

# 2025 VOLUNTEER APPLICATION GUIDE

Thank you for your interest in joining the Sydney Writers' Festival Volunteer Team!

Each year we are fortunate to have an amazing team of 300 volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to help create a remarkable festival for Sydney's readers and writers. Sydney Writers' Festival volunteers greet people with a friendly smile, answer questions about the program, keep our queues orderly, and the authors on time. For most people, our volunteers are the face of Sydney Writers' Festival, and we are proud that each year our team receives praise from both attendees and authors for their enthusiasm and dedication. The extraordinary work of our volunteer team is a major part of the Festival's success.

In 2025, volunteers will help Sydney Writers' Festival host a festival featuring over 250 events taking place at Carriageworks and various other locations across Sydney, between 19 and 29 May.

## SHIFTS OVERVIEW FOR 2025 VOLUNTEERS

MON 19 MAY	TUES 20 MAY	WED 22 MAY	THURS 22 MAY	FRI 23 MAY	SAT 24 MAY	SUN 25 MAY	MON 26 MAY	TUES 27 MAY	WED 28 MAY	THURS 29 MAY
SUBURBAN & LIBRARY EVENTS										
SCHOOL DAYS					YA DAY	FAMILY DAY	SCHOOL DAYS			
BUMP IN		CARRIAGEWORKS PRECINCT ALL-DAY PROGRAMMING						BUMP OUT		
	FESTIVAL NIGHTS PROGRAM							STH		

While there are no particular skills or work experience required for you to become a volunteer, a friendly disposition and a love of books would surely be a good start. Though, when we think about our volunteers and the energy they bring to the Festival each year, there are a few personal traits that spring to mind.

Sydney Writers' Festival volunteers are:

- Enthusiastic
- Generous
- Punctual
- Friendly
- Motivated
- Compassionate
- Tactful
- Resilient
- Spirited

If you share these qualities, then you too will enjoy volunteering at Sydney Writers' Festival.

**THE INFORMATION IN THIS GUIDE WILL ASSIST YOU  
WHEN FILLING OUT THE VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM**

Volunteer rosters are decided according to the **locations** you can work, the **times** and **dates** you are available, the **type** and **number** of shifts you prefer, and the **roles** you are interested in doing. This document will explain what you can expect from your time with us as a volunteer, what tasks you might be doing while on shift, and what we are looking for in your application. The application form is online at [swf.org.au/support-us/volunteer](http://swf.org.au/support-us/volunteer)

## Shift locations

**The Festival Precinct – Carriageworks (in Redfern):** More than 90% of all volunteer shifts are located at this Festival hub, Carriageworks, so if you do get a volunteer roster this year then you can expect that most of your shifts will be here within our 'Festival Precinct'.

Volunteers with existing knowledge of Carriageworks will be considered favourably for Information Assistant roles. Experienced volunteers with Carriageworks AND local Redfern familiarity will be considered favourably for Concierge roles positioned at our Festival Hotel and Patron Lounge.

However, by the start of the Festival, ALL volunteers should be familiar with the layout of the Festival Precinct and all venues located within it. You will be provided with maps and information about each venue, a tour of the precinct, instructions for your arrival, and a supervisor to guide you when you get there.

**Volunteers rostered on team locations within the Precinct will sign in at the Volunteer Green Room (VGR) located at Carriageworks**, then disperse with their teams to a specific location within walking distance.

**Carriageworks VGR:** Elston Room Foyer, 245 Wilson St, Eveleigh NSW  
 Train Stations: Redfern (10 min walk), Macdonaldtown (10 min walk), Newtown (20 min walk)  
 Nearby Bus Stop: Codrington Street at City Road (7 min walk)

### Locations outside the Festival Precinct

Volunteers are required to be available to work in at least one location outside the Festival Precinct, though not all volunteers will be given a suburban shift on their roster as shift numbers are limited.

**Major events** held in the evenings and on weekends at Sydney Town Hall, City Recital Hall and Riverside Theatres (Parramatta).

**School Days** held at Riverside Theatres (Parramatta), Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre (Penrith), Sydney Town Hall and The Concourse (Chatswood).

