

WHAT YOUR NON-PROFIT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

BY: EMMALEE BLACKADAR



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Abstract

Canada's non-profit volunteer landscape is continuously evolving. Time, money, and donations of material items are constantly in demand. Corporations have the resources to fill the gaps.

In Manitoba, large and small businesses alike have room for growth in Corporate Social Responsibility. The pandemic has altered our way of life because of restrictions on what we can and can't do. Incorporating an Employer-Supported Volunteer program into your workplace not only benefits the non-profit but increases employee loyalty. Increasingly, [younger workers](#) want the company they work for to include a way of giving back to the community. Findings from a survey done by Deloitte, show "more millennials feel their employers are creating diverse and inclusive work environments (up to 71%, from 68% in 2019) and having a positive impact on communities (up to 69%, from 65%)."

Employer-Supported Volunteering (ESV) is a way for organizations to practice Corporate Social Responsibility. In 2013, 4.7 million volunteers received formal support from their employers. Employer-Support Volunteering can include:

- changing hours or reducing an employee's workload;
- allowing the use of company facilities or equipment;
- recognizing staff with a letter of thanks; or
- receiving paid time off (according to Statistics Canada.)

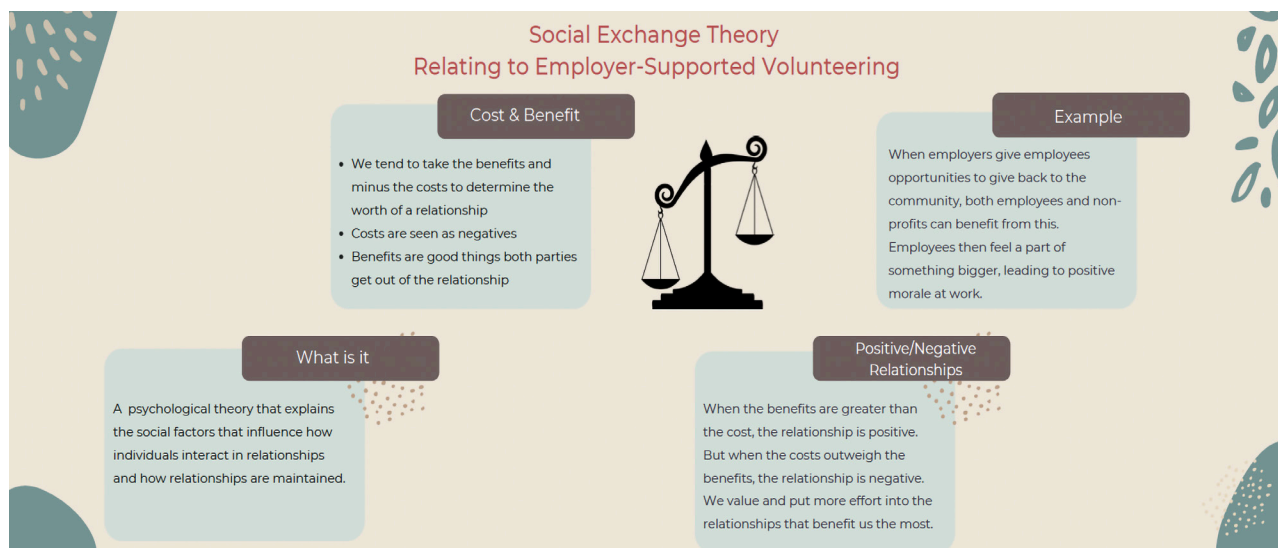
This white paper looks at how non-profits can encourage corporations to partner with them through Employer-Supported Volunteer opportunities. It also includes insight from corporations in Winnipeg that already have long-lasting partnerships with non-profits. These two perspectives show how both non-profits and businesses can benefit from working together through Employer-Supported Volunteer programs.

Introduction

The Issue

Non-profits, not-for-profits, and charities need help — they need money, time, and skills. Corporations have Employer-Supported Volunteer programs that can fill the gaps.

