



VolunteerMatch



# Virtual Volunteering

A Guide for Nonprofits

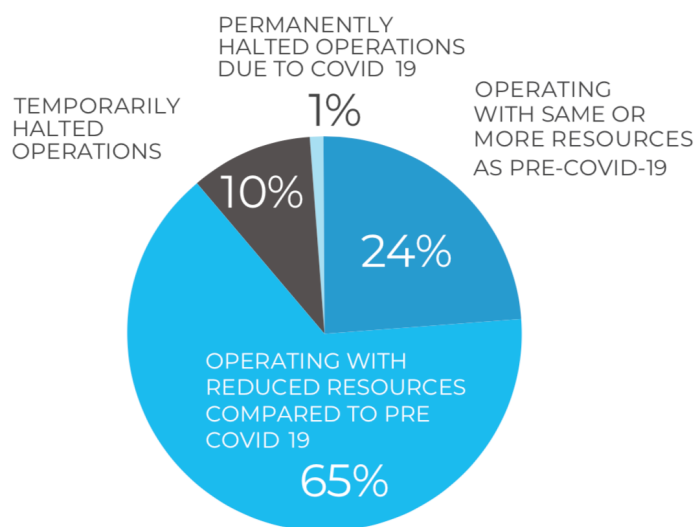


# Introduction

Virtual volunteering is increasing in popularity among nonprofit organizations as they seek out safer ways for people to give their time. [In a survey](#) we performed in October of 2020, 51% of nonprofits are offering more virtual opportunities — up from 32% in March of 2020.

As more nonprofits are feeling the financial strain from the impact of COVID-19, virtual volunteering is an effective way to get the support they need to help raise or improve productivity.

Whether you're designing new roles to provide support and respond to the needs of your communities, or keeping volunteers engaged while some of your employees are remote, read on for tips on how to create the virtual program that works best for you.



*65% of nonprofit organizations are operating with reduced resources compared to pre COVID-19*







## GETTING STARTED

### 1 - Analyze your organization needs

#### Questions to Ask

- What are the biggest challenges you are facing?
- What needs are you seeing in your organization?
- If you had more volunteers what would you do?

### 2 - How to go virtual

- Build opportunities based on your needs.
- Determine who will manage the volunteers.
- Create guidelines for volunteer engagement.
- Identify the technology you need.
- Write a volunteer position description.
- Post to recruiting sites like [VolunteerMatch](#).
- Set milestones with deliverables.
- Do regular check-ins.



### 3 - Analyze any potential barriers

- Technology:** Determine what technology you have such as video meeting applications, project management programs, computer equipment, or specific design programs that could be used to support the virtual volunteering program.
- Time:** Estimate the number of hours that can be allocated for creating and managing the program.
- Initiating:** Start with simple tasks that you need support with and test it. Keep it simple. Then you can build larger programs based on what you discover.
- Training:** Identify the skills the volunteers need to support your organization.
- Retention:** Build a plan around what happens once the volunteering service is complete. Follow-up with the volunteers and let them know the specific impact they made such as the number of people they helped. Then, tell them about how they can continue their service.

### 4 - Create opportunities

#### Build your foundation

When shifting your volunteering to virtual opportunities, look at your program's foundational components. Maximize the time and talent of volunteers by designing effective position descriptions, building out your training program, or diversifying their work.

#### Virtual volunteer opportunities

- Writing copy, fundraising letters or grants
- Responding to email inquiries
- Creating digital art
- Designing websites
- Editing videos
- Working on public relations
- Making greeting cards
- Doing social media

#### Bonus Tip

Design opportunities that can be done by the whole family, especially as parents are looking for activities for their kids to do.



# RECRUITMENT

## 1 - Write accurate and useful position descriptions

### Effective position descriptions include

- Position Title
- Skills Needed
- Department
- Secondary Skills
- Responsible to
- Desired Experience
- General Outline
- Time Commitment
- Primary Responsibilities
- Needed technology

### Bonus Tip

See pages 6-7 for a sample description and a virtual email template

### Virtual recruitment tips

- Stick to a communication calendar for recruitment.
- Design an email template.
- Host a quarterly webinar about your program.

## 2 - Market your roles online to a larger audience

- Research what recruiting sites work best for your needs.
- Test it out by posting your opportunity. With millions of visitors each year, [VolunteerMatch](#) allows you to reach a wider audience.
- Set up an automatic reply, so volunteers hear from you right away.

## 3 - Map out your messaging

### General guidelines

- Keep communications brief, timely, and actionable.
- Commit to regular updates.
- Ask volunteers to help you.
- Communicate your program's progress and how volunteers contributed.

### Communicating during crises

- Stay up-to-date.
- Communicate urgency.
- Emphasize the volunteer's safety and wellness first.
- Be sensitive to the different ways people react to stress.



