



How to Develop a Volunteer Role Description

A volunteer role description defines what the volunteer's purpose is and how they will fit into your organisation. It clarifies expectations and makes the process of recruitment and selection easier because the description can be used to determine a person's suitability for the activity. It is a good idea to involve staff who may be working with the volunteer when developing the role description. They will understand the 'ins and outs' of the role, the skills required and what training should be provided.

Creative Role Title

Creating a catchy role title will help 'sell' your volunteer opportunity to potential volunteers. Be honest: make the title sound enticing and encourage people to apply without making them think the role is more than it is.

Organisation & Role Overview

People are often attracted to volunteering as much for the aims and objectives of the organisation as the role itself. Provide a brief overview of your organisation and its purpose. Include a short piece on the volunteer role and how it will contribute to the organisation's work.

Tasks

Clearly and specifically outline the tasks the volunteer will undertake. This way, both you and the volunteer know exactly what is expected.

Time Commitment

Outline the hours the volunteer is needed e.g. 2 hours a week on a Monday evening. In addition, outline the length of time the volunteer is required e.g. one weekend, 6 months or 2 years. Stating the time commitment allows potential volunteers to quickly scan through the role description and immediately screen themselves out if they are not available.

Location

State the place where the volunteer will be working i.e. virtually, at your office or an off-site location. While your head office location may suit the volunteer, if the volunteer activity takes place elsewhere it may not suit the volunteer to travel to that location. This information informs the potential volunteer of additional travel and time commitments they may need to consider.

Skills, Experience & Qualities

In order to help select the right volunteers it is necessary to outline the skills, experience and qualities desirable for the role. Be specific e.g. '3 years graphic design experience required'; 'proficient in Microsoft word'.

Training & Induction

All volunteers should be offered an induction to your organisation on their first day, regardless of the role they are undertaking. Further training may include in-depth information about the organisation or role-specific training.

Support & Supervision

Just like paid employees, volunteers need regular support and supervision. Identify and name the individual responsible for providing regular support and supervision to the volunteer. One-on-one meetings provide an opportunity to monitor and evaluate your volunteer programme, discuss how the volunteer feels about the role, identify goals, and pre-empt difficult situations before they arise.

Benefits

Individuals usually have their own reasons for volunteering – belief in your mission, the desire to give something back to their community, to gain work experience etc. It is important to identify the specific benefits of each volunteer role.

Expectations

It is also helpful to outline basic expectations you have of volunteers such as confidentiality, professionalism, respect etc. These can be further developed in the volunteer agreement and the organisation's volunteer policy and procedures.

"If our hopes of building a better and safer world are to become more than wishful thinking, we will need the engagement of volunteers more than ever." - Kofi Annan