



VOLUNTEER STRATEGY

Principles: Choice - Diversity – Mutual Benefit – Recognition

Volunteering encourages civic participation and demonstrated active citizenship

Volunteering is an expression of the individual's freedom to choose

Volunteering is unwaged and is a reciprocal gift relationship that meets the needs of organisations and volunteers

Volunteering promotes inclusion and should be open to all

Volunteering enables people and communities to influence and contribute to social change

Volunteering works best when it is guided by good practice

Benefits of Volunteers to Festival

PUBLIC FACE - Volunteers are central to the Festival experience. They are our public face at events and enable us to talk to more of our patrons.

DIVERSITY - Volunteers allow us to involve a more diverse group of people and open new channels for local input.

PERSPECTIVE - Volunteers give Festival a new perspective, as the volunteers' perspective reflects the views of the community.

ENERGY - Volunteers bring a unique energy and enthusiasm to Festival – they give up their time and want to be with us.

SKILLS - Volunteers bring new skills and experience that may otherwise be unavailable.

CREDIBILITY - Volunteers lend us credibility. They give their time free of charge and this suggests that our work must be of value.

Benefits to Volunteers

SHARE SAME VALUES - Festival's values of inclusion, diversity and civic participation attract customers, partners, volunteers and sponsors to us. Volunteers are motivated to spend time with people who share the same values.

DIVERSITY - Diversity in programming, venues, ideas and strategy is complemented by a diverse team of volunteers. Festival offers a safe space for all people.

FREE TICKETS - Volunteers can often see the events they are volunteering at for free. Artists are unique, of international standard and are often Irish or UK premieres. Festival also offers ticket discount or complimentary tickets to volunteers for events they are not volunteering at, subject to availability.

FRIENDSHIPS - The camaraderie around Festival time is notable and friendships are formed between people who may not otherwise have met each other. The melting pot of Festival ensures that volunteers apply year after year.

CONTACTS - Informal networking with like-minded people is a great way to not only meet new friends, but also to meet people you might like to work with. Some volunteers have gained work or other opportunities via people they have met at a Festival event.

EXPERIENCE - Practical experience in the arts world is essential if you would like a career in the arts and is attractive for people exploring a new career or seeking work experience. Volunteering is a sure signal of your interest in the creative industries and arts organisations see volunteering in the field as a positive commitment.

INSPIRATION - Seeing international artists at no cost, helps our local artists with professional development. Local artists make great volunteers as they are dynamic and knowledgeable about their subject and our customers experience is enhanced by their enthusiasm.

CONFIDENCE - Volunteering builds confidence, adds structure and provides a sense of belonging. Volunteering for low responsibility activities provides a sense of structure and achievement. Festival offers a warm, supportive environment where volunteers are part of our team.

TRAINING – Full support and training provided for all Volunteers

Getting the most from our Volunteers

We will grow our capacity to manage the volunteers.

We have clear reasons for involving volunteers.

We will acknowledge and recognise volunteers' contributions.

We are clear about why we have volunteers and are committed to supporting them.

The roles of volunteers are clearly defined so that paid staff do not feel undermined or threatened.

We have a culture that values the involvement of volunteers and allocates resources to support them properly.

We recognise that although volunteers are not paid for their work, they are not a free gift or a substitute for paid staff.

We will evaluate whether our investment in volunteers is paying off annually.

Recruitment

We need the right number of Volunteers whose skills and qualities match our needs, whilst catering where possible to their motivations and interests.

We will promote volunteering opportunities by:

- We will have simple introductory information to help people work out whether they want to offer their services as a volunteer
- All our information will be written in plain language in a readable font, with relevant policies easy to download from our website
- Items can be made available in accessible formats, for example, large print and audio.
- We will promote online, via social media as well as through linked organisations such as Volunteer Now or Community Arts Partnership
- We will also spread the word through our existing volunteers

Selection

To ensure we get the right people in the right voluntary roles we will:

- Formulate volunteer task descriptions
- Ask volunteers to complete application or registration forms
- Provide simple introductory information on our organisation and volunteering
- Reserve the right to take up references
- Check criminal records if required

Accepting or rejecting offers of voluntary help

Not everyone who comes forward to volunteer will be suitable.

