Volunteer Selection Process

During the selection process, the Partnership examines the extent to which a particular candidate is most suited to the position and the candidate examines the extent to which the Partnership fits his/her needs and motives. The selection process makes it possible to get to know the candidate: his/her experience, skills, personality traits, needs and the extent of their identification with the goals and values of the Partnership. The selection process can be useful to the Partnership in building up its public image and prestige.

The Selection Process

Creating a structured selection process will serve to make educated decisions with respect to the appropriate methods of selecting candidates for the Partnership as well as the criteria for selection, allowing the Partnership to differentiate between a candidate that is appropriate, will be suitable for the position, the Partnership’s goals and a candidate who will not persevere over time in the Partnership or does not fit the sought-after profile.

A structured selection process will include the following stages:

- Notification of placement
- Decision making
- Defining the needs of the Partnership
- Description of the position
- Invitation to the selection process
- Initial screening through recruitment process
- Building an interview manual
- Choosing the methods of selection
- Structured process for selecting volunteers
An explanation of the selection process flow chart

- **Defining the needs of the Partnership and a description of the position** – These stages are described in detail in the documents ‘P2G Planning and Integration of Volunteers’ and ‘P2G Defining Partnership Volunteer Positions.’

- **Selection through the recruitment process** – On the assumption that the recruitment process is structured and the message conveyed during the recruitment process includes most of the details of the position, its requirements and its expectations, it is reasonable to assume that the recruitment process itself will constitute a selection mechanism and only candidates who believe they meet the defined qualifications will be interested in this volunteer activity.

- **Choosing the method of selection** – During this stage, the most appropriate tools of selecting candidates for the position are chosen. A description of various tools and possibilities is detailed below.

- **Creating an interview manual** – On the assumption that the interview is a part of the selection process, this stage will involve preparing for and planning the interview, which will include preparing relevant questions, instructing the interviewers and preparing evaluation sheets. During this stage, the criteria for evaluating a candidate will be chosen, in accordance with the position he/she is being interviewed for. The criteria will be based on skills, traits, abilities and constraints, as defined in the position description.

- **Invitation to a personal interview** – At this stage, the candidate will be invited to be interviewed.

- **Decision making** – This stage takes place at the end of the selection process, during which all the candidates for the position are interviewed and the most suitable is selected. The duration of this stage should be clearly defined and it should be made clear to the candidates how long it will take to reach a decision.

- **Notification and placement** – During this stage, the candidates receive notification whether they have or have not been accepted to the position. It is important to also notify candidates who have not been accepted and it is even recommended that they be offered alternative volunteer opportunities in other frameworks within the Partnership. The notification can be made by telephone or in writing.

### Methods of Selection

During the selection process, it is recommended that a number of methods for selecting a candidate be chosen. This will provide a number of perspectives on his/her suitability for the position. Possible methods of selection:

- CV of the candidate
- Registration form
- Personal interview
- Group interview
- Recommendations
- Evaluation center
**The Selection Process of a Candidate for the Steering Committee / Subcommittee**

1. **Process to recruit potential members of the Steering Committee**
2. **Application of a potential candidate to the Partnership**
3. **Sending the registration form, description of the position and information on the Partnership to the candidate**
4. **Intake and review of the candidate's registration form**
5. **Invitation of the candidate to a personal interview by the Director and Chairperson of the Partnership**
6. **Check References**
7. **Evaluation of the candidate by the selection team and a decision by them**
   - **The candidate is found to be unsuitable for the Partnership’s Steering Committee**
   - **The candidate is found to be suitable to be a member of the Partnership's Steering Committee**
   - **Consideration of the candidate for other positions in the Partnership**
   - **Not suitable: Letter of rejection and suggestion to join other organizations in the community**
   - **Suitable: Alignment of expectations for the position**
   - **Notification from the Director of the Partnership by phone and in writing to the candidate of his acceptance**
   - **Conversation with the Chairperson and the Director of the Partnership to align expectations and signing of a volunteer agreement**
   - **Integration of the volunteer as a member of the Partnership Steering Committee**
**Personal Interview**

The goal of the interview is to determine the extent to which the candidate is suitable for a particular volunteer position. The interview makes it possible for the Partnership or its representative to convey information to the candidate with regard to the position and the Partnership. The interview makes it possible to observe how the candidate interacts in a face-to-face situation and how he/she verbally responds to questions being asked. Essentially, the interview is an in-depth conversation to get to know one another; during which it is possible to understand the volunteer’s motives, needs and skills. The interview makes it possible for the interviewers to determine how each side can accommodate the other. In addition, the candidate himself is better able to understand what is expected of him and to assess his degree of suitability to the position.

