



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

## Volunteer Policy

### Background:

The National Museum and Art Gallery, a section of the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism was established since 1892 to care for the material culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Museum's mission involves the collection, preservation, interpretation and presentation of the material culture of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the implementation of programmes, jointly with other relevant agencies and stakeholders, that aim to safeguard this country's intangible cultural heritage. In carrying out its mandate the Museum helps to foster a sense of national belonging, national pride and nationhood, so crucial to the collective efforts required for the realization of the government objectives as they relate to the arts and culture.

In this relatively small country, a well developed National Museum Service can be key to the transmission of positive values to the National Community. The Museum's activities remain guided by Government's policies in the area of culture and cultural heritage.

These policies, together with consultations with constituents, have helped to shape the Museum's plans, programmes and policies.

The National Museum, throughout all of its activities attempts to ensure that:

- ‡ Trinidad and Tobago's unique culture which is manifested through a diverse set of activities, festivals, traditions and norms is acknowledged, promoted and celebrated.
- ‡ Policies and procedures are developed, monitored and upheld in order to protect Trinidad and Tobago's Heritage in all of its forms and manifestations.
- ‡ Develop a National Strategic Plan for Museum Development that has widespread stakeholder ownership.

## Staffing:

The National Museum operates as a separate entity under the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism, however, it is not fully autonomous as would be a regular statutory body and depends almost entirely on the government for its funding. This also applies to the Museum's staffing. Staff issues at the Museum are dealt with by the Human Resource Department of the Ministry and positions are filled through the Service Commissions Department of the government.

There are a number of permanent positions on the current staffing structure of the National Museum, two of which are professional positions (namely Curator and Assistant Curator). Due to the nature of the work that the National Museum conducts it relies on university graduated trainees (from the On-The-Job-Trainee Programme of the Ministry of Science Technology and Tertiary Education) as well as professional and non-professional volunteers who offer their services from time to time at the Museum.

This policy is aimed at developing a document that would bring more structure to the Volunteer Programme at the National Museum while ensuring that the Museum as well as persons who give of their time to the organization are protected from all foreseeable outcomes of the said arrangement.

## Volunteers:

### The Role of the Volunteer

Volunteers are a very important part of the National Museum Service. Without the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers, much less would be achieved in order to meet the Museum's objectives. At the National Museum, volunteers undertake activity in a variety of areas including learning, administration, collections management, development and visitor services. The overall responsibility for volunteers rests with the Curator; however, day to day management rests the Head of each of the Museum's departments (i.e. Curatorial, Administrative, Security, and Maintenance)

### Application Process

Vacancies for volunteering positions will be posted on the National Museum's website. A list will also be held at Reception and on the company server. The vacancies will include details of what the role involves, the time commitment it requires, the skills applicants may need and any Health and Safety issues they need to be aware of.

Applicants for a role will be asked to submit their CV, along with the names of two referees. This information should be submitted to the Head of Administration. Applicant's personal details will be kept on the Volunteer file by the Administrative staff.

### Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

Equal opportunities will be adhered to when recruiting and selecting volunteers. Applicants will receive a response to their application within 14 working days of the deadline. If invited to interview the applicant will be interviewed at the museum by the Curator and a second

member of staff, usually the Head of Department for which the volunteer is applying. Every effort will be made to match the volunteer's skills, talents and interests to the task. Some tasks can be undertaken without any previous experience as training and supervision are provided. There are, however, certain tasks which require certain levels of physical ability, previous experience and knowledge. If an applicant is offered a volunteering role this will be subject to a one month trial period during which time the volunteer and museum can assess progress and make appropriate adjustments or end the placement. Volunteer recruitment procedures will be subject to regular review.

### Reference Checks

Before appointment, two references should be obtained for each applicant. This may be reduced to one if an applicant has just left college or university. References may not be taken from relatives. A Police Certificate of Character may be required for volunteers; applicants will be advised of this during the application procedure.

### Expectations

Volunteers are expected to give as much or as little time as they consider appropriate to them. Each vacancy will list the time commitment the role needs to fulfill it. The National Museum expects volunteers to be realistic in their commitment; however, once a commitment is made the Museum expects its volunteers to fulfill this unless negotiated otherwise.

### Rights of Volunteers

- To know what is expected and to be given clear information.
- To have clearly specified lines of supervision.
- To receive a level of support appropriate to the role
- To receive appropriate induction and training
- Experience personal development through participation
- To be shown appreciation
- To be able to say 'no'
- To know what their rights are if things go wrong
- To take part in the activities of the organization
- To have safe working conditions
- To be insured
- To be free of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, sexuality, disability, age
- To withdraw from voluntary work

### Responsibilities of Volunteers

- To supply a CV and provide the name of two referees
- To give a reasonable and sustainable level of commitment
- To do the job reliably and safely
- To carry out tasks in a way which corresponds to the aims and values of the Museum
- To be honest if there are problems
- To attend training and support sessions
- To comply with existing policies and procedures
- To take responsibility for their own personal health and safety
- To supply current contact information and notify the Museum of changes

## Expenses

If at anytime volunteers are required to purchase materials on behalf of the National Museum these costs will be reimbursed (all purchases must be cleared with the curator). Volunteers claim all such expenses on the standard Museum expenses claim form, available from the Head of Administration. Receipts must be provided. The National Museum reserves the right to review and alter expenses entitlement at any time.

## Use of keys and security codes

Volunteers are not permitted to claim keys unless a particular need has been proven and they have been authorized to do so by the Head of Department. It should not be necessary for volunteers to need keys as they will be supervised by a member of staff. Volunteers will only be given necessary security codes to gain access to areas of unsupervised activity.

## Insurance

Volunteers, whilst undertaking work on behalf of the National Museum and Art Gallery, are covered by its insurance policies. This includes employer's liability and public liability.

## Supervision

The National Museum and Art Gallery ensures that all volunteers are adequately supervised. When they begin at the Museum, new volunteers meet the Head of Department to get to know each other and both are encouraged to develop a good relationship. There are occasions and tasks where minimal supervision is required, depending upon the skill and experience of the volunteer. If a volunteer feels they are not being adequately supervised, they are encouraged to discuss this with the Curator.

## Support

The National Museum and Art Gallery believes that it has a duty to provide ongoing support for its volunteers. This is done through regular meetings between the volunteer and the supervising member of staff to discuss their progress, training needs (if appropriate) and any other issues. If any volunteer has a particular problem or concern a member of staff or the Curator will usually be available to talk to them.

## Relationships with Paid Staff

Steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff at all levels are clear about the role of volunteers, and that good working relationships are fostered between paid staff and volunteers. Appropriate training, support and resources will be provided for all those who work alongside volunteers and for those who have a managerial role in relation to volunteers. The roles of volunteers and paid staff will be complementary and mutually supportive. Volunteers will not be engaged in times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff. They may continue with their regular activity, provided appropriate supervision by paid staff continues to be available, but will not be asked to undertake additional duties.

### Benefits:

- x All volunteers are entitled to a free National Museum shirt and polo T-shirt.
- x Volunteers will be given a package of basic stationery to be used in carrying out their duties
- x After two (2) months of service volunteers are entitled to a 10% discount on all items in the Museum Gift Shop
- x Letter of Recommendation

### Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is still appropriate to the needs of the National Museum and its volunteers. Volunteers are asked to contribute to this review. Between the annual reviews everyone who is involved, staff and volunteers, is expected to monitor its use ± comments should be passed in the first instance to the Head of Department.

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