

# Lessons from Project V Pilot

Driving impactful, sustained  
volunteering at scale



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# Sustaining volunteering at scale

Project V is a structured corporate volunteering programme, designed to enable companies to volunteer sustainably, impactfully and at scale.

Using insights from the Project V corporate volunteering pilot, this guide offers insights through 16 success factors that enable companies to volunteer regularly, sustainably, and at scale. They can help you enhance your volunteer engagement efforts, drive social change, and foster a more inclusive and compassionate society, no matter where your organisation is in its volunteering journey.

You can read the full report at <https://www.thecompanyofgood.sg/project-v>

Project V has identified four pillars and 16 success factors that foster scalable and sustained impact through volunteering

| Building a strong foundation to meet volunteering goals                                                                                                                                                                             | Identifying the right partner and volunteering programme                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Unleashing the power of a dynamic volunteer force                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Elevating impact through evaluations                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>1. Establish a clear volunteering focus</div> <div>2. Secure leadership buy-in and support</div> <div>3. Designate accountable community investment resources</div> <div>4. Implement supportive organisational policies</div> | <div>5. Establish a strong partnership</div> <div>6. Understand the needs of the community and volunteering programme</div> <div>7. Align corporate investment with community needs</div> <div>8. Leverage diverse volunteer profiles and preferences</div> <div>9. Enhance collaboration to refine or develop programmes</div> <div>10. Identify appropriate volunteering metrics</div> | <div>11. Ensure accountability for volunteer recruitment</div> <div>12. Utilise the right recruitment model</div> <div>13. Leverage appropriate communications channels to rally volunteers</div> <div>14. Conduct onboarding and training for corporate volunteers</div> | <div>15. Conduct reflection and internalisation of learnings through debriefs</div> <div>16. Conduct regular programme evaluations</div> |



## CHAPTER 1

# Building a strong foundation to meet volunteering goals

**As you set out to maximise your community impact through corporate volunteering, you must build a strong foundation from the start.**

This means you should aim to:

1. Establish a clear volunteering focus
2. Secure leadership buy-in and support
3. Designate accountable community investment resources
4. Implement supportive organisational policies



## 1

## Establish a clear volunteering focus



A clear volunteering focus helps you decide which opportunities best suit your organisation, and:



Encourages a shared sense of purpose and engagement



Aligns your volunteering focus with business values and goals



Identifies potential and compatible community partners



### Key takeaway

By having a clear volunteering focus, you can find partners and programmes that align with your goals, allowing for more sustainable volunteering efforts. This also enables you to leverage your strengths and assets to best meet service users' needs.

## 2

## Secure leadership buy-in and support



Endorsement from senior leadership generally increases employee participation. It goes beyond expressing verbal support for volunteerism. Seeing leaders actively participate in volunteering activities shows employees that the company values volunteerism.

**Leaders can support corporate volunteerism in these ways**



**1** Embed volunteerism in the company culture by actively communicating its importance.



**2** Encourage leaders and staff to be proactive in volunteering programmes and events.



**3** Set up policies that encourage volunteering, e.g., providing paid volunteer leave, flexible work arrangements, or even tracking metrics related to community impact.



**4** Allocate resources to make volunteering an accessible and smooth experience, e.g., allocating funds and manpower to run volunteering programmes.

## 3

## Designate accountable community investment resources



To better recruit and communicate with volunteers, some corporates have a dedicated volunteer manager, who secures volunteers for programmes with community partners. There are different models on how volunteer managers can work across organisations:

| Models                                             | How it works                                                                                                                                                           | Suited for                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Dedicated resources</b>                         | A dedicated community investment (CI) team has full ownership and decision-making power over volunteer management processes                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisations just starting out their corporate volunteering journey, regardless of size</li> <li>Smaller organisations that can afford to dedicate CI resources</li> </ul> |
| <b>Cross-functional committee</b>                  | A CI committee, comprised of members from various departments and business units, owns the initiatives and is responsible for volunteer management processes           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisations just starting out their corporate volunteering journey, regardless of size</li> <li>Organisations <i>without</i> dedicated CI resources</li> </ul>            |
| <b>Clear strategy with decentralised ownership</b> | A central CI team determines strategy and approves initiatives. Then, teams or individuals own the initiatives and are responsible for volunteer management processes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large organisations with many different departments and business units</li> <li>Organisations with <i>limited</i> CI resources</li> </ul>                                   |

The approach to structuring the team is based on your employees' preferences, resource availability, and even experience in managing past volunteering programmes.

