

# Volunteer Policy

June 2015



## Aims and objectives

- Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA) exists to promote universal human rights, environmental sustainability and animal welfare by encouraging a wider understanding of the ability of ethical purchasing to address these issues.
- ECRA produces Ethical Consumer magazine and website, and the Corporate Critic on-line database. It also undertakes research and provides consultancy services on corporate responsibility and environmental and social impact issues.
- ECRA responds to hundreds of enquiries on ethical consumerism each year, attends meetings and conferences on the subject and presents its case in national and local media.

## Volunteering with the Co-operative

- ECRA is a multi-stakeholder co-operative with worker members and investor members. Both classes of member are involved in decision-making and the election of Directors onto the Board.
- The day-to-day operations of ECRA are managed by its staff as a not-for-profit co-operative.
- ECRA's staff is made up of paid staff, paid research associates and volunteers. Volunteers are integral in supporting staff and projects, contributing to ECRA's ongoing success. Some of ECRA's paid staff were once volunteers at the organisation!
- ECRA is limited in the number of volunteers, interns, and research associates it can support due to a small workforce and a limited number of available desks in the office. However, opportunities to work remotely are available. For example, on the Wikispaces project.
- ECRA recruits volunteers on an ongoing basis when a space becomes vacant, or a project is identified for, or by, a volunteer.
- As well as space, there is a limit to the number of internal office tasks available for volunteers, so we are unable to take on a large number of office volunteers at one time.

## **Incentives for volunteering with ECRA**

For long term volunteers who volunteer for more than 6 hours per week ECRA can cover reasonable transport requests within the Greater Manchester area. In addition we can offer a lunch allowance of up to £5 per day.

### **Other incentives include:**

- Valuable work experience
  - The broad range of tasks and experiences open to a volunteer make working at ECRA a valuable work experience for a number of careers: environmental consultancy, research, environmental journalism, marketing, graphic design and desk-top publishing, campaigning, database management, personnel, NGO policy making and management.
  - ECRA staff have gone on to jobs at Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and in computer programming and journalism.
- Skills development, personal and professional development, and training
  - Where possible, and practicable, we will provide skills training for volunteers.
  - As well as the volunteer's personal task list, weekly 1:1 catch-ups will be provided, and all volunteers will be assigned one supervisor. Your supervisor will be responsible for supporting you throughout your volunteer experience.
- Friendly atmosphere
  - Our offices in Hulme are situated in a complex of flats and like-minded companies - nearby amenities include a theatre space and café. Despite its often intense and hard-working atmosphere, ECRA is a friendly and frequently humorous place to work.
- Socials and invitations to events
  - We have socials for both staff and volunteers where we have fun away from the office!

### **Skills and experience needed**

We have a minimum set of requirements for volunteers at ECRA which we ask volunteers and staff to fulfil. This makes it easier for both ECRA, and those thinking of volunteering, to establish whether we are right for each other.

**Volunteers will need:**

- an interest in, and knowledge of, a range of the environmental and ethical issues of concern to ECRA
- to be able to take responsibility for tasks and to work well without supervision;
- to have an organised and methodical approach to work;
- to be able to work well within a team and taking part in the day-to-day running of a workers' co-operative;
- to commit to volunteering one day per week over a six month period, or equivalent
- (half day over a year etc);
- proficiency in English.

**Typical office volunteer tasks**

Volunteers will be expected to pitch in with the day-to-day administration of ECRA. This may include:

- bespoke research for product guides (e.g. shop surveys);
- helping with a section of the main product report (e.g. environmental impact of computers);
- helping with administration of magazine mail-outs.

As well as performing general duties and supporting other members of staff, volunteers are encouraged to develop their own projects about subjects of interest to them and relevant to the work of Ethical Consumer. Previous volunteers have worked on: a project comparing ethical certification schemes; a compilation of academic texts on Ethical Consumerism; translation of Corporate Social Responsibility reports in other languages and producing video content for ECRA's website.

**Applying to work as a volunteer**

All potential volunteers must fill in an application form, specifically highlighting experience and skills relevant to those outlined above. ECRA will select applicants to come to an informal interview where we will discuss volunteering opportunities. Volunteers will be told within a fortnight whether or not we can support their volunteer placement and expectations.

**Equal opportunities**

ECRA strives towards equal opportunities for all. The ECRA office is accessible by wheelchair, by lift and through four doors. A full equal opportunities policy is available on request.