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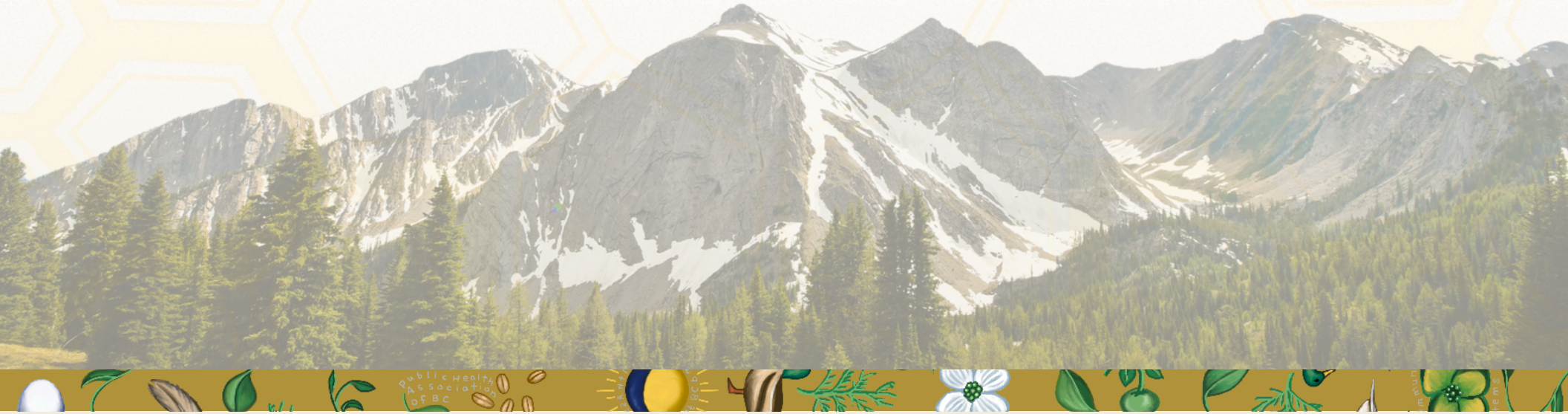
Youth Volunteer Onboarding Toolkit



As we begin this work together, it's important to reflect on where we are and how our efforts are connected to our land-based work. PHABC is a provincial organization and acknowledges that our work goes beyond the places we live and impacts the lives of nations across British Columbia and Turtle Island. We recognize the deep relationships that Indigenous Peoples hold with the lands and food systems where our work takes place.



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Rise Up! Youth Onboarding Toolkit

We are so excited that you have chosen to be a part of Rise Up! Strengthening Food Systems and Environmental Stewardship with the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC). Thank you for bringing us your energy, ideas, curiosity, and commitment to making a positive difference in your local food system!



A Warm Welcome to Rise Up!

Throughout the program, you'll have the opportunity to grow as an active participant in your community while you meaningfully engage in Volunteer work with your Host Organization, connect with your fellow Rise Up! peers, and explore food systems, leadership and civic engagement topics via online educational modules.

As you start your Rise Up! journey, we want to ensure that you have the information and support you need for a fun, safe and meaningful experience. This toolkit is designed to do just that! Between its pages are resources you can refer back to throughout your placement whenever you need guidance.

Inside, you will find tools to help you prepare for your Volunteer role, set goals, navigate challenges, and reflect on your impact. If you would like to review information about program expectations and timelines, feel free to refer back to your Welcome Package and Volunteer Participation Agreement, or contact your Rise Up! Regional Lead. As we begin this journey together, we acknowledge that the Rise Up! program takes place on the traditional territories of many Indigenous peoples across British Columbia. We are committed to honouring the ongoing relationships that Indigenous Peoples hold with the lands, waters, and communities where we live, learn, and serve.

We invite you to reflect on your own connection to the land and do your best to listen, learn, and contribute to uplifting and respecting Indigenous voices and traditions throughout the program. We are thrilled to have you join us, and are here to support your growth as a leader in food systems and environmental stewardship as you rise up in your community! If you need any further information or clarification, feel free to reach out to your Regional Lead. You can find their contact information here.

Sincerely,



Lauren Bernardi
Provincial Manager
Rise Up!

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Volunteer

As a Volunteer with Rise Up! you have certain rights that help keep you safe and treated fairly. Rise Up! staff, Host Organizations and volunteers have a variety of responsibilities to keep each other safe and make sure everyone feels included.