It is good practice if a potential volunteer is unsuitable, or decides against volunteering, to thank them for their interest in the organisation. Some people may ask for feedback and it is good practice to offer some constructive advice where possible.

Training

We will provide formal training before the start of volunteering.

This will include what Volunteers need to know to carry out their role well. It will also explain how volunteers will be managed at events, supported and developed.

Volunteers will receive essential information about Festival, how it operates, key policies and procedures that Volunteers should be aware of such as Health & Safety and safeguarding.

Retaining, recognising and supporting Volunteers

We want to keep Volunteers motivated and involved.

We will offer ongoing support to Volunteers and encourage them to develop to their full potential.

We will offer annual training and regular support meetings.

We may offer special responsibilities or opportunities to Volunteers e.g. taking part in more artistic roles. In previous years some volunteers performed in an outdoor spectacle.

We recognise and thank Volunteers for their contribution to Festival's work within our everyday engagement with them, and at our annual post Festival get together.

Ending a volunteering placement

We accept that sometimes there are situations where it becomes clear that a volunteer placement should not continue. This is challenging for everyone involved. We will aim to provide a change of role if possible, and provide additional support or training.

If a volunteer is no longer capable of carrying out their role or they cannot continue due to gross misconduct, we aim to take a planned and caring approach.

If we end a placement we will describe what the issues are and communicate them clearly, referring to any written records and the Volunteer Code of Conduct

Legislation and Good Practice

Equality and diversity

Working with Volunteers from diverse backgrounds enhances our volunteering programme and your organisation. We will treat all Volunteers fairly regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, age, physical/mental disability or offending background. We aim to ensure that our Volunteers reflect all sections of society where possible as well as our local community.

We take a proactive approach to tackling discrimination and to promoting equality and good relations positively. We encourage people from any of the following groups, which will improve diversity in our volunteering programme and demonstrate good practice in our organisation.

- Black and minority ethnic community groups
- Young people over 18
- Retired people
- Students
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people
- Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants
- People with Disabilities
- Ex-offenders
- People from a range of faith communities
- Unemployed people, particularly long term unemployed.

We will monitor diversity by asking volunteers to complete an Equality and Diversity form noting e.g. their gender, race, ethnic origin, age and any accessibility requirements that they have as part of the recruitment process.

Safeguarding

Belfast International Arts Festival welcomes visitors of all ages and abilities and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults that come into contact with our work.

We believe that everyone has an equal right to protection from abuse and discrimination regardless of their age, race, religion, ability, gender, language, background, employment status, marital status or sexual identity and consider the welfare of the child/ young person / vulnerable adult is paramount. Staff and Volunteers are committed to practice which promotes the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protects them from harm and abuse.

We take every reasonable step to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected in the delivery of our work. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

We enable all our staff, including Volunteers and freelance staff and those who work with us to make informed and confident decisions regarding safeguarding. We expect everyone (staff, board, associates, Volunteers and anyone working on behalf of the Company) to have read, understood and adhere to our full policy and related procedures.

Our Volunteers are aged 18+.

Data protection

We deal with personal information about individual volunteers. We comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation that came into force on 25 May 2018.

- Personal data will be processed fairly and lawfully
- Personal data will be adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Personal data will be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
- Personal data will not be kept for longer than is necessary
- Personal data will only be used in relation to your Voluntary work and is never shared or passed on to third parties

Health and safety

We have a duty of care to look after Volunteers' health and safety.

We will:

- Consider what we ask Volunteers to do, what could happen as a consequence and how that might impact on Volunteers, staff and customers
- We will ensure we have the appropriate insurance in place
- We will ensure Volunteers are properly vetted where appropriate
- We will carry out risk assessments to ensure that Volunteers are kept safe whilst undertaking their voluntary role
- We will review our practices regularly

Reviewing, monitoring and evaluating

We will:

- Review our volunteering programme regularly
- Monitor the programme by collecting feedback from Volunteers and staff
- Consider bringing people together for group discussions
- Give Volunteers the opportunity to feedback informally

This will help us to check the quality of Volunteers' experiences within our organisation, help us assess the value Volunteers bring to our organisation and engender ideas for improvement.