



Resource Guide

Community Engagement Programs



What is a Community Engagement Program?

A community engagement program, more commonly known as an Employee Volunteer Program (EVP), is defined as a planned, managed effort which seeks to motivate and enable employees to effectively serve community needs with support from their employer. According to [The Seven Practices of Effective Employee Volunteer Programs](#), workplace volunteer programs (EVPs) or employer-supported volunteer programs, are typically one component of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program or other programs that addresses the company's involvement in societal causes.

Why Have an Employee Volunteer Program?

Establishing an employer-led volunteer effort for your company can:

- Build teamwork among employees
- Enable staff to develop and enhance employees' professional and leadership skills
- Increase employee commitment and goodwill towards your company
- Create a vehicle for building new business relationships
- Improves corporate image and relations with stakeholders through positioning as a leader in giving back at the local and national level which can generate positive press and social media for the company

Community Service Program Ideas

Companies can have diverse programs to help their employees serve the community. Here are few of the most common options:

Volunteer Time Off: Allow employees time off, with pay, during regular working hours to volunteer.

Employee Volunteer Program: Assign a staff member of staff committee to develop and coordinate volunteer activities company-wide. These may include:

- One-off or annual projects
- Employee-directed programs that encourage employees to create their own projects, which are then supported by the company or a specific staff person at the company
- Ongoing partnerships with specific nonprofits to concentrate volunteerism, and create maximum commitment and impact
- Skills-based volunteer opportunities that match individuals who have particular management and technical skills with nonprofit agencies that request help in those areas of expertise

Encourage Participation on Nonprofit Boards: An attractive option for mid- to senior-level executives. Provide support by matching individuals with local boards of directors, and give flexibility for board-related responsibilities.

Awards: Encourage a culture of volunteerism by giving awards to employees for community service, whether or not it is company-sponsored.

Sabbatical: Offer sabbaticals (similar to a worker's personal leave), which are specifically allocated for volunteer work.

Before Starting an Employee Volunteer Program

1. Understand what type of volunteer service is most interesting to employees. Get their feedback on whether they are open to volunteering for company-sponsored causes or agencies, and on what those causes should be.
2. Determine how the volunteer program will contribute to business goals, and which types of efforts (see above), best align with those goals. Consider what the company is best resourced to address. Examine the company's human, physical, and financial resources when deciding.
3. Choose a volunteer coordinator or coordinators. Someone in the company should be responsible for writing policy and tracking the outputs. This can be the same person who outlines the logistics of any company-sponsored work or it can be someone different.
4. Create policies which provide standards on what types of volunteer work will count towards the program. Consider whether or not volunteer work for religious or political organizations will be included in the company program.
5. Develop a strategy for communicating the importance of volunteer service to employees, and the policies surrounding it.
6. Create a strategy for communicating the company efforts and results to the public.

Resources

- [Serve Rhode Island](#) is the state's center for volunteerism and service, and administrator of the federally funded AmeriCorps program
- [United Way of Rhode Island](#) can provide your company and your employees with available volunteer opportunities at <http://www.uwri.org/take-action/volunteer/>
- [Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island](#) works with United Way of Rhode Island to administer a skills-based volunteer program: <http://www.grantmakersri.org/skills-based-volunteer-initiative/>
- Review Points of Light's Seven Practices of [Effective Employee Volunteer Programs](#)
- Blackbaud discusses [Creating an Employee Volunteer Program at Your Small Business](#)
- [Common Impact](#) provides a variety of resources for skills-based volunteering

Associated Resource Guide

- Supplementary Benefits
- Corporate Charitable Giving