**Suburban** events will be held at various locations across Sydney including Auburn, Chatswood, Parramatta, Penrith, Hornsby, Camden and Wentworth Point. The State Library of NSW will host events on Wednesday.

## Shift times

Sydney Writers' Festival requires volunteers at various times throughout Festival week. **AM and PM shifts on the main four days (Thursday to Sunday) are by far the busiest times.** If you are particularly interested in performing a certain role, remember that consistent availability over consecutive days will be of most help to the position.

There are six (approximate) shift times available per day:

<b>AM</b>	START: 8am or 9am	FINISH: 12pm or 1pm
<b>MID</b>	START: 10am	FINISH: by 3pm
<b>PM</b>	START: 12pm or 1pm	FINISH: 5pm or 6pm
<b>EVE</b>	START: 3pm	FINISH: by 8pm
<b>NIGHT</b>	START: 4pm or 5pm	FINISH: 10pm or 11pm
<b>DAY</b>	START: 8am or 9am	FINISH: 3pm or 4pm

Exact shift start and finish times vary as each venue has different requirements. Most shifts are 4-5 hours. Your roster will specify the exact shift times required of you on the day.

**Volunteers working double shifts OR long shifts (approx. 5 hours or more) will have lunch or dinner provided.** You will be asked to specify your dietary requirements at the end of your application form.

## Preferred number of shifts

Every volunteer must do a MINIMUM of three shifts, although we know many of you will choose to do more. You will be asked to specify your *idea*/number of shifts on the application form. We will have almost 1,300 shifts to roster among 300 volunteers, so volunteers offering FOUR or more shifts are more likely to receive a roster.

## Shift dates

As you can see in the 'Roster Overview' table on page 1, the bulk of the Festival's events will happen between Thursday 22 May and Sunday 25 May. In fact, over 90% of all shifts fall on this 'main' Festival weekend. Therefore, we require all volunteers to be available for AT LEAST THREE shifts during Festival weekend.

Thursday and Friday AM / PM shifts are notoriously difficult to cover, so being available on these days will greatly increase your chance of receiving a roster!

### Suburban Events

Suburban events are usually 2-3 hours long. All Suburban shifts are rostered with one experienced volunteer and one new volunteer to greet attendees and assist venue staff throughout the event.

### Children's & Young Adult Program (\*Working with Children Check required)

School Days events (9am – 3pm) and Family Day (9am – 4pm) are DAY shifts, with lunch provided. YA Day has three shifts at Carriageworks (AM / PM / EVE). Volunteers will work as a team to assist authors and manage large crowds of young people at these events.

### **Sydney Writers' Festival Main program at the Festival Precinct**

From Thursday to Sunday, there are hundreds of volunteer shifts in the precinct (see the roles available on the next page). To increase your chances of being rostered, you should offer as much availability as possible on these days. Note: Even if you mark all shifts as available you will still only receive one shift per day on your roster, unless double shifts are specifically requested.

### **Sydney Writers' Festival Nights**

Events at major venues, including Sydney Town Hall, City Recital Hall and Riverside Theatres, as well as the Sydney Writers' Festival Nights program at Carriageworks, generally require volunteers after 4pm. These are popular events that attract between 200—2,000 attendees and therefore require confident volunteers to help manage the large crowds.

Note: This year we have special events planned for Tuesday 20 May (Opening Night) and Tuesday 27 May (Sydney Town Hall), in addition to night-time programming from Wednesday 21 – Sunday 25 May.

## **Pre-Festival Volunteering**

In the four weeks leading up to the Festival, volunteers can offer to help with the many small but time-consuming tasks that go in to prepping for a festival. These tasks include:

- Compiling Volunteer Information Kits and Orientation Day materials
- Packing author gift bags and volunteer tote bags
- Cutting and compiling lanyards for publishers, guests, volunteers and staff
- Preparing Festival signage, paperwork and VIP passes
- Packing boxes and Festival kits ready for bump-in

These tasks are simple, and sometimes monotonous, but crucial for the delivery of the Festival. Volunteers will be asked to come to the Sydney Writers' Festival office (located in The Rocks) and work together in small groups of 4–6 people, taking a break at lunch (harbour views guaranteed!). This is usually a weekday task (10am–4pm) and lunch is provided. Expect lots of chatting, laughter and bonding among the volunteers that come in to help.

