

1.0 Definitions

“project” includes a single, one-time event, capital project, service and on-going activities that benefits Town property or a Town asset

“Group Leader” means a person designated by an organization to directly support, oversee, supervise and manage the organization’s volunteers and their projects and serves as the liaison between the organization and the Town Supervisor

“organization” means an independent organized group of volunteers that offers to perform a project without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond any expenses agreed-upon in advance; “group” has like meaning

“program” means the Town’s program for engaging volunteers

“Town” means the Corporation of the Town of Fort Erie

“Town Supervisor” means a designated Town employee who serves as the liaison between the Town and the Group Leader

“volunteer” is any person who, as the member of an organization, freely and willingly chooses to participate in a project without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond any expenses agreed-upon in advance

2.0 Program Policy Statement

The Town values the involvement of volunteers in community activities. Volunteering contributes to a healthy community, supports the development of active lifestyles and assists the Town in the delivery of a diverse range of safe and enjoyable events, programs and services. Moreover, it provides volunteers with an opportunity to grow and give back to the community in meaningful ways.

3.0 Program Purpose

The purpose of this program is to;

- support citizen involvement and engage individuals and organizations in the community in safe and meaningful ways
- establish best practices, systems and processes for Town staff and organizations to support volunteering
- minimize risks to the Town and volunteers
- ensure the parties understand their respective roles and responsibilities

4.0 Scope

Unless specifically stated, this policy applies to all organizations in all Town program and service areas and includes all projects undertaken for the benefit of the Town. It applies to volunteer projects proposed by Council-appointed Boards and Committees.

This policy does not apply to;

- volunteer firefighters
- volunteer positions attached to the Museum

Generally, a volunteer must be at least 14 years of age at the time of the project. The Director, Infrastructure Services may consider an exception for projects associated with an organized school activity.

5.0 Guiding Principles

The participation of volunteers in minor, low-risk projects is welcomed and valued, but may be restricted by the availability of Town resources, staff, budgeted funds, liability considerations and the value of the Town asset.

Volunteers have distinct but complementary roles from paid employees. They are not used to replace or displace paid employees, backfill existing employee positions or address workload pressures. Volunteer roles are such that;

- if a volunteer fails to report, regular staff are not required to fill-in
- if a volunteer resigns, the impact to regular work is minor
- if a volunteer makes a mistake, the consequences are minor

Participation in this program does not constitute, neither implicitly or explicitly, an employment agreement between the Town and any volunteer.

The Town reserves the right to amend any section or subsection contained within this program policy.

A project is conducted in a manner consistent with relevant Town policies and procedures. Whenever possible, projects are performed at times when a Town Supervisor is available and during daylight hours.

6.0 Risk Management

In addition to the community benefits, The Town recognizes there are risks involved with volunteering. These risks include;

- potential harm to individuals – volunteers, Town staff and the public
- potential damage to Town assets, equipment and reputation
- cost and time associated with re-work
- potential legal liability for the Town, organizations and independent volunteers

For the protection of staff and volunteers, the Town will only approve low risk projects. Examples include, but are not limited to;

- general beautification
 - restoring, planting, maintaining landscaped areas, gardens, trails, open spaces
 - picking-up litter and debris
- minor facility maintenance (i.e. cleaning, ground level painting, graffiti removal)

- administrative tasks

Every volunteer and volunteer organization is required to undergo Town-approved safety training and sign a waiver and release in a form approved by the Town. Every volunteer who is under 18 years of age must have a parent or guardian sign the waiver and release on the volunteer's behalf before starting the project or annually for on-going activities.

7.0 Insurance

An organization and a volunteer are not covered by the Town's insurance for any damage to personal or private property or injury caused or sustained by the organization or a volunteer during their participation in a project. A volunteer is not entitled to any of the medical and insurance benefits or workplace safety insurance normally provided by the municipality to employees. Individual volunteers may wish to seek out their own insurance.

Any vehicle, equipment and tools that are not owned or leased by the Town are not covered under the Town's insurance and the Town will not pay compensation for any loss or damage.

