



# VOLUNTEER MANUAL



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# WELCOME

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the Ontario Farmland Trust!

OFT has many volunteer opportunities from being a Board or Committee Member to volunteering with us in the office, in the field, or at our annual Farmland Forum.

We want to ensure that your experience with us is a good match for both you and the organization.

Please feel free at any time to discuss your needs as a volunteer, how your skills could assist our organization, and how we can make your time with us rewarding.

Our organization values the contributions that our volunteers make. Let us know how we are doing and how we can continue to make all volunteers an active part of our organization.

## **Definition of a Volunteer**

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A volunteer is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of an agency. A volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled by the agency prior to performance of the task.

## **Volunteering with OFT**

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Volunteering with the Ontario Farmland Trust offers an excellent opportunity for people who are passionate about local food and agriculture to make a difference.

Volunteers are critical to the success of farmland protection efforts in Ontario. The passion, commitment and expertise they share provide the foundation for the Ontario Farmland Trust's work and allows us to grow the impact of our work on-the-ground in communities across the province.

OFT volunteers:

- Uphold the mission and values of OFT
- Are active OFT members
- Contribute time and skills to the cause of farmland protection

In return, OFT volunteers:

- Build connections in the sector
- Achieve personal and professional goals and experience
- Are honoured and recognized annually at our AGM

## **Volunteer Positions with OFT**

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### **Board of Directors**

- Attend 4-6 meetings per year (and participate in e-votes or conference calls as needed)
- Attend the AGM
- Participate in at least one Board committee

### **Board Committees – Executive Committee, Land Securement and Stewardship Committee, Fundraising Committee, Policy and Education Committee**

- Attend meetings in person or by conference call
- Provide advice and guidance on programs and activities
- Assist in property inspections and annual monitoring
- Support fundraising efforts

### **Office**

- Help with office filing systems (electronic and hard copy)
- Data entry
- Stuff and stamp envelopes for appeal mailings
- Answer phone and email inquiries

### **Communications**

- Write blog posts
- Research new facts on farmland loss and protection in Ontario
- Prepare ENews postings
- Update content and layout of website
- Support social media outreach

### **Fundraising**

- Prepare funding proposals under the direction of the Executive Director
- Write fundraising appeals and inserts

### **Event Coordination**

- Assist with the coordination of the annual Farmland Forum
- Assist with the coordination of our Annual General Meeting
- Coordinate farmland easement celebrations
- Coordinate local farm visits for outreach and education

### **Farmland Forever Outreach Volunteers**

- Set up display booths at markets and various regional events
- Talk to people about farmland loss and farmland protection in Ontario
- Door to door canvassing about OFT's mission
- Recruit new members for OFT

# ABOUT OFT

## Who We Are

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OFT works to protect and preserve Ontario farmlands and associated agricultural, natural, and cultural features of the countryside through direct land securement, stewardship, policy research and education for the benefit of Ontarians today and future generations.

Our Vision is for a future where Ontario's best farmland is valued and permanently protected through sound policy, partnerships and proactive community engagement; where diverse farming communities thrive; and where the protection of farmland, agriculture and local food production is recognized as the foundation of a sustainable rural economy in Ontario.

OFT has been partnering with farmers and farmland owners since 2004 helping to ensure the long-term protection of more than 1,200 acres of farmland to date in Ontario.

## Governing Body and Practices

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OFT is part of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA), and adheres to the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices. Our volunteer Board of Directors is elected at the Annual General Meeting with specific governing duties to approve and oversee all OFT business.

## What We Do

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OFT actively promotes farmland protection through these three focus areas.

- **Farmland Easement Agreements** - The Ontario Farmland Trust permanently protects farmland by working directly with farmers and other rural landowners to place farmland easement agreements (conservation easements) on their land. An easement agreement protects farmland from any future non-agricultural use. OFT is the only land trust in Ontario that offers the unique service of protecting the agricultural values of farm properties in addition to the protection of natural features.
- **Farmland Policy** - The Ontario Farmland Trust works with the province and municipal planners to encourage greater protections for agriculture and farmland in planning and policy development.
- **Farmland Forum** – OFT hosts an annual farmland forum, bringing together planners, politicians, farmers, farmland owners, researchers and conservationists to discuss the most current issues related to farmland protection in Ontario.

# GETTING STARTED

## Volunteer Orientation Checklist

The following checklist has been created to ensure that all volunteers receive effective and appropriate orientation and training during the first days/weeks at OFT.

