

# Creating Volunteer Positions That Appeal and Engage

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# Welcome to Creating Volunteer Positions That Appeal and Engage

# Today's Team

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Andy King  
Training Coordinator  
AmeriCorps VISTA



Robyn Stegman  
Project Specialist  
Campaign  
Consultation Inc.



Rebecca Starr  
Project Specialist  
Campaign  
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# Today's Agenda

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- What is a Volunteer Position?
- Designing Appealing Volunteer Positions
- Real World Examples of Engaging Volunteer Positions
- Observations from a Current VISTA
- Revisiting Volunteer Positions
- Questions and Next Steps

# Your Presenter

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Erin Barnhart, Ph.D.

# Poll

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Have you ever created a volunteer position?

Have you ever had difficulty retaining volunteers or recruiting for a particular role?



# Volunteer Position Descriptions 101

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- What is a volunteer position description?
  - What is the purpose?
    - Comprehensive description of the role
    - Important recruitment tool
  - Why are they important?
    - Comprehensive details
    - Critical for appropriate match
    - Realistic expectations and shared understanding



# Volunteer Position Descriptions 101, Continued

- How does a volunteer position description differ from a recruitment message?
  - Volunteer position descriptions are the “what” that helps one determine “how,” “where,” and “who” to recruit
  - Volunteer position descriptions can accompany – but should not replace – recruitment messages



# Components of a Volunteer Position Description

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- Brief Description of Organization
- Title of the Volunteer Position
- The Purpose and Impact of the Volunteer Position
- Activities, Tasks, and Responsibilities
- Required and Preferred Skills/Qualifications
- Time Commitment
- Site and Supervision
- Benefits Gained by Volunteers
- Contact Information and Next Steps

# Identifying Volunteer Positions

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- Self-evaluate organizational needs and opportunities
- Partner and communicate with staff members
  - What skills or perspectives do they want or need?
  - What new opportunities exist for volunteers?
  - What existing tasks could volunteers take on so that \*they\* can explore new opportunities?
    - The importance of positive staff/volunteer relationships
- Design a range of position types
- Pair not-so-appealing roles with more interesting tasks

# Making a Volunteer Position Appealing

- Consider Volunteer Motivations
- Highlight Volunteer Benefits
- Clear Connection to the Mission
- Comprehensive + Realistic



# How to Add Appeal

- Consider Volunteer Motivations
  - Who is your audience?
  - What might motivate them?
  - Will the design of the role align with these motivations?
- Highlight Volunteer Benefits
  - What benefits might they be seeking?
  - Will this role offer opportunities to gain them?



# How to Add Appeal

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- Clear Connection to the Mission
  - Is it clear why this volunteer position matters?
- Comprehensive + Realistic
  - Are you painting a realistic picture of this position?
  - Is it clear why the less appealing parts matter?



# Volunteer Position #1

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- **Title:** Volunteer
- **Tasks and Responsibilities:** This volunteer will help the Marketing Director with various tasks as needed.
- **Skills:** Experience with marketing and promotion.
- **Contact:** For more information, contact Sarah at [xxxxx@yyyyy.com](mailto:xxxxx@yyyyy.com).

## Volunteer Position #2

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- **Title:** Marketing Assistant
- **Tasks and Responsibilities:** This volunteer will assist the Marketing Director with outreach activities, including developing effective messaging, managing social media, and writing press releases.
- **Required Skills:** Strong writing and communication skills
- **Preferred Skills:** Experience with marketing and outreach
- **Time Commitment:** Five to ten hours per week; minimum three month commitment requested.
- **Site and Supervision:** This volunteer will be supervised by the Marketing Director. Volunteers can work independently as well as at YYYYY Organization.
- **Contact:** For more information, contact Sarah at xxxxx@yyyyy.com.

# Volunteer Position #3

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- **Title:** Marketing Assistant
- **Purpose and Impact:** This position helps YYYYY Organization design effective communications to educate and engage the community in activities to improve early childhood wellness. Crafting compelling messages that capture the attention of community members and inspire them to act results in improved health and wellness for children and families in our area.
- **Tasks and Responsibilities:** This volunteer will assist the Marketing Director with outreach activities, including the following:
  - Writing and editing text for marketing materials, including brochures and posters
  - Writing and curating posts for social media, including Facebook and Twitter
  - Writing and editing press releases
  - Researching new methods and mediums for effective community outreach
  - Assisting with overall marketing activities and strategies

# Volunteer Position #3 continued

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- **Required Skills:** Strong writing and communication skills.
- **Preferred Skills:** Experience with marketing and outreach. BA or MA in Marketing or current student studying Marketing.
- **Time Commitment:** Five to ten hours per week; minimum three month commitment requested.
- **Site and Supervision:** This volunteer will be supervised by the Marketing Director. Volunteers can work independently as well as at YYYYY Organization.
- **Volunteer Benefits:** This position offers the volunteer a multitude of professional development opportunities, including building a portfolio of marketing and education communications, developing skills in grassroots community outreach, and expanding personal and professional networks.
- **Contact:** For more information, contact Sarah at xxxxx@yyyyy.com.

