

## Volunteer Ireland: Volunteer Policy and Procedural Guidelines

### Statement of policy

*Volunteering is at the heart of Volunteer Ireland. We firmly believe in the ethos and value of volunteering and believe that volunteers make a vital contribution to society as a whole and to the aims and mission of Volunteer Ireland. We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within all appropriate activities.*

*As the national volunteer development agency, it is essential that Volunteer Ireland present a model of good practice in volunteer management. We aim to train, support and supervise volunteers to the best of our abilities, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise. Volunteer Ireland aims to recruit volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, age groups, races, abilities and nationalities. We are committed to equality of opportunity for all volunteers. Volunteer Ireland aims to have a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship with our volunteers. It is Volunteer Ireland's intention that volunteers will benefit and prosper from their experience with the organisation.*

### Definition of Volunteering

“Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment.”

The White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity (2000)

### Procedural guidelines

#### 1. General principles

##### 1.1 Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide all staff and volunteers with clear guidelines on involving volunteers; to outline expectations; and to explain management / supervision systems and operating standards. It supplements other Volunteer Ireland policies and procedures. This policy does not constitute a binding contract and is subject to change. Volunteers and staff are expected to act in accordance with all Volunteer Ireland policies and procedures as outlined by this policy.

##### 1.2 Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including voluntary Board members) are expected to facilitate this process.

##### 1.3 Eligibility

Volunteer Ireland will consider involving anyone who wishes to volunteer with the organisation. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the

aims of the organisation and may only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the organisation. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the organisation will be accepted as a volunteer. Voluntary board members will not normally undertake other voluntary work within Volunteer Ireland itself, but will be encouraged and supported by Volunteer Ireland if they wish to volunteer elsewhere.

#### **1.4 Relationship with paid staff**

Volunteers are appointed to enhance the capacity of paid staff (including employment scheme workers), not as a substitute for them. Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

#### **1.5 Working conditions**

Volunteers are treated as full members of Volunteer Ireland team. They are treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisation's functions and decision-making processes wherever practical. Volunteers are provided with appropriate work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

#### **1.6 Working times**

Working times are negotiated between the relevant line-manager and the volunteer and are as flexible as the tasks allow. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform their supervisor as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

#### **1.8 Volunteer Roles**

Volunteer Ireland engages volunteers across all departments with day-to-day administration, specific project plans, event planning and coordination, communications and social media and training. The Board of directors are also volunteers. On occasion Volunteer Ireland is approached by individuals wishing to offer their skills, experience and support in a particular area and in these instances a volunteer role can be designed to facilitate all of this and in line with Volunteer Ireland's work.

#### **1.9 Expectations**

A full outline of volunteer organisational expectations can be found in the Volunteer Agreement document that accompanies this policy.

## **2. Recruitment**

### **2.1 Recruitment and Selection**

Volunteer positions are advertised on [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie), I-VOL, various social media platforms and appropriate volunteer recruitment channels. All applications are sent to Volunteer Ireland along with a CV, cover letter and or application form, as outlined in the advertised role. Applicants are then shortlisted and asked to attend an informal interview with 1 or 2 members of Volunteer Ireland staff. For certain roles, group interviews may be conducted. Volunteers are selected based on requirements of the role, experience, skills, availability and interest.

## **2.2 Appointment and Probation**

Successful volunteers will be notified via telephone and or email. References are required and depending on the role, volunteers may be required to complete Garda Vetting.

All placements are subject to an initial agreed trial period. The volunteer's trial or probation period is dependent on the nature and hours of the volunteer role, and is communicated via the volunteer agreement. Most trial periods are 6 weeks and can be extended.

## **2.3 Role Descriptions**

To ensure that programmes and services are provided efficiently and effectively, Volunteer Ireland will provide each volunteer with a specific written role description prior to beginning their role. The role description lays out the specific tasks involved in the position, the qualities and skills required to fill the position and any other relevant details of the role.

## **2.4 Induction**

On a volunteer's first day, they can expect to receive a planned induction with their line manager. This induction involves, but is not limited to, an introduction to all staff/volunteers, general housekeeping, volunteer policy and agreement overview, terms and nature of the role, Volunteer Ireland operations, Volunteer Ireland services and, as appropriate, further policies and procedures.

In addition to this, all new volunteers will identify a number of measurable learning objectives at their induction. These can include technical and or behaviour competencies and work activities that can provide the individual with an opportunity to practice and develop within their role.

## **2.5 Training**

Role specific training will be provided to assist volunteers with their position and its tasks where applicable. All volunteers are actively encouraged to identify and avail of training opportunities within Volunteer Ireland networks and externally. Approval to undertake external training must be agreed in advance with the designated supervisor/line manager, approved by the CEO and is dependent on resources. If external training is paid for by Volunteer Ireland, any course or other materials remain the property of Volunteer Ireland. Volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended and disseminated to relevant staff/volunteers within VI.

# **3. Code of Conduct**

## **3.1 Appropriate behaviour**

Volunteer Ireland is committed to managing volunteers in a manner that meets the needs of both the individual and the organisation. Please refer to Harassment and Anti-bullying Policy.

### **3.2 Confidentiality**

Volunteer Ireland respects a volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with VI.

