



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK & APPLICATION

To apply as a volunteer with Experience Olympia & Beyond, please read through this packet, fill out the application, and schedule an interview with our Office Manager. We look forward to working with you!

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# INTRODUCTION

## **THIS HANDBOOK**

This handbook is a starting point for everything you need to know about being a volunteer with Experience Olympia & Beyond. You will learn some basic information about our organization, see a job description outlining our volunteer responsibilities, and then apply for one of our volunteer positions.

## **WHO ARE WE?**

The Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater Visitor and Convention Bureau (also known as Experience Olympia & Beyond) serves as our county's destination marketing organization. We are a non-profit focusing on economic development by competitively marketing Thurston County as a destination for conventions, tour groups, and individual travelers.

We offer a variety of services to our member businesses including promotion in our visitor guides, maps, meeting planner guides, and sports facilities guide. We also help plan meetings, conventions, and events in the county by connecting the organizers with area facilities and resources. At our Visitor Information Center (VIC), we offer inspiration and assistance to individuals interested in traveling and spending time in Thurston County.

## **OUR MISSION**

We strengthen the region's economy by developing meaningful experiences and promoting travel to vibrant Thurston County.

## **OUR VISION**

Travel to Thurston County offers treasured moments that leave visitors and residents feeling inspired and fulfilled.

# VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

## JOB DESCRIPTION

Visitors directly impact the economy of the area, resulting in more jobs and a vibrant community. As a volunteer, you will serve as a guide and expert on our county, assist visitors with information requests, and encourage them to extend their stay by promoting tourism in Thurston County.

This position reports to the Office Manager and, after the initial training period, will be responsible for opening and closing our facilities independently. Shifts are typically 4 hours (from 9AM to 1PM or 1PM to 5PM) on weekdays, and we ask our volunteers to sign up for one shift a week.

## LOCATION

All regular shifts occur at our Visitor Information Center on the Washington State Capital Campus, located at 103 Sid Snyder Ave. SW, Olympia, WA 98501

## SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

These are the task you will be asked to do daily:

1. Open and close the VIC (depending on your shift)
2. Greet and welcome visitors to the VIC
  - a. Answer any questions they may have about our county and offer appropriate resources
  - b. Utilize our Trip Planner and Hotel Reservation software when appropriate
  - c. When appropriate, make referrals to other Visitor & Convention Bureaus or Destination Marketing Organizations when the visitor identifies they are traveling outside of the county
3. Answer the phone and assist with visitor inquiries
  - a. Transfer or pass on calls when appropriate
  - b. Record visitor requests to be mailed
  - c. When appropriate, make referrals to other VCBs or DMOs when the visitor identifies they are traveling outside of the county
4. Assist staff with keeping the VIC tidy and presentable
5. Help collect important visitor data through our guestbook, counter, and tick sheet
6. When appropriate and time allows, assist with administrative projects

## DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS & SKILLS

The following describe the qualifications and skills of the ideal volunteer:

- **Be approachable and genuine**
  - Welcome each guest as they enter and offer assistance
  - Ask questions and actively listen to visitors before responding
  - Don't give everyone an elevator speech; focus on their needs and questions
  - Enjoy working with people from various backgrounds, including visitors from other countries
  - Remain polite and helpful under all circumstances
- **Be resourceful and knowledgeable**
  - We don't expect you do be an expert on *everything*, but we do expect that you can look up information you don't know or ask for assistance.
  - We love the phrase "I've never heard that question before, let me look that up for you!"
- **Understand basic computer operation and word processing**
  - You will often have to research questions or resources online
  - Much of our scheduling and announcements take place via email
  - We have many free resources available to visitors online that we'll expect you to learn about and use
- **Be reliable and punctual**
  - Attend the shifts you sign up for and communicate early when emergencies arise that prevent you from attending
  - Open and close the VIC at the assigned times

## BENEFITS

Welcoming visitors to Thurston County can be hard work, and we want to make sure we say thank you early and often! Here are some of the benefits of volunteering with our team:

- Complimentary on-site parking for your shifts
- Complimentary coffee, tea, and occasional snacks
- Invitations to quarterly volunteer familiarization (FAM) tours throughout the county
- First hand knowledge of upcoming tourism projects and activities
- Meeting people from all over the world
- Contributing to the promotion of Thurston County

# POLICIES

## ATTENDANCE

Volunteers are expected to attend all of their scheduled shifts, from start to finish, except in case of emergencies or prior communication. Life always happens, but we need to make sure our facility is always open as advertised.

