

Considerations for volunteer management

Below are a few questions regarding volunteer program management. If your project can answer “yes” or justify a “no” response to each of these questions, you are following SWD identified best practices in volunteer management. This is a self assessment to assist volunteer coordinators identify program strengths and weaknesses.

1. Is *OF 301- Application for Volunteers* used for every potential volunteer?

OF-301 OF-301 “Volunteer Application” is the standard application required by USACE for all Volunteers. This form allows the potential volunteer to see and select for him or her self what types of activities are of interest and either through check list or provided space allow them to indicate their experience and qualifications for those activities. This process assists the potential volunteer to think beyond the excitement of the moment and realize there is a commitment to be made in actually performing the job. By having one standard form for all volunteers it streamlines your paper work and insures all potential volunteers have equal opportunity to join your program.

2. Does each of your volunteers have a written job description?

a. If so, do the job descriptions include required skills and/or essential functions of the position including physical, mental, visual and auditory requirements?

Clearly written job descriptions which detail the skills required and desired for the position along with how success in that position is measured. This will assist the volunteer in understanding the job requirements and will give the volunteer coordinator the bases of determining if the objectives are being met.

Essential functions of the job that include physical, mental, auditory and visual requirements of the position are required by the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1994. They also assist the accepting official in determining a candidate’s ability to perform the tasks while allowing volunteers unable to perform the essential function an opportunity to self select out of that job.

Job Descriptions for volunteer positions should include:

- Overview of Projects Volunteer Program and the role this volunteer will have in the Project Team.
- primary duties a detailed outline of duties to be performed by Volunteer
- Secondary duties the responsibilities of all volunteers on the team.

- Minimum Qualifications for the Job. This must list any physical or mental abilities required to perform the duties of the Job. This is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Things to consider: Could a blind, deaf, or mentally challenged individual competently do the job with reasonable accommodations, could work be performed while seated in a wheel chair, what physical abilities the position requires. If you feel that any form of disability or physical restriction would prevent a person from successfully completing the task it must be stated the level of ability you require. Once these are determined volunteers not meeting these criteria should not be given the position in question
- Desired Experience should also be listed. These are the things you want your volunteer to know, but if the right attitude and personally were present and, the skills were not you would be willing to train.

Volunteer Job Descriptions generally should not be more than a page in length, once the person is brought onto your team the nitty-gritty details of the work can be covered in a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

3. Do you request and/or check references?

It is important to check references especially past work history or volunteer experience as part of a comprehensive screening for potential volunteers. While these are people the volunteer has provided you can still gain valuable information regarding how they have interacted in similar situations in the past. It is important that the volunteer gives permission for references to be checked (we should never look into someone's back ground or personal information with out there knowledge). All provided references should be checked as a part of our due diligence to fully investigate each potential volunteer before putting them in a position of public trust.

4. Does every qualified applicant receive an interview?

No one would ever consider hiring someone to work for their organization without an interview so why would we allow a volunteer to represent us to the public with out first interviewing them. This is another part of our due diligence to protect our visitors, staff, volunteers, and organization from negative actions of volunteers who are not properly suited for the position they seek. Every applicant who seems qualified on paper should receive an interview to be sure we get the best match for each potential volunteer.

If a potential volunteer does not fit the Job they have applied for you maybe able to help them find a better fit with in your program or in another organization if you know what the criteria for other positions are.

a. Has a standardized list of interview questions been developed for each position?

Every applicant for any given position (refer to Job Descriptions) should be asked the same set of questions. This will insure that when comparing candidates you are comparing “apples to apples not apples to oranges”. This also provides proof of non-discriminatory practices in our selection or denial of any given volunteer. Documentation of questions and answers given should be maintained in the volunteers file with their application and other pertinent documents.

b. Are they used in every interview?

5. Is a background screening process completed before leaving a volunteer to work independently and/or in a position of public trust?

Volunteers can have a profound impact on your facility and the community. It is important to screen them thoroughly to make their experience a positive impact on the facility, the organization, its visitors, the paid and volunteer staff and the potential volunteer. Never feel compelled to accept someone just because they walk through your door. Persons unwilling to submit references or allow a background check should be RED FLAGS in the interview process.

A criminal history/background screen through a private screening company or by an agreement with local law enforcement should verify the person’s criminal record in all 50 states and check the sex offender registry.

a. Does the project eliminate candidates who have been convicted of: Violent crimes, Crimes against another person, Crimes involving the use of a weapon?

ER 1130-2-500 specifically states that persons with these offenses can not be accepted in our volunteer programs.

b. Is there a clear SOP for other disqualifiers?

