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**Governance Code for Sport**

**Volunteer Management**

Guidelines

**Disclaimer**

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice. This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary.

Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**How to Use this Document**

The document is designed to assist sporting organisations with their adoption of the Governance Code for Sport by the end of 2021. It provides an overview of key considerations and a framework for initial policy considerations within an organisation.

In all cases the policy will require some adjusting to reflect the staffing arrangements, membership profile, organisational structure or Board structure.

Managing and supporting volunteers: why an organisation needs volunteer management

Principle 1 of the Governance Code for Sport is “*Leading our Organisation’*, whilst Sub-principle 1.3 states that we do this by: “*Managing, supporting and holding to account staff, volunteers and all who act on behalf of the organisation*.”  Volunteers are involved in many aspects of a sport organisation’s work, whether it is a Type A, B or C organisation. Volunteers are vital in all sports to ensure the growth of the game is maintained, to act in lieu of staff where the sport is fully volunteer-led and provide support for full-time staff. It is the responsibility of the sport to ensure that the volunteers are supported and managed.

Volunteering can provide a great opportunity for people to develop their own skills at the same time as volunteering time and resources towards a sport. People are the lifeblood of sport and its most valuable asset. Boards and Committees should proactively manage their volunteer workforce. Coaches, officials and other volunteers need ongoing support, such as induction, training and recognition. Successful sports are run by enthusiastic and knowledgeable people, who contribute and feel valued.

Some people can feel unwelcome or self-conscious when fronting up to a new group, particularly if they are on their own or don't have peers or friends already there. Individuals are the most important ingredient in creating an inclusive sport by creating a warm, friendly, open-minded environment for all members. The checklists provided in this guidance note can help organisations manage and support their volunteers to develop, learn and be trained in the areas required.

Volunteer management is a critical part of good organisational governance, as there are multiple potential risks to the organisation should volunteers not be supported and managed appropriately. A volunteer management policy should be developed to ensure that the organisation has best practices in place to support and manage volunteers.

Whose responsibility is it to manage volunteers?

It is the responsibility of the highest level of management in the organisation / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to implement human resource policies, such as volunteer management. It is also the responsibility of the Board to be confident that volunteers are being managed and supported appropriately as per the Governance Code for Sport. A volunteer management policy should outline the organisation’s plan and position around managing and supporting volunteers.

What is volunteer management?

Volunteer management is about:

* The rights and responsibilities of volunteers
* Outlining the importance of job descriptions
* Identifying ways to recruit, retain and recognise volunteers
* The process of selecting and screening volunteers
* Identifying the need for succession planning
* The management of volunteers in negative situations e.g., termination of a volunteer role

What should a volunteer management policy cover?

A volunteer management policy should cover:

* Introduction to the organisation and why volunteers are involved
* Vision and mission for volunteering
* The role of staff in supporting volunteers
* Volunteer roles required
* Matching the right volunteers to the right roles
* Volunteer code of conduct
* Equality, diversity and inclusion
* Safeguarding guidelines
* Positive induction and training
* Health & safety and insurance
* Expenses
* Saying thank you
* Managing challenging situations
* Confidentiality
* Photography
* Social media
* Grievance policy
* Termination of role
* Review

Training for volunteers

All new volunteers should be given a basic induction to the organisation, an introduction to the committee and other volunteers, and an understanding of what is expected of them. New volunteers should ideally be given a simple written description of the role/task expected of them (this could be by email). To make them feel comfortable they could be invited to shadow another volunteer initially, so they understand the role better. Volunteers should all be provided with the volunteer code of conduct.

The governing body/sport organisation should coordinate some training courses for volunteers, including safeguarding and coaching qualifications and volunteers should be supported and encouraged to sign up for these courses.

Sport Ireland also offers some training courses that are open to volunteers, including some governance courses, which volunteers (subject to their role in the governing body/association) should also be encouraged to attend.

Recruitment of volunteers

Recruitment is the process of attracting new volunteers to an organisation. Some tips for positive recruitment of volunteers are:

* Provide potential volunteers with a realistic preview of what the job entails – volunteers need to understand the size and nature of the task ahead of them before deciding to commit their time and energy to a position.
* If possible, provide a job description including meeting times, major tasks, average weekly or monthly time commitments, benefits and conditions. This will help potential volunteers make an informed decision about whether a job might suit their skills, experience and availability.
* Make sure new recruits feel valued – they are giving up their leisure time, so it is important they feel the role is important.
* It is important to check whether the organisation has the constitutional power to recruit individuals for some voluntary positions. The constitution may bind the organisation to elect board or committee members or to appoint some members on an ex-officio basis.

Selection and screening of volunteers

The selection process involves choosing the individual who best meets the requirements of a position. Depending on the level of the position [policy/management or operational], the selection process can involve a number of steps, which may include screening, formal interviews, testing, and reference checks. An important consideration in the selection process is whether a position can be appointed or whether the constitution requires it be elected. Reference checks are important when appointing individuals into a sporting body, and safeguarding guidelines must be followed, including the garda vetting of all volunteers. Appointing a person to a volunteer position as a ‘last resort’ may be more harmful in the long term than temporarily leaving the position vacant and starting the recruitment process again.

Primarily, the goal of volunteer management is to acquire the human resources necessary for the sport to function effectively and to support and manage those volunteers for the best of the sport and its people.