## 4

## Implement supportive organisational policies



Other than strong leadership support, corporate volunteerism also requires policies to lower barriers to volunteering. Here are some ways to get you started:

- 1 Volunteer leave:** Corporates can implement volunteer leave in addition to annual leave.
- 2 Flexible working arrangements:** When employees have flexible working arrangements, it allows them to take time out of the workday to participate in organisation-led volunteer programmes.
- 3 Reimbursement policies:** If the company has a mass volunteering day, reimbursing additional costs like transportation and meals provides employees with the necessary support to volunteer effectively.
- 4 Incentives and recognition schemes:** You can have an incentive programme to encourage the habit of volunteering among employees. Other ways to recognise volunteers for their efforts include appreciation events and feature stories in company newsletters.

## CHAPTER 2

# Identifying the right partner and volunteering programme

Once you have a clear volunteering focus, the next step is to learn about needs on the ground from your community partners, and the existing programmes that address them.



5

## Establish a strong partnership



Building strong partnerships with community partners fosters trust and sustainability. By understanding each other's strengths and needs, corporate and community partners can co-create impactful programmes that address local challenges effectively.

6

## Understand the needs of the community and volunteering programme



Understanding the needs or requirements of your community partners allows you to choose activities that complement your volunteers' profile, at a sustainable commitment level.

7

## Align corporate investment with community needs

The journey of corporate volunteerism often starts with small investments of Time, Talent, or Treasure—where Time is the time spent volunteering, Talent is the skills offered by your volunteers, and Treasure is direct financial investment or donations in kind. Every corporate has its own goals and pace in volunteering, but every small act matters.

*The following questions can help guide your decision-making when selecting the right programmes*



### 1 Time

- How many sessions are required within the programme duration?
- How much time is required if you want to co-curate a programme with your community partner?



### 2 Talent

- How many volunteers are needed for each session and the whole programme?
- Will service users' needs be met without repeat volunteers?
- How can volunteers support the co-curation of programmes?
- Are specific knowledge and skills required?



### 3 Treasure

- What are the costs of supporting the programme?

Different programmes require different resources, such as volunteer numbers and commitment. Choose a programme that aligns with your company's focus and what you can offer. You can work with community partners to co-curate and co-design programmes. This requires more time and effort, but utilising existing assets creates a sense of ownership for volunteers.



## 8 Leverage diverse volunteer profiles and preferences

To have a successful partnership, it is critical to understand and align your volunteering focus and capabilities with the needs of your community partners. This requires understanding your company's employees and their volunteering preferences, allowing you to recruit and deploy volunteers effectively.

**Volunteer profiles will differ based on three factors**



**1 Involvement:** Volunteers look for different types of volunteering. Some prefer ad-hoc to fit their schedules. Others prefer regular "plug and play" volunteering activities that require no preparation, e.g., accompanying the elderly for walks or food delivery. With a wide variety of options, you can attract a larger pool of volunteers.



**2 Commitment:** Volunteers have different priorities and desired growth as a volunteer. To match these needs, offer varying levels of participation and responsibilities before, during, and after the project. Look out for volunteers who are keen to step up, whether in the recurring or the co-curating team. Empower them with relevant opportunities.



**3 Skills:** Corporate volunteers are better positioned to lend their skills to volunteering programmes. You can leverage your employees' interests, skills, and expertise to increase engagement and create a greater impact when delivering a programme.

Volunteer preferences may change over time due to interest or experience, or changes in organisational support. If you're co-curating a programme, work with community partners to review roles when these changes arise.

## 9 Enhance collaboration to refine or develop programmes

Co-curation of volunteering programmes is beneficial to you and your community partners.

With your company's diverse knowledge, skills and assets, you can expand the variety of programmes for service users. This can lead to unique and impactful activities that community partners may not have the bandwidth or skills to create. You must also understand if your volunteers have skills or knowledge gaps so that you can prepare or equip them accordingly.





# Identify appropriate volunteering metrics



Appropriate evaluation metrics can help you understand if your resources were used wisely and if your desired outcomes were achieved.

It can also provide insights into different areas of your volunteering efforts, e.g., volunteer attraction and retention, engagement levels, and social impact. This data can help you better strategise and enhance your volunteering activities, and provide evidence of the positive impact of your volunteering efforts.

