

Volunteer Policy

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Statement: A Partnership with Africa (APA) is committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism in the organisation. It recognises that in order to achieve its goals, it is necessary to involve volunteers in the work of the organisation. It is essential to present a model of good practice in volunteer management. At APA, volunteers are regarded as valuable resources and are encouraged to get involved at all levels of the organisation within all appropriate activities. APA aims to train, support and supervise volunteers, and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

Purpose: The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering at APA. It does not constitute a binding contract. It supplements other APA policies and procedures, as well as APA's understanding of volunteering, its mission statement and its value base. These procedures apply to all non-elected volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of APA.

1. General Guidelines for Volunteers

Responsibility: APA Management is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers are expected to facilitate and participate in this process.

Eligibility: APA will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the organisation. Any person who has a conflict of interest should declare such on application.

Roles: Volunteers are sought to enhance the capacity of paid staff not as a substitute for them. ~~Conversely, APA does not accept the services of its paid staff as volunteers.~~ Clear roles are established to differentiate between paid staff and volunteers to foster mutually beneficial and complementary relationships.

Working conditions: Volunteers are treated as full members of the APA 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~~ **feasible**. Volunteers are provided with appropriate materials and have access to the equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

Working times: Working times are negotiated between the APA 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.

Appropriate Behaviour: Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of APA and adhere to its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of APA to the outside world.

Representation of APA: Volunteers must seek prior approval from the APA Manager before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- statements to the press
- joint initiatives with other bodies
- agreements involving contractual or financial obligations

Confidentiality: APA respects the volunteers' rights 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 APA.

Records: Volunteer records are accorded the same confidentiality as staff records.

Termination of Service: It is important to note that any voluntary service is at the discretion of APA. APA may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer's relationships with the organisation. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships with APA. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity, preferably in writing.

2. Recruitment

Applications: Volunteers are recruited on a pro-active basis by the organisation using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively or via a partner agency. Volunteers are recruited in accordance with APA's equal opportunities ethos. All volunteers are required to complete an application form, as seen in Appendix F and if working with children, may have to submit a Garda vetting certificate.

Interviews: If necessary, applications are short-listed and suitable candidates are invited to attend an informal chat with the APA Manager to ascertain their interest in and suitability for the role. Written records of interviews are kept. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future.

References and Other Checks: Where it is deemed necessary for a particular role, references are sought. If the role requires it, health checks may be requested. Other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers are always warned in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be placed.

Role descriptions and person specifications: Like paid staff, volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each volunteer opportunity. This must include a title of the volunteering role, starting, **renewal** and

finishing dates, hours and place of work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate, a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The role description may be amended in joint agreement with the volunteer and APA Manager. A copy of the final version must be given to the volunteer before commencing voluntary work, **for use** in supervision and evaluation sessions. Volunteers should expect to sign a contract (included in Appendix G) that outlines their work expectations. Role descriptions must define a time limit (no longer than one year) for voluntary involvement, after which time they are reviewed and updated if appropriate.

Appointment: Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met.

Probation (where applicable): If it is deemed necessary for the position, an initial trial period of **three** months will be utilised. At the end of this period, the APA Manager meets with the volunteer to discuss the volunteer's suitability for their role. At this point, the volunteer may continue in their current role, be reassigned to a more suitable role if available, or discontinue volunteering.

3. Training

Induction: All volunteers receive induction when they begin voluntary work with APA. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role. The Volunteer Induction Checklist can be found in Appendix H.

On-the-job training: Volunteers receive initial and on-going on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

Additional training: Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, seminars, conferences, and so on, which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development. Approval to undertake such training free-of-charge must be given by APA Management and this will only be done if sufficient funds are available. Priority is given to long standing volunteers and those who have received little or no training in the past.

Training information: If additional training was paid for by APA, any course or other materials belong to the organisation and must be filed in APA office. All volunteers are required to submit a short report outlining the content and usefulness of the course or meeting attended. Training information must be disseminated to relevant people within the organisation.

4. Supervision

Lines of communication: Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate information and materials relevant to their tasks. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

Supervisors: Depending on the task involved, volunteers may have a supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer. APA Management normally takes on the supervisor's role, but in some cases it may be another volunteer. All those in supervisory roles have the necessary skills and experience for the role and if required will receive training and guidance on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the organisation.

Supervision sessions: In some cases, volunteers will receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions take place regularly (at least once a year) between the volunteer and his or her supervisor. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with APA, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

Corrective action: If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

Dismissal: Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their supervisor. Grounds for dismissal 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 APA policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

Concerns and Grievances: If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their work are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by APA Management. The relevant staff members will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint and take appropriate action. The CEO and/or Deputy CEO will make the ultimate decision.

5. Support and Recognition

Support: APA endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Volunteers are encouraged to express their ideas on how their contribution can be improved by contacting APA Management.

Recognition: Volunteers provide a unique service to APA, the benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. APA staff is responsible for thanking all volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to the organisation. APA Manager is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times.

Expenses: Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, ~~so it is essential that APA offers to reimburse any out of pocket expenses they may incur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the organisation.~~ **APA will endeavour to offset some exceptional costs**

that volunteers may incur in the course of volunteering but cannot presently reimburse routine travel expenses. Current rates and procedures for claiming expenses are agreed by the management committee and publicised to all volunteers.

Insurance: Insurance is provided by APA to cover all volunteers working on behalf and at the direction of the organisation.

Personal and vocational development: Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the organisation. APA will support volunteers to take on additional, greater responsibilities over time if they desire this and/or if it is possible given the positions and opportunities available.

Monitoring and Evaluation: APA monitors and evaluates volunteer involvement in the organisation on a regular basis and seeks to make on-going improvements.