

Fact Sheet

Corporate Volunteering – Fact Sheet for Vol Managers

What is Corporate Volunteering?

Volunteering Australia offers the following definition of Corporate Volunteering:

“..any program intended to encourage employees within a business to volunteer in a not-for-profit organisation” <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org>

Corporate volunteering takes many forms including:

- allowing employees designated time off (this could be annually or monthly) to volunteer in an activity of their choice but approved by management
- having all employees, or designated teams participate in a community project either on a one off or regularly scheduled basis
- virtual volunteering that involves using a work computer in work time for a designated number of hours
- skills-based volunteering, where employees with professional expertise provide pro-bono services specific to the needs and requirements of an organisation. This model is common in the legal and accounting professions and corporate skills based volunteering extends this to a wider range of skills and expertise. Skills based volunteering can extend to membership of a board or management committee or secondment to a community organisation for short periods or special projects
- businesses allowing employees time off to volunteer for emergency services such as bush fire, ambulance and surf life-saving on an ‘as needs’ basis. This commitment by both the employer and the employee is often vital to the provision of emergency services in regional Australia.

For further information: <http://www.corporatevolunteers.org.au/toolkit/>

What are the benefits for community organisations?

Partnerships between business and community organisations can provide low cost solutions to address community issues or needs. The involvement of corporate volunteers can help organisations deliver services and create opportunities to develop new projects which would not be achievable within existing resources.

The benefits to community organisations include:

- access to additional skills that they would otherwise not be able to afford
- access to skills and intellectual capital not held by existing staff or volunteers
- opportunities to build long term relationships with the business sector and secure ongoing support
- opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the organisation’s goals and services as well as wider community issues

- access to recruit potential advocates
- the transfer of knowledge and good practice methods from the corporate partner, for example, in the area of work health and safety procedures, social media and other technical areas.

David Warren from Foodbank WA summed up the impact of corporate volunteering support to his organisation with the following comment:

“The project continues to live and add value ... a small donation has an immediate impact but it is not lasting. Our social media project has the potential to deliver a financial return far greater than a single small donation. In addition it provides a platform to promote the cause and directly impact the lives of people in need.”

Risk management, challenges and opportunities

Although corporate volunteering programs offer win-win-win opportunities for corporate partners, their employees, and the community, there remain challenges that all partners should take into consideration when planning and negotiating corporate volunteering partnerships, these include:

Choosing the task or activity

Businesses should first consider what their objectives are in embarking on a corporate volunteering venture, a good match is essential to a successful community business partnership. For a successful partnership, the objectives of the recipient not-for-profit will need to take priority over the objectives of the corporate partner.

Most corporate programs provide for 1-2 days per year for the employee to volunteer. Not-for-profit organisations need to consider the scope of the project and whether it can be undertaken by an individual volunteer or would require a team or staged approach. The project needs to be clearly defined, with measurable outcomes so that corporate volunteers can use their time effectively.

Not-for-profit organisations should be aware that skills-based volunteers are highly sought after and there is no guarantee that an organisation will be able to access the required expertise.

Cost

The cost to the corporate partner is primarily in the form of paid leave which can be a significant factor for small to medium enterprises wishing to engage with their community through employee volunteering. Corporate partners may also incur costs related to use of other corporate resources such as IT, printing, vehicles, providing catering, PPE etc.

The cost to not-for-profit organisations can be significant depending on the project. In addition to the costs associated with negotiating and managing the project, costs may include insurance coverage, materials or provision of food and beverages if the project covers meal periods. Volunteering WA recommends that all costs be included in the project negotiations so that the corporate partner can consider providing additional financial support if appropriate.

Adherence to good work health and safety practice is paramount. Some not-for-profit organisations may not have the knowledge and experience to meet the operating standards that many, particularly large, corporates adhere to, for example Risk Assessment and Job Hazard Analysis. There may also be costs associated with use of protective clothing and related equipment

Volunteering WA's Services

Volunteering WA's role in advancing corporate volunteering is to enhance the relationship between our corporate and not-for-profit members and to promote volunteering through:

Brokering services

A skills-based brokering service which includes:

- working with not-for-profit member organisations to design and scope projects where specialist skills are required
- liaising with corporate partners to match individuals or teams to the project

Corporate team based events, which includes:

- working with not-for-profit member organisations to design and scope suitable team activities
- arranging a site visit to conduct a site and risk inspection ensuring all potential risks are identified and reported to the corporate
- coordinating transport, refreshments PPE and project support for the corporate teams
- benchmarking feedback and statistics from corporate participants.

Corporate Volunteer Council of Western Australia

- convening the Corporate Volunteer Council of Western Australia, a coalition of businesses that recognise and promote the importance of workplace volunteering

Developing Corporate programs

Volunteering WA works with businesses seeking to establish corporate volunteering programs by providing information and options as well as specific services such as corporate team days, and skills-based volunteering projects.

For further information:

<http://www.corporatevolunteers.org.au/>

<http://www.corporatevolunteers.org.au/corporate-volunteer-council.aspx>