### **3.3 Intellectual Property**

All written material, whether held on paper, electronically or magnetically which was made or acquired by volunteers during the course of their involvement with Volunteer Ireland is our property and our copyright and therefore should not be disclosed to any person without our written consent. Volunteers are expected to exercise caution and care with any documents or other material containing confidential information and at the end of your involvement with the organisation, return any such material in your possession.

### **3.4 Representation of Volunteer Ireland**

Volunteers must seek prior approval from Volunteer Ireland before undertaking any representation on behalf of the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the media, joint initiatives with other organisations and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

## **4. Management of Volunteers**

### **4.1 Management of Volunteers**

Volunteer Ireland is committed to managing volunteers in a manner that meets the needs of both the organisation and the volunteer. Each line manager is responsible for the management of their assigned volunteers, including answering questions regarding policies, delivering induction, arranging training, providing support and supervision and dealing with any complaints or grievances involving volunteers.

Volunteers are managed by a staff member/line manager who has the skills and experience in a particular role, and has responsibility for implementing the strategic goals of a particular area.

### **4.2 Support and Supervision**

All volunteers are allocated a designated supervisor/line manager. It is the role of the designated supervisor to provide advice and guidance relating to the work, provide support and supervision for the duration of the volunteer role and encourage training opportunities where possible.

Volunteer Ireland commits to supporting all volunteers to develop personally and professionally within their role.

### **4.3 Corrective Action**

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following support and supervision sessions. Examples include extending a probation period, additional training and/or reassignment.

### **4.4 Time and Duty commitments**

Volunteer Ireland staff are expected to meet time and duty commitments for volunteers, to provide appropriate time at induction, training and on a day to day basis.

Volunteer Ireland will aim to provide volunteers with notice regarding upcoming scheduled events or training where their attendance is required.

If a volunteer is sick or unable to commit to their role for personal reasons they should notify their designated supervisor/line manager by phone as soon as possible. In addition if a volunteer wishes to take a holiday they are requested to notify their designated supervisor/line manager and provide at least one week's notice so that workloads can be managed effectively.

#### **4.5 Ending the volunteer relationship**

Volunteer roles have a natural end where the individual will often move on to further opportunities or paid work. In this instance Volunteer Ireland will conduct an exit interview with the volunteer as a way to capture feedback on their role, experience within the organisation and future learning opportunities.

In the instance of a volunteer breaching Volunteer Ireland policies, grievance and disciplinary procedures are outlined below.

#### **4.6 Grievance and Disciplinary Difficulties**

All volunteers have access to a process to address any issues or difficulties about any aspect of their work or how they are managed. If a volunteer is unhappy in their role or have a grievance they wish to discuss they may approach their designated line manager, or escalate their grievance to the CEO. The matter will be dealt with in a private and confidential manner and in line with Volunteer Ireland's HR standards.

Volunteers who do not adhere to Volunteer Ireland's policies and procedures or who fail to perform their volunteer tasks satisfactorily may be asked to leave. Volunteer involvement will not be ended until the individual has an opportunity to discuss the reasons for being asked to leave with the supervisor. Grounds for being asked to leave include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Gross misconduct
- Being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol)
- Theft
- Misuse of equipment and materials
- Abuse of clients and co-workers
- Breaches of confidentiality
- Failure to abide by policies and procedures
- Failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard

When a volunteer is asked to leave this will be communicated both in person and in writing to the individual. If a volunteer is deemed to have behaved with extreme detriment to Volunteer Ireland and its reputation and to the health and safety of others involved in the organisation, Volunteer Ireland reserves the right to end its relationship with the individual with immediate effect.

## **5. General Information**

## **5.1 Recognition**

Volunteers provide a unique service to Volunteer Ireland, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Volunteer Ireland staff are responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. The CEO is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times, such as International Volunteer Day. Examples of formal recognition include cards, certificates, appreciation events, training etc.

## **5.2 Expenses**

Please refer to Expenses Policy for full details of volunteer expenses. [Please note Volunteer Ireland's volunteer expenses policy is subject to change and is regularly reviewed]

## **5.3 Insurance**

Insurance is provided by Volunteer Ireland to cover all volunteers while working on behalf of and at the direction of Volunteer Ireland. However drivers using their cars in connection with their voluntary work must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover.

## **5.4 Personal Information and Confidentiality**

All information is dealt with in accordance with Data Protection Policy and Data Protection Acts. A folder and database is maintained on all volunteers, to include their initial application, role description along with any relevant information on scheduling and notes. All personal data held on file will be shredded or safely destroyed within 1 year of a volunteer's leave date. Volunteers are able to access their personal information freely upon request. Responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with their line manager.

## **5.5 References**

Where appropriate and upon request volunteers may be furnished with a reference that states the role, days and hours the volunteer worked.

## **5.6 Accompanying Documentation**

Documents that accompany this policy document are:

- Volunteer agreement
- Volunteer induction checklist
- Volunteer Action and Development plan
- Volunteer Ireland Harassment and anti-bullying Policy
- Volunteer Ireland Expenses Policy

# **6. Monitoring and evaluation**

## **6.1 Volunteer Involvement**

Volunteer Ireland monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make ongoing improvements.

## **6.2 Feedback**

Constructive feedback on this document is always welcome. It must be given to the Chief Executive Officer who will ensure that it is considered fully.

## **6.3 Review**

This document will be reviewed and ratified by the volunteers, staff and Governance sub-committee on a three yearly basis. Amendments may be added throughout this period.

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