

Guidelines For Deciding If The Position Is Appropriate For A Volunteer

When engaging volunteers often one of the most difficult tasks for an NfP is deciding what roles/positions are appropriate for volunteers. Reaching a decision about the work to be undertaken by the volunteer, and where this would fit alongside paid work can be tricky.

Outlined are the following factors that Volunteering Auckland considers when listing a voluntary role for one of our member NfP organisations.

Factors Which Tend To Make Involvement of Volunteers Appropriate:

- Where the work is for the benefit of NfP organisations and assists them with their service delivery to the wider community.
- Where the position has not been performed by a paid worker within the last 12 months and will require no more than 16-20 hours per week.
- Where new areas of work are being explored and volunteers may pave the way for the creation of new positions.
- Where the organisation has policies in place around volunteer engagement, including the principle of entitling volunteer staff to the same employment practices and benefits as paid staff.
- Where paid staff acknowledges the value of a volunteer's contributions and adequate resources are made available to support, supervise and train the volunteers.
- Where there is an opportunity for the volunteer to benefit from the work by achieving personal goals. This may include developing their skills and talents, acquiring experience, extending networks and social relationships, etc.
- Where a task can be carried out better by a volunteer than by a paid staff person. This might include one-to-one befriending, advocacy, visiting, or specialised skills, etc.
- Where a distinct area of work can be identified for which the volunteer can take responsibility, and which complements, extends or enhances the work of but does not replace paid staff.

Factors Which Tend To Make Involvement of Volunteers Inappropriate

- Where the work is for the benefit of a profit-making organisation, whereby voluntary contributions may result in equity gains, interest or dividends to shareholders, an individual person or persons, etc.
- Where the volunteer receives remuneration implying low-waged status rather than voluntary work.
- Where the work will typically require more than 16-20 hours per week.
- Where the work is normally considered to be the responsibility of a statutory service, e.g. nursing care, teaching etc.
- Where the volunteer would be undertaking work which is the subject of an industrial dispute.
- Where the volunteer would be performing tasks carried out by paid staff in the past 12 months or where their involvement would reduce the likelihood of employment of paid staff and jeopardise wages or employment conditions of paid staff.
- Where there is a disagreement within the NfP about the nature and purpose of volunteer engagement. Where there are insufficient resources to provide proper support, supervision, training or workspace for volunteers.

- Where there is no money available to pay volunteers out-of-pocket expenses, provide appropriate insurance cover or meet Health and Safety requirements.
- Where the work offers no rewards to the volunteer, e.g. work is too demanding, tedious, dirty, and/or unpleasant e.g. utilising volunteers to do the work that paid staff find boring.
- Where volunteers themselves do not perceive any value in the work, or any opportunity to achieve personal goals.
- Where unacceptable risks to health and safety are involved, e.g. physically dangerous work, potentially violent work etc.

Before completing a Request for Volunteers

Before sending through a request spend some time developing an outline for the role you intend to list; where does it fit, what is the purpose of the role, do you have a desk available and resources to complete the task, is there adequate support and supervision? Is there anything that may make the role inappropriate for a volunteer? Do you have policies in place? And what are your expectations re outcomes and timeframe?

Remember to allow us reasonable time to fill your request. If a request arrives on a Monday needing volunteers for the Friday that maybe too short a timeframe. Plan in advance and get your requests in early. For an ongoing role we suggest at least two weeks, for a project or events we recommend 3-6 months out from date of event. Remember that we cannot guarantee that the right person will present themselves to VA or will choose your role.

When you have your outline and have worked out your requirements, read through and ask yourself: "Would I volunteer for this role?"