

Volunteer Program Policies and Procedures

Overview

1.1 The Volunteer Program

The mission of the Minnesota Historical Society is enhanced by the active participation of citizens of the community. To this end, the Society accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the institution and within all appropriate programs and activities. Society staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive roles in which volunteers might serve and to assist in recruitment of volunteers from the community.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of Volunteer Policies

The purpose of these policies is to provide overall guidance and direction to management, staff, and volunteers. These policies are intended for internal management guidance only. They do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The Society reserves the right to change any of these policies and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Unless specifically stated, these policies apply to all volunteers in all programs and projects undertaken on or on behalf of the Society.

1.3 Role of Volunteer Services Program

The productive utilization of volunteers requires a planned and organized effort. The function of Volunteer Services is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer management within the institution, and to direct and assist staff and volunteer efforts to jointly provide more productive institutional services. The volunteer program is responsible for maintaining liaisons with other volunteer-utilizing programs in the community and assisting in community-wide efforts to recognize and promote volunteering. The Volunteer Program Manager takes primary responsibility for planning for effective volunteer utilization, for assisting staff in identifying productive and creative volunteer roles, for recruiting suitable volunteers, for training staff to supervise volunteers effectively, and for tracking and evaluating the statistical data reflecting the contribution of volunteers to the institution.

1.4 What is a Volunteer?

A "volunteer" is anyone who chooses to perform services for the Society without compensation or expectation of compensation, (beyond reimbursement for pre-approved specified expenses) and, who performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the institution. A "volunteer" must be officially accepted and enrolled by the institution prior to performance of the task. Volunteers are not employees of the institution.

1.5 Special Case Volunteers

The institution also accepts as volunteers those persons participating in student projects, corporate volunteer programs, and other volunteer referral programs. In these cases, a special arrangement may be made with the organization, school, or program from whom the special case volunteers originate to identify responsibility for the management and care of these volunteers.

1.6 Executive Council

Members of the institution's Executive Council are elected from its membership and are accepted as volunteers with the institution.

1.7 Society Employees as Society Volunteers

The service of staff members as volunteers is accepted provided that the volunteer service is 1) initiated by the staff member, 2) provided totally voluntary, and 3) involves work that is outside the normal scope of duties and working hours for that staff member.

1.8 Family Members of Society Staff

Family members of staff are allowed to volunteer with the institution. When family members are enrolled as regular volunteers, they normally will not be placed under the direct supervision of, or within the same department as other family members who are employees.

1.9 Service at the Discretion of the Institution

The Society accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the institution. Volunteers understand that the institution may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to end the volunteer relationship.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer's relationship with the institution. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

1.10 Volunteer Standards and Responsibilities

Volunteers represent a valuable resource for the Society, its staff and its visitors. Volunteers should be given meaningful assignments and effective direction, and be recognized for work done. In return, volunteers should actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities, volunteer at their assigned times, and remain loyal to the mission and procedures of the Society.

Volunteer Management Procedures

2.1 Maintenance of Records

A system of records should be maintained on each volunteer with the Society, including dates of service, assignments held, duties performed and feedback forms. Volunteers and appropriate staff are expected to submit all appropriate records and information to Volunteer Services in a timely and accurate fashion.

Volunteer records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as staff personnel records.

2.2 Conflict of Interest

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of the institution, shall be accepted or be allowed to continue to serve as a volunteer with the institution.

2.3 Representative of the Institution

Volunteers must seek prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff prior to any action or statement which might affect or obligate the institution. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations.

2.4 Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all appropriate or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as volunteers, whether this information involves staff, volunteers, or other persons, or involves overall institutional business.

Failure to maintain confidentiality could result in ending the volunteer's relationship with the institution.

2.5 Worksite

Programs should establish an appropriate workstation for volunteer use prior to the enrollment of volunteers. This workstation should contain necessary facilities, equipment, and space to enable the volunteer to perform their duties. The employee/volunteer lounge is available to volunteers.

2.6 Dress Code

As representatives of the institution, volunteers are responsible for presenting a good image. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties. If issued a nametag, volunteers are required to wear it while they are working on their volunteer assignment. Buttons that are not provided by the Society may not be worn during volunteer activity.

2.7 Time Reporting

Individual volunteers are expected to maintain accurate records of the time they have volunteered. Volunteer supervisors are responsible for submitting a record of these hours by the 5th of each month to Volunteer Services.

2.8 Risk Management/Safety

The safety of volunteers is important to the Society. Volunteer supervisors are expected to comply with federal and state regulations for training and protective equipment. Safety measures should be included in the description of volunteer responsibilities.

Volunteers who are injured or who are involved in an accident during their volunteer assignment must report the accident immediately to their supervisor. Any on the job injuries are covered only by the institution's Worker's Compensation program.

Volunteer Recruitment and Assignment

3.1 Volunteer Assignments

Volunteers should have clear, complete, and current descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of the assignment. Before a volunteer is recruited or assigned, a description should be developed for the volunteer assignment. This volunteer description should be reviewed with and given to each accepted volunteer.

