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Volunteer Program Guidelines

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Chapter 1 - The Volunteer Program

1.1 Overall Policy on Utilization of Volunteers

The City of Fort Worth's Volunteer Program is a unique occasion for community members to share their gifts and talents. Volunteers who are placed in a rewarding experience often become instrumental team members who not only enhance the capabilities of the city but also become lifelong advocates. Volunteers are rewarded by the intrinsic altruism of their experience. The city is benefited by the increased resources made possible through the volunteer. To this end, the city accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels and within all appropriate programs and activities. All staff members are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive volunteer roles, and in the recruitment of volunteers from the community.

1.2 Purpose of Volunteer Policies

Volunteer policies are provided for overall guidance and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteer programs. These policies are intended for guidance only and do not constitute a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The city reserves the exclusive right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Areas not specifically covered by these policies shall be determined by the department volunteer coordinator overseeing the volunteer activity. A department may establish additional rules, guidelines and regulations for their departmental volunteer program that are not specifically addressed in this handbook. Additions to this document may not conflict with the existing standards provided within these guidelines.

1.3 Scope of Volunteer Policies

Unless specifically stated otherwise, these policies apply to all non-elected volunteers in all volunteer programs and projects undertaken on or on behalf of the city.

1.4 Role of the City's Volunteer Program Coordinator

The productive utilization of volunteers requires a planned, organized and unified effort. The function of the city's volunteer program coordinator is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer management city-wide. The city's volunteer program coordinator should serve as a unifying liaison with other volunteer coordinators and assist in the promotion and recognition of programs throughout the city.

1.5 Role of the Volunteer Coordinator

The volunteer coordinator is responsible for assisting department, division or section staff in identifying volunteer opportunities, recruitment, tracking, evaluations and appreciation. The function of the volunteer coordinator is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer management throughout that area of the city. The volunteer coordinator should also serve as a liaison with other volunteer programs in the city and assist in city efforts to recognize and promote volunteering. *Note that a Volunteer Coordinator may not be an official title, rather a role or responsibility within the organization.*

1.6 Definition of Volunteer

A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation, performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the city. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by the department prior to performance of the task.

1.7 Classification of Volunteers

Volunteers are classified as:

Credentialed Volunteers – These are volunteers who have passed the city background clearance and have been given an ID badge.

General Volunteers – These are volunteers who are not working with vulnerable populations and are likely special event or short-term volunteers.

Court-Mandated Workers – People who are completing court-ordered community service or restitution work are not considered volunteers but court-mandated workers.

1.8 Employees as Volunteers

The city accepts the services of staff as volunteers. This service is accepted only if the volunteer service is provided without any coercive nature, involves work which is outside the scope of normal staff duties in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act and takes place outside of normal working hours. Family members of staff are eligible for volunteer service.

1.9 Service at the Discretion of the City

The city accepts the service of volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the residing department of the volunteer opportunity. Volunteers agree that the department may at any time, for whatever reason, terminate the volunteer's relationship with the department and potentially the city.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the relationship with the city. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

1.10 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to the city, its staff and its customers. This program is designed to allow volunteers to:

- Be given meaningful assignments.
- Be given a fully defined activity description and expectations.
- Be treated with respect as members of the department team and receive effective supervision.
- Receive recognition for work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of the department and city.

1.11 Scope of Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of the city, and serve at all levels of skill and decision-making as appropriate. Volunteers should not, however, be utilized to displace any paid employees from their positions.

Chapter 2 - Volunteer Management Procedures

2.1 Maintenance of Records

An electronic volunteer management system will be maintained by the city to store volunteer records, including addresses, phone numbers, emergency contact information, dates of service, positions held, duties performed, evaluation of work and awards received. Volunteers and designated staff shall be responsible for updating all appropriate records and information in a timely and accurate fashion. To the extent permitted by law, volunteer records shall be treated with the same confidentiality as staff personnel records and shall be subject to open records in accordance with all applicable state laws.

2.2 "Two Hat" Policy

Members of the various advisory boards and councils can be accepted as direct service volunteers with the department and city provided there is no conflict of interest.

2.3 Representation of the City

Prior to any action or statement which might significantly affect or obligate the city, volunteers should seek prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations. Volunteers are unauthorized to act as representatives of the city except to the extent as specifically indicated within their activity descriptions and only to the extent of such written specifications.

2.4 Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves staff, volunteers, customers, clients or other persons or involves overall city business. Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in some corrective action or termination of the volunteer's relationship with the city.

2.5 Worksite

An appropriate worksite shall be established prior to the enrollment of any volunteer. This worksite shall contain necessary facilities, equipment and space for the designated activities to be performed effectively.

2.6 Dress Code

As representatives of the city, volunteers, like staff, are responsible for presenting a good image to customers, clients and to the general community. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties, as defined by their supervisor.

2.7 Logging Hours

Individual volunteers are responsible for the accurate completion and timely submission of their hours served. Volunteers will be asked to log their hours online or submit their hours to their supervisors on a monthly basis at a minimum.

