



Volunteer Role Descriptions

What is a role description?

Once you've talked to everyone, you might like to write up these ideas into 'role descriptions'. A 'role' describes the title of the volunteer, such as 'newsletter contributor'. A 'task', or set of tasks, are activities that the volunteer will be doing as part of that role. So, the newsletter contributor will: suggest topics for articles, conduct interviews and write up articles.

Having different role descriptions can be useful for various reasons:

- It helps volunteers, who are thinking about applying know what they're being asked to do. This will help them decide if it's right for them.
- It gives the volunteer more information on the role, that there might not be time to cover when they first get in touch.
- It's a great way of thinking through if you've covered everything that a volunteer might want to know and that you need to have in place.
- Once the volunteer has started, they will know what they need to do.
- It will also help you support them as you can refer to the role description when catching up about how they're getting on.
- A role description helps other people in your organisation understand how the volunteer role fits with their own.

Where should I start?

When you're first thinking about involving volunteers it's helpful to talk to your co-workers, board members and current volunteers to get their ideas. It's really useful to include them in the process so they can understand the value of involving volunteers in your organisation. After all, they might be working with the new volunteer once they've started!

Things to think about are:

- What is it that you need a volunteer to come and do or help with?
- Why is this activity best for a volunteer and not a co-worker? Maybe it's something that you would like to see done that no one currently has the time, or skills, to do? Maybe it's something that you'd like to do differently by involving a volunteer.
- How will meeting this need add value to the service you provide?
- How will this volunteer role sit with the wider staff roles? Are you sure this is not replacing a paid job in the organisation to save money?
- Is it the kind of thing that a volunteer would want to do? Would you do it?
- What are the risks, or health and safety issues?
- How often is a volunteer needed and who will be their point of contact?

What should I include?

- **Role Title:** Name of volunteering role. Try and make it appealing and relevant to the role.
- **Outline of the role:** Introduce the organisation and what you're looking for a volunteer to do. You could bullet point the main tasks here.

- **Skills, Attitudes and Experience needed:** Outline what's needed to do this role. Maybe the volunteer has to have a driving licence or it's important that they enjoy meeting and talking to new people.
- **Benefits to the volunteer:** Let a potential volunteer know what they could get out of doing this role. It might be that they'll be offered training, gain experience, grow in confidence or get more fresh air and exercise!
- **Where:** Where will the role be based?
- **When:** This can outline exactly when in the week the opportunity takes place, how often it is and if it's ongoing or short term. You can also cover what commitment you hope from volunteer. You should approach this informally as something you hope the volunteer can give, not something that they have to do.
- **Support:** Who will be a point of contact for the volunteer and offer support if they have any concerns?
- **How to apply / what happens next (selection methods):** If the volunteer now wants to apply, what do they do next and then what happens. Let them know if they have to meet you for an informal interview or become a PVG scheme member and if you cover the cost of this.
- **Any questions:** Who can the volunteer get in touch with if they still have questions.

What next?

Once you've written your role description ask co-workers and other volunteers to read it and give you their feedback. This will help make sure it's easy to understand and also that the role is realistic. Your management committee will probably want to approve the role and then you can let everyone know about it!

It's a good idea to review the role at least once a year, or before the next time you're taking on new volunteers for the role. It's also useful to involve volunteers in the review of the role – after all they have the best understanding of it!

Need some more help?

If you would like more help or advice in relation to this guide please get in touch with us:

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