Volunteer descriptions should be reviewed and updated at least every three years by the volunteer supervisor, or whenever the position substantially changes.

Descriptions should usually include a summary of the assignment, a title, a listing of responsibilities and qualifications, any training requirement, the time commitment needed for the assignment, the supervisor and the worksite location. Volunteer Services is available to assist staff in the development of volunteer descriptions and assignments.

3.2 Staff Requests for Volunteers

Requests for volunteers should be submitted in writing by staff, and sent to Volunteer Services. The request should include a description of the volunteer assignment and a requested timeframe. All parties should understand that the recruitment of volunteers is enhanced by creative and interesting jobs and by advance notice. Volunteer Services reserves the right to refuse to recruit or place any volunteers until staff are prepared to make effective use of volunteer resources.

3.3 Recruitment

Volunteers shall be recruited by the institution on a proactive basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Volunteers may be recruited either through an interest in specific functions or through a general interest in volunteering which will be matched with a specific function.

3.4 Recruitment of Minors

Volunteers who have not reached 18 years of age must present a written consent of a parent or guardian to Volunteer Services prior to volunteering. The volunteer assignment for a minor should be in a non-hazardous environment and should comply with all appropriate requirements of child labor laws.

3.5 Interviewing

Prior to being assigned, all regular volunteers should be interviewed to ascertain their suitability for and interest in that assignment. The interview should determine the qualifications of the volunteer and their commitment to fulfill the requirements of the assignment; and it should answer any questions that the volunteer has about the assignment. Interviews may be conducted either in person or by other means. A reference check may be made by the volunteer supervisor if appropriate for the volunteer assignment.

Whenever possible, staff who will be working with the volunteer should participate in the design and conduct of the interview. Final assignment of a potential volunteer should not take place without review and approval of appropriate staff with whom the volunteer will be working.

3.6 Health Screening

If there are physical requirements necessary for the performance of a volunteer task, a screening or testing procedure may be required to ascertain the ability of the volunteer to safely perform the tasks. This cost will be paid by the department to which the volunteer is assigned.

3.7 Criminal Records Check

Volunteers in certain assignments may be asked to submit to a background criminal check. Volunteers who do not agree to the background check may be refused assignment. This cost will be paid by the department to which the volunteer is assigned.

3.8 Certificate of Ability

Volunteers who indicate that they are under the care of a physician for a health condition may be asked to present a certificate from the physician as to their ability to perform their volunteer duties satisfactorily and safely. Volunteers under a course of treatment which might affect their volunteer work will not be accepted without written verification of suitability from their physicians. Any volunteer who, after acceptance and assignment by the institution, enters a course of treatment which might adversely affect the performance of their volunteer duties should consult with their volunteer supervisor or the Volunteer Program Manager.

3.9 Placement

In placing a volunteer in an assignment, attention should be paid to the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and to the requirements of the volunteer assignment. No placement should be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the supervising staff can be met: volunteers should not be assigned to "make work" assignments nor should assignments be given to an unqualified volunteer.

3.10 Acceptance and Appointment

No volunteer should begin performance of an assignment until they have been officially accepted for that position and have completed all necessary screening and paperwork. At the time of final acceptance, each volunteer should have completed a volunteer application and received a copy of their volunteer description.

3.11 Reassignment

Volunteers who are at any time reassigned to a new position should be interviewed for that assignment and should receive all appropriate orientation and training for that assignment before they begin. In addition, any screening procedures appropriate for that specific assignment should be completed, even if the volunteer has already been on a previous assignment with the institution.

3.12 Professional Services

Volunteers shall not perform professional services for which certification or licensing is required unless currently certified or licensed to do so. A copy of such certificate or license is to be provided to Volunteer Services.

3.13 Length of Service

A predetermined time commitment should be developed with each volunteer assignment. At the end of their commitment, this should be re-negotiated.

Most volunteer assignments request a year commitment. After the end of the year, the volunteer and staff supervisor decide whether the volunteer would like to continue their assignment, seek a different volunteer assignment within the institution, or retire from their volunteer service.

Volunteer Training and Development

4.1 Orientation

Volunteers are given an opportunity to attend a general orientation on the nature, purpose, and mission of the Society; review of the volunteer program; and, a tour of the institution.

4.2 Training

Volunteers should receive training by their volunteer supervisor to provide them with the information on 1) knowledge and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment, 2) the operation of the program encompassing their volunteer activity, and 3) the purpose and requirements of the assignment. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the assignment and the capabilities of the volunteer.

4.3 Staff Involvement in Orientation and Training

Staff members who are responsible for institutional programming and supervising volunteers should have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of volunteers. Those staff who will direct volunteers should have primary responsibility for design and delivery of on-the-job training to volunteers assigned to them.

Volunteer Direction and Feedback

5.1 Volunteer Direction

Each volunteer who is accepted with the Society should have a staff person providing direction for the volunteer assignment. This staff person should be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the volunteer, and should be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance. Paid staff who direct volunteers should have these responsibilities identified in their position descriptions.

