Volunteer Management Issues and Termination

An important part of the work of the Partnership is to deal with issues in the management of the volunteers and with problematic volunteers. The Partnership must learn to deal with situations in which the volunteer is not meeting expectations and should decide what must be done in order to prevent situations in which volunteers are recruited whose needs cannot be met. The goal of correct volunteer management is to avoid, to whatever extent possible, problematic situations in the activity of volunteers. The basis for achieving this will likely involve the investment of effort according to the following stages:

- Placing the volunteer in a position that suits their skills and abilities
- Alignment of realistic expectations
- Personal support, guidance and supervision of the volunteer’s activity
- A structured feedback process in order to maximize the performance of the volunteer
- Make clear what is permitted and what is not—establish boundaries of the position and the organization’s rules for volunteers

In many cases, problems that arise in the management of volunteers may result in a situation where the Partnership must terminate the work of the volunteer. When the problem is not solvable through the ongoing management of the volunteer the Partnership must examine alternatives to firing the volunteer.

Alternatives to Firing

- **Structured Feedback**
  As part of a structured feedback process, it can be mentioned that there is a need for improvement in the volunteer’s work. Suggestions can be made for improvement and a program can be built together with the volunteer for monitoring progress.

- **Renewed Enforcement of Rules**
  In cases where volunteers have difficulty following the rules of the organization, it is recommended that the rules be enforced with renewed effort. This includes reemphasizing the rules to the volunteer and the boundaries of his position.

- **Reassignment**
  Reassignment of the volunteer to a different position. It may be that the evaluation of the volunteer’s abilities, skills and qualifications during the selection process was inaccurate or the volunteer himself did not get along in the new social environment. In this case, it is recommended to consider reassigning the volunteer to a different position in the organizations and to check whether the reassignment was successful.

- **Retraining**
  Some people learn new skills and techniques at a slower pace, while others prefer their own methodology over group learning. If the problem is the result of a lack of knowledge or motivation, it is important to provide the volunteer with the required knowledge and skills and to suggest that he take part in an additional training process which will offer a style of learning that is most suited to him.

- **Referral**
  In the case of a burned-out volunteer, the Partnership should transfer the volunteer to a parallel organization and allow him to volunteer in a different place for a defined period of time. This timeout from his volunteer activity will allow the volunteer to accumulate new energy and perhaps develop additional or new skills at the new organization.
Firing Volunteers

In the case that the alternatives to firing a volunteer have been tried and there is no significant improvement in the situation, the Partnership must initiate the termination of the volunteer’s activity, i.e. to fire him from the Partnership. The firing of volunteers is an expression of the organizational and professional responsibility of the Director and that of the Partnership toward its customers, the professional staff and the other volunteers.

The Partnership must take a clear position and adopt clear rules for the firing of volunteers (on the level of the headquarters and on the level of the region):

- To decide on procedures and rules for the firing of volunteers—to define the red lines, when it is important to consider alternatives and when to fire a volunteer.
- To update and notify volunteers regarding the process and procedures during the orientation process or on a periodic basis.
- To fine tune the procedures to each specific position—in the case of firing a chairperson, a member of the Steering Committee, a member of a subcommittee, etc.

Stages in Firing a Volunteer

1. **Preliminary Conversations with the Volunteer**
   - To verify that the volunteer understands the measures of success in his position, to explain to the volunteer in detail what is acceptable behavior and what is not, and to provide warnings against a deviation from the rules in the implementation of his function.

2. **One-on-one Conversation**
   - Have a conversation to ascertain whether the volunteer has indeed broken the rules.

3. **Notification of Firing in a Respectful Conversation**
   - It is important that this be done in a private conversation—the message should be given assertively and unambiguously—trying to function as a psychologist should be avoided.

4. **Send a letter of thanks and appreciation.**

5. **Notification to the Partnership** and the customers that there has been a change.
Examples: Dealing with Volunteer Management Issues

Work relations between the volunteer and a member of the Partnership2Gether staff—these issues are often related to unclear boundaries between volunteer positions and staff positions.

Possible Problem
The Chairperson of the Partnership is interested in being involved in the selection and appointment of personnel in Partnership2Gether.