Guidelines on who is screened and disqualifiers for volunteer positions at your site should be in writing as an SOP for your office. This makes it clear for everyone what risks the organization is willing to accept in considering the past performance of a potential volunteer.

6. Is OF-301 –“Volunteer Agreement for Natural Resource Agencies” on file for every volunteer at the project?

OF-301 “*Volunteer Agreement for Natural Resource Agencies*” is the standard form that all federal agencies agreed to use to standardize our programs and reduce paperwork for our volunteers. Having a volunteer agreement signed by both the volunteer and an organizational representative establishes the rights of the volunteer and the expectations of the organization. It should clearly state who is agreeing to what and reference the position description of the volunteer. Any special considerations that may be offered to the volunteer by the organization or any special requirements of the volunteer should also be noted along with dates for evaluation and scheduled end of agreement.

a. Is Parental consent portion of OF-301 “*Volunteer Agreement for Natural Resource Agencies*” completed for any volunteer under the age of 18?

Children under the age of 18 should also have a parental consent signed for their work with your organization to insure their parent or guardian is aware of the agreement they are signing with you as well as any rights they have as volunteers. Children 16 and under are subject to all child labor laws even in their volunteer positions.

7. Are all volunteers provided with an appropriate orientation for the position and training for the responsibilities of their position?

Orientation is the overview of our organization, the local mission and how the volunteer fits into the picture. Orientation is valuable to the volunteer to show how certain programs are operated and how their job description impacts office goals. Volunteers should be introduced to other Corps staff members that they will be working with on a daily basis to insure a smooth transition into the work environment.

Training is the key to how each location expects volunteers to perform their daily task, and should include safety aspects as well as work to be preformed. Training also serves as a guide for the Corps to ensure proficiency with equipment that the volunteer will use or how the volunteer will interface with the public. Training should cover all job duties that the volunteer will be performing.

8. Are volunteers identified as part of our Corps Team (i.e. with name tag or uniform, etc.)?

Volunteers working directly in a public setting (i.e. park host, visitor center, book store) should be identified as part of the team. Name tags, uniforms, and hats are the most common type of identification which will identify volunteers to the public. Park host also use magnetic decals or window flags on their vehicles when touring park areas. Identification of volunteers provides visitors a sense of security and helps the volunteer feel more appreciated for their contributions to the team.

USACE volunteer items can be purchased through VF Solutions with a Impact visa using your 5 character office symbol (i.e. SWFLE) as both the log in and password. Additional items such as t-shirts can be purchased through local vendors.

9. Are all volunteers provided training and required to comply with all safety guidelines as outlined for all employees? (EM-385-5-1-1 specifically)?

ER 1130-2-500 Chpt 10 requires we provide our volunteers the same work environment afforded to our paid personnel this would include meeting the requirements set for in EM 385-1-1.

- a. Are Position Hazard Analysis (PHA) signed and on file for each volunteer and are Activity Hazard Analysis (AHA) utilized for all tasks not in the PHA or for volunteers performing specialized tasks?**

10. Are volunteer records stored in a secure location?

The Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. §552a, requires that agencies that collect an individual's personal information in a system of records do not disclose such information unless authorized by law. Disclosure is allowed in certain cases, one of which is, "to those officers and employees of the organization which maintains the record who have a need for the record in the performance of their duties." Records must be maintained in a system of record after collection. A system of records means "a group of any records under the control of any organization from which information is retrieved by the name of the individual or by some identifying number, symbol, or other identifying particular assigned to the individual." 5 U.S.C. § 552a(a)(5).

Each organization that maintains a system of records shall—

- (1) upon request by any individual to gain access to his record or to any information pertaining to him which is contained in the system, permit him and upon his request, a person of his own choosing to accompany him, to review the record and have a copy made of all or any portion thereof in a form comprehensible to him, except that the organization may require the individual to furnish a written statement authorizing discussion of that individual's record in the accompanying person's presence;
- (2) permit the individual to request amendment of a record pertaining to him and--

(A) not later than 10 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) after the date of receipt of such request, acknowledge in writing such receipt; and

(B) promptly, either--

(i) make any correction of any portion thereof which the individual believes is not accurate, relevant, timely, or complete; or

(ii) inform the individual of its refusal to amend the record in accordance with his request, the reason for the refusal, the procedures established by the organization for the individual to request a review of that refusal by the head of the organization or an officer designated by the head of the organization, and the name and business address of that official;

