



Recruiting Virtual Volunteers

AN OVERVIEW OF VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

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Many organizations are accustomed to managing volunteers that establish a one-time or long-term¹ commitment to your agency, but how do you manage a volunteer that wants to volunteer virtually via the Internet?

Virtual Volunteers can perform more and more of your organization's volunteer activities. Typically virtual volunteers work off-site or off-hours, often independently of Volunteer Center staff. Virtual volunteers can come from any where around the world. This adds further benefit to the secure, web-based 1-800-Volunteer.org Virtual Volunteer interface because volunteers can self-select for live or virtual volunteer activities, register, and prepare anytime 24/7 without taking up valuable staff time. Also, managing volunteers is faster and easier via the integrated, seamless, automated 1-800-Volunteer.org system.

WHAT IS VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING?

Virtual opportunities are a special category of volunteer opportunity that allows the volunteer to provide assistance without physically visiting a specific location. Many activities are performed or exchanged by computer or another technology device, and transmitted via the Internet.

Consequently, virtual volunteers can participate from anywhere in the country, or even the world, [bringing a wider breadth of skills and passions to your organization](#). Virtual volunteering constitutes volunteer tasks completed at a location of the volunteer's choosing and delivered via the Internet, telephone, or mail. Also called virtual volunteering, cyber service, and telementoring / teletutoring, virtual

¹ One-time opportunities are scheduled on a single day or over a period of several days (e.g., a weekend). Long-term opportunities are ongoing; regular needs that your organization has. They may or may not be scheduled on specific days or dates to coincide with particular needs or activities. Or, they may be open-ended needs that can be performed any time, at the volunteer's convenience.



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volunteering also refers to volunteer managers with virtual volunteers, regardless of where the service is performed.

Many organizations are new to recruiting and engaging Virtual Volunteers, so the Points of Light Foundation and 1-800-Volunteer.org have provided a guide to examine the issues you need to consider when recruiting and managing virtual volunteers.

This Guide will:

- Highlight the value of posting virtual volunteer opportunities
- Provide step-by-step instructions for creating and writing a virtual volunteer opportunity
- Provide samples of high quality virtual volunteer postings
- Demonstrate how to screen virtual candidates
- Outline resources to learn more about virtual volunteering


THE VALUE OF POSTING VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Virtual volunteers can work with your organization in a variety of ways, even if they are not near geographically. They can share their knowledge, skills, and personal connections to perform a task, or help foster your cause by harnessing the power of the Internet and computers.

Why should you recruit virtual volunteers?

- They may have better computer equipment and software than your organization, and they don't require office space.
- They have a tendency to be more comfortable using computers and electronic media.
- Virtual volunteering is perfect for people with disabilities or with home obligations, and could therefore increase the diversity of your current volunteer programs.

On 1-800-Volunteer.org, individuals who would like to volunteer virtually can search for opportunities by their zip code and their interests. They can select "Virtual" as one of their search criteria under "Advanced Search", and they are presented with a

computer icon  when an opportunity is appropriate for a virtual volunteer. When a visitor to 1-800-Volunteer.org searches by a zip code that does not currently have any opportunities posted, they are presented with all virtual volunteer opportunities posted on 1-800-Volunteer.org.



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DID YOU KNOW...

Virtual volunteers tend to be newer to volunteering than volunteers who accept on-site assignments. The majority of volunteer managers see no difference in the reliability or quality of work of virtual volunteers compared to on-site volunteers. In addition, studies suggest that virtual volunteers are newer to volunteering and more likely to be found if volunteer agencies approach them directly and ask for their help, and virtual services like 1-800-Volunteer.org are the best places to find these volunteers. *(For further details consult Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Murray & Harrison's 2002 study on Virtual Volunteering.)*

CHECKLIST FOR MANAGING A VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- Establish executive-level support and commitment
- Educate staff (address requirements for supervisors, volunteers, and office-based support staff)
- Amend policies and procedure manuals for managing and screening virtual volunteers (see the end of this guide for templates of how to establish those procedures)
- Create e-mail or web versions of all materials given to volunteers (if appropriate, create a separate “welcome packet” for virtual volunteers)
- Post virtual volunteer opportunities on 1-800-Volunteer.org
- Create discussion lists via e-mail² for your volunteers. Learn and apply the dynamics of netiquette (Internet etiquette), real-time communication, e-mail relationships

² Online group software like Yahoo Groups is a great tool to establish a listserv and let your virtual volunteers connect with each other.