You can consider a broader set of qualitative and quantitative metrics to better understand your programme's effectiveness and impact.

| Qualitative                                                                                                                | Quantitative                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Volunteer satisfaction:</b> measures how satisfied volunteers are with their experience, through surveys or interviews. | <b>Output:</b> refers to tangible products or services, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of volunteers (total/unique/repeat)</li><li>• Number of volunteer hours for the year</li><li>• Number of service users served by volunteers</li></ul> |
| <b>Skills development:</b> the extent to which volunteers gain or enhance skills.                                          | <b>Outcome:</b> refers to direct results of volunteering efforts, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preventing isolation</li><li>• Increasing literacy rates</li><li>• Improving community engagement</li></ul>                                        |
| <b>Stories of change:</b> anecdotes or stories about how volunteering efforts have made a difference in communities.       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Accurate and comprehensive metrics and measurements for your volunteer programmes helps you:

- 1 Evaluate effectiveness and efficiency:** Knowing which initiatives yield the greatest impact helps allocate resources optimally, increasing productivity and driving outcomes. It shifts the focus from “how much” to “how well,” providing a better assessment of whether your volunteering programmes are creating their intended positive change.
- 2 Plan strategically:** With a greater understanding of the performance of different initiatives, you can focus on strengthening successful endeavours or discontinuing less effective ones. This also informs decision-making for future volunteering programmes.
- 3 Improve transparency and accountability:** Reliable metrics provide evidence on where resources were allocated and impact made.
- 4 Enhance volunteers' experience and satisfaction:** Understanding what makes a fulfilling volunteering experience can help attract and retain volunteers, ensuring a more sustained volunteer pipeline for your community partners.

Impact measurement requires a close partnership with community partners to gather additional data points. The value of measuring impact extends to community partners, as monitoring their volunteer programmes also allows them to make better decisions when allocating scarce resources, thereby maximising positive outcomes in the community.



## CHAPTER 3

# Unleashing the power of a dynamic volunteer force

To meet your volunteering goals and programme needs, you must find a sustainable approach to recruit and deploy volunteers.



# Ensure accountability for volunteer recruitment

Strategies are needed for successful volunteer recruitment and deployment. These must be communicated with community partners for mutual understanding of responsibilities in meeting volunteering goals.

Here are some ways to manage risks around volunteer recruitment



**1 Volun-teaming:** Allocate groups of business units instead of individual volunteers. Volunteers can check in with others in their group to swap sessions if they cannot make it to a scheduled session.



**2 Volunteer accountability:** Require volunteers who cannot attend sessions to find a replacement. This approach also shifts their mindset from having a casual approach to volunteering to taking full accountability for their attendance.



**3 Purposeful oversubscription:** Recruit beyond the required number of volunteers, then place volunteers on a waitlist in case of drop-outs.



**4 Involve business unit heads:** Share accountability with business units by delegating some parts of the volunteer management process to business leaders. This enables the organisation to sustain its volunteering efforts without adding dedicated manpower.

# Utilise the right recruitment model



You can recruit volunteers individually, in groups, or by business units. The recruitment strategy will largely depend on the programme requirements, as well as the number of volunteers needed.

Meeting the required number of volunteers per project can be tricky, but there are ways to work around certain challenges:

| Challenge                                                                                                                                                               | Solution                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Low sign-up rate:</b><br>Low sign-up rates tend to be an issue at the beginning of volunteering activities.                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan longer lead times to build awareness of the programme and the volunteer opportunities available.</li><li>• Increase participation of leadership in the recruitment drive.</li><li>• Incentivise or provide perks to participate.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Oversubscription:</b><br>There will be instances when the number of volunteers required for a session or programme would be low, but employee interest remains high. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have a “first come, first served” approach and place individuals on a waitlist once volunteering spaces are filled.</li><li>• You can prioritise new volunteers, which will increase the total number of employees within the organisation who have volunteered.</li><li>• You can also prioritise individuals who have participated in the programme before, or those who have indicated they can commit to multiple sessions.</li></ul> |

## Leverage appropriate communications channels to rally volunteers

Apart from recruiting volunteers, strategic communication plans also help sustain a culture of volunteerism within your organisation.

You can utilise various communication channels such as email, internal online platforms, social media, physical or digital office bulletins, volunteer champions, and company events. Creating a brand through corporate attire and team names can help unite volunteers.



## Conduct onboarding and training for corporate volunteers



There are benefits to briefing volunteers before the session starts, and you don't have to do it alone. Tap on your community partner's knowledge to help you better prepare your volunteers for an enjoyable experience.

### Benefits of a pre-volunteering briefing



**1 Better understanding of roles:** A typical volunteer briefing covers operational aspects such as session schedules, a list of activities, meeting and pick-up points, and other details that may be useful or relevant in preparing for the sessions.



**2 Better understanding of impact:** A volunteer's sense of purpose and contribution will increase when they understand the programme's impact.



**3 Provide tips and acknowledge potential issues:** Volunteer briefings may include tips or guidance on how to best interact with service users and manage potential issues, ensuring volunteers are fully equipped and prepared for their roles.



