, detailed job descriptions so they know what's expected of them and how to do their best work. Well-written job descriptions are also powerful tools in recruiting new volunteers. Read on for what elements a position description should contain.

Title: What is the position called?

Purpose: What result will the job accomplish? This is the most important part of the position description.

Results: What results contribute to the overall purpose?

Suggested Activities: What are some examples of what might be done to accomplish the purpose? The word "suggested" indicates that volunteers have some authority to pursue other approved activities if their supervisor agrees these might be effective in achieving the result.

Measures: How will you tell if the desired results are being achieved?

Qualifications: What skills, attitudes, and knowledge are desired?

Timeframe: What are the estimated number of hours, length of commitment, and flexibility in scheduling?

Site: What's the location of the work?

Supervision: How will the volunteer interact with paid staff and other volunteers? What supervisory relationships and reporting requirements exist? What are the procedures for monitoring volunteers and dealing with problems?

Benefits: What training will the volunteer receive? Are there other benefits, such as access to parking, childcare, insurance, expense reimbursements, or any volunteer remuneration? Will you be holding events to thank volunteers?

“Job descriptions are powerful recruiting tools.”



The precise format of the position description isn't important. What's important is that all the elements are covered and that a well-thought-out purpose is defined for the volunteer. [S](#)

This article is excerpted from Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, found in the Energize online library at energizeinc.com.

Use Job Descriptions to Avoid Legal Problems

Having clear job descriptions is as important for volunteers as for paid employees. Not only does it help volunteers do their jobs well, but it will also help you sidestep lawsuits and other legal problems. Check out these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Volunteers: Resource or Risk? (Vol. 15, No. 5)

Volunteer Management Strategies: Balancing Risk & Reward (Vol. 17, No. 3)

Can Your Organization's Employees Also Be Volunteers? What Are the Risks? (Vol. 35, No. 4)

How to Tell Your Volunteers Good-Bye (Vol. 27, No. 5)

Volunteer Protection Act: What Does It Mean for You? (Vol. 16, No. 2)

Volunteer Screening: Changing Trends in Changing Times (Vol. 34, No. 2)

Risk Management: Slippery Slope or Moral Imperative? (Vol. 16, No. 4)

Can You Save Money by Using Volunteers Rather than Paid Staff? (Vol. 27, No. 5)