



Direct Communication Project

Resource No. 17

Guidelines for Describing Volunteer Activities

Volunteering is as American as apple pie and has always been an integral part of Foreign Service life. Many posts have volunteer award programs to recognize the contributions of those people who donate their time to improve the quality of life for their colleagues and/or to help the needy in the host country.

Today, you can apply your volunteer experience to your professional life. Volunteer work enhances a resume; some corporations eliminate candidates for executive positions who do not show community involvement on their resumes. The Federal Government accepts job-related volunteer work as qualifying experience for Civil Service positions - it counts the same as paid experience. This paper contains two tools to help you accurately describe your volunteer experience. The Outline of Volunteer Activities can help you organize your volunteer accomplishments. The Action Verb List can help you describe the specific work that you did.

The Outline of Volunteer Activities is a composite of the experiences of many Foreign Service family members. It is divided into four skill areas that you may have developed while doing volunteer work at posts abroad or in the United States. Under each skill area, there are phrases that you can edit and supplement based on your individual experience adapting them to your career area or a specific job. Use the Action Verb List to help you choose strong words to describe your work.

The Outline of Volunteer Activities can be used to draft a resume or a government application form. Two types of resumes are described here. The functional resume is a good format to use if you are just out of college, have little work experience, are reentering the job market, or are changing careers. It focuses on abilities or skills, not on job titles or dates. The chronological resume lists work experience starting with the most recent job. It shows where and how experience

was acquired, plus the accomplishments of each job. It should be used by those with steady and increasingly responsible work experience.

If you are using these guidelines to prepare a government application form, explain skills in greater detail. For example, instead of writing "Organized____," detail what was involved: "chaired meetings, initiated programs, recruited workers, interviewed _____."

In describing volunteer work abroad, mention the number of countries in which you have served, the years invested, and the hours spent weekly in a particular function. Where pertinent, detail the amount of money handled and the number of people supervised.

It may also be useful to highlight foreign language competency, especially if you acquired or used it in volunteer activities, e.g.,

“fluent in written and spoken French, which was used extensively in working with host country nationals.” Foreign Service spouses can have their language skills tested by the Foreign Service Institute. Eligible family members of State employees can schedule testing at no cost. A fee is charged family members of employees of other agencies. Call to make an appointment:

Language Testing Unit (SLS/TU)
National Foreign Affairs Training Center
4000 Arlington Boulevard, F4221
Arlington, VA 22204-1500
Telephone: 703-302-7125

The Outline of Volunteer Activities and the Action Verb List are designed to help you get started describing your volunteer accomplishments. Professional counselors at the Career Development Resource Center (CDRC) will help you refine your resume or application. Their services are free to Foreign Service spouses. Contact them at:

Columbia Plaza (SA-1), Room L321
2401 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20522-0108
Phone: 202-663-3042
Fax: 202-663-3146

Resources

The Resume Doctor: How to transform a Troublesome Work History into a Winning Resume – John J. Marcus, 1996.

Dynamite Resumes (3rd Edition) – Ron Krannich, Ph.D. and Caryl Krannich, Ph.D., 1999.

The New Perfect Resume by Tom Jackson and Ellen Jackson. New York: Doubleday, 1996.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Perfect Resume – Susan Ireland, 2000.

Reinvention: Federal Resumes by Kathryn Troutman. Washington, DC: The Resume Place, 1997.

101 Quick Tips for a Dynamite Resume – Richard Fein, 1998.

The Federal Resume Guidebook: A Step-by-Step Guidebook for Writing a Federal Resume in Accordance with the Office of Personnel: Management's Flyer - Kathryn K. Troutman, 1999.

The Damn Good Resume Guide: A Crash Course in Resume Writing (3rd Edition) – Yana Parker, 1996.

Federal resume writing web site:

www.resume-place.com/jobs

Outline of Volunteer Activities

Management Administration

Managed _____ United States Government official residential property(ies).

Hired and supervised household staff of _____.

Maintained household and representational accounts and records.

Supervised budget of \$_____ making recommendations for budget revisions and allocation of funds.