## **Volunteer Orientation Day**

The **compulsory** Volunteer Orientation Day will take place from **10am on Saturday 3 May** at Carriageworks in Bay 20.

All volunteers will be given a welcome kit, their volunteer ID lanyard, and a 2025 volunteer T-shirt. The team will be briefed on general Festival information by Sydney Writers' Festival staff, given a full safety briefing from our production team and an overview of the systems relating to our volunteer team this year.

All volunteers will be expected to stay from 10am–12pm and new volunteers can take an optional walking tour of the Festival precinct afterwards, led by the 2025 supervisor team.

**Please note:** Non-attendance at Orientation Day means you may not be able to volunteer. While it is understandable that an emergency or unexpected event might prevent a prospective volunteer from attending the orientation, if you miss Orientation Day, your participation in the Festival is not guaranteed.

<b>Orientation Day Address:</b>	<b>Carriageworks, Bay 20 245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh NSW</b>
Train Stations:	Redfern (10 min walk), Macdonaldtown (10 min walk), Central (20 min walk)
Bus Stops:	City Road after Cleveland Street (2 min walk), Cleveland Street near Beaumont Street (3 min walk)
Parking:	Shepherd Street multi-storey carpark on corner of Cleveland & Shepherd Streets (10 min walk)

### Digital documents and instructions

We use MS SharePoint to deliver training documents for volunteers, including online quizzes, forms, instructions and information. This transition to digital in recent years has saved us over 40,000 sheets of paper (and counting!) which is the equivalent of four 45ft trees.

**Please note:** You may need a Microsoft account to access the site. A Microsoft account is a free account you use to access many Microsoft devices and services, such as the web-based email service Outlook.com (also known as hotmail.com, msn.com, live.com), online apps like Word or Excel for the web, Skype, OneDrive, Xbox Live, Bing, Windows, or the Microsoft Store. If you already use any of these services, chances are you already have a Microsoft account. Microsoft accounts used to be called "Windows Live ID".

## Volunteer roles preferred

We recommend you remain open to performing multiple roles as this increases your chances of being given a roster. If you are happy to help with whatever is needed, then please select all boxes on the application form and consider yourself a star!

If you have particular skills or work experience that would suit a certain role, please note this on your application form when we ask about your previous experience and skills.

### The 2025 SWF Volunteer roles are:

- Accessibility Assistant
- Book Signing Assistant
- Children's Event Assistant
- Concierge
- Festival Bus Assistant
- Floater
- Greeter
- Information Assistant
- Site & Stage Assistant
- Slido Assistant
- Survey Assistant
- Usher
- Volunteer Green Room Assistants
- Volunteer Supervisor (\*only available to returning volunteers)
- Writers' Green Room Assistant
- Writer Assistant / Runner

### **Accessibility Assistant**

Accessibility Assistants will provide advice and support to Festival patrons and guests with disabilities or special needs. This might include guiding a visually impaired patron to a venue, assisting someone in a wheelchair to access the right seating area, or helping one of our own team members thrive in their role as a volunteer. This role can require negotiations between FOH staff and Festival patrons, particularly those who are navigating challenges, and therefore requires a little patience and a generous spirit. The Festival is committed to helping every patron feel welcome at the precinct.

### **Book Signing Assistant**

During Festival weekend, there will be one main book signing area at Carriageworks. Book signing assistants will ensure guests know which queues are for buying books and which are for book signings, they will ensure signing tables have name markers and glasses of water for the authors, and they will make sure the queues are managed effectively within the space. Before each event finishes, volunteers will rearrange chairs and name markers to accommodate the next round of authors signing.

### **Children's Event Assistant**

Volunteers will greet families and school-age children then usher them into events, help give out prizes, assist with microphones during Q&A sessions, and manage the book signing queues after each session. Family Day is particularly busy, with volunteers also assisting at author activation spaces, helping with craft activities, dressing up in book character costumes and assisting on Russ the Story Bus.

NB. A valid Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required for all volunteers working at children's events. Please have your WWCC number handy when filling out the application form.