Name of volunteer	
Position	
Start date / Schedule	

DAY 1	
<p><b>Meeting with Executive Director or Program Manager to Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hours of Volunteer Work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Job description complete with duties, responsibilities, and performance measurables</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Confidentiality agreement</li> </ul>	
<b>General OFT Presentation</b>	
<p><b>Tour(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lunchroom</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Copier/scanner/printer</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Background material</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Manual</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> View 3 OFT videos</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review Website</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Annual Reports</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Workstation Orientation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Google email and calendar system</li> </ul>	
<b>Supervisor Sign off:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

## DAY 2

### Review:

- Volunteer schedule
- Office Rules
  - Dress code
  - Texting/Social Media / Email / Internet Use/ Cell phones
  - Working Alone
- Membership/Recruiting Members

### Health & Safety

- Complete “Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps”

<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/elearn/worker/index.php>

- Responsibilities
- First Aid
- Fire Exits
- Workplace Harassment
- Accident/Incident Reporting

### Introduction to our social media

- Facebook
- Twitter

**Supervisor Sign off:**

**Date:**

## Confidentiality Agreement

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Volunteers for the Ontario Farmland Trust must comply with the terms of this Agreement. This form shall be returned to the Executive Director for retention in the corporate records.

The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) requires corporate confidentiality to be strictly maintained for all of the confidential information obtained by volunteers (including all Committee members and task persons) about the business of the organization, as well as the clients, donors, partners or others served.

I acknowledge and agree that I will not divulge any confidential information, regarding the organization or its programs to anyone, other than what is required in the regular course of business conduct within the Ontario Farmland Trust. This includes but is not limited to confidential information pertaining to its financial status and operations such as budget information, donations of money or gifts in kind, salary information as well as any personal information pertaining to clients, donors, partners, Board, staff or other volunteers.

I will be provided with a volunteer job or task description, discuss expectations with assigned leaders, engage in related orientation or training and understand that reports, materials or products which may be created by me in the course of my service are part of the real property of the Ontario Farmland Trust.

I agree that upon termination of my volunteer role with the Ontario Farmland Trust, I will promptly return to the organization all materials obtained by me during my volunteer work, including but not limited to the OFT confidential documents, files, reports, manuals, equipment, membership lists, computer programs, funding proposals, etc. or otherwise dispose of these materials, upon leaving, as I am directed.

Failure to comply with confidentiality policies and workplace standards of the Ontario Farmland Trust may result in disciplinary actions, training efforts or dismissal as a Volunteer.

I understand the above terms of agreement and agree to these terms:

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# OFFICE RULES

## **Dress Code**

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OFT volunteers are expected to present a clean and professional appearance while conducting business, in or outside of the office.

Volunteers are expected to dress in 'office casual' attire in order to present a professional image to all visitors and partners. 'Business casual' should be the dress code when participating in meetings with council, partners, or other high-level meetings or attending the Farmland Forum.

OFT volunteers shall wear OFT branded t-shirts when conducting outreach events (tabling displays and attending outdoor events like farm easement celebrations, farm tours, etc.)

Unacceptable for either gender: gym clothes, rumpled or ripped clothing, miniskirts, inappropriately revealing attire, and flip-flops.

## **Personal Use of Social Media/Email/Internet/Cell Phones**

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During your volunteer shift with OFT, it is expected that there will be no personal use of social media, email, internet or cell phones, unless for an emergency, or for work related to your volunteer role with OFT (e.g. OFT social media posts, taking photos for OFT).

When using social media on your own time be mindful of your affiliation with OFT. Your followers may still make the connection to OFT so be respectful and think before you post.

## **Shared Office**

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OFT has an open, shared office space. Please be respectful – be friendly, but keep chatter to a minimum. There is a common room for meetings so that other staff are not interrupted while working.

## **Working Alone**

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On occasion volunteers may find themselves working alone in the OFT office. Please take all precautions for safety - lock the door and make sure someone knows where you are. Do not leave valuables in the office unlocked if you step out to get food or go to the mailbox.

## **Telecommuting**

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Volunteers may arrange, by mutual agreement, an option to work from home for certain tasks. This must be pre-approved by the Executive Director.

## **Expenses**

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Any purchases or mileage claims need to be pre-approved by the Executive Director.

# REPRESENTING OFT IN THE PUBLIC

## Representing OFT at Events

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Volunteers may represent OFT at outreach events, farm tours, and public events like the Farmland Forum.

Volunteers are expected to act in accordance with OFT's Code of Conduct & Conflict of Interest Policy

- Act fairly, honestly, and with integrity at all times
- Communicate effectively using generally accepted business language
- Ensure that public confidence and professional respect in the OFT are upheld and can bear close public scrutiny on accountability

## Collecting Memberships and Donations

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It is expected that volunteers will uphold OFT's *Donor Bill of Rights* when collecting memberships and donations on behalf of the organization.

## Donor Bill of Rights

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OFT has a **Donor Bill of Rights Policy**. The purpose is to ensure that donors and prospective donors have full confidence in the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) and to clearly demonstrate our appreciation for the support of our donors.

### Donor Rights and Principles

- To be informed of the mission of the Ontario Farmland Trust, of the way OFT intends to use donations and of its capacity to use donations and resources effectively for the intended purposes
- To be informed of the identity of those persons serving on the Board of Directors of the Trust or its staff
- To have access to the Trust's most recent annual reports on program achievements and financial statements
- To be assured that all gifts and donations will be used for the purposes requested and for which they were given
- To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition for contribution while respecting donor wishes in regard to publicity
- To be assured that information about gifts and donations are handled with respect and confidentiality to the extent provided by law
- To expect all contacts with individuals representing the OFT and its programs of interest to the donor will be professional in nature
- To be informed whether those seeking donations are officers, volunteers, employees of the Trust or Trust hired solicitors
- To have their personal information kept private and confidential
- To feel welcome and free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful, and forthright answers

## **OFT and Social Media**

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The following principles shall be followed when using social media for organizational-related activities (official business).