# Your VISTA Presenter

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**Jordan Katcher**

AmeriCorps VISTA Member

United Tribes Technical College: Land Grant Program

Bismarck, North Dakota

# Tip 1: Research Your Community

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- Who is your targeted recruitment population?
  - Consider your community's demographics.
  - Become aware of any limitations, such as transportation and family obligations.

## Tip 2: Be as Detailed as Possible

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- Think about the position from a variety of angles.
- Be realistic – but positive - about the position's expectations.
- Confirm the potential volunteer's awareness of these position details.



## Tip 3: Consider Having an Incentive

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- Communicate the importance of the position.
- Highlight professional development gains.
- Consider offering a tangible incentive, such as a certificate or professional reference.

# Position Description Example #4

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**Title:** Garden Fundraising Coordinator

**Purpose and Impact:** Organization YY wants to deepen its connection to the sustainable agriculture and urban planning movement within the city. The Garden Fundraising Coordinator will be working at the frontlines of this exciting new development within our program! This individual will work to identify potential partnerships and develop financial and in-kind resources to support the growth of the garden-based nutrition program.

**Tasks and Responsibilities:**

- Research funding opportunities both locally and nationally.
- Create resources to sustain an annual fundraiser.
- Attend fundraising and networking events with development staff as needed.
- Recruit volunteers as needed.

# Position Description #4

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**Required Skills:** Strong writing and communication skills.

**Preferred Skills:** Development and fundraising experience preferred.

**Time Commitment:** Strong networking and communication skills required.

**Site and Supervision:** Organization YY and remote. This position reports to the Development staff of the organization.

**Volunteer Benefits:** The Garden Fundraising Coordinator will attain considerable resource development skills, including but not limited to: grant writing, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, networking. This position is a terrific way to expand one's professional network and credentials for careers in the nonprofit sector!

**Contact:** For more information, contact Jeff at [xxxxx@yyyyy.com](mailto:xxxxx@yyyyy.com).

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Questions?

# Revisiting Volunteer Positions

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- How do we know when something is *wrong* with a volunteer position?
- “Symptoms” that the design of a volunteer position might be flawed:
  - Difficulty recruiting for a position
  - Difficulty finding the right candidates/fit
  - Lack of diversity among volunteers/applicants
  - Inconsistent outcomes
  - Difficulty retaining volunteers

# Revisiting Volunteer Positions

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- Tailor volunteer positions to specific audiences
  - Revisit volunteer motivations and benefits
  - Consider language and terminology
- Revisit positions that have been difficult to fill
  - Do you have a good fit between audience and role?
  - Adjust the time commitment or schedule
  - Consider restructuring the position

# Volunteer Position #3 - Revisited

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**Title:** Marketing Assistant

**Purpose and Impact:** This position helps YYYYY Organization design effective communications to educate and engage the community in activities to improve early childhood wellness. Crafting compelling messages that capture the attention of community members and inspire them to act results in improved health and wellness for children and families in our area.

**Tasks and Responsibilities:** This volunteer will assist the Marketing Director with outreach activities, including the following:

- Writing and editing text for marketing materials, including brochures and posters
- Writing and curating posts for social media, including Facebook and Twitter
- Writing and editing press releases
- Researching new methods and mediums for effective community outreach
- Assisting with overall marketing activities and strategies

# Additional Resources

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- [Volunteer Work Design – Energize, Inc.](#)
- [Volunteer Recruitment \(including Volunteer Motivation\) – Energize, Inc.](#)
- [Creating Volunteer Roles – Volunteering England](#)

# Next Steps

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- Create a volunteer position from scratch
  - What needs or opportunities would you identify?
  - Ask colleagues to identify potential volunteer positions
- Take a look at your existing volunteer positions
  - How might you make them more appealing?
  - How might you restructure or redesign them?

# How to Ask Questions

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Thank you very much for your time and participation!

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