## TRAINING

All volunteers will complete a one-month (four shift) training prior to being asked to open or close.

We offer a variety of ongoing training opportunities including quarterly FAM tours and an annual safety training. Whenever schedules allow, volunteers should participate in these trainings.

## COMPUTERS & CELL PHONES

Volunteers are encouraged to use our computer to get information about the Legislature, Capitol Campus events, and other tourism information for our visitors.

Certain websites should be open during your shift to allow you quick access to information.

- An online search engine like Google
- The Experience Olympia and Beyond website - [ExperienceOlympia.com](http://ExperienceOlympia.com)
- Our online trip planning & hotel booking tools

You are welcome to bring personal devices and phones to your shift, as long as they are not a distraction from helping visitors, and we have complimentary Wi-Fi available.

## FOOD & BEVERAGE

You are welcome to bring beverages to the VIC. There is a small fridge, freezer, and microwave available for your use. We also provide water (hot and cold), coffee, tea, and occasional snacks.

## BREAKS & DOWNTIME

Welcoming visitors at the VIC can be feast or famine and you should anticipate sporadic downtime. Please feel free to bring a book, homework or personal projects, or a personal device for lulls in visitor activity. But these diversions should never interfere with helping a visitor.

If you are volunteering alone and need to step out of the VIC for a break, please make sure to close and lock the doors and windows. Leave the provided "Closed" sign on the door or in the window and return promptly.

## **BAD WEATHER AND OTHER EMERGENCIES**

Volunteers should adhere to the following guidelines in deciding whether to travel for their appointed shifts when road conditions may be hazardous because of the weather:

- If Olympia Schools are closed, the VIC will be closed
- If Olympia Schools are open but the schools in the district where you live are closed, the VIC will be open, but you will not be expected to come in
- If schools are on a 2-hour delay, the VIC will be open
- If you have concerns about driving, or can't get to the VIC when schools are open, please call one of the numbers on the VCB's Office Manager. If possible, please try to talk to someone rather than leaving a voice message.

If for any reason we cannot open the VIC due to a power outage or other reason, we will make every attempt to reach you by phone. You can check in by calling our Office Manager's cell phone number (provided on day one at VIC).

## **VISITOR REQUESTS**

We position ourselves to be destination experts and to provide our visitors with accurate, up-to-date information about our region. Removing personal bias, we utilize our full range of resources (including printed guides, online resources, and personal experience from familiarization tours) to provide visitors with a range of options to fit their needs.

If possible, we will recommend member resources first, followed by resources within our county. If no such resource exists, we will recommend known out-of-county resources or refer visitors to another Destination Marketing Organization.

Our volunteers and staff commit to responding to visitor inquiries in a timely manner. All direct communications (emails, phone calls, social media inquiries, etc.) will be responded to within 24 business hours. Requests for visitor guides, or other requests that require a response through the mail, will be processed and shipped every Tuesday and Friday to ensure prompt delivery.

# VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO THE OFFICE MANAGER

**MAIL:** 2424 Heritage Ct. SW STE B Olympia, WA 98502  
**LOCATION:** 103 Sid Snyder Ave, Olympia WA 98501  
**WEBSITE:** [www.ExperienceOlympia.com](http://www.ExperienceOlympia.com)

**PHONE:** (360) 704-7544 ex. 6  
**FAX:** (360) 704-7533  
**EMAIL:** [Michael@ExperienceOlympia.com](mailto:Michael@ExperienceOlympia.com)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE TELL US HERE *WHY YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING AT THE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER AND WHAT SKILLS YOU BRING TO THE POSITION:*

**NOTE: A MANDATORY BACKGROUND CHECK WILL BE CONDUCTED THROUGH WASHINGTON STATE PATROL**

By providing this information and signature, you are consenting to a background check through the Washington State Patrol and acknowledge that you have read and agreed to our volunteer handbook's expectations.

**DATE OF BIRTH:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DRIVER'S LICENSE INFO:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
State License Number Date of Expiration