Every organization is responsible for its volunteers health and safety and liability insurance while on a project. Before commencing a project, an organization will provide the Town with a certificate of liability insurance covering public liability and property damage in a minimum amount of \$2 million. The policy will include;

- a cross-liability clause or endorsement
- an endorsement adding the Town as an additional insured
- an endorsement to the effect that the policy will not be cancelled or allowed to lapse without thirty (30) days advance written notice to the Town.

8.0 Access to and use of facilities, vehicles, tools and personal protective equipment

All tools and equipment supplied by an organization must be in good condition and meet all accepted safety standards. Prior to the start of a project, the organization will submit to the Town a list of tools and equipment it proposes to use and confirm their fitness for use. The Town Supervisor may inspect any tool or equipment that volunteers propose to use on Town property and deem it unsafe for use.

The Town may provide safety and personal protective equipment to volunteers subject to availability.

The Town recommends that a volunteer not be requested or required to drive their personal vehicle as part of the project (i.e. pick-ups, deliveries, transporting materials or equipment).

A volunteer is not permitted to operate a Town vehicle.

9.0 Application Process

An organization wishing to perform a project will, at least four (4) weeks prior to the proposed start date, submit a project proposal in a form approved by the Town, with sufficient detail as to the nature and scope of work, resources required and the skills and expertise of volunteers, for the review and approval of the Town's Director, Infrastructure Services.

The project proposal must be approved and signed prior to the start of a project. If the Town determines that the risk of the proposal is unacceptable, the Town has the right to reject the proposal or recommend changes to reduce the risk.

An individual wishing to perform an unspecified volunteer activity for the benefit of the Town will be directed to apply to the organizations that are participating in the volunteer program.

10.0 Screening

Screening protects vulnerable populations, increases volunteer awareness of their role, and ensures quality assurance standards for program delivery are met. Screening allows the Town to assess the suitability of an organization and its project team members for the project and the organization's capacity to provide adequate supervision.

An organization will screen each of its participating volunteers to assess their suitability for a project and submit to the Town the results of the screening as part of the project proposal. It is expected that an organization's screening requirements will be similar to the requirements in place for employees and may include some or all of the following;

- application form
- intake interview
- reference checks
- criminal record checks (if the project involves vulnerable individuals)
- an assessment of the volunteer's suitability for the proposed project, including;
 - age
 - physical and cognitive ability to safely perform the task
 - knowledge and expertise sufficient to safely perform the task

11.0 Support and supervision

Each organization will appoint one or more Group Leaders. The Group Leader is responsible for the direct supervision and guidance of volunteers on the project and shall be available to the volunteers for consultation and assistance.

In appointing a Group Leader, the organization will appoint someone who

- has the knowledge, training and experience to organize the project and monitor the way the project is performed, and

- is familiar with the volunteer program and guiding principles, policies and safe work legislation and regulations

The designated Town Supervisor is responsible for general oversight of a project and will be available to the Group Leader for consultation and assistance.

12.0 Orientation and Training

An organization will ensure that the Group Leader has received appropriate orientation and safety training and that the Group Leader has shared that training with volunteers.

The Group Leader will distribute, collect and retain volunteer waivers/releases and/or consents and other necessary forms prior to the start of a project. The Group Leader will provide volunteers with a general project orientation, including;

- the operation of the volunteer program
- the purpose and requirements of the project
- project logistics
- knowledge and skills necessary to perform project

Before the start of a project, the Group Leader will train volunteers in the following;

- communications protocols
- emergency procedures
- project specific risks and hazards
- methods for eliminating or controlling the hazards

The Group Leader will provide the Town with a sheet signed by volunteers who attended the orientation and training.

Immediately prior to the start of the project, the Town Supervisor will meet with the Group Leader to conduct a site-specific safety briefing, including

- emergency procedures
- location of emergency exits, alarms, fire extinguishers
- WHMIS/MSDS considerations
- specific Safe Work Standards
- tools/equipment inspection/orientation
- location of First Aid

13.0 Dress

Volunteers are expected to dress appropriately for the project and look professional. Ripped jeans, revealing clothing or any clothing portraying inappropriate or offensive language or images are not acceptable.