Kept inventory of property contents.

Planned and supervised rebuilding, redesign, or redecoration of _____ Embassy residence(s), chancery(ies), garden(s). Consulted with Embassy on contracts.

Coordinated program to provide welfare and housing support to American evacuees from neighboring country.

Community Relations Community Liaison

Organized system for welcoming newly arrived personnel and families to post.

Planned and developed orientation programs for newly arrived personnel and families.

Assessed and responded to the needs and problems of American families within the Embassy.

Provided family counseling and basic health care guidance on problems of handling domestic staff, including information on local customs and cultural differences.

Identified community problems and developed programs to find solutions. Give details, e.g., coordinated establishment of Community Liaison Office.

Encouraged better relations among members of different agencies within the official American community.

Mediated _____ dispute(s) among differing factions within the _____ community leading to satisfactory conclusion.

Chaired or served on the board of executive committee of _____ school, commissary, club, church, or hospital.

Developed close contacts between Embassy and families of American business community.

Organized _____ American or international community projects or programs: teen club, community council, recreation association, summer work program for teens, book discussion group, sports program, or Scout group.

Provided recreation or community center at Embassy residence for American Embassy employees and their families in the absence of other adequate facilities.

International Relations

Public Relations

Non-Media Public Relations

Planned, implemented, hosted _____ official representational functions monthly (for _____ guests) for the United States Government.

Represented United States Government at official local government functions.

Planned and coordinated schedules and events for VIP visitors, official groups, congressional delegations, and special occasions (4th of July, conferences, seminars, cultural programs).

Selected art works for the official residence from the Art in Embassies program. Arranged exhibitions. Wrote or supervised the writing of exhibition catalog.

Participated in radio and television programs on American life, customs, or art.

Served as a member of official U.S. team on visits of various field projects: urban renewal, family planning, schools, hospitals, factories. Briefed on implementation of project and reviewed goals.

Organized or chaired international fund-raising projects for _____. Proceeds of \$_____ were used to _____.

Served on board of international or binational club(s).

Used specialized knowledge to advise on establishment of _____ local schools, health care facilities, English language programs, social services, cottage industries, craft shops.

Organized recitals or exhibitions of local craftsmanship. Advised on design. Initiated liaison among local American designers.

Directed orientation and hospitality for local and/or American student groups participating in _____. (Examples: American Field Service, Crossroads, or other educational programs.)

Advised student groups and international clubs. Arranged briefings, lectures, and interviews. Planned social functions.

Assisted foreign diplomatic families assigned to Washington or New York adapt to life in the United States.

Developed interpersonal relationships and communicated on cross-cultural basis with _____.

Research Writing

Researched through publications, lectures, briefings, and visits the history, politics, economics, institutions and culture of _____ (area of assignment).

Organized and updated reports on local living conditions and prices that resulted in a change in cost of living allowances.

Strengthened professional and personal interests by studying and researching:

- Programs of following agencies involved in overseas development - AID, Peace Corps, USA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF (write out name of agency);
- Programs sponsored by private voluntary organizations (PVO's) in developing countries -- CARE, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Asia Foundation, Church World Service, Catholic Relief, Red Cross, American Field Service, in _____(country).

Researched and wrote booklet on living conditions and services in _____(country) for the American community.

Interviewed and wrote articles on foreign cultural programs and activities of American women abroad for _____.