Formal volunteering in Canada has been declining, but there has been a surge in non-formal volunteering, according to Statistics Canada. Employer-Supported Volunteer programs have also been on the rise, not only because they are an opportunity to give back to the community through money, time, and skills, but it is a boost in staff morale and engagement.



Source: Booth, Jonathan E., Kyoung Won Park, and Theresa M. Glomb. "Employer-Supported Volunteering Benefits: Gift exchange among employers, employees, and volunteer organizations." 227-49.

Since the 2008 recession, non-profits and charities have still been trying to recover from the increase in need. The pandemic caused a setback to the recovery process and an upsurge in demand for their services. More than ever before, non-profits, not-for-profits, and charities need help from corporations as they faced the possibility of shutting their doors.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it hasn't been possible to have the same in-person volunteer experience. Yet, companies are ready and willing to step up and fill the gaps with their money, time, and skills — even if it means participating remotely. So how can non-profits connect with corporations eager to help?

When it comes to who reaches out to whom, the answer is it depends. Both corporations and non-profits can and do reach out with different volunteer and partnership opportunities. Having a clear outline of what each party is looking for with the partnership can help both parties in the decision-making process.

Key Definitions

Charity: A charity is a not-for-profit that has charitable status with the federal government. A charitable organization's purpose must fall within four general categories:

1. Relief of poverty
2. Advancement of education
3. Advancement of religion
4. Other purposes beneficial to the community in a way the law regards as charitable.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable — to itself, its stakeholders, and the public.

Employer-Supported Volunteering: Employer-Supported Volunteering encourages a company's staff to donate their time to community causes, according to Volunteer Canada.

Formal volunteering: Formal volunteering can be activities conducted without pay on behalf of a group or organization.

Non-formal volunteering: Non-formal volunteering can be activities conducted without pay not on behalf of a group or organization.

Not-for-profit: A not-for-profit has a goal to help individuals, groups, or causes by re-investing profits into the work of the organization to achieve its mission, as defined by Volunteer Manitoba.

Non-profit: A non-profit is an organization created to not make profits as defined by the Manitoba Companies Office. Any profit made goes towards furthering the goal or undertaking of the organization.

Volunteer: A volunteer is someone who participates in meaningful activities without monetary compensation.

Volunteer grants: Volunteer grants are charitable donations by corporations in recognition of volunteer work done by employees.

Q&A — Winnipeg Non-Profits Pt. 1

Harvest Manitoba and United Way Winnipeg are two well-known non-profits in Winnipeg. Leaders from these non-profits explain how corporations can get involved and ways corporate volunteers were able to help throughout the pandemic.

Vince Barletta is the president & CEO at Harvest Manitoba. Rob Pierce is the associate director of partnership development at United Way Winnipeg. Melissa Burgess is the senior manager of engagement initiatives at United Way Winnipeg.

What do you look for when a new corporation is looking to partner with you?

Barletta (Harvest Manitoba): “We need people, we need money, and we need food. When we can build long-term sustainable partnerships, that gives us the stability that we know that we’re going to have food, money, or people that we’re going to have those resources going forward. The long-term relationships also allow us to be part of their overall philanthropic strategy. We can also work with them to develop leaders in their organization.”

Pierce (United Way Winnipeg): “When we partner with organizations, there’s a little more involved. It’s not just building relationships, but I’d say building partnerships with organizations that they can feel that you know if they really get behind their community campaign.”

Burgess (United Way Winnipeg): “Across United Way, we are really looking to build strong partnerships with workplaces and other groups in the community, and so for us, we really try to make sure that those relationships are mutually beneficial. We know that businesses are busy and have a lot going on. So, whenever possible, we try to make sure we’re offering just as much to them as they’re giving.”

Non-Profits

What are Your Needs

As a non-profit you need three things: people, money, and resources.

Volunteers are essential to keeping your non-profits functioning. According to Cindy Guy, former president of the Leduc, Nisku & Wetaskiwin Regional Chamber of Commerce, volunteers are a big part of how things get done, seeing as most non-profits have tight budgets. Now, more than ever, non-profits are looking for long-term volunteers they can rely on. You need people who build relationships with both the staff and clients.

