



Making the most of partnership: Employee Volunteering Programs

Guide for not for profit organisations



Contents

Introduction	1
Getting started – six steps	3
Step 1 – self-evaluation	3
Step 2 – develop ideas	3
Step 3 – plan	4
Step 4 – liaise	4
Step 5 – facilitate	4
Step 6 – evaluate	4
The six-point plan for setting up an EVP	5
Point 1 – your organisation	5
Point 2 – volunteer support of your organisation	5
Point 3 – type of work you're offering	5
Point 4 – managing your employee volunteers	6
Point 5 – list other ways that a company can support you	6
Point 6 – contact details	6
How Volunteering Victoria can help	7
Projects and partners	7
Managers' Knowledge Network	7
Employee Volunteer Matching	7

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Introduction

Volunteers can be attracted to not for profit (NFP) organisations through a variety of means. Many come individually, drawn to your organisation's activities through their personal networks and community links – or even through your organisation's own recruitment drives for volunteers.

Another way is for NFPs to seek out a partnering arrangement with corporates or business with employees. This method provides NFPs a new channel of support and resources that can be otherwise difficult to access. Commonly referred to as Employee Volunteer Programs (EVPs), this process provides a way for business to assist NFP's through structured and sustainable involvement of their employees.

Like all volunteers, employee volunteers bring enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge to your organisation – with the support of their employer who sees value in their involvement to themselves and to you.

To maximise the benefits of employee volunteering, it is essential that both the not-for-profit organisation and the business understand how each side operates. This guide is based on Volunteering Victoria's extensive experience in advising and working with NFPs and employers to build partnerships.

Getting started – six steps

Preparation ensures your community-business partnership has a strong foundation through understanding and aligning with each other's values. Many businesses are offering their intellectual capital to one-off or ongoing community projects. With effective planning every volunteer-involving organisation can benefit from these partnerships.

All successful partnerships allow time to discuss details of the EVP with their prospective partner. The following step-by-step guide can assist in scoping your organisation's needs and capacity to partner with a business and their employees.

Step 1 – self-evaluation

Before committing time and resources to researching your partnership, conduct a clear evaluation to learn about your NFP's interest, readiness and capacity to develop a community-business partnership.

Assess the following areas of your organisation:

1. Finances – can you afford the extra time, training and general expenses?
2. Staff – will your staff engage and support this partnership?
3. Other stakeholders – will they support this partnership?
4. Benefits – will the relationship reward both the community and the employee-volunteers?
5. Resources – do you have the space, management structures, etc. to coordinate a partnership?

Discussing these questions can identify ways to engage and support a business partner.

Be careful and don't overcommit. Better to start small and scale up. Ensure you are ready, willing and able to deliver on your commitments.

Step 2 – develop ideas

Contemplate and discuss the following to identify the right business partner:

1. What do you want (or need) out of a partnership?
2. What benefits will the business bring to your organisation?
3. What types of business would bring these benefits?
4. What can your organisation offer a partnership?
5. What is the best model partnership for you? How will it work in practical terms?

Brainstorm all the businesses or corporates with a possible interest in your cause or location then pick the best fit.

Step 3 – plan

Good planning will ensure any EVP will dovetail smoothly into your NFP activity:

- Develop an employee volunteering policy that clearly explains what an EVP will do or contribute to your organisation
- Define your objectives and outcomes for your EVP involvement
- Structure meaningful activities for the volunteers who come to you through this partnership
- Budget carefully
- Outline your measures of success
- Undertake a risk assessment to safeguard employee volunteer health, safety and wellbeing
- Ensure sufficient training, induction and supervision resources. Consider including a code of practice, duty of care and code of conduct
- Decide if screening is necessary.

Step 4 – liaise

Formalise the partnership with a letter of agreement, which should include:

- Contact person
- Insurance cover
- Costs associated with participation
- Briefly how the partnership will work / what it aims to achieve
- Position descriptions.

Alternatively, the business partner may have one of their own – consider it carefully and ensure it reflects your requirements and expectations too.

