

Policy Direction – Volunteer Engagement

Rationale and Relationship to Mission, Principles and Values

The MS Society of Canada recognizes the important role volunteers have in building an impact-driven, collaborative, compassionate, bold, and resilient MS community. Actively involved in shaping the mission and values of the MS Society, volunteers contribute to, and expand capacity, to ensure the MS Society delivers on mission and pursues strategies that benefit the community. From founding to present day, volunteers drive the work of the MS Society forward which is to connect and empower the MS community to create positive change.

The MS Society embraces and promotes a positive culture towards volunteer involvement and fosters meaningful partnerships between staff and volunteers. The MS Society is committed to ensuring that staff and volunteers across the footprint of the MS Society have the support and resources necessary to make an impact in their role. Designated staff and leadership volunteers will be responsible for supporting the volunteer journey to ensure that volunteers are effectively integrated, engaged, supported and recognized for their involvement.

A volunteer is anyone whose time is willingly given, without compensation or the expectation of compensation, at the direction of and on behalf of the organization.

Policy Objective

This policy provides a framework to consider the role of volunteers within the organization and the impact effective volunteer involvement can have.

The policy is designed to:

- Support the development of effective volunteer involvement strategies and practices
- Ensure the rights of volunteers are protected and that they are supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities
- Involve volunteers in meaningful and impactful ways
- Ensure volunteers are effectively recruited, engaged, recognized and supported.
- Provide resources and support to staff to foster positive partnerships with volunteers

The related procedures are an integral part of the MS Society's approach to volunteers; both the policy direction and the procedures shall be followed in any function that involves volunteers.

Policy Application

This policy applies to staff and volunteers at all levels of the MS Society.

Authorization

The policy was first approved by the MS Society of Canada board of directors on February 26, 2015.

Policy Details

The Executive Team is authorized to develop detailed procedures for this policy direction following its approval.

The MS Society is committed to championing a culture that supports and values the role and impact of volunteer involvement. To develop and support a strong volunteer engagement culture, all levels of the MS Society of Canada shall:

- Build relationships with volunteers, identify volunteer interests and relate those interests to the overall needs of the MS Society as a whole;
- Leverage volunteer potential across all programs at all levels of the organization;
- Communicate and cross promote volunteering opportunities within the MS Society to volunteers;
- Utilize MS Society volunteer records at all levels of the organization to maximize volunteer potential and opportunities for further engagement;
- Maintain a clearly communicated screening process that is adopted and consistently applied throughout the organization.
- Provide volunteers with an orientation to the organization, its policies and practices including the rights and responsibilities of volunteers and staff. Furthermore, volunteers will receive training customized to the volunteer assignment and needs of the volunteer.
- Supervise and support volunteers at a level appropriate to the task and are provided with regular opportunities to give and receive feedback.
- Acknowledge the contributions of volunteers with consistent, formal and informal methods of recognition.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to share feedback

- Evaluate the impact and contribution of volunteers and the volunteer engagement program to ensure the needs of the organization are being met in fulfilling its mandate.
- Ensure that processes are in place to protect the health and safety of volunteers in their capacity as volunteers.

1.0 Guiding Principles

1.1 - Volunteers are valued team members and make impacts in all areas of the MS Society. The MS Society is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for volunteers and to ensuring that the appropriate infrastructure exists to support all aspects of volunteer involvement.

1.2 - Volunteers are considered partners along with staff and other stakeholders in driving the work of the MS Society forward. Volunteers have rights and responsibilities, as described in this policy direction.

1.3 - The MS Society at all levels should seek volunteers to expand the capacity of staff to fulfill the organization's work towards achieving its mission. Staff will follow established best practices and procedures in engaging volunteers effectively.

1.4 - The MS Society of Canada maintains a strong policy of equal volunteer opportunity. Our core values include treating everyone with respect and dignity, and protecting their privacy. This applies to both staff and volunteers. We recruit, accept, train, promote and dismiss volunteers on the basis of individual competence and position performance, without regard to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability, or socioeconomic status.

2.0 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers have rights. Volunteers have the right to meaningful assignments, the right to be treated with respect and dignity, work in a welcoming and safe environment free from harassment of any kind, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition. Volunteers are free to move between different areas and departments of the organization, and to take on any role for which they are deemed eligible. Volunteers will have access to training and development opportunities as appropriate.

Volunteers have responsibilities. Volunteers make a commitment and are accountable to the MS Society. Volunteers will act with respect for the cause, the stakeholders, the MS Society and the community it serves. Volunteers will carry out their involvement with responsibility and with integrity. Volunteers will actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to act in keeping with the goals, policies and procedures of the organization.

Executive Champion

The MS Society's Vice-President (VP), People, Innovations & Volunteers is the executive champion for this policy direction.

The Executive Team is authorized to develop detailed procedures for the application of the Volunteer Engagement Policy Direction and related procedures.

Monitoring and Compliance

The MS Society's VP, People, Innovations & Volunteers is responsible for leading the monitoring of the application and compliance of this policy direction in conjunction with other members of the Executive Team. The VP will work with appropriate staff to ensure compliance.

Related Policies, Legislation

MS Society Workplace Relationship Policy

Policy Review

The policy is to be reviewed annually following its approval on February 26, 2015.
- Reviewed and approved by Executive Team on January 13, 2020

Definitions:

Executive Team – The most senior level of staff leadership within the MS Society comprised of the president and chief executive officer; division presidents; senior vice-president(s) and vice-president(s). One person may hold more than one position. The president and chief executive officer may alter the composition of the executive team as required from time-to-time.

Volunteer – A volunteer is anyone whose time is given willingly, without compensation or the expectation of compensation, to perform a task at the direction of and on behalf of the organization. This can include roles ranging from board directors, government relations and advocacy volunteers, event volunteers, programs & services volunteers, research volunteers, etc.