Chapter 3 - Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

3.1 Activity Descriptions

Volunteer activities require clear, complete and current descriptions of the duties and responsibilities. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment efforts, an activity description must be developed for each volunteer activity. This activity description will be made available to each accepted volunteer and utilized in subsequent management and evaluation efforts. Activity descriptions should be reviewed and updated whenever the work involved in the activity changes substantially. All activity descriptions shall include a description of the purpose and duties of the position, a designated supervisor and worksite, a timeframe for the performance of the activity, a listing of qualifications and a description of activity benefits. Volunteer coordinators are available to assist staff in the development of volunteer activity descriptions.

3.2 Staff Requests for Volunteers

If staff needs assistance recruiting volunteers, requests for volunteers shall be submitted to the department volunteer coordinator by interested staff, complete with a draft activity description and a requested timeframe. All parties should understand that the recruitment of volunteers is enhanced by creative and interesting activities and by advance notice.

3.3 Recruitment

Volunteers shall be recruited by the city/department on a proactive basis, with the intent of broadening and expanding the volunteer involvement of the community. Volunteers shall be recruited without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, transgender status, gender identity, gender expression, religious affiliation, political affiliation or belief, age (over 40), sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status or disability status. The sole qualification for volunteer recruitment shall be suitability to perform a task on behalf of the department. Volunteers may be recruited through either an interest in specific functions or through a general interest in volunteering which will later be matched with a specific function.

3.4 Screening

Prior to being assigned or appointed to a position, volunteers will be screened to ascertain their suitability for and interest in that position. The screening should include communications to determine the basic qualifications of the volunteer and their commitment to fulfill the requirements of the position and should answer any questions that the volunteer might have about the position. The screening may also include a background investigation as determined by the volunteer activity. *For more information about volunteer background screening policies and procedures, please see the City's Volunteer Background Screening policy.*

3.5 Professional Services

Volunteers shall not perform professional services for which certification or licensing is required unless currently certified or licensed to do so. A copy of such certificate or license should be maintained by the department volunteer coordinator.

3.6 Length of Service

All volunteer positions shall have a set term of duration. It is highly recommended that this term shall not be longer than one year, with an option for renewal at the discretion of both parties. All volunteer assignments shall end at the conclusion of their set term, without expectation or requirement of reassignment of that position to the incumbent. Also, as stated in Section 1.9, volunteer service is provided on an at-will basis and may be terminated by the city/department at any time, with or without cause.

Volunteers are neither expected nor required to accept further service in a position at the end of their set term. However, they are welcome to do so or may instead seek a different volunteer assignment within the city/department, or retire from volunteer service.

3.7 Leave of Absence

At the discretion of the supervisor, leaves of absence may be granted to volunteers. This leave of absence will not alter or extend the previously agreed upon ending date of the volunteer's term of service.

Chapter 4 - Volunteer Training and Development

4.1 Orientation

All volunteers will be provided a general orientation on the city's mission, vision and values, an orientation on the department/division for which they are recruited and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position/activity which they are accepting.

4.2 On-the-Job Training

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

4.3 Staff Involvement in Orientation and Training

Staff members with responsibility over delivery of services should have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of volunteers. General orientation to the city's mission, vision and values will be available online. Those staff who will be in a supervisory role to volunteers shall have primary responsibility for design and delivery of on-the-job training to volunteers assigned to them.

4.4 Continuing Education

Additional training and educational opportunities should be made available to volunteers during their connection with the city/department. This continuing education may include both additional information on performance of their current volunteer assignment as well as more general information. Educational opportunities might be provided either by the city/department or by connecting the volunteer to educational programs provided by other groups.

Chapter 5 - Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation

5.1 Requirement of a Supervisor

Each volunteer who is accepted to a position with the city must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. This supervisor shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance.

5.2 Volunteers as Volunteer Supervisors

A volunteer may act as a supervisor of other volunteers provided that the supervising volunteer is under the responsibility of a paid staff member.

5.3 Volunteer Staff Relationships

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programs of the city. It is essential to the proper operation of this relationship that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

5.4 Staff Volunteer Management Training

An orientation on working with volunteers will be provided to all staff, as necessary, by a volunteer coordinator. In-service training on effective volunteer utilization will be provided on request to those staff members who are highly involved in volunteer management.

5.5 Volunteer Involvement in Program Evaluation

Examination of effective utilization of volunteers may be a component in the evaluation of volunteer programs. In such cases, supervisors should ask for the input and participation of volunteers in evaluating program performance. Evaluations will be submitted to the department volunteer coordinator for review and will be used to assess the volunteer management program.

5.6 Staff Involvement in Volunteer Evaluation

Staff should be involved in all evaluation and work assignments of volunteers with whom they are connected, providing assistance and input to the supervisor in the evaluation process.

5.7 Lines of Communication

Volunteers are entitled to information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments. Accordingly, volunteers should be included in appropriate memos, materials and meetings relevant to the work assignments. To facilitate receipt of this information on a timely basis, volunteers should be included on the distribution schedule for receipt of information distributed in their absence. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer.