- Social media shall be used to promote the activities of the organization in support of our mission.
- OFT will not promote/endorse contractors, organizations or suppliers who provide products or services for farms.
- OFT is a non-partisan organization. We will not support politicians, political parties, or take stances on issues not related to farmland protection, unless approved by the Board of Directors.
- OFT occasionally takes political stances on planning and policies that impact farmland protection (e.g. a change in land use). We can, for example, post links to articles about planning decisions that impact farmland loss/conversion. We try to keep these informative and information based, rather than argumentative.
- OFT values partnerships and works with our partners and stakeholders (OFA, CFFO, Farms at Work, etc) to advance farmland protection. We can post and repost content from these approved partners and stakeholders.
- OFT will cite our sources when stating facts.

Social media blurs many of the traditional boundaries between internal and external communications.

- Be thoughtful about what you publish or post online.
- Do not disclose or use non-public information (e.g. family name, contact information and address of an easement property).

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

OFT is committed to a safe and healthy work environment.

- Volunteers are required to comply with health and safety legislation and the policies and practices of the Trust that are applicable.
- Volunteers are required to wear and use safety clothing and equipment as required by statutory regulations and/or OFT policies including work gloves and safety shoes during planting and other outdoor activities.

Volunteers are responsible for:

- Working and acting in a way that won't hurt them or any other staff member or volunteer.
- Reporting any hazard they find in the workplace.

## Workplace Health and Safety Resources

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All volunteers will complete: "Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps"

<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/elearn/worker/index.php>

## First Aid

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There are two first aid kits in the office for minor injuries. One kit is to be taken on all site visits and outdoor events.

## Fire Exits

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The first priority in the event of fire is to ensure your own personal safety. Immediately leave the building when you hear a fire alarm (even if you think it is a false alarm). The primary exit is the set of doors to the front of Johnston Hall. Wait on the sidewalk until the building has been cleared for re-entry. Alternate exists are at either end of the hall, exiting to the north or south sides of Johnston Hall.

## Workplace Harassment

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OFT supports the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the conduct of its business and adheres to provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code in regard to anti-discrimination. Harassment is the improper conduct by an individual, that is directed at and offensive to another individual and that is known or should be reasonably known to cause offence or harm. The OFT has a zero-tolerance policy with respect to harassment (see OFT Code of Conduct & Conflict of Interest Policy on page 12). OFT staff and volunteers will treat the public, co-workers, and other volunteers with professional courtesy, fairness, and respect at all times (Section 5.1.4 HR Management Policy).

## Incident Reporting

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All incidents (accidents, harassment, first aid measures, inter-office issues) shall be documented and provided in writing to the Executive Director who will review and address the matter.

## **OFT CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY**

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Volunteers shall be informed about the guiding principles in the OFT Board Policy that defines “Code of Conduct, Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment & Conflict of Interest”. OFT works cooperatively with many stakeholders and the public at large to increase awareness in the value of Ontario’s farmland and to implement programs to protect these farmlands. As a registered charity, the OFT must ensure generally accepted standards of ethical conduct, integrity and professionalism are practiced in fulfilling its objects and responsibilities.

### **Guiding Principles:**

The conduct of everyone employed by or associated with OFT is expected to be consistent with and fully comply with this Code. To preserve and enhance integrity and professionalism, all OFT Employees, Directors, volunteers and other service providers shall:

- Act fairly, honestly and with integrity at all times.
- Communicate effectively using generally accepted business language.
- Conduct themselves truthfully and professionally at all times during their engagement with OFT in accord with their responsibilities.
- Engage in open and transparent business dealings and in communications that reflect general fairness, courtesy and respect for all of our stakeholders and each other.
- Exercise professional judgement in an unbiased manner independent of personal interests.
- Take personal responsibility for their actions and decisions and follow through on their commitments as part of the Trust organization.
- Respect and understand the opinions and beliefs of others, even where such opinions and beliefs may be different from your own perspective.
- Treat colleagues in a courteous and professional manner, and exercise appropriate judgement in terms of behaviour and decorum.
- Maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality and avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest in accordance with applicable federal and provincial privacy laws.
- Ensure that public confidence and professional respect in the OFT are upheld and can bear close public scrutiny on accountability.
- Ensure proper care and stewardship of Trust assets and resources.
- Support and implement decisions of the Board.

Failure to comply with this policy could result in disciplinary action up to and including revocation of appointment, direction for new behaviour or other action, subject to applicable charity laws and approved OFT bylaws, policies, principles and/or related guidelines.



**ONTARIO FARMLAND TRUST**  
PROTECTING FARMLAND FOREVER