The lists below outline some of these rights and responsibilities, but keep in mind that your Host Organization may have additional guidelines. Speak to your Regional Lead or Host Organization if you have any questions!



As a Rise Up! Volunteer, you have a right to:

- A safe, equitable and respectful environment during all Rise Up! activities and events, including with your Host Organization;
- Be treated fairly, with respect and without discrimination based on your background or lived experience; and
- A Volunteer and educational experience that is aligned with your goals, skills and interests.

As a Rise Up! Volunteer you are responsible for:

- Communication – with your Host Organization and Regional Lead consistently about scheduling, tasks and any issues throughout your placement.
- Acting with Respect – listen with an open mind, treat others with kindness and honesty, and respect people's diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.
- Understanding and following guidelines – follow the policies and procedures of the Host Organization (e.g. safety, confidentiality, respect, harassment, food safety, etc.).
- Asking questions – when something is not clear to you, don't be afraid to ask for clarity.
- Being prepared – do your best to arrive on time for scheduled shifts, with any required supplies or equipment (e.g. water, snacks, work clothes, personal medication).
- Gaining consent – use social media responsibly. We encourage you to share your Rise Up! journey online, but please ask people if they are alright with being in your photos/videos and having them shared on social media.















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Navigating your Rise Up! Placement: Tips for Success

Everyone in Rise Up! brings something different to the table. No matter where you're starting from, this guide will help you prepare, build confidence, and make the most of your volunteer placement and your experience in the Rise Up! program.

Being Prepared

Starting something new can be both exciting and unfamiliar. Preparing for your volunteer placement can help you feel confident and ensure you are ready to fully contribute.





Your First Day Volunteering:

- Confirm the time, location, and who to check in with for your first day with your Host Organization. Plan how to get there and give yourself extra time.
- Ask if there is anything helpful to review beforehand. Complete any onboarding paperwork that your Host Organization requires. Your Regional Lead can help you with this process!
- Bring anything you might need - like a notebook, water bottle, or snack.
- On your first day, you should also ask questions such as: “What will a typical day look like?” and “Who do I talk to if I have questions?”. To help you prepare, there are prompting questions in the **Volunteer Placement Co-Creation Guide In Appendix A.**

Time Management and Staying Organized

Your placement should fit into your life while supporting your Host Organization's needs. Good time management helps you stay on track and shows the host you're organized. To manage your time:

- Use a calendar or planner app to block off your placement hours and your other responsibilities (school, work, rest). Build in time for travel, meals, and breaks.
- Let your Host Organization know as early as possible if you need to adjust your schedule.
- Check the program timeline in your Welcome Package to get a better sense of your commitments throughout the program.
- Track your volunteer hours on the Rise Up! Digital Platform. This will help you monitor progress towards your 120-hour commitment. You can also use the platform to see upcoming events.



Working with Your Host Organization – Commitment, Active Participation, and Teamwork

When you and your Host Organization work together and support each other, the experience is more meaningful for everyone. To build a strong relationship:

- Show up on time, be ready to take part, and follow through on your assigned tasks.
- Listen actively, be open to feedback, and ask questions if something is unclear.
- Be respectful of and open-minded to the diverse perspectives, experiences, and contributions of your team members. Try to seek out mentorship from those who have wisdom to share.
- Share your ideas or concerns in a clear and respectful way. Your voice matters, so choose a time, place and tone that will contribute positively to the goals of your team.
- Stay flexible. Plans may change depending on the organization's needs. Try to adapt and see these moments as learning opportunities!

Empathy and Respect: For People, Land, and Community

Empathy and respect are key to meaningful volunteer work in food systems and environmental stewardship. By treating people, land, and community partners with care, you are helping to build stronger relationships, support healthy communities, and create lasting, positive change.

- Everyone's experience with food and the land is different. Avoid making assumptions, treat each person with kindness, listen to their stories, and be open to learning.
- Treat food and the environment with care. Follow instructions from your Host Organization on how to handle food, plants, soil, and equipment responsibly. Ask questions if you are unsure!
- Respect different cultural and community traditions related to food and the land. Be open to learning about practices different from what you may be used to.



Reflect on Your Growth and Co-create Your Experience

Taking a moment to regularly reflect on your experience helps you notice what you are learning, realize how you've grown, and decide where you want to go next. This reflection is also key to co-creating a meaningful placement with your Host Organization, bringing your interests and strengths to the role while supporting the organization's needs. Co-creation can look like:

- Asking to try something new that interests you;
- Suggesting a small idea that supports the team's goals; and/or
- Offering help in areas where you already have experience. Check out the Self-Reflection Guide in the next section, as well as the Co-Creation Guide in Appendix A, to help you identify and communicate your goals to your Host Organization to ensure alignment between the volunteer placement and your interests.