Step 5 – facilitate

Good preparation creates more scope for staff and volunteers to enjoy the experience:

- Plan the scope of your EVP date/s, time/s, number of employees, etc.
- Attribute responsibility for facilitation to one staff member. Ensure this is part of their job description
- Organise staff to work with the employee volunteers. Have they been involved in the planning?
- Organise appropriate work areas, materials and equipment
- Secure media coverage by agreement
- Send the company a register of volunteers for each activity.

Step 6 – evaluate

Evaluation will help you plan for the future and provide results to your corporate partner which they can use for their own internal reporting purposes:

- Follow up any feedback from the employee volunteers
- Provide feedback to the company on the outcomes of the employee volunteering experience
- Report tangible benefits to your target group and/or broader community
- Celebrate the contribution – certificates, articles, thank you letters, etc.

The six-point plan for setting up an EVP

Once you've decided on a target business, these steps can assist your approach. The aim is (naturally) to engage with your potential employer partner professionally and enthusiastically.

Concisely and comprehensively addressing each point below can form a framework for a written or oral pitch to your potential partner.

Point 1 – your organisation

- Acknowledge the ways in which your mission statement aligns with theirs
- What information can you include to attract your prospective employer partner? What common ground, news, facts or people will be relevant and interesting to them?
- List the specific benefits of this company partnering with your organisation in terms of the volunteer, the community and the company.

Point 2 – volunteer support of your organisation

- Describe how your organisation and clients are supported by your volunteers
- Give a sense of the size and shape of your organisation
- Summarise the roles undertaken at your organisation
- Describe any aspirational areas of need for your organisation.

Add any recent media about the work of your organisation.
Companies may appreciate the profile-building opportunities that arise.

Point 3 – type of work you're offering

Volunteering work takes various forms:

- Outline clearly what you want done, why it needs doing and how to do it
- Is the work in teams or structured around individual tasks?
- Is it skilled or unskilled?
- Is it a one-off or ongoing project?
- Can you remain flexible with the type of work offered in case your preferred partner wants something different to what you are offering?
- Might your partner contribute to project development – skills, ideas, money, in-kind donations?
- If taking on volunteer teams, include how many people, who will manage, required planning and notice required.

Point 4 – managing your employee volunteers

- Outline training required
- Outline supervision provided
- Explain volunteer registration
- Discuss insurance cover – this can be the responsibility of the community organisation or the employer.

We recommend employee volunteers not be engaged in tasks that require working with children and police checks as they are time consuming and costly.

Point 5 – list other ways that a company can support you

- Workplace giving
- In-kind donations
- Sponsorship
- Skill-sharing
- Board membership
- Supporting, attending or holding events.

Point 6 – contact details

Make it easy for a company to get hold of you.

Provide:

- Name, phone number and email address of your key contact
- Details of the key contact's position
- Name, phone number and email address of a backup contact
- Your organisation's website.

How Volunteering Victoria can help

Employee volunteering improves business visibility as well as staff skills, morale and loyalty.

At the same time it contributes to your organisation's and the employer's communities.

As the state peak body for volunteering in Victoria, hundreds of not-for-profit member organisations use our services.

Projects and partners

Many Australian businesses are committed to corporate social responsibility and provide time for their staff to contribute to the community.

Volunteering Victoria advises, encourages and liaises with organisations and businesses to create successful programs.

At Volunteering Victoria we provide four services to enhance the Employee Volunteering Program (EVP) experience:

1. Managers' Knowledge Network
2. Employee Volunteer Matching
3. Employee Volunteer Consultancy
4. Research and resources.

Managers' Knowledge Network

The network provides opportunities for peers to meet, share knowledge and explore workable approaches to employee volunteering. Network meetings include case study analysis, research presentations, workshops and real examples that focus on developing tools to take back to the volunteer-involving organisation. We also discuss how to integrate future trends into the volunteering program.

Employee Volunteer Matching

Volunteering Victoria helps not-for-profit organisations and businesses form enjoyable, sustainable relationships. We use our Volunteer Referral Service to help you find suitable partners.

