



Volunteer Program Cleveland Museum of Natural History Overview

At the Cleveland Museum of Natural History our mission is to inspire, through science and education, a passion for nature, the protection of natural diversity, the fostering of health, and leadership to a sustainable future. Our Docent guidelines prioritize our visitors, volunteers, and staff alike. All Docent must abide by these guidelines to participate.

Purpose

The purpose of the Museum Docent Program is to enhance the visitor experience by providing knowledgeable and engaging guides who can interpret exhibits and artifacts, share the museum's story, and foster a deeper appreciation for our collections. Docents play a crucial role in creating a welcoming atmosphere, facilitating educational experiences, and promoting lifelong learning for all museum visitors.

Responsibilities

- **Lead Educational Activities:** To lead educational activities in gallery Learning Labs or in gallery areas using education collection items.
- **Engage with Visitors:** Offer assistance, answer questions, and provide additional context about exhibits and the museum's mission.
- **Conduct Guided Tours:** Provide engaging and informative tours for various audiences, including school groups, adult visitors, and special interest tours.
- **Assist with Programs and Events:** Support Museum events, lectures, and special programs by guiding tours, assisting with activities, and interacting with visitors.
- **Maintain Knowledge:** Stay informed about current exhibitions, collections, and museum events through ongoing education and training.

Qualifications

We strive to create a safe, welcoming, and respectful environment for our visitors, staff, and volunteers alike. As such, we expect shadows to adhere to the following:

- **Interest in Education and History:** A passion for sharing knowledge and engaging with the public, particularly in the fields of natural history, anthropology, and science.
- **Good Communication Skills:** Ability to speak clearly and confidently to diverse audiences, with a friendly and approachable demeanor.
- **Commitment to Learning:** Willingness to participate in ongoing training and professional development.

- **Reliability and Punctuality:** Consistent attendance at scheduled shifts and training sessions, demonstrating commitment to the program.

Requirements

- **Age Requirement:** Participants must be 16 years old to apply for our Docent Program
- **Interview Process:** Selected applicants will undergo a brief interview to assess their interests and suitability for the program. Current Volunteers will skip this step.
- **Background Check:** All participants 16 and over will be required to undergo a background check. Current Volunteers will skip this step.
- **Attire:** Participants must adhere to the museum's dress code, which includes wearing appropriate and professional attire. Closed-toe shoes and long pants are mandatory for select departments.
- **Availability:** Due to the training schedule (see below), docent program training may be limited to three times a year.
- Volunteers are to follow the leadership and direction of CMNH staff at all times. Those who fail to comply may be asked to immediately leave our program location(s) and may be restricted from participation in future opportunities.

Commitment and Training

New docents must complete a comprehensive training program, depending on training availability, including both in-person and online components.

- **Orientation Session:** An introductory session covering museum history, visitor services, and volunteer overview. This is provided to all museum volunteers.
- **Athena Training:** A 3-level training designed to equip docents with knowledge of Project Athena, scientific literacy, content delivery methods, and effective communication techniques, ensuring docents are well-prepared to engage and educate museum visitors.
- **Exhibit Training:** Detailed training on current galleries and exhibitions, including key artifacts and interpretive techniques.
- **Shadowing Opportunities:** Observation of experienced docents to learn best practices and develop personal tour styles.
- **Specialty Training:** Optional workshops on specific topics such as human origins, fossils, or regional geology, with opportunities to earn badges or certifications. **Must attend a minimum of two per year**
- **Ongoing Engagement:** Participate in meetings, workshops, and continuing education sessions to maintain and enhance knowledge and skills.

Benefits

- **Recognition and Appreciation:** Regular acknowledgment of contributions through newsletters, events, and special recognition programs.

- **Professional Development:** Access to ongoing training, workshops, and networking opportunities with other museum professionals and experts.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is a docent?

A docent is a trained volunteer who serves as a knowledgeable guide and educator at a museum, gallery, zoo, or other cultural institution. They provide visitors with engaging and informative tours, interpret exhibits and artifacts, and share the institution's history and mission. Docents play a vital role in enhancing the visitor experience by facilitating educational activities, answering questions, and promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of the site. Docents undergo specialized training to stay informed about current exhibitions and best practices in visitor engagement.

How do I apply for the docent program?

To apply, please complete the volunteer application form available on our website or here: TBD. Submit the completed form along with any required information.

How long will it take to process my application?

Applications are typically processed within 1 week. You will be notified via email or phone regarding the status of your application.

Is there an age requirement?

Participants must be 16 years old to apply for the Docent Program.

How long is a docent shift at the museum?

Docent shifts are available in 3 hour increments throughout the days the museum is open. Time is decided on during scheduling.

What type of tours will I be expected to conduct?

Docents conduct various tours for school groups, adult visitors, special interest groups, and during museum events.

How often is training offered?

Due to the structured training schedule, the docent program training may be limited to three times a year.

Will I receive any certification or acknowledgment for participating in the Docent Program?

Certificates will be given upon completion of the docent program. Name badges and/or buttons will be given to communicate to visitors of status.

I still have questions, so who can I talk to for more information?

If you have any questions about the Docent Program, these guidelines, or your docent participation, please Contact Hannah Driscoll, Manager of Volunteer Engagement at 216.231.4600 x3545 or hdriscoll@cmnh.org