5.8 Absenteeism

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regularly scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers should inform their supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made. Continual absenteeism will result in a review of the volunteer's work assignment or term of service.

5.9 Substitution

Volunteers may be encouraged to find a substitute for any upcoming absences which might be filled by another volunteer. Such substitution should only take place following consultation with a supervisor, and care should be taken to find a substitute who is qualified for the position. Substitutes may only be recruited from those who are currently enrolled as volunteers in the same activity.

5.10 Evaluations

Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluations to review their work. The evaluation session is utilized to review the performance of the volunteer, to suggest any changes in work style, to seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the department, to convey appreciation to the volunteer and to ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in that position. Evaluations should include both an examination of the volunteer's performance of position responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected. The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the department to examine and improve their relationship.

The position description and standards of performance for a volunteer position should form the basis of an evaluation. A written record should be kept of each evaluation session.

5.11 Staff Responsibility for Evaluation

It shall be the responsibility of each staff person in a supervisory relationship with a volunteer to schedule and perform a periodic evaluation and to maintain records of each evaluation.

5.12 Corrective Action

In appropriate situations, corrective action may be taken following an evaluation. Examples of corrective action include the requirement of additional training, reassignment of a volunteer to a new position, suspension of the volunteer or dismissal from volunteer service. A written record should be kept of any corrective action. Prior to corrective action of a volunteer, staff should seek the consultation and assistance of the department volunteer coordinator.

5.13 Dismissal of a Volunteer

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the department or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. The volunteer may be given an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with the supervisor. If, after the volunteer has received specific feedback from the supervisor, the problem is not eliminated and there are no reasonable options for reassignment, the volunteer should be dismissed. Prior to dismissal of a volunteer, staff should seek the consultation and assistance of the department volunteer coordinator.

5.14 Reasons for Dismissal

A volunteer may be dismissed at any time, with or without cause. If dismissed for cause, possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of department equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of co-workers or other individuals, failure to abide by departmental policies and procedures and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

5.15 Concerns

To file a concern, the affected volunteer shall contact their supervisor or, when appropriate, the department volunteer coordinator.

5.16 Notice of Departure or Re-Assignment of a Volunteer

In the event that a volunteer leaves the department, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, or is reassigned to a new position, it shall be the responsibility of the department volunteer coordinator to inform those affected staff and clients that the volunteer is no longer assigned to work with them. In cases of dismissal for cause, this notification should be given in writing and should clearly indicate that any further contact with the volunteer is outside any scope of relationship with the department.

5.17 Resignation

Volunteers may resign from their volunteer service with the department at any time. It is requested that volunteers who intend to resign provide advance notice in writing of their departure and a reason for their decision.

5.18 Communication with the Volunteer Coordinator

Staff members who supervise volunteers are responsible for maintaining regular communication with the department volunteer coordinator on the status of volunteers and are responsible for the timely provision of all necessary information in the city's volunteer management system (i.e., volunteer applications, hours, status, qualifications, etc.). The department volunteer coordinator should be informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer and should be notified before any corrective action is taken.

5.19 Annual Volunteer Report

The department volunteer coordinator shall conduct an annual evaluation and report of the utilization of volunteers by the department. This report shall include information gathered from volunteers, staff and customers to include hours served, success stories, goals for improvement, etc. This report shall be given to the city's volunteer program coordinator.

Chapter 6 - Volunteer Support and Recognition

6.1 Reimbursement of Expenses

Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred while undertaking business for the department. However, it is essential that prior approval be sought for any expenditure.

6.2 Access to Departmental Property and Materials

As appropriate, volunteers shall have access to city property and materials necessary to fulfill their duties and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment deemed necessary. Volunteers are bound to the same standards as employees involved in the operation of equipment (i.e., trainings, licenses, etc.). Property and materials shall be utilized only when directly required for city purposes. *See appendix for information on gaining volunteers access to the internet or city computer systems.*

6.3 Insurance

Liability and accident insurance is not provided for volunteers engaged in city business. Volunteers are encouraged to consult with their own insurance providers regarding the extension of their personal insurance to include community volunteer work.

6.5 Informal Recognition

All staff and volunteers are responsible for volunteer supervision and are encouraged to undertake ongoing methods of recognition of volunteer service on a regular basis throughout the year. These methods of informal recognition should range from a simple "Thank you" to a concerted effort to include volunteers as full participants in various programs.

6.6 Volunteer Career Paths

Volunteers are encouraged to grow and develop their skills while serving with the city and are to be assisted through promotion to new volunteer jobs to assume additional and greater responsibilities as positions are available. If so desired by the volunteer, the department will assist the volunteer in maintaining appropriate records of volunteer experience that would assist the volunteer in future career opportunities, both paid and volunteer. However, acceptance as a volunteer for the city is in no way an implied promise to hire in the future.

Appendix

1. Internet and/or Network Access

In order for a volunteer to be given network access, please submit the attached Volunteer Personnel Limited Access Acknowledgment form to the IT Helpdesk (helpdesk3@fortworthtexas.gov). Please indicate in your submittal the type of access needed (i.e., network, email, internet only, etc.).