Possible Solutions
1. Include the Chairperson as a full member of the selection team and the selection committee.
2. Include the Chairperson in the preliminary selection team which decides on the candidates invited to the selection committee, but not in the final selection committee.
3. Hold a meeting with an HR representative from the Jewish Agency or the Regional Supervisor who will make clear why the selection process is an internal Jewish Agency process.
4. Include the Chairperson as a full member of the selection team and the selection committee.
5. Include the Chairperson in the preliminary selection team which decides on the candidates invited to the selection committee, but not in the final selection committee.
6. Hold a meeting with an HR representative from the Jewish Agency or the Regional Supervisor who will make clear why selection is an internal Jewish Agency process.

Volunteers with a personal agenda—these issues usually involve volunteers who wish to promote a business, to increase their profits or to promote a project or activity they are personally involved in.

Possible Problem
A committed and serious volunteer, who owns a company providing organizational consulting, suggests to the Partnership that one of the moderators who works for a subsidiary of his should be hired as a consultant in a strategic process that the Partnership wishes to advance. According to the Partnership’s rules, a tender must be issued to a number of consulting companies. The tension created here is a result of the desire to retain a serious and committed volunteer while avoiding the conflict of business interests.

Possible Solutions
1. Make clear that the Partnership rules and procedures require a tender being issued to a number of consulting companies.
2. Introduce the volunteer’s consulting company to the relevant departments of the Jewish Agency. In this way, he will be able to compete for tenders in the Partnerships and in other departments.
Issues related to the character of the work and the activity—these issues usually involve situations in which the volunteer is not carrying out his function professionally or he is not committed enough in his position or he deviates from the rules and procedures or accepted norms or he is not capable of carrying out his tasks.

**Possible Problem**
A volunteer member of the Steering Committee who does not regularly attend its meetings and basically only comes to meetings related to trips abroad.

**Possible Solutions**
1. Structured feedback with the Chairperson of the Steering Committee: Evaluation of his motivation to remain in his position.
2. Define clear expectations of someone in that position.
3. Decide on rules for the Partnership: Setting limits on absences from meetings. Going beyond that limit will automatically mean being expelled from the Committee.
4. Decide on Partnership policy for the Steering Committee that will be known to all members of the Committee in order to prevent the recurrence of these situations in the future.
5. Reassign the volunteer to a different position that is more suited to his desire for a closer connection with the Diaspora.

**Possible Problem**
The volunteer Chairperson is not fulfilling his function – he attends only some of the meetings, he is not finishing tasks that were assigned to him and he operates independently and in contradiction to the plan decided on by the professional staff.

**Possible Solutions**
1. Structured feedback with the Director of the Partnership in which he makes clear the situation.
2. Meetings between the Chairperson and the professional staff (the Partnerships Unit) in an effort to come to a reconciliation, to clarify the issues and to determine work procedures.
3. Bringing up the issue with possible mediators from the municipality or the Jewish Agency.
4. Process to replace the Chairperson.

**Possible Problem**
A volunteer who has worked faithfully for the Partnership for a long period and who expected to be chosen for membership on the Steering Committee. The volunteer has set out to cause damage to the Partnership and is complaining about the Partnership to public figures and in the press, with claims of irregularities and poor management.

1. A personal conversation with the volunteer in order to understand his claims: in the Steering Committee and/or with the relevant individuals in the Jewish Agency.
2. Dealing with the claims raised by the volunteer – through the same channels in which the claims were made, i.e. in the press or through public figures.
3. Review and reiteration of the Partnership’s rules and procedures.
4. Reassignment – finding him a new position within the Partnership, which will provide the volunteer with an opportunity to develop and grow. Monitoring of the situation once he has acclimatized in the new position.
5. Process of separating from the volunteer.
Issues related to the character of the work and the activity — these issues generally involve situations in which the volunteer does not carry out his function in a professional manner, is not committed to his position, deviates from the rules, accepted norms or is not carrying out his tasks.

Possible Problem
A volunteer who successfully managed a project for mentoring children has recently shown signs of burnout and excess burden. She does not attend meetings that are important to advance the project and throws responsibility back onto the Director of the Partnership. She does not take part in guidance activity and unlike in the past invests the minimum required to carry out her function. The results of the burnout are noticeable.

Possible Solutions
1. Personal conversation for feedback purposes – ascertaining the needs of the volunteer and determining the reasons for her fatigue and lack of motivation.
2. Talk openly with the volunteer and to consider her reassignment to a different position.
3. Propose a timeout during which she can renew her energy.