

# The volunteer induction process

**It is vital for volunteer managers to take the induction process seriously. Induction is the first impression your new volunteer will get of your organisation, and can make or break their commitment to your volunteer program.**

Organisations need to ensure that the process is professional, fun, organised and valuable. This How to Guide gives you all the information you will require to be able to undertake an induction process well, but Support Cambridgeshire also provides a range of training courses on all aspects of Volunteer management. Please visit our website at [www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/training](http://www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/training).

## What is an induction process?

Induction is the process of welcoming and familiarising new volunteers and staff with your organisation, their job and their workplace.

After completing induction, volunteers should be confident in completing their tasks, know who their manager or supervisor is, and who they can go to for help. They should be aware of where to find necessary resources and be introduced to your organisation's volunteer policies, including occupational health and safety, dispute and grievance policies.

The induction process can be completed with a group of new volunteers or individually. Ideally, all volunteers should complete the induction process before commencing work.

## Why is the induction process important?

Starting a new job can be nerve racking and stressful. Self-doubt often creeps into a person's mind. Volunteering at a new organisation is no different.

Volunteers may be apprehensive about meeting new people, taking on responsibility and doing well. A good induction program will make the new volunteer feel welcome, and give them the confidence they need.

Other advantages of an effective induction process include:

- improved staff and volunteer morale
- increased productiveness, and
- reduction in a volunteers anxiety levels.

## What to include in the induction?

Your induction program should suit the needs of your organisation and the role of your volunteers. Some induction programs will go for half a day, while others will last a week with continuous monitoring and supervision.

Above all, volunteer inductions should be fun and valuable. This is your volunteer's first insight into your organisation and you want it to be positive. Remember volunteers who enjoy their work are more likely to be committed to the organisation and encourage their friends to volunteer.

Icebreakers are a great way to welcome new volunteers to an organisation and learn about their interests and experiences.

As well as having fun, volunteers should also learn about the organisational chart, the organisation's vision and its values and goals,

both short and long term. Ensure you give the volunteer all of the appropriate documentation they need.

Examples of what to give volunteers as part of an induction pack include:

- the code of conduct
- the sexual harassment policy
- role descriptions
- handbooks
- previous annual reports
- contact details
- the current organisational chart, and
- meeting schedules and a calendar of upcoming events.

After the induction, the new volunteer should have a strong understanding on what the organisation does and the role of volunteers and paid staff.

The employees should also be made aware of your organisation's recognition and reward programs and training opportunities.

## Designing your induction program

Decide how long you want the induction process to be, and whether its suited to individuals, groups or both.

For both group and individual inductions, it's a good idea to create a formal or informal checklist of what to talk about and what to include.

This will make each induction easier than the last and ensure you don't forget vital information.

This is also great for succession planning. If you thoroughly document the induction, it becomes easier over time, and enables many different people to work through the process.

## Induction checklist

Suggestions for what to include in your induction checklist include:

- demonstrating how to use the equipment, including telephone, fax, e-mail systems while advising on internal and external mail processes
- showing the location of toilets, meeting rooms, or kitchen and tea rooms
- Explaining parking regulations, locations and public transport options
- showing the location of first aid kits, emergency exits and emergency assembly points
- explaining visitor procedures, how to book meeting rooms, cars and resources
- introducing new volunteers to colleagues and managers, and
- if appropriate, assigning a work colleague as a mentor.

Not all of the above ideas will be relevant to your organisation and the role of your volunteer. It is essential that you customise the induction process and only give your new volunteer relevant information. Remember, many people feel overwhelmed when they are given new information.

It is also important to explain:

- start and finish times
- tea and/or lunch breaks
- reimbursement policies, and
- uniforms (if applicable), and
- flexible volunteer options.

It might also be useful to explain:

- expectations of workplace behaviour
- role description
- performance expectations, and

- training and development opportunities.

If appropriate, the volunteer and volunteer manager or coordinator could set performance expectations and goals for the next six months.

In summary, an effective induction process should:

- welcome the new volunteer by providing personal and professional support and demonstrating commitment to them.
- integrate the new volunteer into the workplace and explain how they fit into the organisation.
- allow the new volunteer to assimilate information about the workplace and their role.
- provide important information and resources that will assist the new volunteer.
- enable the new volunteer to be independent and proficient in their role as soon as possible.