

10

STEPS FOR ENGAGING ADULTS

50+

**A RESOURCE OF THE
GEN2GEN LEARNING HUB**

Developed by

Encore.org's Gen2Gen campaign

and

The Alliance for Strong Families
and Communities' Second Acts Initiative

**STEP 3:
POSITION
DESCRIPTIONS**



POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

The position description does a lot of jobs, including:

- It assigns a title to a role.
- It tells the story of your organization.
- It describes how a role fits into your mission.
- It identifies the relevance of the role to the organization and its constituents.
- It specifies the responsibilities of the position.
- It defines the qualifications and skills required to perform the role.
- It identifies other requirements for the role.
- It often lays out the process for applying for the position and next steps.

A position description can also address issues that are likely to be on the minds of adults 50+ who would be a good match for the role. This is your chance to anticipate those issues and to make sure you don't leave unanswered questions that could discourage otherwise strong candidates from applying.

For example:

- Does the description state that you're interested in the life experience, the perspective and the skills of adults 50+? (You might use language like "people of all ages" or "significant life and work experience").
- Have you avoided jargon and labels such as "senior," "elderly," etc. that might not resonate with the 50+ people you are seeking to recruit? (Note: you might test the language out with a focus group of adults 50+.)
- Have you used language that might suggest you are only interested in younger or early-career candidates?



STEP 3

Position Descriptions (continued)



Mary Gunn, former executive director of Generations, Inc., a literacy program matching adults 50+ with children, recommends “when intentionally recruiting adults 50+ for a volunteer role with youth, it can be helpful to state this explicitly in your job description and recruiting materials or they might think they are not who the organization is looking for.”

- Is the potential impact of the position – on the life of a child, your organization’s capacity, or your community – clear?
- Does the role offer opportunities for applying specific skills or for learning and growth?
- What kinds of discretion and decision-making does the role allow or require?
- Is it clear how this role interacts with others in the organization or in the community?

Most position descriptions use boring language that makes them a challenge to read. Think about how you might brighten up your description to set it apart and make it a better reflection of your organization’s culture, people and mission. Consider these options:

- Tell a story about a success that is central to your mission.
- Use language that is simple, informal, approachable and interesting to read.
- Make an emotional as well as an intellectual pitch.
- Try to avoid jargon and technical terms, unless you intend to use the description as a screening device.
- Leave out information that doesn’t matter.
- Don’t be afraid to use images to help convey your message.
- List all the questions you think someone might want answers to and double check that the answers get included in the narrative.
- Have a few people, including adults 50+ (both familiar with the role and not), review the position description to make sure it is clear and covers what you intend.



STEP 3

Position Descriptions (continued)

TAKING ACTION

Use this checklist to test whether your position descriptions include information that will appeal to the interests and preferences of adults 50+.

POSITION DESCRIPTION CHECKLIST

DEMOGRAPHIC TARGET

- Use language that is relevant to adults 50+ (value of intergenerational connection, giving back, etc.).
- Highlight the value you see in life experience and skills developed over time.
- State that the role is designed for adults 50+, if relevant.

SOCIAL PURPOSE

- Include your organization's mission and social purpose.
- Articulate the social impact of the position.
- Include impact of the role on young people, the organization, the local community.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

- Describe opportunities for connection with clients, partners, staff, peers, etc.
- Indicate specific needs, challenges or opportunities to be addressed through the role.
- Refer to the potential personal benefits of the role (motivation, connection, impact, etc.).

LEARNING & GROWTH

- Clearly define the job tasks and expectations.
- Outline the variety of specific skills required.
- Offer opportunities to build skills and experience.



STEP 3

Position Descriptions

(continued)

AUTONOMY

- Include opportunity for discretion and decision-making.
- Allow for flexible work conditions (hours, location, etc.).
- Identify reporting relationships.

CONTEXT

- Indicate how this role fits into the organization and its mission.
- Explain opportunities for collaboration (teamwork, mentoring, etc.).
- Cite ways that staff/volunteers will be supported by the culture of the organization.



MORE INFORMATION

- [Boomer Volunteer Engagement Guide](https://bit.ly/gen2genvolunteer) (bit.ly/gen2genvolunteer)
 - Chapter 4: Creating the Opportunity: Position Descriptions. pages 55-71
 - Exercises: pages 67- 70 and 152-153
- [Encore Talent Works](https://bit.ly/gen2gentoolkit) (bit.ly/gen2gentoolkit)
 - [Tap Volunteers: Attract](https://bit.ly/gen2genattract) (bit.ly/gen2genattract)
(includes a sample position description for skilled volunteer)
 - [Hire Encore: Attract](https://bit.ly/gen2genattract2) (bit.ly/gen2genattract2)

