



Abberton Rural Training (ART)

Policies & Procedures

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Title: **Volunteer Policy & Procedures**

1. Purpose

As an organisation working closely with people from diverse backgrounds, the Abberton Rural Training (“ART”) is committed to encouraging volunteers who wish to support the organisation’s aims and enhance its service delivery. We also recognise that volunteering is important to volunteers, whether as work experience, as a means of developing new skills, or socially.

The purpose of this policy is therefore to provide volunteers with all the support and guidance they need when offering their resources, skills and expertise to ART. The policy does not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement, but is designed to ensure fairness and consistency so that volunteers know how they can expect to be treated and understand what is expected of them. The policy is also required to be read by ART’s paid staff and trustees so as to ensure that all volunteers are properly supported, that they are treated with consideration, and that their contribution is appreciated. The policy is not intended to act as a means of replacing previously paid staff with volunteers.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers working on any of the projects and activities undertaken by or on behalf of ART. For the purposes of this policy, a volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or the expectation of compensation (beyond the reimbursement of expenses incurred in the course of their agreed tasks), performs a task at the direction of the organisation. It does not apply to a person acting as an ART trustee – there are other guidelines for this purpose – except where the trustee is engaged in other voluntary work for the organisation.

3. Specific Policies & Procedures

3.1. Recruitment

ART will use appropriate means to advertise for volunteers locally that take into account the principles of our **Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy**. Volunteers may be recruited either through an interest in a specific function or through a general interest in volunteering which can be matched with a specific function.

Depending upon the nature of the role we may require a simple application form

to be completed, and potential applicants may be requested to attend an interview. If successful up to two references may be requested. We may also - depending on whether it is proportionate and relevant to the position being recruited to – ask an individual to apply for a *Disclosure & Barring Service* (DBS) check prior to confirming the offer.

We will ordinarily recruit volunteers based on their skills, qualifications and experience, and we undertake not to discriminate unfairly against any individual on the basis of a spent conviction or other information revealed by the individual or by a DBS check. However, we reserve the right not to offer a voluntary assignment to any individual who has an unspent conviction or who has committed an offence which we consider to be so serious as to render them unsuitable for a particular job. This includes any convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings which would be deemed as spent under the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

3.2. Appointment

Regardless of whether or not a formal application/interview process takes place, all prospective volunteers will be invited to talk to the appropriate member of staff in the area in which they may be working, and their skills and expertise will be assessed to ensure that best use is made of their potential, given the amount of time they are willing to contribute and the location(s) they are prepared to work in. Any training needs will be assessed and arranged accordingly, and all reasonable adjustments will be made to enable the volunteer to undertake their tasks.

Once both parties are agreed, the volunteer will be notified in writing that they have been formally accepted to work for ART as a volunteer. They will, at the same time, be issued with a task specification which will include (as a minimum) a description of the agreed tasks (including their purpose), any training needs, any trial period, the work location, the volunteer's designated supervisor and, where appropriate, the timeframe for the performance of the tasks.

3.3. Induction and Training

To the extent that the volunteer has not been fully briefed prior to the appointment, they will - once appointed - be properly inducted into:

- The mission and aims of ART;
- The relevant ART policies, including - but not limited to - this **Volunteer Policy & Procedures**, our **Health & Safety Policy**, **Health & Safety Manual**, **Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy**, **Confidentiality Policy**, and **Data Protection Policy**;
- Other essential operational procedures; and
- Other information as appropriate.

The induction shall be supported by the provision of a **Volunteer Handbook** comprising copies of all the above documentation.

3.4. Support and Supervision

All volunteers will be assigned to a supervisor. Volunteers are entitled to receive all the necessary information pertinent to their roles, and the volunteer's supervisor will ensure that the volunteer receives all relevant information, emails, materials and notification of meetings. The supervisor will also offer support to the volunteer and will, wherever possible, look to fit in with the volunteer's individual wishes. On occasions, where appropriate, the supervisor may encourage the volunteer to carry out tasks wider than those that fall within the immediate scope of the task specification.

3.5. Standards of Service and Absenteeism

The relationship between ART and its volunteer workers is entirely voluntary and does not imply any contract. However, it is important that the organisation is able to maintain its agreed standards of service to the clients who use it. In consequence, volunteers are expected to perform their tasks reliably and to the best of their ability. When expecting to be absent from a scheduled task, volunteers should inform their supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made.

Where appropriate, meetings will be held to discuss any problems or issues that may have arisen and to agree how such problems can be resolved. This might include, in exceptional circumstances, if a complaint has been made against the volunteer. At all times volunteers will be encouraged to express their views about matters concerning themselves and the organisation.

3.6. Recognition

ART recognises the contribution that volunteers make each year and will, wherever possible, promote the value of our volunteers on our website and through other media. Supervisors will be encouraged to include volunteers as full participants in decision-making and the ongoing implementation of projects that involve the volunteer. Volunteers will be encouraged to participate in team building and social events, and will receive a reference for their work on request.

