

Entry-level and Early Career Job Titles

The Mission of standardizing job titles on PSG's Job Opportunities web page is to provide consistency in the naming of entry-level positions and transparency about the financial compensation being offered for expected skills and labor. The standardization of a naming scheme will simplify the often nuanced nature of compensation found in these work opportunities but will allow for applicants to more easily encounter the job opportunities they are seeking.

We hope to reduce inter-agency and general under-appreciation for skilled conservation work by providing appropriate work titles while being transparent about financial compensation through a two-part naming system for full-time work opportunities, instead of down-grading a job title to justify a low or non-existent pay rate for a competitive and/or skilled job. We hope that this will help Early Career Scientists and students in landing jobs that they have earned instead of being passed over because of job titles that undersell their experience on their resumes.

This Job Title Naming Scheme applies only to those work opportunities that have a set end date less than one year after the start date, as this subset of work opportunities has been identified as a barrier to equity, inclusivity and diversity in the career field by the EID committee.

Work Opportunity Naming Scheme

Voluntary positions

Working Vacationer

- Participants in these programs typically pay a fee directly to the organization they are providing unpaid labor to, or a related third party, either to cover the Housing/Food/Travel tied to their on-site participation and/or to support the organization's overall finances. In return, the organization organizes and manages the logistics of the participant's labor.
- Justification for this title: The participants are invariably providing a service, possibly important or integral to the organization's goals, so they are Working. However, the fact that they have to pay to work presents a huge barrier to those that are not wealthy enough to take this opportunity (in either finances, time and/or logistical support). Having to pay an organization in order to perform work, skilled or unskilled, is most often where young aspiring biologists draw the line. This aspect effectively makes these opportunities a luxury only affordable to a select few, regardless of how competitive it is or how skilled the work performed is.

Examples:

COASTS Leatherback and Hawksbill work in Costa Rica. Involves a full workload of a mix of conservation (preventing illegal harvesting) and science (monitoring beaches for nesting females). Participants compete for positions and cover all personal travel expenses and pay the program \$460 per month for housing and prepared meals.

Midway Atoll NWR Bird Counters. Involves a full workload of field work for 3-4 weeks. Participants compete for positions and pay over \$2000 to FWS for a subsidized round-trip flight from Honolulu to Midway, housing and prepared meals.

Volunteer

- Volunteers do not have to move their residence to a location to perform their tasks (i.e. they could be reasonably found locally to commute to this volunteer opportunity)
- Volunteers have a reasonable means to work outside of their role as a volunteer to earn income
- Volunteer work is typically limited to less than 40 hours per week (number obtained from guidelines from the U.S. Department of Labor), if occurring regularly, (i.e. not an isolated event), and are not required to follow a consistent, full-time schedule
- Does not require a post-secondary degree or previous relevant experience
- Volunteer roles are dissimilar in scope, requirements and expectations from paid positions in the organization
- Any compensation is limited to reimbursement for expenses
- Volunteers do not have to pay any sort of logistics or participation fee or donation to the organization managing them or a related third party (e.g. “Friends of” groups)
- 2 tiers to the type of volunteering:
 - Self-supported Volunteer: volunteers are expected to provide most or all of the tools they need to do their work tasks without reimbursement or any form of compensation (vehicles, optics, shovels, work packs, shoes/clothes that meet specific requirements)
 - Volunteer: volunteers are provided most or all of the tools they need to do their work tasks
- Follow the Volunteer Service Rule of Three: “True” volunteers are those who: (1) work toward public service, religious, or humanitarian objectives; (2) do not expect or receive compensation for services; and (3) do not displace genuine employees (nonprofitrisk.org)
- The PSG EID Committee recognizes that legally, organizations are allowed more flexibility than these guidelines to classify some work opportunities as “Volunteer”, but for the sake of clear categories within PSG’s organization, we will use our listed definitions

Examples: Working one afternoon a week at your local zoo, leading birdwatching walks for your local Audubon chapter, spending a weekend doing trail maintenance for a popular hiking path.

Full-time or scheduled positions

For work that occurs full-time (40 or more h/week) or on a consistent weekly schedule that does not allow for other means of income, and requires a specialized skill set, we offer a two-part naming scheme. The first part reflects the financial compensation, and the second part reflects the skill/experience level desired to be performed.

