P-LAH · p-lah.com
Welcome to the team.

Volunteer Handbook

Everything you need to know, written for you — not about you. Keep this close throughout your time volunteering with P-LAH.

> This handbook is a shorter, friendlier version of P-LAH's full Volunteer Policy. It covers what's expected of you, who to contact, how the rating system works, and how we keep everyone safe. If you ever want the full details on anything in here, just ask your volunteer operations contact.

📞 Who to Contact

Save this page. It's the one you'll come back to most.

If you need...	Reach out to...
Help with your day-to-day role	Your placement supervisor at your Host Organisation
Help with your application, placement, or anything P-LAH-related	Your P-LAH Volunteer Operations Coordinator
To raise a safety or safeguarding concern	P-LAH's Safeguarding Focal Point — see “Keeping Everyone Safe”
To raise a complaint or disagreement	P-LAH Volunteer Operations — see “If Something Goes Wrong”
General questions	support@p-lah.com — official P-LAH volunteer support email/phone

What Kind of Volunteer Are You?

P-LAH works with six kinds of volunteers. Here's where you probably fit — and what it means day to day.

Type	What it means for you
Short-Term / Project-Based	You're here for under 3 months, usually tied to a specific project or event.
Long-Term / Ongoing	You're committing to 3+ months with one organisation, renewable for as long as it's working for both sides.
Skilled / Professional	You're volunteering specialised skills. Strong performance here can fast-track you into P-LAH's paid Talent Pipeline.
Corporate Volunteer	You're placed through your employer's CSR partnership with P-LAH – your time commitment follows that programme's terms.
Remote / Virtual	You're contributing without a physical placement — fully flexible, set per role.
Diaspora Volunteer	You're an African abroad, volunteering remotely or during a visit home.

✅ Before You're Placed — Why We Run Checks

Before you start, we run a few checks. Not because we doubt you — because the organisations you'll work with deserve to know everyone on the team is who they say they are.

Q: What checks will I go through?

A: Everyone goes through identity verification. Longer placements, skilled roles, and anything involving children or vulnerable adults also involve reference and background checks.

Q: How long does this take?

A: Most applications move from submission to a placement offer within 5-7 days subject to availability of opportunities. We don't believe in making you wait a month to hear back.

Q: What if I'm not accepted for a role?

A: It might be a skills mismatch, the role being filled, or a check that didn't clear. We will communicate the reason.

REMEMBER: Checks protect you too — they're the same reason you can trust that every Host Organisation on P-LAH has been vetted.

Your First Day

Here's what to expect as you get started:

Step	What happens
1	You sign your volunteer agreement — this happens before any placement activity begins.
2	Your host organisation gives you a role briefing — your duties, who you report to, and any safety basics.
3	P-LAH gives you a short orientation — how ratings work, your support contacts, and where to go with questions.
4	You're usually assigned a buddy or point of contact for your placement
5	You get whatever access you need to do the role — systems, materials, and premises.

Our Code of Conduct

This is what P-LAH and your Host Organisation expect from you — and what you can expect from everyone else on the platform too.

- Treat everyone — staff, beneficiaries, and fellow volunteers — with respect.
- No harassment, discrimination, or abuse of your position, ever.
- If you have a personal or financial interest connected to your placement, tell us.
- Follow your host organisation's specific safety and conduct rules.
- Don't accept gifts, payments, or favours connected to your placement.
- Don't represent yourself as an employee of your host organisation or of P-LAH — you're a volunteer, and that's something to be proud of, not something to hide.

REMEMBER: see “How Ratings Work” for what actually happens. Anything serious (harassment, fraud, safety violations) leads to immediate removal from the platform.

⚖️ If Something Goes Wrong

Disagreements happen. Here's how to get them sorted without it becoming a bigger deal than it needs to be.

Step	What happens
1	Raise it informally with your supervisor or P-LAH Volunteer Operations — most things get sorted here within about a week.
2	Still unresolved? Put it in writing to P-LAH Volunteer Operations. You'll get an acknowledgement immediately
3	P-LAH's Head of Volunteer Connections reviews it and responds within 3-5 business days.
4	If it's still unresolved, an independent mediator steps in.
5	You'll get a final written decision shortly after.

REMEMBER: Raising a concern in good faith never counts against you — that's true for grievances and for safeguarding alike.

Expenses — What's Covered

Volunteering is unpaid — that's the definition. But that doesn't mean you should be out of pocket for showing up.

Q: Can I get a stipend?

A: Some host organisations offer one at their discretion. It doesn't change your status as a volunteer.

Q: Can I get reimbursed for transport or accommodation?

A: Yes, if it's a cost directly tied to your role and pre-approved. Keep your receipts.

Q: How do I claim it back?

A: Submit your receipts within 3 days of the expense. Your host organisation handles reimbursement directly — it's agreed upfront in the role listing, not something P-LAH processes centrally.

Keeping Everyone Safe

Some of the people P-LAH's network serves are children or vulnerable adults. We take their safety extremely seriously — and so should you.

> P-LAH has zero tolerance for abuse, exploitation, or harassment of anyone we serve. No exceptions, no second chances on this one.

- If your role involves direct, unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults, you'll go through an extra safeguarding check before you start.
- If you see or suspect anything wrong, report it immediately — within 24 hours of becoming aware, always.
- You can report a concern confidentially, without giving your name, if that's what you need.
- You will never be penalised for raising a genuine concern in good faith — even if it turns out to be nothing.

⭐ How Ratings Work

Yes — you'll be rated at the end of your placement. And you'll get the same chance to rate your host organisation. Here's how it works and why it's nothing to stress about if you're doing your best.

Q: What's the rating scale?

A: 1 to 5, given by your host organisation when your placement ends.

Q: What happens if I miss a commitment or get a low rating once?

A: You'll get a written reminder and some coaching — that's it. One hiccup doesn't define you.

Q: What if it happens repeatedly?

A: It escalates step by step: a formal warning, then a probationary placement, then a suspension if it continues. You'll always have a chance to turn it around, and you can appeal most decisions within 14 days.

Q: What doesn't get a second chance?

A: Fraud, harassment, safety or safeguarding violations, or giving false information. Those lead straight to permanent removal from P-LAH.

Q: What's the upside of a good rating?

A: A certificate of completion, a reference letter if you've served 3+ months, public recognition if you want it, and a fast track into P-LAH's future paid talent pipeline.

> **REMEMBER:** Ratings exist to protect quality, not to catch you out. Most volunteers never see anything past a friendly reminder, ever.

One Last Thing

This handbook covers the essentials. The full P-LAH Internal Volunteer Policy and the Volunteer Agreement you signed have the complete detail behind everything above, if you ever want it.

Welcome aboard — we're genuinely glad you're here.

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