**4 Answer volunteers' questions:** Volunteers may raise questions, and addressing them beforehand can prepare volunteers for the sessions. A briefing pack with FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) can help address these questions upfront.

## CHAPTER 4

# Elevating impact through evaluations

Given the changing and growing complexity of service user needs, you and your community partners must evaluate your volunteering programmes regularly.



## Conduct reflection and internalisation of learnings through debriefs

Apart from regular programme reviews and evaluations, you can take it a step further by having volunteer debrief sessions. It can be very powerful to have a post-volunteering reflection activity, which may take 15 to 30 minutes, for volunteers to reflect on the session and its impact on them and their service users.

When volunteers step back, reflect, and review their actions and the programme's overall outcome, they may find more meaning in their contributions, potentially leading to higher volunteer retention and turning them into advocates for the cause.

*Debriefs can make the volunteering experience more meaningful*



- ✓ **Why does it matter to the community?**  
Volunteers see themselves as valuable contributors to the wider community.
- ✓ **Why does it matter to the organisation?**  
Volunteers see the corporate purpose of their organisation when they see the connection between business and community.
- ✓ **Why does it matter to me?**  
Volunteers pause and see that their time and actions matter.

## Conduct regular programme evaluations

Regular evaluations ensure that volunteer experience is prioritised and maintained, encouraging repeat volunteerism and advocacy.

Aside from periodic reviews and assessments, regular, informal check-ins with volunteers allow feedback to improve future sessions. If you are more mature in your volunteering journey, these evaluations are helpful when starting new programmes.

Reviews with community partners are also important. With patience and cooperation, you can better meet the needs of your service users while improving the volunteer experience.



# Does your volunteering programme yield a positive outcome?

Here are some questions to ask:



## Alignment with goals and ambitions

- How does it align strategically and contribute to long-term ambitions?
- How does it contribute to the sustainability and growth of the organisation?



## Capacity building

- How does it strengthen organisational capacity in key areas?



## Community impact

- How do our volunteering efforts benefit community partners and service users?
- Are there opportunities to scale or expand the programme to reach more beneficiaries or address more community needs?



## Volunteer engagement

- How engaged were volunteers throughout the programme?
- Do volunteers feel adequately supported and trained for their roles?
- What factors influenced volunteer retention and commitment?
- Based on feedback, what improvements or adjustments would they recommend for future iterations of the programme?



## Partnership effectiveness

- How effective was the collaboration between you and your community partners?
- Were there any communication, coordination, or resource-sharing challenges between partners?



## Investment effectiveness

- How do the costs of running the programme compare to its benefits and outcomes?
- Are there any opportunities for optimising resource allocation or reducing expenses without compromising programme quality?
- Are we tracking the right metrics to measure success in relation to organisational goals and ambitions?



## Food for thought

As a corporate partner, you can significantly enhance the impact of your programmes by focusing on the needs of service users more than employee engagement. Your unique knowledge and expertise will enable you to create distinct and attractive programmes that cater to the needs and interests of the community.

You can support community partners by proactively designing volunteering programmes, being open to feedback, and adapting to change. We encourage you to constantly push the boundaries of your ongoing volunteering efforts, embracing in-depth engagement to make an even greater impact on communities.



## CONCLUSION

# The way forward

By committing to regular and sustained volunteerism, you can help communities meet their daily needs, foster long-term solutions, and cultivate lasting relationships built on trust and mutual support.

Regardless of where you are on your volunteering journey, you can deepen your engagement and commitment to community partners by increasing the regularity of volunteering efforts, encouraging repeat volunteerism, and increasing the scale of volunteering programmes.

When it comes to models of corporate volunteerism, this is the model we've found to be sustainable in the longer term:

1. **Medium regularity:** Monthly volunteering
2. **Low repeat requirements:** Repeat volunteers are not required
3. **Small to medium scale:** Up to 30 volunteers are required per session

This model requires a mindset shift at the individual and organisational levels. Rather than viewing it as a detraction from business, corporates and employees should see that volunteerism can be a strategic investment, contributing to stakeholder value, employee engagement, skills development, community relations, team building, and innovation.

Additionally, corporates can begin to see themselves contributing not just economically, but on the societal front as well. Ultimately, corporates are pivotal in enabling Singapore to be a more caring, inclusive and compassionate society.

Ready to explore opportunities to expand your social impact?  
Get in touch at [contact@companyofgood.sg](mailto:contact@companyofgood.sg)



Project V pilot is co-led by the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), National Council of Social Service (NCSS), and SG Cares Office in the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), along with knowledge partner, EY.

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