

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

WRITING A VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

Volunteer Role descriptions are essential for volunteer recruitment and ongoing management. A role description outlines what tasks will be associated with a volunteering role as well as other relevant information needed to the role. Role descriptions are also a useful tool for managing expectations on both sides. They help the volunteer and the organisation understand what is and is not expected in the role.

Good role descriptions are a fantastic recruitment tool. They demonstrate to prospective volunteers that your organisation is professional and organised and are a good way of ensuring volunteers are suited to the role they have applied for. Additionally, role descriptions are an important tool for meeting your work, health and safety obligations to your volunteers and ensuring you are complying with insurance requirements by clearly providing a scope for the role.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the extent to which you have role descriptions available for each volunteering opportunity available in your organisation, that you undertake risk assessments of proposed volunteer activities and that the roles are covered by your Public Liability Insurance.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF A VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

When writing a Volunteer Role description, you might want to include the following:

Position Title

Ensure your volunteering role has a title that reflects the nature of the work to be undertaken. The more specific the title is, the more likely people are to read through the rest of the role details.

Time Commitment

Be upfront about the time commitment you are looking for from volunteers. If you need people at set times or for a set number of hours, make sure you include this information. If you are vague about the commitment required, volunteers may self-screen out of applying because they may either overestimate or underestimate the commitment you are looking for. If your role can be flexible, including the ability for volunteers to work remotely or virtually, include this information too.

Location

Provide details of where the volunteering will take place. This is especially important if your office has multiple sites. Many volunteers search for roles via location. If positions can be undertaken remotely, make this clear in the role description.



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Description of the Volunteering Role

The description is one of the most important parts of the Volunteer Role Description because it paints a picture of the role to the prospective volunteer and enables them to imagine themselves in the role. Include an accurate description of what you would like them to do and a list of tasks that the volunteer will be asked to undertake. Be clear on which tasks are required, and which tasks might be negotiable in order to ensure your volunteering opportunity is inclusive.

If there are any intended outcomes or goals of the role, make sure to include them. Most volunteers are motivated by a desire to help others so a prospective volunteer will want to know how their involvement will make a difference. Being clear from the outset about the purpose of the volunteering role will enable someone to understand what they can hope to achieve as a volunteer, and how this will make a difference for your organisation, your clients, or the broader community.

Training (if applicable)

Detail any training the volunteer will be required to undertake as part of the role. Be clear about whether this training must be completed prior to starting in the role, or whether it will take place once the volunteering begins.

Background Checking Requirements (if applicable)

Be clear if the role requires volunteers to undergo a background (Disclosure and Barring Service) check and provide information on what checks are required and why. Specify whether your organisation covers the cost of DBS checks.

Qualification Requirements (if applicable)

If you do require a volunteer to have a specific qualification, be clear about this. Also indicate if there are opportunities to achieve a qualification for those who are interested in a qualification as part of the volunteering role.

Benefits

In detailing the benefits of the role, remember that volunteers are motivated for a variety of reasons, and these motivations can be catered for through numerous benefits. Include opportunities such as meeting new people, learning new skills, and undertaking training. Include details of whether travelling expenses will be met by the organisation.

Point of Contact

Make sure you include the contact details of someone who can provide more information about the volunteering role and answer any questions that a prospective volunteer might have.



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A VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION IS NOT A CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT

Remember that a volunteer role description is not a legally binding contract. It serves as a document that clearly outlines the expectations of the volunteer, the tasks to be performed as part of the role and defines the scope of the role. It is important the role description balances what your organisation requires from volunteers with the benefits they will gain through their involvement.

USING THE VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR RECRUITMENT

Your Volunteer Role description is a useful recruitment tool because it enables prospective volunteers to understand the requirements of the role before expressing an interest. When using the Volunteer Role description for recruitment, consider which aspects of the role are non-negotiable and which ones may be open to compromise. The more information you can provide, the easier it is for volunteers to decide if the role does not fit their skills or motivations.

INSURANCE

Role descriptions are an important mechanism of meeting your insurance requirements as they stipulate what a volunteer can and cannot do. For certain roles, especially those that take place off site without direct supervision, your insurer may require volunteers to be provided with a written list of the tasks that are in scope and out of scope. Your role description can encapsulate all of this information in one place. In the event an incident occurs, your role descriptions can serve as evidence that you have risk management processes in place to protect volunteers and service users in your programs.