Writing Accurate and Useful Volunteer Position Descriptions

Jennifer Bennett, CVA
Director, Education & Training
Agenda

- Components of a position descriptions
- Getting started writing or updating position descriptions
- Putting position descriptions in their place
- Just don’t put them in a drawer
- Using position descriptions in recruitment, training and retention
Parts of a Position Description

- **Title**
  - Volunteer is a staff category, not a title

- **Team or Department**
  - Reports to/Works with

- **Description of role**
  - Brief but explains what the position does

- **Primary Responsibilities**
  - Secondary Responsibilities

- **Skills and Experience**
  - What a volunteer needs to know to be successful

- **Time Commitment**
  - Hours/week, months
Involve Others

Before you get started create a plan and timeline for creating or updating volunteer position descriptions.

- Recruit a volunteer with HR experience
- Have volunteers write their own position descriptions
  - Do the position descriptions written by volunteers match your expectations for the position?
- Involve program managers, team leaders
  - Create a committee with representatives from each constituent groups to coordinate the process
Put Positions in Their Place

Integrate volunteer positions into the organization structure.

- Use the reports to work with section to determine how positions fit together.
- Can positions be divided into new positions, graded levels or leadership positions?
  - Encourages volunteers to grow or take on more responsibilities.
Responsibilities

Primary responsibilities

- Day to day activities
- Recurring responsibilities
- What are volunteers expected to do in this position?
- What behaviors or actions are required for this position?

Secondary responsibilities

- Actions or activities that are required of all volunteers
- Team or program responsibilities
Creating Accurate Responsibilities

What responsibilities or activities are

- Missing?
- Appear on more than one position description?
- Happen each shift or day? Seasonally or annually?

Have they been included? What’s missing?

- Seek feedback from constituents and others from within the organization.
Skills and Experience + Training

All the things a volunteer needs to know to be successful in the position.

- Skills can be position or team specific
- May include things that can only be learned in your organization or during a shift (on the job training.)

Experience or characteristics a volunteer needs to have to be a good fit for the position or organization

- Career skills
  - Are volunteers expected to have these skills before they start, or can they be gained during service?
Don’t Just Put them in a Drawer!

Use Volunteer Position Descriptions to recruit.

- Tell prospective volunteers how they fit into the organization.
- Outline the day to day work a volunteer can do.
- Explain what skills you’re looking for, and what volunteers can learn.
- Share the full position description with prospective volunteers so they can better understand what’s expected of them.
Don’t Just Put them in a Drawer!

Use them to develop application and interview questions.

- Create application questions to investigate a prospective volunteer’s previous experience.
- Develop interview questions that explore a volunteer’s ability to fulfill the positions primary responsibilities.
- Ask questions that help you understand how well a volunteer might work with the team or in the organization structure.
Don’t Just Put them in a Drawer!

Use them to inform orientations and develop trainings.

- Use primary responsibilities and skills to develop training materials and courses.
- What does a volunteer need to know before they start work, and what needs to be learned on the job?
- Integrate secondary responsibilities into orientations.
  - Standards and norms
- Reports to/Works with can also help volunteers better understand the structure of the organization.
Position Descriptions and Retention

An accurate position description can help you recruit and keep more of the right volunteers.

- Clear positions and responsibilities can help mitigate difficult situations with volunteers.
  - Everyone is on the same page.
- Give your volunteers room to grow
  - Graded or leveled positions, leadership positions, an opportunity to take on more responsibility or have a role to work towards.
- Program managers and team leaders can better understand how volunteers fit into the organization.
  - Build support for volunteers, and the work they do.
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For any questions contact:
Jennifer Bennett
@JenBennettCVA
jbennett@volunteermatch.org