

How to develop a volunteer policy

Introduction

This M&G resource explains the essential elements of a volunteer policy. It should define reciprocal responsibilities between the museum and the volunteer and clearly outline the steps to take when a problem arises.

It can be used as a template or as a guide to a developing a comprehensive Volunteer Policy.

About 'Pleasantville Museum'

In order to provide context to the policy to follow, begin with:

- A short description of the history of the museum
- One or two sentences describing the collection and the functions of the museum
- A statement about the process of selecting volunteers, such as:

"The Pleasantville Museum prefers its volunteers to have a prior interest or demonstrated knowledge in the Museum and its collections."

Museum volunteers

Insert a short statement about the value of volunteers to the Museum.

Use this as a starting point:

"Pleasantville Museum could not keep its doors open without its volunteers, who perform many major tasks associated with running a museum. Volunteers link the Museum with the local community. Through their wide range of skills, expertise, knowledge and their dedication to preserving and sharing history, the Museum's volunteers contribute significantly to the Museum's reputation and worth."

Volunteer rights

Pleasantville Museum acknowledges the following rights and will act to uphold these:

- To work in a healthy and safe environment
- To be adequately covered by insurance
- To be given accurate and truthful information about the Museum
- To be interviewed and treated in accordance with equal opportunity and antidiscrimination legislation
- To have a job description and agreed working hours
- To be provided with an induction into the Museum
- To be provided with sufficient training to perform the designated task
- To have confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988
- To have access to a grievance procedure
- Not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes

Volunteer obligations to the Museum

Pleasantville Museum requests its volunteers to:

- Respect other volunteers and their rights
- Follow museum rules and regulations, including all Workplace Health and Safety guidelines
- Undertake a commitment to provide visitor service in a friendly, helpful and courteous manner
- Undertake tasks with professional commitment
- Display courtesy to their supervisor and colleagues
- Work with all rostered staff as a team
- Meet the Museum's dress code of good casual dress and appropriate footwear
- Not publicly criticise the Museum
- Undergo security checks as required

Museum obligations to the volunteer

In addition to honouring volunteers' rights, the Museum will provide its volunteers with:

- Opportunities for training for which the Museum will meet costs where possible
- Opportunities for participation in Museum events
- A copy of the Museum newsletter free of charge
- Recognition of volunteer work through rewards and outings

Volunteers should be provided with an operational manual which should include:

- A copy of this policy
- A list of volunteers' duties
- Description of the collection
- Workplace Health and Safety information including location of first aid kit
- Essential information such as emergency contacts
- Code of conduct and rules and regulations

Grievance Procedures

In this section add an outline of the Grievance Procedures. For larger organisations, the Grievance Policy may exist as a separate document, but for small and volunteer organisations indicating the policy in point form is sufficient.

Step 1

The aggrieved volunteer is encouraged to explore the problem or situation directly with the person(s) involved; clearly outlining what he or she feels should be done to alleviate and remedy the situation.

Step 2

If this is not a viable action, discuss the matter directly with the Volunteer Services Manager, or if the museum is volunteer-run, approach a committee member.

N.B: In volunteer-run organisations, one or more committee members need to be designated as Grievance Managers.

Step 3

The parties involved will be asked to comply with the best solution that has been identified by all involved. Information will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Harassment Statement

It is important to indicate the Museums policy in terms of harassment and bullying. Add a short statement at the end of the document, such as:

The Pleasantville Museum will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying in the work place or any venue from which the Museum's programs are delivered.

Volunteers who are found to have acted in such a manner may be required to undertake counseling or may have their voluntary role terminated.