**Management of the Interview**

**Before the Interview:**
- Review the role description for the position
- Decide on selection criteria
- Develop appropriate questions to determine when the criteria are met
- Choose interviewers and train them
- Define the interview’s parameters: duration, time, place, etc.
- Review candidates’ forms and CVs

**After the interview:**
- Rank each candidate (qualitatively and quantitatively)
- Determine the suitability of the candidate.
During any personal interview various biases are liable to enter which may influence the decision to accept or reject a candidate. Being aware of biases, documenting the interview and having more than one interviewer are all ways to avoid these biases. It is important for the interviewers to be aware of their responses and to learn to recognize their weaknesses as interviewers, in order to attempt to reduce the effect of these biases, no matter how natural these may be.

Possible biases in an interview:

- **The halo effect:** Here, the interviewer becomes focused on one prominent characteristic or trait of the candidate, whether positive or negative, and projects it onto the rest of the candidates' traits. For example, finding out that a particular candidate was a pilot in the Air Force may result in the rest of his characteristics and abilities being judged through the prism of the “pilot's halo,” and all that it implies.

- **First impression:** The first impression of the interviewer, whether positive or negative, can affect the entire interview process. For example, the external appearance of a volunteer, the way he shakes hands or the way he chooses to describe himself can cause the interviewer to eliminate him or alternatively to favor him over other candidates. It is important to remember to balance the initial impression with information gathered during the interview itself.

- **The contrast effect:** A good candidate whose interview takes place after a number of interviews with weaker candidates will appear to be more suitable for the Partnership due to the contrast between him and the other candidates. In order to avoid this type of bias, when a large number of candidates are being interviewed, it is important to try to judge each of them on their own merit and not relative to the others.

- **Non-verbal behavior:** Interviewers can be influenced by a candidate’s non-verbal behavior. Research shows that candidates who demonstrate a high level of self-confidence through their body language, who maintain eye contact during the interview and who smile at the interviewer, achieve a higher interview score. A less suitable candidate may be chosen on the basis of his ability to broadcast these non-verbal messages.

- **The similarity effect:** Interviewers have a tendency to choose candidates who are similar to them in personal characteristics, habits and professional or academic background.

- **Gut feeling:** Intuition, is it the best judge? Interviewers have a tendency to evaluate candidates based on their intuition. Although intuition is important, it should be verified that other elements are being taken account when evaluating the candidate.

Examples of Possible Interview Questions

- What volunteer experience do you have?
- What did you most enjoy as a volunteer in the past?
- Why are you interested in volunteering?
- Why are you interested in volunteering with Partnership2Gether?
- How did you come to us—to Partnership2Gether?
- What are the areas in which you can contribute?
- Why are you interested in this specific position?
- What is your occupation? Are you satisfied with your work? With your position?
- How much time can you devote to volunteering?
- How will you deal with…? (an issue/situation in which they may need to deal with)
- What are your expectations of the position?
- What will give you a feeling of satisfaction from volunteering? What will disappoint you?
Dilemmas in the Volunteer Selection Process

Dilemma #1: It is a common concern of Directors that they will be left without functioning volunteers. A volunteer organization’s screening processes and its ability to be selective are dependent upon the number of interested candidates; and this is determined by the character of the organization, its location and primarily by its image. One of the Partnerships had a real concern: How is it possible to choose volunteers when it is difficult to find enough of them? “If I start being choosy, I won’t have enough volunteers!”

How to handle this dilemma: It is important to understand that the Partnership has an obligation and a responsibility to screen volunteers since they are the ones who will be representing the organization in the community. There is also a responsibility towards the volunteers who want to succeed in the position. In order to deal with a situation where there are only small numbers of candidates which does not allow for an authentic selection process, volunteer organizations must create an effective recruitment structure. The legitimacy of selecting candidates exists even if there is no surplus of candidates. It is preferable that there be fewer, but suitable, volunteers (rather than accepting all candidates and taking a risk that they will drop out).

Dilemma #2: There is an emotional difficulty in rejecting candidates. It is difficult to tell a candidate that they are not suited to the position. Many Directors appreciate the willingness of people to play a role in their organization without financial compensation, and find it difficult to reject requests to volunteer. As a result, less suitable candidates are being.

How to handle this dilemma: In this case also, it is important to remember that the Partnership has the responsibility and obligation to screen volunteers, since they will be representing the organization in the community. Clear criteria for screening and accepting candidates and making the needs and requirements of the position clear to the candidate can help resolve this problem. In addition, the candidate can be considered for another position in the Partnership and thus be included in the Partnership’s circle of volunteers.