Volunteer Manitoba encourages non-profits to build a “[well-managed volunteer program](#)” that provides volunteers with feedback, guidance, and supervision.

There is a constantly increasing demand for volunteers, but with COVID-19 restrictions in place, Imagine Canada reports that [three in five](#) charities have experienced a decline in volunteer hours.

The pandemic has only added more financial strain to non-profits, especially with an increased need for service due to job cuts and CERB cheques. Many non-profit organizations are working with shoestring budgets to cover programming, gift-in-kind distribution, administration, governance, facilities, and technology. Volunteers stretch the budget by providing labour without traditional compensation.

Resources can vary depending on your non-profit's needs. The pandemic pushed many people into living from paycheque to paycheque. Many non-profit agencies depended on donations or money to buy the necessary supplies for the people using their services. The most significant need for many non-profits became essential items like hygiene supplies, food, menstrual products, and clothing.

Challenges Non-Profits Face

Recruiting, retaining, and showing appreciation to volunteers is challenging. Volunteer Manitoba provides non-profits, charities, and not-for-profits training opportunities to help combat these challenges. The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement sets the basis for these opportunities.

While many non-profits faced plenty of challenges prior to the pandemic, COVID-19 has made it increasingly challenging. Before the pandemic, some non-profits had trouble hosting large groups than others, but now those organizations are also dealing with social distancing policies.

Fundraising is a challenge. Many organizations have adapted their major fundraisers due to COVID-19 restrictions. The pandemic has caused non-profits to depend on receiving donations through websites, social media, and email, which isn't a bad thing. People are just missing the in-person aspects of being involved. Non-profits also face the challenge of [increased competition for funding](#).

The number of people who need a non-profit's services can also pose a challenge.

Throughout the pandemic, Harvest Manitoba has seen an all-time high number of citizens needing hampers. Harvest Manitoba saw around a 30 per cent increase in need overnight when the first COVID-19 restrictions went into place in 2020. Of course this lockdown also meant that Harvest Manitoba had to send all of its volunteers home. President and CEO Vince Barletta worried Harvest Manitoba would have to shut its doors to the public. Harvest Manitoba saw a 60 per cent decrease in its regular donations. Thankfully, donors stepped up and provided the necessary funds and food donations to continue serving clients.

The Benefit of Having Corporate Volunteers

Volunteers can use their professional experience to benefit your organization. Having [highly skilled volunteers](#) come into your non-profit can help improve the organization's business practices, according to Stéphanie Grawehr, the marketing manager at Alaya.

Corporate volunteers also increase your non-profit's reach. Providing volunteer opportunities to corporate employees connects people who care about specific causes to an organization that serves that cause.

Corporations can raise necessary material and monetary donations. United Way Winnipeg's [Sock & Underwear Drive](#) is a campaign where staff can collect the garments for agencies supporting people who experience homelessness. Another example is United Way Winnipeg's [Walk This Way campaign](#). In 2021, community sponsors pledged \$100,000 if Winnipeggers collectively reached 40,000 kilometres.

Q&A — Winnipeg Non-Profits Pt. 2

How were corporations able to be involved with your non-profit during COVID-19?

Barletta (Harvest Manitoba): “We’ve needed to rely more on money. We have had generosity from corporations, [and] other individuals who are very philanthropic in the community who have supported us financially and allowed us to the financial resources we needed to be able to sustain this operation through some challenging times. I would say that the main shift during COVID-19 has been less people and more money. But we hope that moving forward we can start to get the people back too because that’s a really important part of how we’ve always worked here and how we want to continue to work here.”

Pierce (United Way Winnipeg): “We thought we would have a very challenging year. We said the first thing every company had to do, was look after their employees. And then after you look after employees, you have to look after your company. And I think the timing of the pandemic was good because we run a campaign that starts in the fall. Now it’s time to take care of your community, and they [companies] actually utilized the United Way campaign to actually, you know, get people back together, even if it was virtual.”