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Take Care of Your Wellbeing

We recognize that volunteering can sometimes be emotionally or physically demanding, it is important to prioritize your health. Being honest about your needs and communicating clearly helps build trust and demonstrates your commitment to showing up fully when you can.

If something comes up, whether you're sick, have a family commitment, or need a day to rest, it's okay to take time off – just let your Host Organization know ahead of time. Keep in mind that each Host Organization may have different guidelines around how much notice they need. Feel free to check out the Seeking Support section so you know who else you can reach out to when you need help.

Final Reminders

- You do not need to be perfect. Being open to learning is enough.
- Asking for help shows strength and self-awareness.
- Respect goes both ways. Your time matters, and so does the work of the organization.
- Rest is part of growth. Plan for rest and take breaks when you need them. Volunteering is about showing up, learning, and making a difference. Stay curious, try your best, and enjoy the journey!



Self-Reflection Guide: Setting Intentions for Your Volunteer Placement

Taking a moment to reflect on your goals, interests, and experiences can help you start your volunteer placement with purpose and co-create a meaningful volunteer role with your Host Organization.

Feel free to use this guide to explore how you want to grow during your placement. Reflect in what ever way feels best for you, whether that's brainstorming with your Regional Lead, journaling, or creating a drawing or video. There are no right or wrong answers – focus on what matters to you!



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Below are some prompting questions to help you get started:

- **What do I hope to learn? (e.g. what area of food systems and/or environmental stewardship am I most curious about?)**
- **What skills do I have that I want to contribute to the program?**
- **What skills do I want to develop? (e.g. teamwork, gardening, social media, leadership)**

After reflecting on your hopes for the placement, you may want to set some practical goals to help guide you. These goals may be related to a new skill you want to learn, your desire to make a difference in your community, or challenging yourself in a new way. Feel free to use the SMART goal-setting framework to help guide you (see below for an example)

Specific: What exactly do I want to achieve? E.g. I want to lead a composting workshop for community members to develop my public speaking skills.

Measurable: How will I know when I have reached my goal? E.g. When I have led at least one composting workshop by the end of my placement.

Achievable: What steps will I take to achieve this? Are there any supports or resources I may need? E.g. By observing a current workshop, preparing talking points, and getting feedback from my team.

Relevant: Why is this important to me? Is it relevant to my placement and the organization's work? E.g. This goal is relevant because I am interested in exploring a career in environmental education.

Timely: When will I achieve this goal by? E.g. I will achieve this goal by the end of my placement in March 2026.

Reflection is an ongoing process. Revisit this guide regularly to check on your growth and adjust your goals as needed. You can also reach out to your Regional Lead at any time for guidance.

Equity & Inclusion in Practice – A Shared Approach

At Rise Up!, we believe in creating a space where everyone feels valued, respected, and accepted. It is everyone's responsibility to help create welcoming and safe environments where all program participants have the chance to contribute and feel included.

Rise Up! is committed to creating an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment, where we respect and appreciate differences in age, ethnicity, cultural background, gender, physical ability, beliefs, language, sexual orientation, education, nationality, and social background.



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At Rise Up! this is how we define equity and inclusion:

Equity: Participants have the resources they need to succeed by understanding their unique backgrounds and experiences. It involves providing additional or different supports so that everyone can access the same opportunities as others, no matter where they're starting from.

Inclusion: Participants feel like they are welcome and that they belong, no matter their differences.

Together with Host Organizations, we aim to:

- Create a welcoming, inclusive, and culturally safe environment for everyone;
- Recognize and respect different ways of learning, leading, and participating;
- Create space for feedback, reflection, and adaptation;
- Encourage youth to share their ideas experiences, and ensure that their voices are heard and respected;" and
- Be open to learning, and unlearning, along the way.

How can you practice equity & inclusion during your time in Rise Up!?

- **Help create safe environments** – remember your impact is often more important than your intention. Focus on understanding how others are affected by your words and actions.
- **Engage in thoughtful conversation** – don't be afraid to ask hard questions, but be ready to listen to understand more deeply. While you may not always agree, you can create space to appreciate different perspectives.
- **Value all voices** – practice communicating your thoughts and ideas and if you tend to take over during discussions, practice listening while supporting others to speak up.
- **Continue to learn and unlearn** – acknowledge that everyone is at different stages in their learning, we are all bound to make mistakes and have our own biases. Trust that people are trying their best and be open to changing your mind.
- **Respect others** – honour people's pronouns, identities, and lived experiences. This means actively listening, understanding their point of view, and respecting confidentiality. Remember the stories but leave the names.