If issued a nametag, the volunteer must wear it in a visible and appropriate place at all times.

A volunteer must use and wear any personal protective equipment that the Town deems appropriate for the project.

14.0 Reporting and communication protocols

No organization shall begin a project without first receiving the approval of the Town and confirming the date, time, location and other logistics of performing the project. The organization will agree to communicate with the Town in the manner established by the Town.

15.0 Maintenance of Records

Volunteer records shall be accorded the same confidentiality as employee records and will be kept in accordance with the Town's Records Retention policy.

16.0 Unsatisfactory Performance

The Town reserves the right to revoke its approval of an organization's project where Town policies or procedures have been breached.

The Town Supervisor may recommend the termination of a project if an organization's performance is not meeting expectations.

The Town may ask an organization to dismiss a volunteer if the volunteer's performance or conduct is considered unsatisfactory or inappropriate. Inappropriate behaviours are described in the Town's "Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Program."

17.0 Evaluation

The Town Supervisor will monitor and comment on the performance of an organization upon the completion of the project. During the evaluation process, the organization will have an opportunity to provide feedback on their role, personal experiences and their activities.

18.0 Volunteer Recognition

Recognition should be given as soon after the activity as possible. Methods of informal recognition range from a simple "Thank you" to a concerted effort to include volunteers, as appropriate, in program and process planning and implementation.

The Town will annually recognize all organizations for their participation.

19.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Town will;

- support citizen involvement and engage individuals and organizations in the community in safe and meaningful ways
- approve projects in advance

A Town Supervisor will;

- provide a general safety briefing and orientation
- provide general project oversight, guidance and support to the Group Leader
- monitor the project and provide feedback to the Group Leader
- maintain accurate records

An Organization will;

- submit a project proposal in advance for approval by the Town
- demonstrate the desire and ability to achieve the Program's objectives
- supply the Town with proof of \$2,000,000 in Commercial General Liability coverage listing the Town of Fort Erie as an Additional Insured
- provide or arrange for all transportation, supervision, safety equipment and medical/first aid supplies and service
- be solely responsible for project costs, administration, management of waivers and/or consents and/or other forms, insurance
- designate a competent Group Leader(s) to directly support, oversee, support, train, supervise and manage the organization's project and its volunteers

A Group Leader will;

- distribute, collect and return any and all waivers and/or consents and/or other forms required by the Town prior to the start of a project
- maintain a record of who attended training, orientation and participated in the project
- ensure that all volunteers are made aware of the risks and hazards associated with the project
- take every reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of volunteers and immediately cease or correct any unsafe activities or actions that pose an unnecessary risk
- ensure that all volunteers wear appropriate clothing, footwear and personal protective equipment, where required
- ensure there is adequate parking at the project site or arrange for transportation
- ensure volunteers know how to summon or where to go to get help
- immediately report any incidents or injuries to the Town Supervisor
- ensure volunteers are aware of and follow Town policies, guidelines and standards, particularly the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Town's Health and Safety Policy, Safe Work Standards, Smoking in the Workplace and Code of Conduct
- ensure volunteers perform only approved projects
- ensure no volunteer possesses or consumes illegal drugs or alcoholic beverages immediately before or during the project
- suspend the project in the event of inclement weather
- give the Town Supervisor any items of value (wallets, purses, cameras, etc.) found during the project
- ensure any garbage or scrap/excess material is removed from the site at the completion of the project

A Volunteer will;

- attend and actively participate in orientation and training sessions
- sign any and all waivers and/or consents and/or other forms prior to starting a project
- register with the Organization's Group Leader prior to participating in any project
- abide by all applicable standards, guidelines, procedures and policies
- be prompt and reliable and perform projects to the best of their ability
- follow directions and perform only approved projects
- work safely and say no to a project that is beyond their knowledge and/or capabilities
- dress appropriately for safety and public perception
- immediately report any and all incidents and any unsafe condition to the Group Leader
- maintain the confidentiality of any information that they may gain through their service
- give the Group Leader any items of value found during the project