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TASKS APPROPRIATE FOR VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

Virtual volunteering tasks: should not require high security; can be measured qualitatively; generally involve the handling of information; and are not dependent on a team's efforts. Below are some tasks appropriate for virtual volunteers:

Administrative	Writing
Calculating	Planning
Data entry /processing/programming	Program Design
Database administration	Marketing
Reading	Publicity / Media Pitching
Record keeping	Fundraising
Research	Proposal Writing
Sending e-mail	Computer programming
Support activities	Specifying new computer equipment
Technical assistance	Tabulating online survey result
Typing	

EXAMPLES OF VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING PROJECTS

1. Technical assistance provided by virtual volunteers to requesting agencies, which may include:

- Conducting virtual research for an organization's grant proposal or newsletter
- Providing professional consulting regarding human resources or management issues, developing a strategic plan, or writing a speech
- Providing multimedia expertise with computer-based presentations or database design
- Writing a technology plan, or designing a database system
- Registering an agency's homepage and other appropriate pages with virtual search engines and directories
- Designing an agency's newsletter or brochure
- Writing and editing articles for publications
- Translating documents into other languages

2. Direct contact between a volunteer and an organization via e-mail, a community email-list, a chat room, or an organization's BLOG regarding:

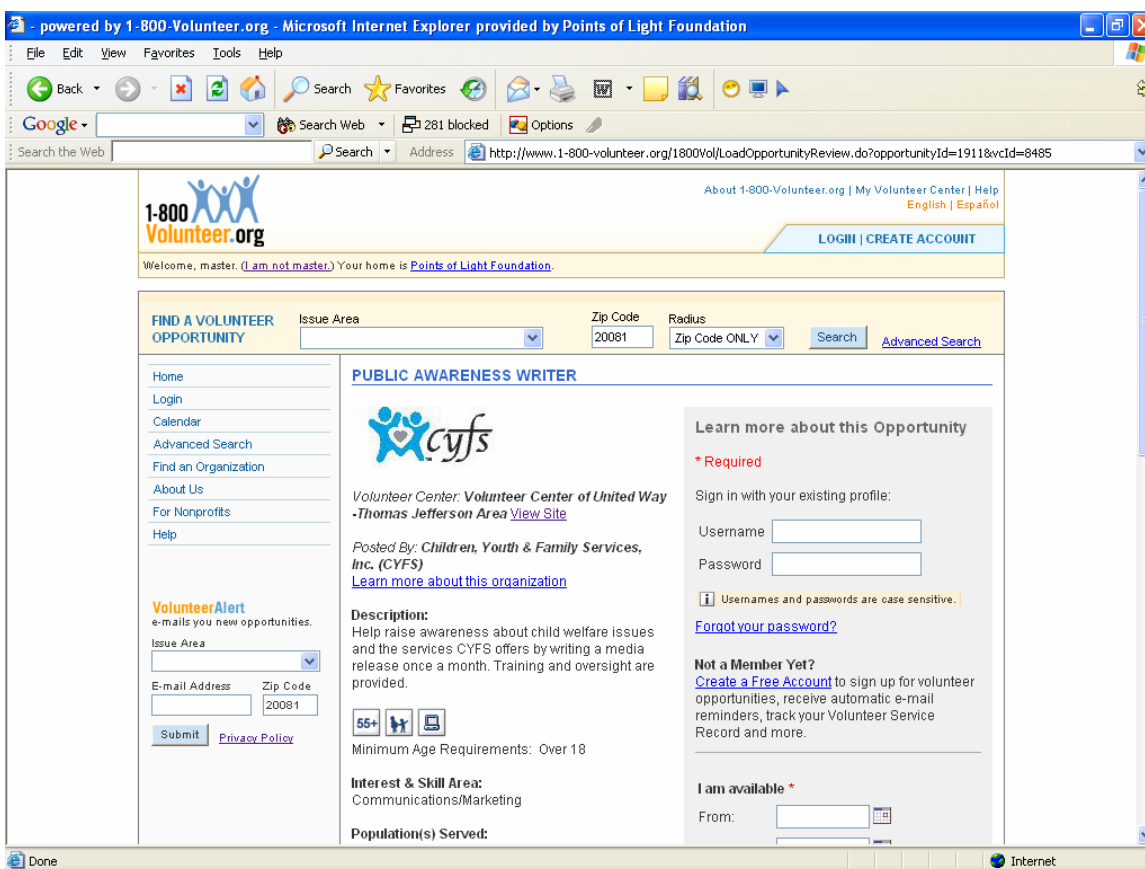
- Training volunteers in a subject via the Internet
- Providing support to an organization's clients by offering advice through e-mail



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- Supervising or moderating an agency-sponsored chat room or e-mail discussion group
- Electronically “visiting” homebound clients
- Providing virtual (web-based) mentoring and instructions to volunteers and/or clients to help them learn skills, find employment opportunities, prepare resumes, or help prison inmates with their studies

EXAMPLES OF VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER POSTINGS



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a volunteer opportunity page. The page title is "PUBLIC AWARENESS WRITER". The organization is "Volunteer Center of United Way - Thomas Jefferson Area". The description states: "Help raise awareness about child welfare issues and the services CYFS offers by writing a media release once a month. Training and oversight are provided." The posting is by "Children, Youth & Family Services, Inc. (CYFS)". The page includes a search bar, a sidebar with navigation links, and a registration form.