3.7. Expenses

We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. Consequently, all out-of-pocket expenses will, if required by the volunteer, and subject to the restrictions agreed by their supervisor, be reimbursed. In order to claim reimbursement, a volunteer claim form must be completed and authorised by the volunteer's supervisor. All receipts, other than for mileage, must be attached.

No flat-rate expenses are paid. Consequently, any reimbursement for expenses is not a consideration for services and so is not subject to income tax or national insurance, and does not affect a volunteer's welfare benefits in any way.

3.8. Equal Opportunities and Diversity

ART's **Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy** sets out the organisation's

commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity in all areas of the organisation's work. The policy extends to our volunteers and sets out the way in which volunteers can expect to be treated by ART. It also extends to the people our volunteers come into contact with when working for ART, and sets out a number of individual responsibilities that our volunteers are required to comply with when carrying out their tasks. All volunteers are required to adhere to this policy.

3.9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

We regard the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as important to the achievement of our objectives and to maintaining confidence between those with whom we deal and ourselves. ART's **Data Protection Policy** therefore aims to ensure that we protect the rights of the individual and that no personal information is collected, retained or passed to a third party without their knowledge and consent. All volunteers are required to adhere to this policy.

In addition to adhering to this policy, volunteers are responsible for ensuring the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information relates to individuals and third party organisations (e.g. clients, members, supporters) or to the activities of ART. This responsibility applies not only during the course of the voluntary placement but also once the placement is over. Further details are contained in ART's **Confidentiality Policy**. All volunteers are required to adhere to this policy.

3.10. Health & Safety

In accordance with the commitments set out in ART's **Health & Safety Policy**, we will provide such equipment, information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to secure the safety and health at work of all our volunteers and of others who may be affected by their actions, including members of the public.

ART's **Health & Safety Manual** promotes method-statements of safe working practice, and identifies individuals' responsibilities for adhering to these method-statements. All volunteers are required to adhere to those method statements relevant to their voluntary assignment, as contained in this manual.

3.11. Insurance

If a volunteer sustains an injury whilst they are engaged in voluntary work on ART's behalf and if ART is held to be responsible, then the volunteer will be covered under the terms of ART's Employers' Liability insurance policy. However, this Employers' Liability policy will not indemnify against any liability in respect of which compulsory insurance or security is required under the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Where a volunteer uses their car in carrying out their voluntary tasks, whether or not they claim for the journey, they must make sure that their car insurer is aware of the circumstances. The volunteer is required to ensure that their insurance covers the use of the vehicle not just for the normal 'social, domestic and pleasure purposes' but also for use by the volunteer in carrying out

their voluntary tasks. Most insurers do not charge any extra premium for volunteers using their cars to assist a charity or community organisation. However, if a volunteer fails to notify their insurer regarding such use then the insurance policy can be invalidated and the driver could be held personally liable for any damage or injuries sustained in an accident.

In order to ensure that our volunteers have adequate insurance cover we will require sight of the following documentation prior to them taking up their voluntary tasks:

- i) a valid driving licence; and
- ii) a valid schedule of insurance, covering the volunteer for the voluntary tasks that they are carrying out.

3.12. End of Volunteering Assignment

Although there is no formal binding contract or personnel agreement, we would ask all volunteers to provide us with at least one calendar week's warning of their intention not to continue offering their services as a volunteer. It would be appreciated too if the volunteer could provide us with a reason for leaving.

If ART decides that the volunteer's role is no longer needed then the volunteer will, wherever possible, be given one month's warning of the organisation's intention not to continue with the volunteering assignment.

If a volunteer does not adhere to ART's policies and procedures or fails to satisfactorily perform their tasks, they will be supported through supervision (see Section 3.4 above). If no improvement is made or if, in exceptional circumstances, the volunteer has acted in an inappropriate manner, their voluntary assignment may be discontinued. However, this will not be actioned until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons with their supervisor.

Regardless of whose decision it is that the volunteer's assignment should come to an end, we will always ask the volunteer for feedback on their assignment so that we can further improve our interaction with volunteers in future.

3.13. Problems

If a volunteer has any problems with any aspect of their work, or has an issue with the organisation or its staff, they should initially explain the nature of the problem to their supervisor. If the supervisor does not resolve the issue to the volunteer's satisfaction (or is the subject of the problem) then the volunteer should refer the matter to the Programme Manager who will convene a meeting with the volunteer to discuss the matter. At all times the volunteer will be freely able to state their case and will be entitled to have a friend accompany them.

The Programme Manager (like the supervisor) is required at all times to act in accordance with ART's principles of fairness and equality, but if, after the meeting with the Programme Manager, the volunteer's issues remain unresolved to the volunteer's satisfaction, then the volunteering assignment will have to be brought to an end (see Section 3.12 above).

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