



A Guide for Creating Inclusive Volunteer Position Descriptions

This guide shows you what to consider when writing inclusive volunteer position descriptions. Transparency and accessibility are key to building trust and engagement. Creating clear and inclusive volunteer position descriptions is key to attracting a diverse group of potential volunteers and giving them the information they need to decide if they want to volunteer at your organization. This kind of position description includes information on role clarity, skills needed, physical requirements, scheduling options, training and support, work environment, and communication methods.

The next page of this guide lists the aspects of an inclusive volunteer position description and questions to consider. The third page is an example of a completed position description.

If you have existing position descriptions, use this guide to enhance them with a lens of equity. Make sure the content, format, and structure work for your organization's needs.

This guide was created by Elizabeth Garrabrant, CVA for inclusion in the *Equity in Action Toolkit* in 2024.



Elements of an Inclusive Volunteer Position Description

Consider the following when creating an inclusive volunteer position descriptions. You don't have to answer yes to all questions or be able to accommodate every need. Thinking of these aspects and the questions listed will help you be as specific and transparent as possible.

ROLE CLARITY

Is what you are asking volunteers to do tough, strenuous, repetitive, boring, smelly? Might any aspects of the role conflict with a volunteer's belief system? It's okay if it does, as long as you are upfront about it! You can't anticipate the needs of every volunteer, so just be clear and concise.

SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS

What are the minimum skills needed to do this volunteer role? Is customer service involved? Not everyone is able to or inclined to talk to the public. Are there any qualifications that a potential volunteer needs to have, like a CPR certification? Be sure to list all the qualifications needed.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Does the role feature regular or extended standing, sitting, walking, or lifting? Say it! Could a walker or wheelchair be accommodated? Do the tasks require sight or hearing? Think about all the physical requirements that are needed and make sure to include them all.

SCHEDULING & FLEXIBILITY

Do volunteer tasks need to be carried out at a specific time or place? When thinking about flexibility, consider if the role can be done remotely, at odd hours, or at non-regular intervals. Be willing to accommodate holidays celebrated by other cultures.

TRAINING & SUPPORT

What type of training do you offer for each volunteer role? Offer training in a variety of formats and languages. When designing training, consider different learning styles. Develop videos or other materials that volunteers can access on their own time to help them get acclimated to their roles.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

What is the atmosphere like for a volunteer in this role? Is it accessible for all mobilities? Be aware of problems that come from loud or background noises, interruptions, unusual scents, or lack of climate control. Will volunteers be required to interact with other people? Will they be the same or new people each time they volunteer?

COMMUNICATIONS

Now, you are on your way to creating an inclusive position description. Next, communicate with potential volunteers in a variety of ways. Face to face may be essential in some cases, but emails, text messaging, social media, and phone calls may be the only ways to reach others.



Example of an Inclusive Volunteer Position Description

Pantry Assistant Volunteer

This key volunteer role ensures that community members receive the food assistance they need efficiently and respectfully. The Pantry Assistant Volunteer supports daily operations by sorting, organizing, and distributing food items.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Unload, sort, and organize food on shelves up to 7 feet high, ensuring that all products are appropriately labeled and within expiration dates.
- Help community members select food items while providing friendly and respectful service.
- Maintain a clean and organized pantry environment by sweeping, mopping, and taking out the garbage and recycling as needed.
- Ensure compliance with food safety and sanitation standards at all times.

SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Have a friendly and approachable manner.
- Ability to stand for extended periods of time.
- Ability to work well both in a team and independently.
- Be sensitive to and be respectful of diverse populations.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality about who is present in the food pantry at any time.
- Driving a forklift is a desired skill but is not a required skill.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Ability to lift and carry items up to 25 pounds from one place to another within the warehouse.
- Ability to stand, walk, and bend for extended periods.
- Ability to perform tasks that involve repetitive motion, such as shelving and sorting items.
- Must wear close-toed shoes in the warehouse. We recommend you dress warmly.
- If operating a forklift, must adhere to the rules outlined in the training.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

- Volunteers will receive an orientation to the organization and specific training for pantry operations.
- Orientation and training materials are available in English and Spanish.
- Ongoing support and supervision will be provided by the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Your orientation and training will take place during your first volunteer shift.

TIME COMMITMENT

- Minimum of 4 hours per week. Shifts are available daily from 8 a.m. to noon and from 2-6 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Commitment to a regular schedule is preferred to ensure consistency and reliability.

ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

This role takes place in our pantry warehouse. It has a concrete floor and is a cooler space. Lighting is inconsistent throughout the space and there are large fans overhead. Loud noises are common. The same warehouse staff will be present during each shift. Different clients access the pantry each day. The volunteers present will differ from day to day.