If you do not have a WWCC already, it is free to register online at:

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check/apply-wwcc/how-apply-wwcc>

### **Concierge**

Volunteers taking on Concierge roles will be stationed at key locations to assist Special Guests of the Festival. For example, Concierge volunteers will be at the entrance to our Patron Lounge, to welcome sponsors and contributors, assisting with program information and wayfinding. Concierge volunteers will also be positioned in the foyer at our author hotel to assist authors with Festival information and event times, directions and general local information. This role is best suited to experienced volunteers who are familiar with the CBD.

### **Festival Bus Assistant**

This year, the Festival will be running a FREE shuttle bus between Redfern Station and Carriageworks. During busy periods, volunteers will ride on the bus to greet patrons at bus stops and assist with information about festival events. Bus shifts are shorter than other shifts and require friendly volunteers who will enjoy chatting to people while they wait for the bus.

### **Floater**

Floaters are very important: they are often asked to assist multiple teams throughout a shift, helping when there is an unexpected surge in crowds, or replacing another volunteer when they get called away, or when a crucial task for Sydney Writers' Festival staff needs doing very quickly. Floaters can offer assistance anywhere, to anyone, and so will provide much needed support at challenging times. Note: this is not a 'spare' position, but rather, one that is quite crucial to the smooth operation of our team!

**Greeter**

Greeters will be positioned at the entrance to the Festival Precinct and main foyers. Their task is to warmly welcome Festival patrons, provide directions and program information, and answer miscellaneous questions.

**Information Assistant**

Volunteers on the Information Team will stand at the main festival entrances to the Precinct, along walking routes between venues, and in the busy public spaces at Carriageworks. Volunteers will hand out daily program guides, answer questions, and help people navigate the precinct. Good customer service skills are a must! Familiarity with Redfern and the surrounding areas would be a bonus.

**Site & Stage Assistant**

Site & Stage Assistants help with behind-the-scenes set up and pack down of festival spaces. Tasks may include packing or unpacking boxes, arranging chairs or assembling décor before events, sticking seat numbers on chairs, carrying equipment between venues, removing seat numbers from chairs, clearing away rubbish, and running errands. This role suits physically active volunteers who enjoy being behind-the-scenes with the operations team.

**Slido Assistant**

Volunteers in this role will assist backstage moderating questions from audience members as they come in through our Slido app. Slido is an online polling software that allows audience members to submit a question for Q&A then 'upvote' or 'downvote' questions from others. Volunteers in this position will help to moderate questions and push them through to the facilitators on stage. Volunteers in this role should be tech-savvy, calm under pressure, and able to multitask listening to the questions on stage while selecting questions online.

**Survey Assistant**

Survey Assistants will spread out among the crowds to ask Festival patrons to take a short survey. This work allows Sydney Writers' Festival to maintain funding, program events relevant to our guests, and improve our customer experience across the Festival.

**Usher**

Ushers work in small teams to organise queues, point people to their seats and ensure a smooth changeover between events. When ushers are not managing large crowds of people, they answer questions and keep an eye on who's coming and going. During events, you may be asked to assist with microphones, which involves guiding attendees to the microphones when it's time for Q&A and helping them use the microphone correctly.

**Volunteer Green Room (VGR) Assistants**

From Tuesday 20 May to Sunday 25 May, the Volunteer Green Room is the headquarters for all volunteer shifts at the Festival Precinct. All volunteers doing a shift at Carriageworks will check in and out here. VGR Assistants will greet and register volunteers at check-in, assist with sign-in processes, give directions to new volunteers, assist with allocating team lunches, track late volunteers and cancellations, collect feedback, and manage the check-out process as volunteers finish their shifts.

**Volunteer Supervisor**

Supervisor positions are only available to experienced volunteers. The role involves supervising a small team of volunteers who require instructions to commence their tasks, positioning them and providing guidance as needed, plus coordinating break times throughout the day. Supervisors must be confident with front of house tasks, like addressing crowds, managing queues and resolving

problems with guests, as well as back of house processes, like coordinating shift changes and lunch breaks, giving briefings and allocating team positions.

