

# Wimmera Volunteers

## Information Sheet

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# CORPORATE/BUSINESS VOLUNTEERING

## **What is Corporate/Business Volunteering?**

Corporate or Business volunteering is one way in which businesses can fulfill their social responsibility. Businesses that engage in corporate volunteering actively support and encourage their employees to volunteer within their local communities. Steadily growing in popularity since the 1990's, corporate volunteering involves the contribution of time, talent, energy, skills and resources by the businesses workforce.

### **TIP...**

Make sure there are clearly defined, interesting and worthwhile jobs to be done. Volunteers not only want to know the aim of the activity, but want to be kept busy. Think about a short briefing before the activity starts to give people relevant and interesting information.

Increasingly, businesses are setting up volunteer programs as part of their long-term corporate and human resource planning. To this end, businesses are pursuing partnerships with local organisations and identifying volunteer opportunities for employees.

There is now enormous potential for community organisations to work with these companies and enlist the help of motivated and skilled volunteers.

Many local businesses have the people and the infrastructure to provide support. Some also have business volunteering programs in place with enthusiastic individuals on teams of employees who want to become actively involved in the community.

## **Benefits of Corporate/Business Volunteering**

Corporate/Business Volunteering has many benefits for not-for-profit organisations, as well as for the community as a whole. These include:

- contributing new skills, knowledge and technical expertise

- forming teams of volunteers who can periodically perform major tasks
- creating wider community awareness of local issues and needs
- promoting the work of a not-for-profit organisation through associated publicity
- providing access to free or subsidised resources
- making a difference to the people and causes an organisation cares about
- improving understanding between the business and the voluntary sectors.

**TIP...**

Corporate/Business volunteering is a shared experience. While volunteers want to help, they also want to learn. Without any organisation there is an enormous amount of invaluable knowledge and skill that can be passed on to employee volunteers. Have some key facts relevant to the day's activity to pass on to the volunteers.

Employees join their workplace volunteer programs for many reasons. Some simply want to help out in whatever way they can. Others have definite preferences for particular causes and types of volunteer work.

Many volunteers are happy to work for a specified time on a particular project (perhaps just one or two days) while others prefer an ongoing commitment to an organisations.

Team activities are often favored over individual activities as they provide volunteers with opportunities to work together in a social and productive way. First-time volunteers, in particular, may feel more comfortable in a group.

**Types of volunteer activities**

There are almost as many types of activities as there are volunteers. Think of indoor and outdoor activities, one-off and on-going, skilled and non-skilled, individual and team, during work hours and out of hours, whole day and part day tasks. Here are just a few examples:

- setting up a website
- writing a human resources policy
- developing a media and promotions strategy
- teaching basic administration/computer skills
- conducting a market research survey at a local shopping centre
- distributing marketing brochures
- selling fundraising merchandise
- painting
- designing and printing a newsletter
- developing a funding bid
- staffing a call centre
- joining a committee

**TIP...**

Be prepared to offer a range of tasks so that volunteers can find something that suits their interests, skills and available time.

Activities that have the best outcome for the not-for-profit organisation are those that are well planned and carefully managed. They not only meet the company's human resource and business objectives but give employees the knowledge that they are making a valuable contribution.

One of the most important aspects of creating activities for corporate/business volunteers is to ensure that the activity is meaningful for the volunteers and useful for the not-for-profit organisation.

Before working with a team of employee volunteers, a not-for-profit organisation should ensure that it:

- is working with a company whose goals and beliefs are in alignment with its own
- has activities which are appropriate for corporate/business employee volunteers-try thinking outside the square and brainstorming ideas with paid staff and volunteers
- can allocate enough resources to the program to ensure volunteers have positive volunteering experience-an organisation should be thinking of support, staff, tools, training, information etc.

### **Matching activities to volunteers**

While there are many benefits to involving corporate/business volunteers, it's important to bear in mind that they will be constrained by their company's preferences for certain types of activities and levels of involvement. This means that the organisations must find a balance between what they need and what a company and its volunteers can offer.

In the process of identifying suitable corporate volunteering projects, it's worth taking the following into consideration:

- offer team activities which can be carried out in a range of locations, for example, an activity that a group of volunteers can do remotely via the web
- schedule half-day activities for the morning so that volunteers don't get 'caught up' at work
- ensure there is enough work for the volunteers-don't adjust the number of volunteers needed because a company has extra people available as this can result in a lot of bored and unhappy volunteers.

### **Supporting Volunteers**

While corporate/business volunteers will generally be very motivated and positive about being involved in the nominated project, they will need a certain amount of guidance and support, both before the activity and on the day:

- welcome the volunteer and give them background information about your organisation
- outline the project, responsibilities and time required
- explain the tasks they will be involved in and provide training if required
- ensure volunteers know where to get a drink, something to eat and where toilets are located
- introduce the member of staff who will supervise the activity
- if appropriate, provide a tour of the workplace
- distribute marketing materials, brochures or calendars of events for volunteers to take away
- thank volunteers for their contribution

### **TIP...**

Don't assume there will be a team available at short notice. It's important to plan the volunteer

activity well in advance and keep in contact with the company's volunteer program coordinator. It can sometimes take time to find the right volunteer or team of volunteers for a specific projects...(also you could ask about Wimmera Volunteers Short Term Volunteer Register!!!!)

### **Following up...**

Businesses whose employees have participated in volunteering appreciate feedback, particularly when it is positive! Feedback is essential for the monitoring and evaluation of corporate volunteering programs. It also helps to reinforce the many positive benefits of these programs. It is worth:

- sending photos from the day to the local newspaper, talking to the local radio station about the project (if you have permission to do so) and inserting an article in the organisation's newsletter
- providing feedback and formal thanks to the business- a letter to the team leader as well as one to the CEO copied to the team leader is a good idea
- taking time to talk with the regular volunteers and paid staff to find out how the day went- learn from this experience and use the information for the next team of corporate/business volunteers.

### **TIP...**

Keep in touch with the business before and after the volunteer activity. Employee volunteers like to know what is expected of them beforehand, and their employer needs to know their involvement was worthwhile and successful.

Stay tuned for our next Information Sheet, on a topic to be announced, if anyone has suggestions feel free to email them through: [brooke@wimmvol.com.au](mailto:brooke@wimmvol.com.au) !!!

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