



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Volunteer Policy

Date: September 23, 2024

To: Toronto Public Library Board

From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Toronto Public Library Board approval of Toronto Public Library's (TPL's) Volunteer Policy (Attachment 1).

The Volunteer Policy serves to codify existing practices that support community volunteer participation, to define the roles and responsibilities for volunteers and to ensure the safety and security of clients, staff, and volunteers.

Volunteers work with staff to strengthen TPL's link to the communities it serves by contributing their expertise, knowledge, and time. Volunteerism at TPL plays an important part in the Library's commitment to enhancing social connectedness and community involvement in Toronto. In 2023, TPL had 1,500 volunteers contribute over 44,000 hours of service to TPL programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the Volunteer Policy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Volunteer Policy aligns closely with TPL's strategic pillars of inspiring public spaces that allow Torontonians to grow together and make community connections. Engaging volunteers enhances and enriches TPL's services by actively engaging members of the community who wish to support the Library in its Vision, Mission and Values and contribute to their community through volunteerism.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Volunteer Policy will have a positive impact by continuing the Library's commitment to developing and retaining volunteers whose differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds, and needs are valued, and whose diverse backgrounds and experiences enhance their ability to participate and contribute.

DECISION HISTORY

This is TPL's first Volunteer Policy. To date, Volunteer Services has been overseen with an administrative Volunteer Management Manual.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

TPL has a robust Volunteer Services program, with over a thousand active volunteers in any given year. There is, however, no overarching Volunteer Policy that provides direction in a cohesive manner. This Volunteer Policy codifies existing practices that support community volunteer participation, defines the roles and responsibilities for volunteers, and helps ensure the safety and security of customers, staff, and volunteers.

COMMENTS

The creation of a Volunteer Policy provides clarity regarding the scope and principles underlying volunteering in TPL. The policy provides important definitions on what a volunteer is and how they differ from employees. Importantly, the policy also explores the varied roles volunteers can have within TPL's long-standing volunteer programs and those associated with the Friends of the Library and Innovation Council.

The Volunteer Policy is informed by principles defined in TPL's Missions, Vision, and Values statements, Equity Statement, and Intellectual Freedom Statement. Volunteers help promote TPL programming, collections, and resources, and build connections between residents and communities. Volunteers may advise staff or offer feedback that is used to shape services. Volunteers do not displace TPL's union workers.

This Volunteer Policy will become an integral part of Volunteer Services at TPL, working in tandem with updated Volunteer Recognition practices (2024) and a revised operational Volunteer Manual (2025). The expected result of the Volunteer Policy is to support staff understanding of the unique role volunteers play within TPL and provide clarity on the roles and responsibilities attached to volunteers.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Volunteer Policy

Volunteer Policy

Policy Classification: Board Policy

Motion # and Approval Date: [Include the Motion # and date the policy was *first* approved by the Board]

Effective Date

[provide the date when the policy, or current revision, is to come into effect.]

Purpose

The Toronto Public Library (TPL or Library) Volunteer Policy provides a framework for volunteers to support the delivery of library services, in accordance with other TPL policies and procedures and the TPL/Local 4948 Collective Agreement.

TPL is committed to developing and maintaining a volunteer program that provides TPL volunteers with meaningful opportunities that enhance and enrich TPL services while also promoting social inclusion, developing leadership skills, and supporting the Library in its Vision, Mission, and Values.

The objective is to have volunteers engage with staff to strengthen TPL's connection to the communities TPL serves by contributing their expertise, knowledge, and time.

Scope

This policy applies to volunteers in all programs and services authorized by and undertaken on behalf of the Library, except where unique governance structures and/or differing recognition practices exist, such as: the Toronto Public Library Board, the Toronto Public Library Foundation, Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Friends of the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, and Friends of the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation, and Fantasy.

Underlying Principles

The implementation of the Volunteer Policy is aligned with the Library's Vision, Mission, and Values, Equity Statement, and Intellectual Freedom Statement. TPL acknowledges the contributions that volunteers make to TPL programming, collections, and services, and TPL is committed to building strengthened connections with residents and communities.

Volunteers donate time, talent, or services without expectation of future employment, wages, benefits, or compensation of any kind, and will not perform bargaining unit work or displace a bargaining unit employee.

TPL is committed to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment for volunteers, grounded in tolerance and mutual respect. By embracing equity, TPL ensures fair treatment and opportunities for volunteers from all backgrounds, regardless of race, ethnic group, nationality, immigration status, socioeconomic status, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ability, language, religious affiliation, beliefs, age, or any other prohibited grounds.

Policy Statement

1. TPL appreciates the contributions of volunteers to Library programs and services.
2. TPL acknowledges that volunteer opportunities promote social inclusion, develop leadership skills, and support the Library's Vision, Mission, and Values.
3. TPL accepts volunteers with the goal of enhancing and expanding community participation in TPL, and will screen volunteers through applications, interviews, references, and vulnerable sector checks, to promote this objective. Volunteers may be asked to submit a Vulnerable Sector Check if they are working with those in a Vulnerable Group.
4. TPL welcomes voluntary services of its staff provided that such work falls outside their regular work duties and work hours, in accordance with the

TPL/Local 4948 Collective Agreement.

5. TPL will provide orientation and training to volunteers before volunteering at the library. This training includes legislated training for all volunteers plus additional specific training related to their role."
6. TPL will assign a volunteer lead to work directly with volunteers and volunteers will engage directly with TPL staff. Volunteers associated with specific TPL programs do so under the guidance and supervision of TPL staff of that specific program.
7. The minimum age requirement for volunteers is 12; each program or service determines the appropriate age range for volunteers.
8. Specific terms and conditions of volunteer arrangements will be provided to volunteers based on the circumstances for each of TPL's volunteer-involved programs and services.
9. TPL recognizes the contributions made by volunteers to TPL on an annual basis.
10. All volunteers doing Library placements on Library premises are covered by the TPL's insurance policies policy for third party liability and are part of a shared commitment to fostering a safe and healthy workplace. Volunteers are excluded from WSIB benefits under the Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Accountability

The Director, Service Development & Innovation has overall accountability for Volunteer Services, including volunteer recognition practices.

Within their divisions, the Directors, Branch Operations & Customer Experience and Service Development & Innovation are responsible for delivering programs and services that engage volunteers.

The Directors are accountable for ensuring compliance with the Volunteer Services Policy in their respective areas.

Related Legislation

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)
- [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017C](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Act](#)
- [Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44](#)

Related Library Documentation

- [TPL/Local 4948 Collective Agreement](#)
- [Rules of Conduct Policy](#)
- Workplace Violence and Response Policy

Definition of Terms

Volunteer: a person who donates time, talent, or services to support the library and its activities without expectation of future employment, wages, benefits, or compensation of any kind. A volunteer's duties will be determined by their assignment, as laid out in individual Volunteer Profiles.

Vulnerable Group: in accordance with TPL's Police Record Check Policy, a vulnerable group is composed of "persons who, because of their age, disability, or other circumstance, either temporarily or permanently, are in a position of dependence on others, or are at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust."

Contact

Director, Service Development & Innovation