Compensation comes in many forms in this career path, but here we focus on the financial compensation, as it is the only concrete and easily comparable form of compensation, and the type that presents the largest barrier to EID. We recognize that many organizations offer a wide array of other forms of support, such as free or subsidized housing (from a patch of dirt for a tent to private rooms in large and modern homes), food (to varying degrees), travel, tax-exempt status, beautiful sunsets, privileged access to birding hot spots and/or super remote areas no one else can go to, etc. However, these factors are not considered in the compensation part of a job title because they are not directly comparable and not easily categorizable. The goal is to make the work of the prospective employees seeking these jobs as straightforward as possible. We hope that future developments with seasonal field work job postings may be better able to reflect these forms of support. We also recognize that if posting these opportunities with our labeling practices presents a legal issue or otherwise for your organization, we will not post the job at all.

Unpaid

- No form of financial compensation for labor performed
- Considered different than volunteer because of the many limitations described above involved in classifying a work opportunity as “volunteer” per our naming scheme

Stipended¹

- Financial compensation at below minimum wage² (Currently \$7.25/hr United States federal minimum wage, disregarding overtime pay rates)

Paid

- Financial compensation at or above minimum wage² (Currently \$7.25/hr United States federal minimum wage, disregarding overtime pay rates)

¹ Here we recognize that the number of hours worked in field work is subject to debate because of the inconsistent nature of what may be considered work hours. We will rely on the job posting descriptions to declare an expected number of hours to be worked to determine Stipended/Paid status. If it is not stated, we will assume a 40-hour week.

² Minimum wage is determined by the country in which the hiring organization is based, not necessarily the locality of the work

Job titles themselves should reflect the amount of experience the employer is hiring for (what is desired, not necessarily minimum requirements) and the level of skill expected to be performed in the role. It is possible that the applicant that ends up securing the work opportunity has less or more than the listed desired qualifications. If a job posting lists required AND desired qualifications, we will use the desired qualifications to determine the job title.

1. Trainee/Intern

- Entry-level, no previous relevant work experience required/necessary to perform the functions of this role
- A learning role, where the trainee/intern can expect to work with an experienced supervisor most of the time
- The intended hiree has no prior relevant experience

- Use of Trainee is default, unless the organization offers the term “intern” and their description aligns with this category
2. Field/Research Assistant (for field science career tracks)
Education Assistant (for education career tracks)
 - One or a few previous work experiences relevant to this role
 - Not a leadership position
 - Can expect to work independently at times, with some guidance from an experienced supervisor
 - The intended hiree will possibly have minimal prior relevant experience but is still primarily expected to be in a learning role
 - In Field Science Career Tracks, the use of “Field Assistant” will be default (compared to “Research Assistant”) unless it is blatantly obvious that the job being advertised is PRIMARILY not in the field but still based on field data (e.g. working on a computer on a dataset collected in the field)
 - In Education Career Tracks, “Education Assistant” will not require previous work experience
 3. Technician (for field science career tracks)
Educator (for education career tracks)
 - More than two previous work experiences relevant to this role
 - Can expect to work mostly independently, with some guidance from an experienced supervisor
 - The intended hiree has enough relevant prior experience to be expected to be high functioning and require minimal training beyond organization-specific procedures
 4. Crew Lead (for field science career tracks)
 - Similar to a technician, the only difference is that they are in a leadership role. Different organizations have different criteria for hiring crew leads, but we believe that there should be a distinction made when a leadership role is a part of the position. This title can be used as a modifier (i.e. Crew Lead Technician) or as a stand-alone job title.

Examples:

- *Kure and Midway 6-month “volunteers” under this scheme would be “Unpaid Field Assistants”*
- *Project Puffin summer full-season employees under this scheme have 3 types of positions, Paid Crew Leads, Paid Field Assistants, and Paid Trainees*
- *Americorps has a wide variety of positions, but their overall target hiree falls under the Stipended Field/Research Assistant or Stipended Trainee title*
- *Point Bue’s Farallon “Volunteer Research Assistants” would be “Unpaid Field Assistants”*
- *Alaska Maritime technicians would be “Paid Technicians” and “Paid Crew Leads”*

If you feel like the position you are hiring for was advertised with the incorrect job title on PSG’s website and social media, please contact communications@pacificseabirdgroup.org

We do not require that you use our job title naming scheme on your website, hiring process or social media, but we recommend that you do for continuity, to reduce confusion among applicants, to support our mission, and to support the career development of the hirees that take on these jobs.

We recognize that this Work Opportunity Naming Scheme does not fully address all problematic practices in conservation career fields, but we hope to begin our journey with this first step. If this Naming Scheme is successful and embraced by the conservation community and those that utilize workers in these categories, then we hope to progress into a better system that may include certification levels and/or an organized classification scheme.

Resources:

<https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/employee-or-volunteer-whats-the-difference/>

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa>