

# CANADIAN CODE FOR EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING



[volunteer.ca](http://volunteer.ca)



Volunteer Canada acknowledges the financial support of Cenovus Energy for the development of the Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering.

For further information on Employer-Supported Volunteering or other types of volunteering, please visit: [www.volunteer.ca](http://www.volunteer.ca).

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## FOREWORD

Employer-Supported Volunteering has gained momentum over the past decade, bringing together players from the private, public and non-profit sectors to build collective community impact. With 37% of Canada's 12.7 million volunteers reporting some form of support from their employers to volunteer, leaders on Volunteer Canada's Corporate Council on Volunteering identified the need to articulate values and guiding principles for these multi-sector relationships, and to promote standards of practice for Employer-Supported Volunteering.

The new **Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering** is based on the **Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI)**, which was first launched by Volunteer Canada to mark the International Year of Volunteers in 2001. The CCVI was the brainchild of Liz Weaver, who at the time was the Executive Director of Volunteer Hamilton. It was developed as her anchoring project in the McGill-McConnell Program (the Master of Management for National Voluntary Sector Leadership). The CCVI was revised in 2006, 2012 and 2017 to reflect legislative changes, demographic shifts, global trends and social innovation within the volunteer engagement field. The CCVI is targeted to boards of directors, volunteer management staff and volunteers of charitable and non-profit organizations. It has been adopted by charitable and non-profit organizations and by public institutions in every region of the country. Notably, the CCVI continues to be one of the top resources downloaded on Volunteer Canada's website, [volunteer.ca](http://volunteer.ca).

The **Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering** was designed to align with the CCVI. It has the flexibility to be adapted to the context, language and business objectives of Canadian workplaces of all sizes and within all sectors.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are enormously grateful to **Cenovus Energy** for their leadership and support of the development of the Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering. We want to thank the members of Volunteer Canada's **Corporate Council on Volunteering** for their insight and ongoing commitment to excellence in Employer-Supported Volunteering. We also appreciate the enthusiastic support, valuable review and focused editing from the following members of the Volunteer Canada team: Lainie Towell, Nadine Maillot and Deborah Pike. A special thank you to our external reviewers: Jane Hennig, Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo; Paul Forgues, Conference Board of Canada; Shilpa Tiwari, LBG Canada; and Clare O'Kelly, Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada.



Paula Speevak  
President & CEO  
Volunteer Canada

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## SECTION I INTRODUCTION

### Volunteer Canada

Volunteer Canada provides national leadership and expertise on volunteerism in Canada. We aim to increase the participation, quality and diversity of volunteer experiences in Canada in order to help build healthy and resilient communities. Since 1977, we have worked closely with the following collaborators in order to achieve our mission.

- > More than 200 volunteer centres in communities across Canada
- > More than 1200 Volunteer Canada members
- > More than 20 members of the Corporate Council on Volunteering
- > Canadian charitable and non-profit organizations
- > Businesses
- > Local, provincial and federal government departments
- > Educational institutions
- > National and provincial professional associations

### Volunteer Canada's Corporate Council on Volunteering

The Corporate Council on Volunteering advances Employer-Supported Volunteering and facilitates multi-sector collaboration to maximize collective community impact. Founded by Volunteer Canada in 2005, with support from The Home Depot Canada, the Council is driven by leaders from corporations of diverse industries, sizes and structures. Drawing on the collective assets of its members, the Council monitors global trends, the economy, demographic shifts and social issues to set the course for more integrated and reciprocal business-community engagement strategies.

The Council is also a vehicle for members to share their experiences on a range of practical issues, including innovative program models, technology platforms, outcomes measurements and how best to align community engagement strategies with business objectives. The Council convenes national dialogues, participates in initiatives within the broader field of corporate social responsibility and creates innovative tools and resources to strengthen Employer-Supported Volunteering in Canada.

### Employer-Supported Volunteering (ESV)

Employer-Supported Volunteering is any activity undertaken by an employer to encourage and support the volunteering of their employees in the community<sup>1</sup>. Employers provide time, meeting space, infrastructure and support for their employees to volunteer where they live and work. Employer-Supported Volunteering is typically one component of a corporate social responsibility strategy and ESV can be aligned with an employer's Human Resources objectives, such as employee recruitment, retention and professional development.