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Seeking Support: Contacts and Resources

As a Rise Up! participant, your well-being is a priority. We understand that challenges can come up, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

Whether you're unsure about something, feel uncomfortable, or just need help staying organized, you don't have to do it alone. Find out who to reach out to for help and what to do if something doesn't feel right.





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Your Host Organization

This is the organization where your volunteer placement is happening. Reach out to them if you:

- Have questions about your volunteer shift schedule or tasks.
- Need to let someone know you'll be late or unable to attend your shift.
- Are interested in adjusting your role to better align with your interests.
- Would like to learn about their staff's career journeys and how to enter related career paths.
- Need to get your hours confirmed on the Rise Up! Digital Platform.
- Want to share feedback or concerns related to your role.

Your Regional Lead

Your Regional Lead is here to support you throughout your Rise Up! journey. Reach out to them for:

- General help (e.g. scheduling, email drafting, productivity tips) or program questions.
- On-site supervision at your volunteer placement.
- Support with navigating the Rise Up! Digital Platform (e.g., how to log your hours).
- Information on financial and accessibility supports, including reimbursement forms.
- Check-ins to discuss your placement, reflect on your experiences, and address any concerns.
- Sharing reflections from your experience or ideas about how Rise Up! can grow. You can find the contact information for your Regional Lead **here**. You can reach out by email, phone, or ask for a video call - whatever feels right for you.

Lauren Bernardi – Rise Up! Provincial Manager

Lauren supports the Rise Up! program across the province. If you need to speak with someone beyond your region, Lauren is available to connect with. Feel free to reach out to Lauren if:

- You're not comfortable sharing something with your Regional Lead.
- You have a serious concern about your experience.

You can reach Lauren at: **rise.up@phabc.org**



Additional Supports

Emergency and Mental Health Support

- Call 911 for immediate assistance in case of any serious emergency.
- Call Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 for free mental health support.
- Call the Hope for Wellness Help Line at 1-855-242-3310 for immediate mental health counselling and crisis Intervention. They also have an online chat available here.
- Contact the Kuu-Us Crisis Line Society at 1-800-588-8717 if you are an Indigenous person and need culturally safe support.
- See Culturally Safe and Trauma-Informed Cultural Services Information Sheet from First Nations Health Authority for further supports and/or resources.

We recognize that support isn't one-size-fits-all, and that individuals' needs may be different based on their background, identity, and lived experience. If you want to talk to someone who better understands your unique experience or if you're looking for resources to address another type of concern, reach out to your Regional Lead. They'll do their best to connect you with safe, respectful and culturally relevant support in your area.

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What to Do if You Feel Uncomfortable or Unsafe in Your Placement

1. Trust your feelings: If something feels wrong, trust your instincts. It's okay to take a step back. You have the right to refuse any task or environment that feels unsafe.

2. Reach out immediately to your:

- **Host Organization:** If it's an issue that you feel comfortable bringing up, and if it seems like something they could fix directly, reach out to your main contact or another trusted staff member at your Host Organization. Examples include: feeling overwhelmed by the workload, a miscommunication with a staff member, or wanting to feel more involved.
- **Regional Lead:** You can talk to your Regional Lead at any time, no matter how big or small the issue feels. You can reach out if you don't feel comfortable speaking to your host, if something happens that makes you feel unsafe or disrespected, or if the issue hasn't improved after speaking with your host. Your Regional Lead can help you explore your options, and work with your host to resolve the concern.

3. Note down important details: If your concern is related to a specific situation, it may help to note down details such as date, time, location, who was involved, and what happened. This information can be useful if more follow up is needed.

4. Next steps: After reporting an issue, we will work with you to find the best way forward. Stay tuned for any further instructions from your Regional Lead.













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Wrapping up your Placement

Thank you for being a part of the Rise Up! program. Your commitment, passion, and energy has supported food system transformation and environmental stewardship within your community. That's a big win for people and the planet!

As you are wrapping up your placement, there are a couple of administrative tasks to keep in mind. Use the checklist below to ensure you've completed everything.





