

VOLUNTEER POLICY



Friends of the Earth's mission is to campaign and build movement power to bring about the system change we need for a just world where people and nature can thrive. Friends of the Earth believes that it cannot achieve its mission without the active involvement of the wider community of those committed to being part of creating positive change. We are therefore striving to formalize our approach to working with volunteers and strengthening our commitment to provide them with opportunities for leadership development and meaningful contribution to the organisation.

When individuals and groups are nurtured to engage in a process of critically informing themselves as well as being supported to learn-by-doing, they are more likely to take effective collective action to bring about changes in their own communities and as part of a mass political movement.

Friends of the Earth seeks to:

- Enable volunteers to contribute to all areas of our work
- Find opportunities to match skills with meaningful opportunities for contribution
- Develop the leadership capacity of volunteers

PURPOSE OF THIS VOLUNTEER POLICY

This policy was created in order to provide clarity to volunteers regarding the unique and valued role they occupy within Friends of the Earth. In addition, it will be used as induction and upskilling resources for new and existing Friends of the Earth staff members, in order to ensure there is a common understanding and consistency across the organisation regarding how volunteers are recruited, included and treated.

This policy is intended to promote good practice in the organisation and to encourage a deep respect of all volunteers as well as a commitment to prevent exploitation of volunteer energy and skills.

PRINCIPLES

- Friends of the Earth Ireland will ensure that volunteers who offer a regular, rather than occasional, commitment are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to meaningfully contribute to Friends of the Earth's work. This applies to any volunteer committing to 10 hours or more a week or for more than 1 month.
- Friends of the Earth expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and will actively seek to involve them in their work where appropriate.

- Friends of the Earth will ensure all volunteers sign a GDPR agreement in advance of commencement of their volunteering.
- Friends of the Earth recognises that volunteers require a sense a competency and satisfaction in their volunteering experience. We will therefore seek to consult with volunteers in advance of commencement and determine what brought them to seek a position volunteering, and what they hope to gain from the experience.
- Friends of the Earth will seek to help volunteers develop their leadership potential and personal development.
- Friends of the Earth will at all times respect the volunteer’s time, energy, experiences to date and unique skillset. Friends of the Earth will view each volunteer as unique and treat them accordingly.
- Friends of the Earth will provide the necessary training in order for the volunteer to undertake their voluntary activity effectively.
- Friends of the Earth will uphold rigorous standards of equality and inclusion when recruiting volunteers, and will be driven by our values of solidarity, inclusion and representation across all recruitment efforts.
- Volunteers will be communicated with in a respectful manner at all times, and communication regarding acceptance of volunteer application will be prompt.
- Friends of the Earth encourages, promotes and supports the employment of people with disabilities in line with the Disability Act 2005. In line with this, a disability does not prevent prospective applicants from consideration for a volunteer role and applications are encouraged from people with disabilities. Where necessary, reasonable adjustments will be made to interview facilities, volunteer arrangements and premises to support volunteers with disabilities.

CONDUCT

When volunteering for Friends of the Earth, a volunteer represents Friends of the Earth. Rude, abusive, anti-social, aggressive or dangerous behaviour towards members of the public, other volunteers or staff will not be tolerated and will result in the volunteer being asked to leave their volunteer post. Should a volunteer feel they have been the victim of any of the above, they should inform their named contact or supervisor as soon as possible. Volunteers have the right to volunteer without fear or threat.

All volunteers will be given a copy of this volunteer policy and must adhere to it.

Volunteers must abide by the Friends of the Earth GDPR policy and will be asked to sign a data protection agreement before commencement of their role. Information disclosed to volunteers while undertaking assigned tasks is strictly confidential.

PROCEDURES

RECRUITMENT

In all instances where a volunteer will be volunteering for 10 hours a week for more than 1 month, prospective volunteers will be interviewed to determine the following:

- Their reasons for deciding to volunteer with the organisation
- Their unique skillset and relevant experiences to date
- Their personal development goals as related to the volunteering opportunity

In sum, their suitability for the role(s) on offer will be ascertained as well as how best their unique potential might be realised.

Those wishing to volunteer generally with Friends of the Earth may complete an initial form on Friends of the Earth's website. They are then categorised based on their answers and may be contacted for specific requests (for example, emailing the volunteers who have offered to do graphic design if a job is urgently required).

Urgent, once-off, or short-term positions (less than 1 month) will be advertised to this list.

For longer-term (> 1 month) volunteer posts, an application form and equal opportunities monitoring form will be sent to this volunteer list as well as the wider Friends of the Earth mailing list, as appropriate. We may also advertise these longer-term volunteer roles on Dóchas, Aivelink, Comhlámh, and with Volunteer Ireland.

All 1 month+ volunteer recruitment procedures must include reference and screening procedures for all those that will be volunteering with people under 18 years of age.