Burgess (United Way Winnipeg): “We’ve created some new activities that [employees] can do virtually, so we’ve created some fun learning games like a jeopardy game that’s about United Way in our community. We created an online poverty simulation called make the money. [This simulation] is an activity that people can go through to understand better some of the challenges that low-income families face. There’s been a huge need in the community for donations of hygiene items, menstrual products, food, and essential items. So, we have collection drives. We’ve also had groups build their own kits for folks. We’ve also been doing some community walking tours.”

Corporations

The Benefits of Corporate Volunteering

[Both non-profits and the corporation involved](#) in an Employer-Supported Volunteer program experience benefits. Examples of who benefits include the non-profit or volunteer organization, the community, specific individuals, the business, and employees.

According to Cindy Guy in the Leduc Representative, employees who participate in ESV are more likely to have increased morale, motivation, and job satisfaction, creating a better relationship and view of their employer.

Having an ESV program that aligns with the business's goals will also improve the bottom line. Corporations are more likely to retain and engage current employees and enhance their work experience by allowing them to do something good.

Employers show how the business cares for its employees and the community by providing ESV benefits. According to [Michele Parmelee](#), the Deloitte Global deputy CEO and chief people & purpose officer, employers who attempt to address the value of Gen Z and Millennial workers are likely to see more job loyalty.

COMPARISON

FORMAL VOLUNTEERING	VS	NON-FORMAL VOLUNTEERING
Total population (thousands): 3,424 Number of volunteers (thousands): 1,773	GEN Z	Total population (thousands): 3,424 Number of volunteers (thousands): 2,667
Total population (thousands): 7,764 Number of volunteers (thousands): 3,139	MILLENNIALS	Total population (thousands): 7,764 Number of volunteers (thousands): 5,950
Total population (thousands): 7,159 Number of volunteers (thousands): 3,162	GEN X	Total population (thousands): 7,159 Number of volunteers (thousands): 5,427
Total population (thousands): 9,348 Number of volunteers (thousands): 3,608	BABY BOOMERS	Total population (thousands): 9,348 Number of volunteers (thousands): 6,810
Total population (thousands): 3,148 Number of volunteers (thousands): 996	MATURES	Total population (thousands): 3,148 Number of volunteers (thousands): 1,839

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering, and Participating, 2018

Volunteering also provides your employees with [leadership and teamwork](#) opportunities outside the workplace. Employees have the chance to work alongside other departments and other volunteers while developing new soft skills.

Including an ESV program into a company’s corporate social responsibility might result in stronger stakeholder relationships. Employees are more likely to be engaged with workplace activities, leading to a lower turnover rate. This will help the business build and develop new or existing relationships with non-profits.

When employees have a good relationship with the organization’s hierarchy they work for, they are more likely to stay loyal to the company and work harder. Volunteering allows companies to build relationships on a vast scale. It fosters connections inside the workplace, in the community, and inside the organization your employees volunteer with. Working for a company that cares about its staff is something many people look for when applying for jobs.

**“If I had two options in front of me, I would lean towards the one with the community day.”
- Peter Parboji, a Wawanesa employee**

Employees also benefit from having Employer-Supported Volunteer opportunities. Many people are busy outside of their work life and may not dedicate the time to volunteering. This opportunity allows for staff to improve soft skills, improve their workplace well-being, feel like they have a purpose, and encourage care for mental health, according to Grawehr.

Volunteer Opportunities Within an ESV

ESV programs can look different for each organization. They can also have other names. Wawanesa Insurance refers to it as “Employee Volunteerism,” an umbrella term that includes many opportunities. IG Wealth Management refers to it as a “Volunteer Support Program.” Both companies have the programs as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and value giving back to their communities. Though they have different names, there are lots of commonalities between the programs at Wawanesa and IG Wealth Management. Common factors include a day of service, volunteer paid time-off, volunteer grants, group volunteer opportunities, council or ambassador programs, pro bono assignments, and short or long-term skill-based opportunities.

