



Volunteer Recruitment Toolkit

Articulate Your Volunteer Needs

Effectively matching a volunteer's expectations to your organization's volunteer needs is a critical step to establishing a vital and rewarding relationship. Develop a position description that thoroughly articulates the requirements, benefits and structure of the opportunity that includes the following:

- **Position Title:** Titles denote respect and authority. Recognize your volunteers with a title appropriate to their role.
- **Purpose:** What is the ultimate goal of this role? What does success look like?
- **Position Summary:** What are the primary duties and responsibilities of this role? Write a clear and concise position description.
- **Benefits:** What can a volunteer expect to get out of this opportunity?
- **Reports to:** Who can the volunteer turn to for the guidance and support necessary to fulfil this role?
- **Skill Set:** What qualifications, skills and proficiencies are needed to fulfil this role?
- **Commitment:** What are your expectations in so far as the length of time per shift, frequency of shifts, and ideal initial commitment in terms of weeks or months for this role?
- **Time:** What are the times for the volunteer to consider? The more variety you can provide the more likely they will find one that will work for them.
- **Location:** Is this work all on-site or are there other expectations of which they should be aware?
- **Application:** What information do you need to see up front from the applicant in order to consider if they would be a good match for your need? Can they apply on line as well as in writing?
- **Contact Details:** How do you want them to contact you? Email? Website? Phone? Mail?

Identify Your Prospective Audience

1. Think about the people who would be well suited to serve in this role and might actually enjoy doing it. Consider the skills, experience, emotional intelligence, situational factors, passion and commitment needed to ensure success. Describe your target audience:

2. Based on your prospective list, how might you find applicable candidates? Think about work settings, organizational affiliations, leisure time activities, personal contacts you or they might have, publications they might read, locations in which they might frequent, etc.

3. Think about the desires of your prospective volunteers. The more you can connect the 'what's in it for me' viewpoint, which is innate in all people's thinking, to what you need from the volunteers, the more effective you will be at getting the desired responses. What motivations of this person can you appeal to in your recruitment effort? For example, the desire for personal growth, resume enhancement, socialization, learning new skills, career exploration, leadership development, giving back to the community, making a difference, meeting new people, etc.

Draft Your Recruitment Message

An informative, succinct, and compelling recruitment message is an essential element to effective volunteer recruitment. Readers have a lot of options to choose from. Messages should aim to quickly capture their attention, answer basic questions about the opportunity, alleviating any potential barriers or fears, and inspiring them to take further action.

Be sure to communicate the mission and goals of the project in a clear, straightforward manner and then connect the dots to what this means for prospective volunteers. Think about how to reach broader demographics of potential volunteers by articulating your mission and goals through filters which attract various ages, lifestyles and are inclusive of genders and ethnicities.

1. Start with a hook. Consider including a catchy title and brief summary of the opportunity with just enough fodder to compel the reader to keep reading. Consider these examples:
 - Volunteers needed to sleep. NW women's shelter is recruiting for its Sunday overnight shifts. Talk, laugh, and share with the residents.
 - Be a PhoneFriend! DC Hotline is looking for people who care about children to work as volunteers as phone friends, the afternoon phone line for children. If you want to help children who are scared, lonely or need support call 223-CALL. Training begins soon.
 - Interested in the arts? Volunteers know what goes on behind the scenes at the Kennedy Center. Call the Friends of the Kennedy Center at 254-8700.

2. Why should this job be done at all? What is the need in the community for this work? What negative impact will happen if this role is not fulfilled? Use both statistics and examples to illustrate the need for support.

3. What will the benefit be to the community or to the client if the job is done? What will the work accomplish? What changes will the role make in their lives? What will the volunteer be able to accomplish if they accept the position?

4. What are some possible fears or objections concerning this job which must be overcome? The type of clients? The subject area? The skills needed to do the work? Geography? Liability? What can the organizations say or do to alleviate potential concerns?

5. What will be the personal benefit to the volunteer in fulfilling the role? Skills? Experience? Flexible work schedule? Parking? New Friends?

6. Who should they contact for more information and how?

Once you have your recruitment messages ready, your next step is finding the right communication tools to get the word out.

Get the Word Out

First and foremost capitalize on using word of mouth through the client, employee, and volunteer base of your organization. These are people who are already excited about what you have to offer and can speak to it with authenticity and excitement. When you put those two together the message is contagious. Provide these people with informational flyers that they can give out to their friends and relatives.

Other forms of communication include: newspapers (and weeklies), printed materials such as flyers and posters, social media, local outlets (television, radio, churches, service groups, schools, universities, corporations, organizations, etc.), online platforms and more. Refer to **Tips and Resources for Volunteer Recruitment** for additional ideas and approaches.

You don't have to pursue every option. The trick is to pick a few, be intentional, learn from your efforts and adjust your approach as you go. In order to maximize the time and energy that you have, consider creating a simple volunteer recruitment plan that outlines:

- What you are hoping to achieve as a result of your recruitment efforts (a numeric goal)
- Volunteer sources you plan to pursue
- Specific steps you will take with each volunteer source
- Who is responsible for each action item
- Timeframe in which actions will be completed

*Note, it is important to have your organization's website ready as a go-to point to which all of these sources can direct interested parties. That means that on your main page the volunteer section is highly visible and only one click away from the home page. On your volunteer page be sure to include both email, text, phone call and walk in location options for prospective volunteers to take the next step. Monitoring these sources is imperative as your response back must be timely to benefit from whatever motivated the potential volunteer to contact you in the first place.