## EMAIL TEMPLATE

### What to include in your email

- Acknowledge your existing relationship.
- Outline the impact of the virtual opportunity.
- Manage/outline work expectations.
- Include a call to action.

### Recruiting once-in-person volunteers for virtual programs

Hi (name),

We've really missed seeing you during our after school mentoring hours. We're launching a new online mentoring program, and we'd love to have you be a part of it! We have a virtual informational session coming up on Wednesday which you can register for *here*. We'll be covering the new online approach and our expectations for the online mentoring program as well as our updated policies. We'll also be scheduling a time to give you a demo and start training on the platform. I know you miss volunteering here and I hope you see this as a rewarding way to keep your student's learning on track. I hope you'll join us!

If you have questions please do not hesitate to reach out.







## MAXIMIZE YOUR DESCRIPTION

### What to include in your introduction

- Write an attention-grabbing title and make good use of your first sentence.
- Keep it brief (100 words or less).
- On VolunteerMatch, you can use the skills menu to help the right volunteers find you (& these listings automatically cross-post to LinkedIn).
- Brainstorm and use key words.
- Outline any potential deal-breakers.
- Include an impactful call-to-action.

### Virtual Volunteering Description Sample

Seeking kind and compassionate people to lend their ears! Are you a good listener? Do your friends and family come to you for a shoulder to lean on? Compassionate Listeners is an organization that provides free mental health resources and emotional support to millions of people who just need someone to talk to. You can volunteer remotely, from the comfort of your home, with your own smartphone. Don't worry, this is a chat-based service and anonymous. We connect volunteers with people who need someone to talk to, providing a safe space, free of judgment or bias. Volunteer listeners are trained in active listening and psychological first aid, providing them with the tools needed to make a difference in people's lives. Are you ready to become a volunteer?



# ENGAGEMENT

## 1 - Connect regularly

- Have volunteers check in with each other by email, text or phone, especially if your volunteers skew older.
- Set up a phone tree to ensure that information is shared with everyone.

## 2 - Provide structure and ask for feedback

- Clearly state your expectations.
- Share the project or work timeline.
- Check in regularly.
- Provide guidance and suggestions to overcome challenges or roadblocks, but also allow volunteers to make recommendations.

### Ask Questions

- What would you change about the program or your role?
- How would you rate the organization's use of technology in engagement and recruitment?
- How satisfied are you with your virtual volunteer experience?

#### **Bonus Tip**

Ask the right questions by having surveys conducted, written, and evaluated by volunteers

## 3 - Use social media

### Ways to use each platform

- Facebook—building a community of constituents and volunteers
- YouTube—promoting your organization and storytelling videos
- Twitter—providing immediate updates and hashtag campaigns
- Instagram—sharing photos of volunteers in-action & their creative projects
- LinkedIn—networking with pro-bono, skilled, and corporate volunteers

## 4 - Show your appreciation

- Check in with volunteers as they work and provide support and feedback.
- Feature volunteer stories on your blog, website, or social media channels.
- Give your volunteers awards.
- Send your volunteers a simple, handwritten thank-you card.
- Create a badge on LinkedIn volunteers can use to highlight their community involvement.





## HYBRIDIZE YOUR PROGRAM

Some volunteering simply can't be done virtually. During the pandemic, we've heard many people say they feel less connected, but are still interested in helping others. The demand for in-person volunteering keeps growing as the needs in our communities increase and fewer large groups can volunteer in-person. Many of our nonprofits in the U.S. have reworked and innovated their in-person opportunities to ensure they follow the CDC guidelines.

### Safer Volunteering Guidelines

- Wash hands for 20 seconds each time. If you don't have access to soap and water, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol and cover all of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Ensure that volunteers wear masks that cover their nose and mouth.
- Set up volunteering based on physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- Display signs promoting protective measures.
- Regularly clean and disinfect environments.
- Provide proper ventilation or set up volunteering outside.
- Discourage the sharing of objects.
- Stagger scheduling.
- Modify volunteer contracts with a clear outline of new rules.
- Develop a policy to address when guidelines aren't followed.

## MAKING IT EASIER TO ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

VolunteerMatch is committed to the resiliency and recovery of our nonprofits and the constituents we serve. We connect passionate people with meaningful volunteer opportunities in their communities. In fact, we have ways to get involved in every city, state, and zip code across the U.S.

- Start recruiting great volunteers right away by [registering on VolunteerMatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org). We can help you reach individual volunteers as well as volunteers giving their time from within a wide range of corporations.
- Get volunteer engagement tips, industry insights, and management best practices by attending over 20 free webinar topics from the [VolunteerMatch Learning Center](https://www.volunteermatch.org/learning-center).

