



BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

This best practice guidance has been devised in close collaboration with Volunteer Edinburgh, the centre for expertise in volunteering in the city

volunteeredinburgh.org.uk

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society and Volunteer Edinburgh are committed to following best practice for the engagement of volunteers and expect all Fringe venues to share that commitment.

Volunteering can be a powerful tool for improving volunteers' personal wellbeing, building social capital and personal development, for gaining skills and experience as well as improving an individual's career prospects and the Fringe provides a unique environment for this to happen.

Adopting the highest possible volunteering standards is beneficial for everyone involved in the Fringe and this document is designed to support the development of best practice across venue operations. When this is achieved, exploitation of the individual is avoided, clarity between paid and unpaid roles is provided and the Fringe can set the example for successful and beneficial volunteering programmes.

For the purposes of this guidance, we define volunteering as an unpaid activity which is undertaken by free choice and without any compulsion within a structured non-profit distributing organisation. We do not recognise unpaid activity in an organisation which is profit distributing as volunteering. That is unpaid work. Specific hours for volunteering roles will vary, but clarity of expectation and the provision of genuine opportunities to volunteers are very important.

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1. Volunteers should give of their time freely and not through compulsion.
2. Volunteers are unpaid, but volunteers should receive reasonable out of pocket expenses. The level and scope of expenses to be reimbursed should be clearly articulated at the point of advertising.
3. If accommodation is offered as part of the volunteer placement, the basic definition of this accommodation should be described at the point of advertising. For example, shared or single room, amenities available, bed type.
4. Individual volunteer roles should not be business critical, but should complement any paid roles. Volunteers offer additionality to an operation and therefore supervision by a member of staff in a paid role or access to nearby and immediate assistance should the volunteer require it, is necessary. If a minimum level of staffing is required for a building to operate safely, rotas should allow contingency for some volunteers being unable to attend pre-arranged shifts.
5. Volunteering roles should benefit the individual volunteer as well as the organisation involved – this could be through training provided, experience gained, access to shows, professional development workshops.

6. Volunteer opportunities should be clearly defined. Individuals should be engaged in opportunities which match their skills, abilities, attitude and aspirations. When an appropriate opportunity does not exist, individuals should be signposted elsewhere e.g. to Volunteer Edinburgh.
7. Volunteers should be clear about their roles and responsibilities and be provided with a role description outlining key elements of the role in the advertisement.
8. Volunteers who are ultimately engaged for a role, should have a written agreement provided to them, outlining key aspects of their role, along with any responsibilities and expected hours to be offered. This agreement should set out the expectations for each party clearly so there is no ambiguity and a signed copy should be kept by both parties.
9. Volunteers should have access to appropriate training and development, and a named contact to provide the necessary support for their role.
10. Volunteers should have opportunities to contribute to volunteering policies and procedures through feedback.
11. Volunteers should have access to a mechanism to deal with any problems that they may encounter.
12. Organisations should take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure volunteers' health, safety and welfare while volunteering.
13. Organisations should endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible. Equality and diversity monitoring forms should be used in order to facilitate future planning and engagement of volunteers.

For more information, resources and guidance in engaging volunteers or volunteering, please contact Volunteer Edinburgh: volunteeredinburgh.org.uk/contact-us

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