POSTING A VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY ON 1-800-VOLUNTEER.ORG

To post a virtual opportunity on 1-800-Volunteer.org, you first have to register.

Getting started is easy

1. Click “Create Account” from the 1-800-Volunteer.org homepage
2. Click “Create an Organization Account”



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3. Find your local Volunteer Center by typing in your zip code or state and clicking "Search"
4. Select your local Volunteer Center
5. Fill in all the required fields and click "submit"

Typically, your Volunteer Center will approve your account within two to four business days. Once your account has been approved your organization can:

- Review and modify your Organization's profile
- Add or edit volunteer profiles
- Add new or modify existing volunteer opportunities, activities, or events
- Create and run reports on your data

How do I post a Virtual Opportunity?

- ❑ **Step 1:** Select "Calendar" from the navigational links located on the left side of the page
- ❑ **Step 2:** Select "Opportunity"³
- ❑ **Step 3:** Select "Add a New Opportunity" (located in upper right corner)
- ❑ **Step 4:** Complete the following four steps of the Create/Edit Activity form (in English &/or Spanish):
 - Details⁴
 - Issue Impact - This section is where you indicate that the opportunity is virtual, by selecting the checkbox next to the computer icon (see below):

³ As a 1-800-Volunteer.org user/affiliate, you should become familiar with the three types of Virtual Volunteer opportunities that you can post in the system: one-time, long-term, and virtual. When posting opportunities to 1-800-Volunteer.org you should try to have a balance of each type of opportunities so that volunteers who want to help you can provide assistance based on their own availability.

⁴ It is also important to post opportunities based on the existing grouping structure to ensure that your posting receives the most exposure. To view the grouping structure, visit: <http://www.1-800volunteer.org/1800Vol/OpenVCAdminContent.do?title=helpTaxonomy>

Test Test Demonstration Site - powered by 1-800-Volunteer.org - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by Points of Light Foundat

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Google Search Web 281 blocked Options

1-800 Volunteer.org Contact Support

MY ACCOUNT | LOGOUT

ADMINISTRATION - Demo VC

Admin Home
Calendar
Events
Activities
Opportunities
Preview: Emergency Events
Emergency Sign-Up Forms
Referrals
Volunteers
Organizations
Website
Reporting
Resources
Contact Support
Help
Logout

CREATE/EDIT OPPORTUNITY - MDD: GRAFFITTI CLEANER

Organization: ABC Agency

(1) Details (2) Issue & Impact (3) Review (4) Scheduling

Provide the following information about the Opportunity you are creating or editing.

* Required

Referral Source [Dropdown]
POLF Season of Service: Make A Difference Day [Dropdown]
Related Event [Dropdown]

Volunteer Options
Check all that apply.

Groups are welcome.
 This activity is for older adult volunteers.
 This activity can be done virtually.
If checked, please answer the following:
Is access to a computer required? Yes No
Is Internet access required? Yes No
 This opportunity is handicap accessible.

- ❑ **Step 5:** Select "Save and Return to Opportunity List" to save and submit for Volunteer Center approval.

***Note your local Volunteer Center will provide you with a comprehensive manual on how to add content to the system. Once you log into your account, you can also find those instructions under "Help".

RESOURCES AND VIRTUAL HELP

- Service Leader (Virtual Volunteering Guide Book)-
<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/documents/vvguide.pdf>
- Association for Volunteer Administrators- www.avaintl.org
- CompuMentor- www.compumentor.org (nonprofit technology portal)
- Cyber Speaker- <http://www.cyberspeaker.com/sevensteps.html>
- Energize Inc.- www.energizeinc.com (general VPM resource)
- Net Aid- www.1-800-Volunteer.org/ov/index_html
- TechSoup- www.techsoup.org (nonprofit technology portal)



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- Volunteer Today- www.volunteertoday.com (VPM monthly e-gazette)
- Netiquette- www.dtcc.edu/cs/rfc1855.html

EXAMPLES OF VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

- Children's Museum of Washington- www.discoverycreek.org
- International Telementor Program- www.telementor.org
- National Air and Space Museum- www.nasm.si.edu
- National Building Museum- www.nbm.org
- National Museum of Women in the Arts- www.nmwa.org
- Smithsonian- www.si.edu
- Teletutoring Project- www.monmouth.com/~vnet/v4a.html