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<sup>1</sup> IAVE (2012), Global Trends in Corporate Volunteering

Two-thirds of the 12.7 million Canadians who volunteered in 2013<sup>2</sup> were employed part-time or full-time. 55% of these individuals, constituting 4.7 million volunteers, indicated that they had received some sort of formal employer support. This included: changing hours or reducing workload; allowing use of facilities or equipment to carry out volunteer tasks; providing recognition or a letter of thanks; or offering paid time off.

Elements of ESV include: Volunteer Grant or Dollars for Doers Program; Volunteer Paid Time-off Policy; Day of Service; Volunteer Council or Ambassadors Program; Group Volunteering; Short or long-term skills-based or pro bono volunteer assignments<sup>3</sup>.

## Investing in Employee Volunteer Programs

*For every employee who participates in a volunteer program, more than \$2,400 of value is generated by improving employee engagement. This is created by decreasing turnover costs and improving employee performance.<sup>4</sup>*

Workplaces that choose to develop employee volunteer programs and design them to align with core business goals are also improving their bottom lines, recruiting and retaining more engaged employees and enhancing the quality of life in the communities where they operate.

- > 68% of Canadians, given the choice between two jobs, would choose the one with the strong volunteer culture<sup>5</sup>.
- > Employees who volunteer are some of the most engaged employees to be found and bring such benefits as improved communication, skills, lower staff turnover and less absenteeism<sup>6</sup>.
- > Young professionals aged 18-24 who frequently participate in their company's employee volunteer activities are twice as likely to rate their corporate culture as very positive<sup>7</sup>.
- > 83% of millennials and 70% of other employees would be more loyal to a company that helps them contribute to social and environmental issues<sup>8</sup>.
- > 92% of respondents involved in hiring decisions agree that volunteering improves employee's broader professional skill sets<sup>9</sup>.
- > 77% of Canadians believe a company can take specific actions that both increase profits and improve the economic and social conditions in the community where it operates<sup>10</sup>.

2 Statistics Canada, *General Social Survey: Giving, Volunteering, Participating 2013*, released January 30, 2015

3 See Appendix B

4 The Corporate Executive Board Company (CEB): *Maximizing the Effectiveness of Corporate Volunteer Programs*

5 *Recognizing Volunteering in 2017 Summary Report*, Volunteer Canada (2017)

6 *A Call for Volunteers*, CW magazine (September 2011)

7 *Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Study* (2011)

8 *Cone Communications Employee Engagement Study* (2016)

9 *Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Study* (2016)

10 *Edelman Trust Barometer – General population, Canada* (2017)

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# The Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering: Purpose and Elements

## Purpose

Increasingly, workplaces are recognizing the value of ESV and the positive effects it has on companies, employees and the quality of life in their communities.

*Volunteering is being put to work, in varying degrees as a strategic asset to help achieve business goals, including managing and changing culture, strengthening the brand, building external relationships and improving employee engagement.<sup>11</sup>*

**The Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering** is designed to provide guidance to workplaces on developing and enhancing their ESV programs. It is intended to initiate thought and discussion within workplaces about the value of these programs and the impact employee volunteer engagement can have on achieving strategic business goals while affecting social and environmental change in communities. Finally, the Code aims to support the work of those who manage ESV programs within a workplace.

The Code recognizes and reflects the changing realities of today's volunteers, current employee volunteer engagement and management practice. It is flexible and applies to workplaces of all sizes, with different levels of resources, whether rural or urban, and crossing a range of industries. Elements of the Code are designed to be inclusive and applicable to a diversity of people, cultures, communities, opportunities and approaches.

For ESV engagement to be effective, workplace leaders must actively champion a culture and structure that supports and values the role and impact of employee volunteerism.

## Elements

The Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering consists of three elements:

> **The Value of Employer-Supported Volunteering**

Core statements about the importance and value of employee volunteer involvement in the workplace and Canadian society.

> **Guiding Principles for Employer-Supported Volunteering**

Principles that inform the relationship between a workplace, its employee volunteers and the charitable or non-profit organization with which it partners.

> **Standards of Practice**

Standards workplaces should consider when developing or reviewing their ESV program.

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<sup>11</sup> IAVE, *Global Trends in Volunteering* (2012)

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## SECTION II CANADIAN CODE FOR EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

### The Value of Employer-Supported Volunteering

ESV has a positive impact on communities, non-profit organizations, workplaces and employees. Workplaces build relationships to make a difference in the local and global communities where they operate.

#### **Volunteering is fundamental to a healthy and democratic society in Canada**

- > It promotes civic engagement and active participation in shaping the society we want.
- > It encourages everyone to play a role and contribute to the quality of life in communities.

#### **Employer-Supported Volunteering builds relationships**

- > It connects employees and their workplaces to the causes they care about and allows personal and corporate goals to be met within the Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement<sup>12</sup>.
- > It creates opportunities for non-profit organizations to accomplish their goals by better understanding and involving workplaces and their employees.

#### **Employer-Supported Volunteering helps workplaces achieve their strategic goals**

- > It strengthens the company's image, brand recognition and stakeholder relations.
- > It results in higher revenue per employee, higher shareholder returns and higher market premiums.
- > It enhances employee engagement, leading to improved communication and recruitment, reduced absenteeism, lower staff turnover and increased retention.
- > It supports the development of core competencies and leadership skills in employees.
- > It builds new external relationships and networking opportunities with and between customers, suppliers and clients.
- > It helps create an engaged and motivated workforce and a positive corporate culture.

#### **Volunteer involvement is personal for employees**

- > It provides the opportunity for employees to engage according to their values, personal preferences and motivations, and helps build pride in their workplace.
- > It allows employee volunteers to build, develop and share their professional and leadership skills.
- > It builds relationships between work colleagues, between employees and clients or customers.
- > It recognizes employees for their personal contributions to community.

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix A

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### **Employer-Supported Volunteering builds capacity in charitable and non-profit organizations**

- > It provides charitable and non-profit organizations with specialized skills, expertise and resources that can enhance their sustainability and ability to respond to community needs.
- > It provides charitable and non-profit organizations with hands-on service and support that help them accomplish their goals.
- > It helps organizations understand how corporate culture, values and core competencies can be leveraged to impact social change.

### **Employer-Supported Volunteering contributes to strong, inclusive and resilient communities**

- > It allows business and employees to align and support their interests in contributing to the quality of life in communities.
- > Multi-sector collaboration and partnerships can address community challenges and maximize collective impact.

*Employees strengthen corporate citizenship from the inside out with compassion, promising ideas and unparalleled energy.<sup>13</sup>*

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13 The Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, *Mapping Success in Employee Volunteering: The Drivers of Effectiveness for Employee Volunteering and Giving Programs and Fortune 500 Performance* © 2009

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## Guiding Principles

Effective collaborations between workplaces and charitable and non-profit organization both fit their corporate culture and values, and effectively address specific community needs. Such relationships are guided by the following principles:

### Shared value

Policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates. Shared value creation focuses on identifying and expanding the connections between societal and economic progress.<sup>14</sup>

### Reciprocity

An approach to workplace-community engagement that is mutually beneficial to workplaces and non-profit organizations. Partners have an understanding of and commitment to meeting each other's needs, goals and objectives.

### Mutual respect

Companies and their charitable or non-profit partner organizations work to identify and bridge cultural differences. They value the expertise each brings to the relationship and operate with openness and transparency. Companies that move from a charitable model to a partnership model with charitable and non-profit organizations build mutual respect, trust and a commitment to accommodating each other's realities.

### Shared decision making

Building relationships and partnerships involves accepting shared responsibility and shared risk. Partners set mutual realistic expectations and make a commitment to evaluation and continuous improvement.

### Alignment

Workplaces develop policies and operating practices that align community engagement strategies with business objectives.