A day of service can look different from business to business. Businesses typically give employees one or two days per year to volunteer within their community. The employee can choose something on their own, or the company can provide them with a list. Employees let their immediate supervisor know when they plan to use their day of service and get a sign-off approval. Typically, a day of service is a short-term and time bound opportunity. Many companies give monetary compensation for these volunteer days.

Group volunteering can either be done during the day of service or in a larger setting, such as a partnered fundraising event. Some of these events will cap on how many people can participate, but will typically be a 'the more, the merrier' activity. Group volunteering can be done over the short or long-term.

Non-profit organizations saw a rise in the need for short or long-term skill-based opportunities from corporations. When the pandemic first hit, some non-profits needed to move programming online for the first time. United Way Winnipeg could match up agencies with companies that had the skills and capacity to help non-profits navigate the online world.

One example is Endeavour Wealth Management. This company supported a financial counseling non-profit preparing to move their in-person tax clinics to a virtual format. The agency needed to set up webinars, virtual presentations, and remote tax preparation software. Endeavour Wealth's team got them up and running.

How ESV Programs Work

Wawanesa Insurance

Each employee is given one “My Community” day, that they can book off similar to the way they would book off a vacation day. Wawanesa has team events, which are a part of the employee volunteerism pillar. The United Way campaign, employee volunteerism, and My Community day are just a few ways staff can give back to the community. Wawanesa focuses charitable giving where staff work and live. For Wawanesa employees, giving time is equally important to making monetary donations. Wawanesa also provides non-profits support financially from the donations program. Staff can also participate in walks, runs, or virtual events that help raise funds.

IG Wealth Management

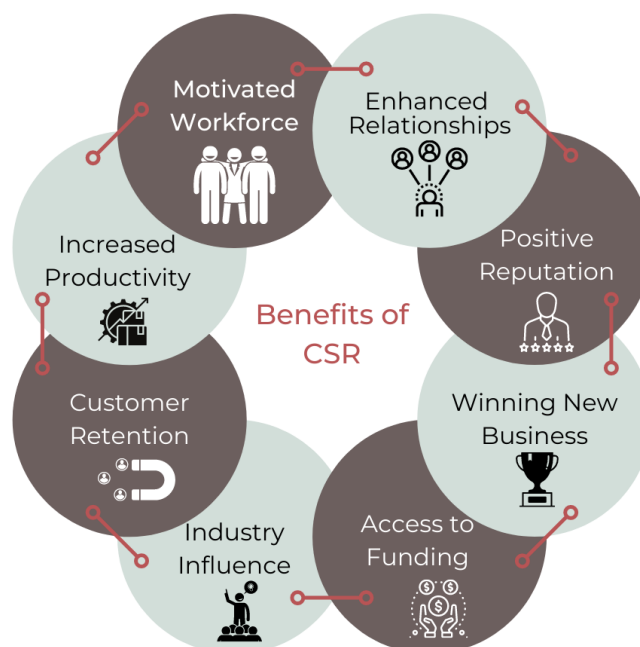
Every employee at IG Wealth Management has two days to volunteer. They can book these volunteer days using the same system the company uses for booking vacation. IG Wealth Management recently began offering formal team volunteer days and are still trying to find the right balance in terms of the options they offer. IG Wealth Management doesn't want staff to feel like they have to use their personal volunteer days on top of being involved with formal team volunteering.

The Value of ESV

Introducing an ESV program to a company [enhances the competitiveness](#) and advances the conditions of the internal and external community. An ESV program, can raise the reputation of a company.

Many employees want to work for companies that align with a local or global social cause. They want to make a difference in the quality of life for those around them. Businesses like Wawanesa and IG Wealth Management are proactively connecting employees with different volunteer opportunities though team events. These opportunities are fundamental to a healthy and democratic society, according to Volunteer Canada.

Employer-Supported Volunteer programs have strong ties to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). A strong CSR means positively impacting the community, the workplace, and the partnering organization. Whether it is driving sustainability forward, increasing equity and justice, or standing alongside newcomers.