All supervisors are required to attend three key supervisor dates:

Initial Supervisor team overview from 9.30am–12.30pm on Saturday 22 March

Supervisor safety, site and role training from 9.30am–2.30pm on Saturday 12 April

Assisting with registrations and venue tours from 9am–1pm at Orientation Day on Saturday 3 May

### **Writers' Green Room (WGR) Assistant**

This year, the Festival will be operating one Writers' Green Room at Carriageworks, requiring a small team of registration desk assistants to help check in guests and dispatch them to stages on time. Writers, their publicists and event facilitators are asked to check in at WGR 45 minutes before the start of their event. WGR assistants will be asked to guide authors through the check in processes, answer questions, dispatch authors to stage on time, relay information to the book signing and information teams as needed, and help keep the WGR tidy. This role is ideal for volunteers with a calm temperament and knowledge of the Carriageworks venues, and is generally available to experienced volunteers only.

### **Writer Assistant / Author Runner**

The Writers' Green Room dispatches authors to stages via Track 3 and the back of house corridors at Carriageworks. Writer Assistants / Runners will escort authors to and from stages when instructed, and to and from the book signing area when needed. This role is ideal for volunteers with a calm temperament and knowledge of the Carriageworks venues and will require you to be capable of traversing long distances as there is a considerable amount of back and forth involved in escorting authors to and from stages.

**YOU NOW HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO COMPLETE THE  
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM.**



## After Applications close

Your roster will be built after applications close at midnight on Thursday 30 January 2025. As the rosters are determined by availability, we cannot guarantee that all applicants will receive a roster, though you will stand a better chance of success if you are open to a broad range of locations, roles, shifts and dates, as mentioned above. Ultimately, your availability and openness to a range of roles determines your eligibility to volunteer.

### Getting your roster

We will begin the roll out of rosters in early March, releasing and confirming shifts in batches, starting with supervisors and experienced volunteers. All volunteer applicants will have heard from Sydney Writers' Festival, whether successful or unsuccessful in their application, by early April.

When you receive your roster, it is a good idea to look up where each shift is located and check parking or public transport times to ensure you can get to and from your shift with ease.

Please ensure that you reply to all emails from [volunteers@swf.org.au](mailto:volunteers@swf.org.au) and confirm your roster as soon as you receive it. If at any time you are no longer available for one or all of the shifts allocated to you, please let the Volunteer Program Coordinator know as soon as possible so that we can adjust your roster and replace the shift/s.

### Buying Festival Tickets

We recommend waiting to see if you received a roster before purchasing tickets. Volunteers that have confirmed their roster will be offered discounted and/or free tickets in the week before the Festival, after attending Orientation Day.



Thank you for taking the time to read this Volunteer Application Guide – we hope to see you at the Festival this year!  
If you require further guidance regarding your application, please email the Volunteer Program Coordinator at [volunteers@swf.org.au](mailto:volunteers@swf.org.au).

## Volunteer Satisfaction

Sydney Writers' Festival believes there is a strong link between volunteer satisfaction and the success of the Festival. We know that providing clear information about your role as a volunteer will help you enjoy your time with us.

In order to better prepare you for your role as a volunteer, we will:

- Introduce the different volunteer roles to you in this document
- Email you information about your allocated shifts once rosters are complete
- Provide further information and relevant role training at Orientation Day
- Assign a Supervisor or experienced volunteer to guide you while on shift

### Our promise

In return for your commitment to volunteer, we commit to taking all practical steps to ensure we deliver a volunteer program that is both engaging and rewarding for you to participate in.

We promise to:

- Be reliable in our dealings with you
- Build rosters that are balanced
- Provide useful information and training on your role
- Give you clear instructions in a friendly and respectful way
- Support you with experienced and reliable supervisors
- Recognise the value of your efforts
- Provide you with a safe working environment

## Thank you!

We appreciate that you are considering offering your time to Sydney Writers' Festival.

Sydney Writers' Festival is one of the largest literary festivals in the world and it remains one of the most inviting and inspiring festivals to attend, for both audiences and authors alike. This is, in part, due to the commitment and kindness of our wonderful volunteer team.

We hope you can join us as a Sydney Writers' Festival volunteer in 2025.