Checklist

- ☐ Have I fulfilled the tasks required from my Host Organization?
- ☐ Have I had a final check-in with my Host Organization and Regional Lead?
- ☐ Have I tracked all of my hours in the Rise Up! Digital Platform?
- ☐ Have I completed all the educational modules?
- ☐ Have I completed evaluation forms to provide feedback on the program?
- ☐ Have I asked my Host Organization for a written reference or LinkedIn recommendation? (optional)
- ☐ Have I and/or my Host Organization written an impact story on the Rise Up! Digital Platform?

Next steps

Beyond Rise Up!, there is real value in taking the time to reflect on your experience, including what you have learned and how you have grown. The skills and knowledge you have developed will be transferable to many different settings, so it's important to remember how you developed them and how you can apply them in future. Check out the reflection prompts in **Appendix B** to help you!

In the meantime, continue to create positive change in your communities and keep in touch with us! We would love to know where you go next.





Appendix

A. Volunteer Placement Co-Creation Guide:

Co-creation means working with your Host Organization to design a volunteer placement that aligns with both your interests and the organization's needs, ensuring the placement is meaningful for both of you. By helping shape your role, you'll feel more motivated and connected to the role while providing your host with support that is thoughtful, relevant and aligned with their mission.

Prompts for Co-Creating Volunteer Placements

These guiding questions can help you have meaningful conversations with your Host Organization at the start to help shape the placement. You can also revisit this guide throughout your role, as needed.

Understanding Each Other's Goals

- What do I want to learn, explore, or contribute during this placement? How does this align with what my Host Organization is hoping to accomplish?
- Are there existing tasks or projects that can be adapted to fit both of our goals?
- What would a successful placement look like for myself and the organization?
  Availability and Capacity
- How much time can I commit, and how often?
- Are there any times I'll be busier (e.g., exams, travel)? What about the organization?

- How do I learn and work best? Are there any supports and resources that would help me feel more comfortable and confident?
- How comfortable am I with independent work versus guided tasks? Is there a balance?
- How do we both prefer to communicate with each other? (e.g., phone, email, text)

Learning and Mentorship

- What skills or experiences do I want to gain? Are there areas of the organization's work that I'm especially curious about?
- How might this placement connect to my career interests? What kind of guidance or mentorship can the Host Organization provide to support this?
- How often will we check in on my progress? How does the organization prefer I share feedback or concerns?
- Will I have chances to try new things and take on more responsibility as my confidence increases?

Final Reflection

Co-creating your placement is about having open conversations, making decisions together, and building something that works for both you and your Host Organization. If you would like help in designing your role or talking with your host, your Regional Lead is here to support you.

B. Reflections of Your Rise Up! Journey

Regardless of where you are in your educational or career journey, reflecting on your experiences can help you see how far you have come and explore what you want to do next! Use the prompts below as a guide. When answering these questions, try to think of specific examples from your Rise Up! journey. You can use the STAR framework to help:

Situation – describe the context or background.
Task – what was your role or task?
Action – how did you complete your task or resolve the situation?
Result – what was the out come?

The STAR method helps break down your experience so you can better understand what you did, what you learned, and how you can apply it in the future.

What did you do?

- What were your key responsibilities during placement? What duties made up your dayto-day, what tasks were you responsible for? • What key skills did you develop? Can you think of some examples of how you developed them?
- What were some milestones or accomplishments? Did you achieve something you set out to do? This could be big or small, and something you either did on your own or as part of a team.
- Who were the key people you engaged with and did their roles inspire you?
- What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

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What did you learn? Or unlearn?

- What did you learn about yourself during Rise Up!? Did you step outside of your comfort zone?
- What new concepts around food systems or environmental stewardship did you learn?
- Were there any situations you might approach differently next time?
- Did you gain new insights on how to work in a professional setting? This could include things like punctuality, communication or teamwork.
- Did you find organizations who are doing inspiring work in your community that you can continue to be a part of?

What did you enjoy?

- What activities or type of work made you excited and engaged?
- Was there an activity or task that you ended up enjoying more than you thought? Or did something make you feel even more interested in a particular area?
- What came easily? What were you good at?
- Were there moments where you felt like you could have used more training or knowledge?
- Were there any problems that you enjoyed solving?

Looking ahead:

- What do you care deeply about? How could this translate into your education or career?
- Do you see yourself working in food systems or environmental stewardship?
- Is there another job or industry that you're interested in?
- How could the skills and knowledge you've gained during Rise Up! help you succeed?
- Did you network with someone that you can stay in touch with for ongoing mentorship?

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