Where appropriate, Garda Vetting will be necessary and processed before the start of the volunteering agreement period.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Friends of the Earth endeavours to ensure that everyone, particularly people from groups under-represented in environmental spaces and society at large are considered and included in the conversation. We acknowledge the privilege that comes with working in an NGO, and understand the fact that there may be barriers to participation. We strive to expand and diversify civic engagement, by creating spaces for everybody to participate and be included in activism and political change.

As part of this commitment to the values of solidarity, participation and inclusion we strongly encourage volunteer applications from those with identities underrepresented in the environmental movement, for example: people of colour, LGBTQIA+ people, those seeking asylum or with refugee status, people with a disability, or people who are members of an ethnic minority.

PROBATION PERIOD

All volunteers will be subject to a one-month probation period per six-month volunteering period where either side may choose to withdraw from the volunteer agreement.

EXPENSES

All volunteers will be offered reimbursement of their travel expenses, to and from the site of their voluntary activity, to be reimbursed within the maximum limits currently in force within Friends of the Earth Ireland. Travel expenses incurred as a necessary part of the volunteer's activities will be reimbursed in full.

All other genuine out-of-pocket expenses necessarily incurred as part of carrying out their voluntary activity will be reimbursed in full, provided all receipts are kept.

INSURANCE

All volunteers are covered by Friends of the Earth's employer liability insurance policy whilst on the premises or engaged in any voluntary activity on the organisation's behalf.

SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

All volunteers will have a named person in the organisation as their main contact.

For 1-month plus volunteer posts, this named person will schedule regular check-ins with the volunteers in order to: feedback on progress, identify obstacles to effective volunteering, identify gaps in skills or knowledge and opportunities for upskilling.

This supervisor should provide constructive feedback to support the development of the volunteer, and should also ensure that the volunteer is emphatically thanked for their contribution regularly.

VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTION

The volunteer will agree a written role description of the specific voluntary activity they will be undertaking and will do this by signing a written agreement. This is for data protection reasons and allows the organisation to give prior notice should the role need to be dissolved at a particular time. **A volunteer role description is not a contract. Friends of the Earth has no intention of creating a contract with any volunteers.**

Volunteer roles will be created to fulfill needs of the organisation. Role descriptions will be drafted by the management circle, including consultation with relevant staff members (e.g. on Child Protection, GDPR).

INDUCTION AND TRAINING

All volunteers will receive an induction pertaining to the nature of the voluntary activity undertaken. The staff circle which will oversee the majority of the volunteer's activity will be responsible for induction. Induction should take no less than 1 hour, and no more than 3.5 hours, and no other activities should be scheduled for this time by the induction lead.

Friends of the Earth volunteers are obligated to familiarise themselves with the organisation's activity, mission and values. This should not only support them in their assigned tasks but also give them a greater sense of what they are supporting through their volunteering.

THE VOLUNTEER'S VOICE

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning Friends of the Earth Ireland in internal meetings and with their named contact. The views and opinions of volunteers are valued, as Friends of the Earth recognises their unique standpoint and perspective of the organisation. They are welcome to input as appropriate in team meetings, and are encouraged to provide feedback to their supervisor regarding organisational improvements.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Friends of the Earth could not do what it does without volunteers and recognises the time, commitment, unique experience and skillset that each volunteer brings to the organisation.

Friends of the Earth will show this appreciation by:

- Providing a clear role description to the volunteer
- Offering regular support and supervision
- Giving the opportunity to attend team meetings as appropriate to gain a deeper insight into the work that is done in the organisation
- Provide opportunities for training and upskilling in ways relevant to the volunteering role
- Celebrating the contribution of the volunteer
- Thanking the volunteer

GRIEVANCE

Volunteers contributing to Friends of the Earth for more than 10 hours a month are encouraged to utilise the organisation's grievance policy if a grievance situation arises. The grievance policy will be given to volunteers when they begin their role.

Where Friends of the Earth needs to sever a relationship with a volunteer against their wishes, the sole grounds for this should be that:

- a) The volunteer has irrevocably compromised their position in some way.
- b) The volunteer is not carrying out their duties as agreed with their supervisor.
- c) Friends of the Earth are no longer in need of volunteers to fulfill said role.

Opportunities should be given in advance of dismissal for the volunteer to upskill via a performance improvement programme (PIP) and so ensure that b) does not come to pass. If training and development opportunities are provided and within 1 month no improvement is seen, b) can be carried out. Written evidence of the efforts to fill the gaps in the volunteer's skill set must be kept by the supervisor in a confidential organisational folder.

ON COMPLETION OF VOLUNTEER ROLE

Should a volunteer wish to cease their role before the agreed date they must give Friends of the Earth at least one week's notice so that their tasks can be reassigned.

Volunteers are asked to keep a hand-over document detailing their tasks and progression to ease the transition for when their volunteer period ends and a new volunteer begins.

EXIT INTERVIEW

It is our practice to offer exit interviews to all staff and volunteers as a way to encourage continued learning and development in the organisation and hear from the volunteer about their experience.

REFERENCES

Friends of the Earth will agree to provide a reference for paid employment.