



## Employer Supported Volunteerism

Employer-Supported Volunteerism or Employee Volunteer Programs refers to employers supporting their staff to volunteer their time and skills to serve their community. Employee volunteerism is an emerging trend that companies of all different sizes all across the world, from all different industries, are paying particular attention to.

Many businesses in Fredericton are to be commended for the leadership they have shown in sharing the skills and talents of their employees to contribute to community projects; from packing food boxes at Christmas for Food Banks, to tackling home building projects for Habitat for Humanity, to building community gardens and cleaning up office premises for non-profit organizations, to mentoring school children to develop literacy skills or operate a business through Junior Achievement.

Employer Supported Volunteerism can take many forms – from providing staff with flex time for their Volunteer activities to an annual team activity in which all staff participate. It might also involve loaning out staff to complete a project for a community group, recognition of Volunteers in the company newsletter, an Adopt-an-agency program, or something as simple as posting community Volunteer opportunities on your staff notice board. In short, it can be a one-time event, or an ongoing commitment.

The constant which underpins all forms of employee volunteering is that employees perform work in the community with some form of support and/or encouragement from their employer to do so.

Employee Volunteer Programs are on the rise, and an excellent way for businesses to combine strategic goals with employee development, retention and satisfaction. By being involved, employers help to strengthen the local community and demonstrate their leadership as a 'caring company'. Supporting employees' Volunteer activities makes a powerful business statement – it says that your business want to make a difference.

Employee Volunteer Programs are usually a component of an overall Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program. CSR programs are also known by a wide range of terms including Corporate Citizenship, Social Performance, Sustainable Responsible Business, among others.

### **Benefits of Employee Volunteer Programs**

National research studies have shown Employee Volunteer Programs offer numerous benefits for companies, their employees and the communities they serve.

#### **For Companies**

- Highlights a company's social responsibility to its clients and employees
- Enhances corporate visibility, image and reputation in the community
- Expands networks and builds value via increased sales from the communities it serves
- Provides cost-effective professional development opportunities and improves employee skills
- Increases teamwork and relationship building among employees
- Improves employee job performance
- Helps attract new employees, enhances employee morale and improves employee retention



### **For Employees**

- Develops closer and more trusting working relationships among co-workers
- Creates higher morale and greater job satisfaction
- Increases pride in the company and positive feelings towards their employer
- Provides an opportunity to build skills, in particular, teamwork and inter-personal skills

### **For the Community**

- Enhances the life for community members
- Increases financial and other aid to community organizations
- Increases the overall level of community volunteering
- Develops a new pool of Volunteers
- Enhances a sense of community
- Helps maintain a healthy community

You do not have to be a large company to enjoy these benefits!

### **Steps for Success**

#### **1. Be Informed.**

- Become familiar with the non-profit sector's unique culture, its opportunities and limitations.
- Determine the goals of your Employee Volunteer Program, such as providing a meaningful Volunteer experience for your employees while meeting a demonstrated need in the community.
- Be committed to offering true collaboration.

#### **2. Identify the cause you want to support.**

- Review the non-profit organizations that your company already supports through its donations program.
- Poll employee interests (i.e. the types of organizations they already support or would like to support, as well as the types of Volunteer tasks preferred).
- Look at the social, environmental, health, economic, and educational challenges faced by your community.

#### **3. Set aside a budget to help offset costs. Costs can include:**

- supplies pertaining to the volunteer activity (e.g. paint, plants, furniture, etc.);
- refreshments for your Employee Volunteers;
- transportation of Employee Volunteers to the volunteer activity site; and
- staff planning, coordination and implementation time.

#### **4. Form a partnership.**

- A successful Employee Volunteer Program requires leadership. Establish policies and provide direction.
- Meet with the non-profits organization's key stakeholders and decision makers.
- Select an organization that is reputable and demonstrates stability.
- Ensure that there is a designated staff person for both parties to carry on the partnership.



#### **5. Select a Volunteer activity.**

- Make a site visit to review potential Volunteer activities.
- Make sure the site is Volunteer friendly:
- Define the scope of the Volunteer activity and obtain buy-in from all parties:
  1. can accommodate a large Volunteer group;
  2. ensures the safety of Employee Volunteers; and
  3. appropriate and adequate training and tools have been provided.
- identify the number of Employee Volunteers needed;
- determine the time required to complete the Volunteer activity;
- review the budget and clearly communicate which costs will be covered by your Employee Volunteer Program;
- prepare a contingency plan for inclement weather, too many/too few Volunteers, activity completed sooner than anticipated, etc; and
- determine Volunteer training requirements and any pre-activity prep work.

#### **6. Execute the Volunteer activity.**

- Keep track of your Employee Volunteers (e.g. pre-register Volunteers for activities, log number of Volunteer hours, etc.)
- Advise the non-profit organizations in advance of Employee Volunteer skill levels and assign work accordingly versus based on hierarchy in the office.
- Be punctual, reliable and committed.
- Ensure all supplies are on site.
- Have fun!

#### **7. Follow-up / Evaluation**

- Thank and recognize your Employee Volunteers.
- Review accomplishments, challenges and missed opportunities.
- Obtain feedback from Employee Volunteers on the current activity.
- Use knowledge gained to plan future Volunteer activities.

#### **Skills Plus Tools: Volunteer Canada**

- **Summary: this report facilitates** the linkage between volunteer experience and occupational competencies so that:
  - Nonprofits can structure volunteer opportunities to access workplace skills and competencies.
  - Workplaces can strategically support employee volunteers to meet community and competency-development goals.
  - Both non-profits and workplaces can use the tool as the basis to define and measure benefits, value and the return on investment (ROI) of Employer Supported Volunteering.



Volunteer Greater Fredericton  
Bénévoles du Grand Fredericton

### Helpful Resources

[Volunteer Canada](#)-Volunteer Canada is the national voice for volunteerism in Canada. Volunteer Canada's website features information on employee volunteerism including a publication index, research and links to other workplace volunteerism related sites at home and abroad. Volunteer Canada also provides consulting services to companies interested in establishing workplace volunteer initiatives.

[Imagine Canada](#) – Imagine Canada is Canada's national initiative to promote corporate and individual citizenship and support for community. Imagine Canada produces resources and provides services that help businesses and charities build effective partnerships and is internationally recognized as one of the most successful programs of its kind. This link takes you to an exhaustive list of Canadian resources on workplace volunteerism.

[The Conference Board of Canada](#) – The information found on this site can help companies integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into a business strategy that visibly demonstrates responsible corporate behaviour and produces bottom-line results. They can help businesses build a plan that will set them apart from their rivals and give them a competitive edge. This link also features information about community investment and training opportunities.

[Canadian Business for Social Responsibility](#)-CBSR is a not-for-profit membership organization of Canadian Business committed to developing, sharing and implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR). CBSR provides tactical and practical approaches to implementing CSR and help connect companies and stakeholders in the growing CSR community.