5.2 Direction given by Volunteers

A volunteer may direct other volunteers, provided that the directing volunteer is under the direct supervision of a paid staff member.

5.3 Volunteer/Staff Relations

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programs of the institution, with each having a complementary role to play. Each partner should understand and respect the needs and abilities of the other.

5.4 Acceptance of Volunteers by Staff

Volunteers should not be assigned to a staff person without the consent of that staff person, in consultation with their supervisor. Since volunteers are considered a valuable resource in performing the institution's work, staff are encouraged to consider creative ways in which volunteers might be of service and to consult with the Volunteer Program Manager if staff members feel the need for additional training or assistance.

5.5 Staff Training

Training on working with volunteers should be provided to all staff who direct volunteers. Volunteer Services expects to provide effective training to staff providing direction to volunteers.

5.6 Volunteer Involvement in Staff Evaluation

Examination of their effective utilization of volunteers should be a component in the evaluation of staff persons who are assigned to work with volunteers.

5.7 Staff Involvement in Volunteer Feedback

Staff who direct volunteers should use the feedback form and evaluate work assignments of volunteers annually.

5.8 Lines of Communication

Volunteers should have access to information pertinent to their assignments. This may include: appropriate memos, Digest, materials, and meetings. To facilitate the receipt of this information on a timely basis, volunteers should be included on appropriate distribution schedules and may be assigned a site or mailbox for receipt of information distributed in their absence. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information should rest with the staff directing the volunteer. Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist both formally and informally. Volunteers should be informed regarding decisions which would substantially affect performance of their duties.

5.9 Absenteeism

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers should inform their staff supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Continual absenteeism may result in a review of the volunteer's work assignment or term of service, and could result in ending the volunteer's relationship with the institution.

Volunteer Support

6.1 Reimbursement of Expenses

Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking business for the Society. Examples of these expenses include mileage, meals, out of pocket expenses, travel and parking. This expense will be charged to the department budget where the volunteer is assigned. Prior approval must be sought for any reimbursable expenditure.

6.2 Recognition

The Society plans to hold an annual recognition to highlight and recognize the contributions of volunteers who have contributed at least twenty hours of service per year, to the institution. All staff responsible for volunteer supervision are encouraged to undertake ongoing methods of recognition of volunteer service on a regular basis throughout the year. These methods of informal recognition should range from simple "Thank you's" to a concerted effort to include volunteers, as appropriate, in program planning, decision making, and implementation.

6.3 Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while serving with the institution. They may be assisted through new volunteer opportunities to assume additional and greater responsibilities.

6.4 Staff Recognition

Volunteer Services should design a program for recognition of staff who work well with volunteers.

Other Policies

7.1 Political and Civic Activities

The Society recognizes the right of every staff member and volunteer to participate in political and civic activity. However, all such activity must be conducted on the staff member's or volunteer's own time and without the use of the Society's name or materials unless specific approval has been granted by the Society's governing board. As a general rule, all political and civic activities should be conducted outside of work or volunteer assignment. A staff member or volunteer may not display or distribute political or civic materials on Society property.

7.2 Sexual Harassment

The Society does not tolerate sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when

- Submission of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a staff member's employment or volunteer's placement; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a staff member or volunteer is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the staff member or volunteer placement; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a staff member's or volunteer's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

If a staff member or volunteer feels harassed or offended by another staff member or volunteer, a supervisory or management person, a customer/patron, or any other person whom s/he encounters in the course of employment or volunteer placement, whether the opposite sex or same sex, and does not want to deal with the problem directly, the staff member or volunteer should contact his/her supervisor, department head, division head, any member of the Society's management, volunteer manager, or a member of the human resources department.

7.3 General Harassment

The Society believes that every staff member and volunteer has the right to work in an environment free from harassment and will not tolerate harassment based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual preference or orientation, disability, age, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance.

General Harassment includes unwelcome verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward a staff member or volunteer because of his/her status in relationship to a class defined above when such conduct

- Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a staff member's or volunteer's work performance;
- Otherwise adversely affects the staff member's employment opportunities or volunteer placement; and
- The employer knows or should know of the existence of harassment and fails to take timely and appropriate action.

General harassment does not include negative effects a staff member or volunteer may experience as a result of actions taken by a supervisor that are within the scope of the supervisor's responsibilities and would be considered reasonable and appropriate actions.

7.4 Zero Tolerance of Violence

The Society will not tolerate violence on or around its premises either by or against staff members, volunteers, or members of the public. Staff members and volunteers are expected to treat other human beings with respect and dignity.

Any incident of violence should be reported promptly to the appropriate supervisor, volunteer manager, department head, division head, any member of management, or any member of the human resources department. Violence includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical intimidation, contact, or threats.

A staff member or volunteer in the capitol area who is at work after hours or on weekends is strongly encouraged to use the Capitol Security escort service.

Reported incidents are subject to investigation or corrective action.

Any staff member or volunteer who does not comply with this policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.

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