

Volunteer Application Form

Do's and Don'ts



An application form is a great way to collect potential volunteer interest and information. When preparing or updating an application form, think about what you'll collect and how you'll use it.

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Here are some questions to get you started:



What **information will I need** in order to **talk to the applicant**?



What do I need to **know about the applicant at this stage** in the screening process?



How much **detail do I need at this stage** in the screening process?



What **question(s)** can help me determine if the **applicant aligns with the needs of the role**?



Where will the **information collected be safely stored**?

After reviewing many application forms, the tips on the next page can help you reduce barriers for applicants and enable easier decision making.



Volunteer
Toronto



Asking for:

Contact information

Do: Ask for contact information in the format you'll use, such as email only.

Don't: Ask for mailing address unless you intend to communicate by mail regularly.

Gender

Do: Ask for pronouns (optional).

Don't: Ask for applicant gender unless it's a bona fide occupational requirement.

Bona Fide Occupational Requirement refers to anything you would ask from a candidate that is specifically related to the requirements of the role. For example, a peer support role for newcomers can exclusively look for volunteers with lived experience as a newcomer.

Emergency contact information

Do: Leave this out of applications.

Don't: Collect emergency contact info for people that aren't your volunteers yet.

Past experiences

Do: Ask for brief information about past experiences only if this is relevant to the role, helpful for screening and something you will read or review.

Don't: Ask for a listing of every experience, especially if it's not relevant to the role.

Police checks

Do: Let applicants know that a police check request will be required if they are selected for the role at the end of the process if required.

Don't: Ask applicants to start their police check request at the application stage.

References

Do: Let applicants know that you will request references later in the process if the role requires it.

Don't: Collect reference information at the application stage – this is extra personal information to keep safe.

Resume and cover letters

Do: Leave this out of applications unless the specific role requires it.

Don't: Have an “optional” upload of resumes and/or cover letters – applicants will think they won't get selected if they don't include this, even if it's “optional”.



Other considerations:

Accessible application form

Do: Provide multiple access points for the application, including a physical version and backup contact.

Don't: Limit all interested volunteer candidates to a single application form option.

Accommodations

Do: Let applicants know you can discuss accommodations with them.

Don't: Ask volunteers if they have a disability and what type of disability.

Amount of information to request

Do: Collect only the information you'll use to make a decision.

Don't: Collect more information "just in case".

Comfort with technology or tools

Do: Invite applicants to choose their comfort level with technology or tools necessary for the role.

Don't: Ask for applicants to write down tools they feel comfortable with.

Ontario Human Rights Code

Do: Ask only for information that is specifically related to the role so that you avoid discrimination (leaving out personal identity information that is unnecessary).

Don't: Ask for extra or personal identity information to make a "judgement call" on the applicant, which can be discrimination.