Action Verb List

abstracted	attracted	communicated	dealt
accelerated	audited	compared	debited
accepted	augmented	competed	debugged
accompanied	authorized	compiled	decentralized
accomplished	avoided	completed	decided
achieved	awarded	composed	decorated
acquainted		computed	declared
acquired	balanced	conceived	decreased
acted	bargained	conceptualized	dedicated
adapted	bought	concluded	deduced
added	briefed	conducted	deemed
addressed	broadcast	confirmed	defeated
adjudicated	brought	considered	defended
adjusted	budgeted	consolidated	defined
administered	built	constructed	delegated
advanced		consulted	delineated
advised	calculated	contacted	delivered
advocated	called	contained	delved
affected	canceled	continued	demanded
aired	canvassed	contracted	demonstrated
allocated	cataloged	contributed	described
allotted	caused	controlled	designated
allowed	celebrated	convened	designed
analyzed	centralized	converted	detailed
answered	certified	conveyed	determined
anticipated	chaired	convinced	developed
appeared	championed	cooperated	devised
applied	changed	coordinated	diagnosed
appointed	checked	corrected	directed
appraised	chose	correlated	disbursed
approved	clarified	corroborated	disciplined
arbitrated	classified	counseled	discharged
arranged	closed	counted	discovered
asked	coded	covered	discussed
assembled	collaborated	crafted	dispersed
assessed	collated	created	displayed
assigned	collected	credited	disseminated
assisted	combined	critiqued	distributed
assumed	commemorated	crusaded	divided
assured	commended	curbed	documented
attained	commissioned	cut	doubled
attended	committed		drafted

drew	faced	identified	led
earned	facilitated	illustrated	let
edited	fashioned	implemented	levied
educated	featured	improved	licensed
effected	filed	improvised	linked
elevated	filled	incorporated	listed
eliminated	filmed	increased	listened
employed	financed	indexed	lobbied
empowered	finished	indicated	located
enabled	fixed	influenced	logged
enacted	focused	informed	made
encompassed	forced	initiated	maintained
encouraged	forecast	insisted	managed
endeavored	forged	inspected	mandated
endorsed	formed	inspired	manipulated
enforced	formulated	installed	manufactured
engaged	fostered	instructed	mapped
engineered	fought	insured	marketed
enlarged	found	integrated	mastered
enlisted	founded	intensified	matched
enlivened	freelanced	interacted	measured
ensured	functioned	interpreted	mediated
entered	funded	interviewed	mentioned
equipped	fulfilled	instituted	met
established	furnished	introduced	mobilized
estimated	furthered	invented	modeled
evaluated	garnered	inventoried	moderated
examined	gathered	invested	modified
exceeded	gave	investigated	molded
excelled	generated	invited	monitored
executed	ghostwrote	involved	motivated
exercised	governed	issued	moved
exhibited	graded	joined	
expanded	graduated	judged	named
expedited	granted	justified	negotiated
experienced	guaranteed		nominated
experimented	guided	kept	
explained		knew	observed
explored	handled		obtained
expressed	headed	launched	offered
extended	helped	learned	officiated
extracted	hired	leased	opened
	hosted	lectured	operated

ordered	published	restructured	supported
organized	purchased	revamped	surpassed
originated	pursued	reversed	surveyed
outlined	put	reviewed	symbolized
overcame		revised	synthesized
oversaw	qualified	revitalized	systematized
		rewrote	
packaged	raised	risked	tabulated
paid	ranked		tackled
participated	rated	salvaged	tailored
passed	reacted	saved	tapped
perceived	reasoned	scheduled	targeted
perfected	recast	screened	taught
performed	received	sealed	tested
persevered	recognized	secured	testified
persuaded	recommended	selected	terminated
phased in	reconciled	served	toured
phased out	recorded	serviced	traced
piloted	recruited	set	trained
pioneered	redesigned	settled	transferred
placed	reduced	shaped	translated
planned	reevaluated	signed	transported
polled	referred	simplified	traveled
portrayed	refined	sold	treated
practiced	reflected	solicited	tried
prepared	regulated	solved	triggered
presented	rejected	sorted	tripled
presided	related	sought	turned
prevented	released	specified	tutored
priced	removed	spoke	
printed	renegotiated	staffed	unified
prioritized	reorganized	staged	updated
processed	replaced	started	upgraded
procured	replied	stimulated	used
produced	reported	strengthened	
programmed	represented	structured	validated
prohibited	reproduced	studied	verified
projected	requested	styled	visited
promoted	required	submitted	volunteered
prompted	requisitioned	substituted	
prosecuted	researched	succeeded	went
proposed	resolved	suggested	won
protected	responded	summarized	worked
provided	restored	supervised	wrote
publicized	restricted	supplied	