(3) permit the individual who disagrees with the refusal of the organization to amend his record to request a review of such refusal, and not later than 30 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) from the date on which the individual requests such review, complete such review and make a final determination unless, for good cause shown, the head of the organization extends such 30-day period; and if, after his review, the reviewing official also refuses to amend the record in accordance with the request, permit the individual to file with the organization a concise statement setting forth the reasons for his disagreement with the refusal of the organization, and notify the individual of the provisions for judicial review of the reviewing official's determination under subsection (g)(1)(A) of this section;

(4) in any disclosure, containing information about which the individual has filed a statement of disagreement, occurring after the filing of the statement under paragraph (3) of this subsection, clearly note any portion of the record which is disputed and provide copies of the statement and, if the organization deems it appropriate, copies of a concise statement of the reasons of the organization for not making the amendments requested, to persons or other agencies to whom the disputed record has been disclosed; and

(5) nothing in this section shall allow an individual access to any information compiled in reasonable anticipation of a civil action or proceeding.

Finally, violations of the Privacy Act can result in criminal penalties or civil remedies. Id. at 552a(g) & (i).

11. Are volunteer hours and tasks recorded at least monthly?

Eng4882-r – Is the standard form provided in the EP. ER 1130-2-500 establishes that we will collect a time sheet or accounting of time contributed at least monthly. It is important to track how volunteers are being utilized and how many hours of service are required to do those tasks. This helps in establishing the value of volunteer service to your organization and provides information for future needs.

12. Are volunteer hours entered into OMBIL at end of FY?

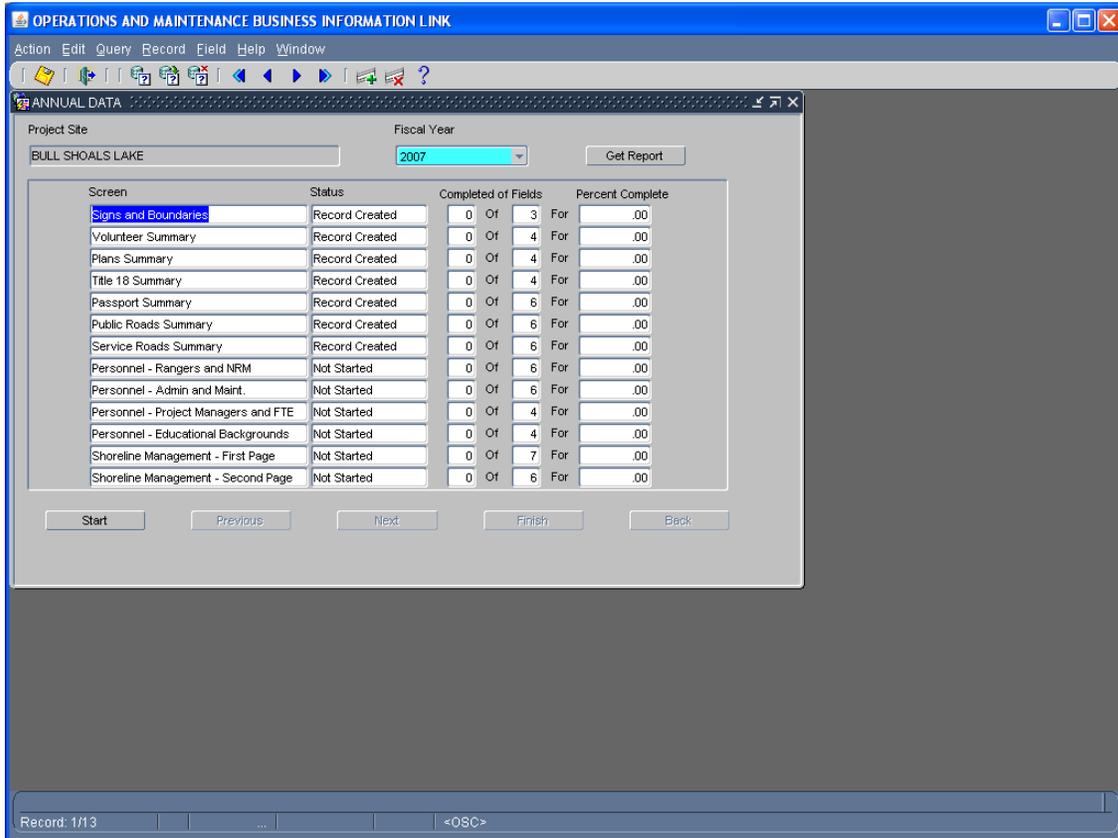
By enter our data annually into OMBIL we allow OMB, HQ, and other entities to use this data to calculate community support into their decisions for our sites. It is important that we use accurate data and adhere to the OMBIL definitions of what shall be input. When entering hours this should be a direct entry from your monthly time sheets
To enter Volunteer hours into OMBIL:

- Go to <https://ombil.usace.army.mil/>
- Click the **Business Link**
- Select the **Recreation Link**
- Select the **Business function Data Input**
- Enter proper passwords
- In the **Business Function Field** be sure **Recreation** is selected
- In the **Available Forms and Reports Field** be sure **Data Input Forms** is selected
- In the drop down box select **Annual Data**
- In the **Annual Data Screen** select the **Fiscal Year** and **Volunteer Summary** then click **Start**

The screenshot shows the OMBIL SWITCHBOARD web application interface. The window title is "OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE BUSINESS INFORMATION LINK". The interface includes a menu bar with "Action", "Edit", "Query", "Record", "Field", "Help", and "Window". Below the menu bar is a toolbar with various navigation icons. The main content area is titled "OMBIL SWITCHBOARD" and contains several sections:

- HAT:** A dropdown menu showing "BULL SHOALS LAKE PROFILE".
- DIVISION:** A dropdown menu showing "SOUTHWESTERN DIVISION".
- DISTRICT:** A dropdown menu showing "LITTLE ROCK".
- PROJECT SITE:** A dropdown menu showing "BULL SHOALS LAKE".
- PROJECT SITE AREA:** A dropdown menu showing "<NONE SELECTED>".
- FACILITY:** A dropdown menu showing "<NONE SELECTED>".
- Business Function:** A list of radio buttons with "RECREATION" selected. Other options include COMMON, ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE, FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION, HYDROPOWER, ENVIRONMENT - STEWARDSHIP, NAVIGATION, and WATER SUPPLY.
- Available Forms & Reports:** A section with two radio buttons, "Data Input Forms" selected, and a dropdown menu showing "REC - ANNUAL DATA".
- Buttons:** "Launch", "Refresh", and "Help" buttons are located to the right of the Business Function section.

At the bottom of the window, there is a status bar with the text "Select a form or report to launch" and "Record: 1/1".



13. Do volunteers have an opportunity to evaluate his or her training, supervisor and the program?

By allowing volunteers to provide feed back on their experience with your organization you can improve your program and enhance each volunteer's connection to the team and its mission. It is recommended that new volunteers have an opportunity to evaluate their orientation and training soon after they begin work to assist in improving the quality of that training for others (i.e. how well did the training prepare them for the work they would be doing?)

15. Are all volunteers evaluated on their performance and counseled on how they can better assist us in meeting our missions?

By evaluating the performance of a volunteer you are assisting them in know what they are doing well and how they can improve. This practice also tells them the organization and their supervisor feels their work is important to the success of the organization.

16. Is there an existing SOP for volunteer reimbursement of job related expenses (i.e. Fuel, mileage, safety boots, etc.)?

If an office or project is going to reimburse volunteer expenses in accordance with ER 1130-2-50 Chapter 10 they should have an SOP for handling such reimbursements that detail what and who will be reimbursed for what types of expenses and how the reimbursement shall be processed. This SOP should be reviewed and approved by the districts Resource Management Office.

17. Is the program evaluated annually and a needs assessment for the following year created?

By evaluating the success of your programs annually, you can determine if your goals were met, the cost of meeting those goals and the staffs perceived difficulty of operating with volunteers. This evaluation can be compared to previous methods of accomplishing the same task to determine, if your volunteer program is saving you time/money or if it needs improvement. Sometimes it may tell you that it should be discontinued if it can not be made more effective (important to know and recognize).

After evaluating last year's program performance, it is important to plan for the upcoming year. A team from your organization comprised of all levels of management, non management and even volunteers (should use seasoned volunteers who know your organizations mission) should look at the evaluation. The needs of the organization for the upcoming year and the budget should be used in determine what volunteers can/will handle for the upcoming year. Plans for supplies, work space and numbers of volunteers required to meet these goals should be set and then executed throughout the year.

18. Does the volunteer coordinator seek out and take advantage of continuing training and networking? Does the volunteer coordinator share or train fellow staff members and volunteers on new information?

Staying current in volunteer trends and new ideas for managing a workforce intrinsically motivated will assist in recruiting and retaining your volunteers. More importantly it will create opportunities for the volunteer coordinator to network and problem solve with their peers and keep enthusiasm for the program strong.

By sharing new information with volunteers and other staff members it re-enforces to the team the commitment of not only the volunteer coordinator but also the organization to support the program. Many people in your organization come in contact or even supervise your volunteers. They will benefit from knowing more about why they chose your organization and what keeps them coming back.