Q&A — Winnipeg Corporations

Wawanesa Insurance and IG Wealth Management are two corporations in Winnipeg with well-established ESV programs and community relationships.

Kristin Speirs is the community and events manager at Wawanesa Insurance in Winnipeg, and Kira Conrad is the sponsorship and community engagement manager at IG Wealth Management in Winnipeg.

How has your company adapted its ESV program to accommodate COVID-19?

Both Wawanesa Insurance and IG Wealth Management pivoted to online opportunities.

Speirs (Wawanesa Insurance): “We tried to work with charitable organizations to see if they had virtual opportunities, but it was not easy. We moved away (from virtual), and we gave employees ideas on how to participate without being in person or gathering. So, it’s been now two years of the acts of caring.”

Conrad (IG Wealth Management): “I mean, it’s not the same, but last year for [the] United Way campaign, we had an employee’s advisors consult, film themselves reading their favourite children’s book. And then we sent all those videos to an organization that we partnered with that sends videos to kids so someone can read them a story or a book. We’ve offered our time to charities to make their thank you volunteer call or their thank your phone calls.”

The Future of Volunteering

Non-Profits

Non-profits seem to be shifting focus to increasing information technology support to help those working remotely and delivering remote programming, according to [Imagine Canada](#). Non-profits seem to have made a shift to emphasize communications and marketing, financial management, and strategic planning.

Many charities are pessimistic about their future, believing their financial situation will worsen before it gets better.

Corporations

Melissa Burgess says there will be a shift in what community engagement used to look like before the pandemic and what it will become. “In the future, workplaces will need to be flexible in terms of what they consider to be volunteer time and the opportunities they provide their staff,” said Burgess.

Volunteer Canada’s blog post “[The 10 Best Employee Community Engagement Practices For 2022](#)” echoes Burgess’s thoughts. The blog post agrees that a broad definition of what is considered volunteering needs to be adopted. Changing what is considered volunteering allows companies to put focus on the act of serving and deepening relationships. The blog also suggests being able to bring your friends and family into the volunteer options.

Online

Over 750 “purpose-driven” brands are taking advantage of [Benevity](#), a website that provides an integrated suite of community investment, employee, customer, and non-profit engagement. This kind of portal allows employees to attract, retain, and engage today’s workforce.

Benevity is about embedding social action into their experiences and impacting the community simultaneously. Using Benevity allows employees to have the same engaging experience no matter where they are. It also provides for employees to take ownership of their giving and volunteerism. Benevity also helps find employees virtual and in-person volunteer opportunities.

With Benevity, you can track donations, track volunteer hours, receive reports, and so much more.

Growth for Smaller Businesses

Melissa Burgess says there is room for growth in terms of giving back to the community in smaller companies. These businesses need to learn and work to figure out what is important to them. From there, they can incorporate a strategic corporate social responsibility plan.

United Way started a new program called the Social Purpose Institute specifically to help workplaces figure out their purpose and support the community. The program’s goal is to help businesses determine how they can affect change in the community and within their company.

Conclusion

As a non-profit you need help, and businesses have the resources to fill in the gaps. You are both looking for ways to make deeper connections within the community.

The landscape of volunteering is constantly evolving. Growth and re-evaluation are crucial for small and large businesses working on corporate social responsibility. Opportunity lies in determining a greater purpose beyond the company's bottom line.

The pandemic has caused a shift in how people perceive social good. In that shift, people have realized how important it is to support others in need. Non-profits need to look beyond how a corporation's dollar can benefit its organization and what skills they can bring to the table.

Next Steps Your Non-Profit Can Take:

- 1. Think beyond finances.** How can corporations get involved in a meaningful way?
- 2. Define your goals.** What do you hope to achieve? How does this partnership mutually benefit both parties?
- 3. Find a corporation that has similar goals and the capacity to volunteer.** You can often find this information within the "About Us" section on the company website.
- 4. Reach out to the corporation,** or the corporation can reach out to you if your goals match.
- 5. Work towards moving this partnership into a valuable relationship.** Go beyond your needs and support each other in backing each other's work.

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