### Capacity

Workplaces and their charitable and non-profit partner organizations acknowledge each other's readiness to: engage in partnerships or projects; capacity and available resources; and willingness to adapt to changing circumstances.

### Accountability

Partners accept mutual and shared accountability. They commit appropriate resources to accomplish agreed upon goals and commit to measure and report on business and community impacts.

### Diversity and inclusion

Partners show respect for and appreciation of differences in ethnicity, age, gender, origin, ability, sexual orientation, education and religion. Employees bring diverse perspectives to their volunteer involvement, linked by the common purpose of building a stronger community.

### Quality of volunteer experience

Workplaces and charitable and non-profit organizations aim to provide a safe environment and meaningful experience for the employee volunteers.

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14 Porter, Michael E. and Kramer, Mark R. *Creating Shared Value*, Harvard Business Review, January 2011 Issue

## Standards of Practice

These standards are intended to provide guidance, not detailed instructions. Each workplace will have to consider how to implement the standards according to its circumstances, while following the overall intent of the Code.

STANDARD	DESCRIPTION
 <b>1</b> Program Strategy	<p>ESV programs and roles are clearly aligned with the business' priorities and core values and integrated into the broader Community Investment strategy. The program strategy should address workplace objectives, employee interests and community needs.</p>
 <b>2</b> Human Resources	<p>The workplace's employee volunteer programs are integrated into Human Resources strategy and policies, including employee recruitment and retention, professional development and performance management.</p>
 <b>3</b> Program Infrastructure	<p>The workplace establishes a framework of guidelines, policies and processes that defines and guides the ESV program. The business has clearly designated personnel with appropriate qualifications and resources that are directly responsible for supporting and managing the program.</p>
 <b>4</b> Leadership	<p>The workplace's leadership articulates, promotes and supports the importance of ESV programs in achieving the business' strategic objectives and building healthy and resilient communities.</p>
 <b>5</b> Evaluation: Tracking, Measuring and Reporting on Impact	<p>The workplace measures and evaluates the effectiveness of the ESV program in furthering the business' strategic objectives. It assesses outputs, outcomes and, where possible, the program's community impact. Employee engagement and workplace satisfaction are also tracked and measured. Feedback is solicited from employees, management and non-profit partner organizations. Standardized documentation, records management practices and procedures follow current relevant legislation.</p>

STANDARD	DESCRIPTION
 <b>Employee Engagement</b>	<p>The workplace creates a corporate culture that encourages, supports and makes it easy for employees to get involved. Employee volunteer recruitment and retention incorporate a broad range of internal strategies. Among the strategies, employee volunteers receive an orientation that includes: policies and practices appropriate to each event, program or role, broader education about the value of volunteering and the reasons the company promotes and supports it. Employee volunteers also receive the level of training, support and supervision required for the role and are provided with regular opportunities to give and receive feedback. As much as possible, volunteer roles involve employee volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect their skills, needs, interests and backgrounds.</p>
 <b>Risk Management</b>	<p>The workplace provides risk management procedures to assess, manage, or mitigate potential risks to the employee volunteers and the company that may result from the delivery of, or participation in, a community program or event. Health and Safety protocols are followed by the employer, employees and non-profit organizations, when applicable.</p>
 <b>Screening</b>	<p>The company works with their partner non-profit organization to adopt and consistently apply a clearly communicated and transparent screening process, which is aligned with the risk management approach across the ESV program. This may also involve a Vulnerable Sector Check when vulnerable populations are involved. (See Volunteer Canada's 10 Steps of Screening.)</p>
 <b>Communication and Technology</b>	<p>The workplace develops a communication strategy to increase awareness, promote participation and deliver key messages to both internal and external audiences about the program and its impact. Employee volunteers are engaged and supported within the workplace through available technology. New opportunities to strengthen employee volunteer engagement and capacity through the use of technology are continually evaluated.</p>
 <b>Recognition</b>	<p>The workplace recognizes and celebrates the contributions of both the ESV program and of the individual employees who give their time and talents, with ongoing formal and informal methods of recognition. (See Volunteer Canada's 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study.)</p>

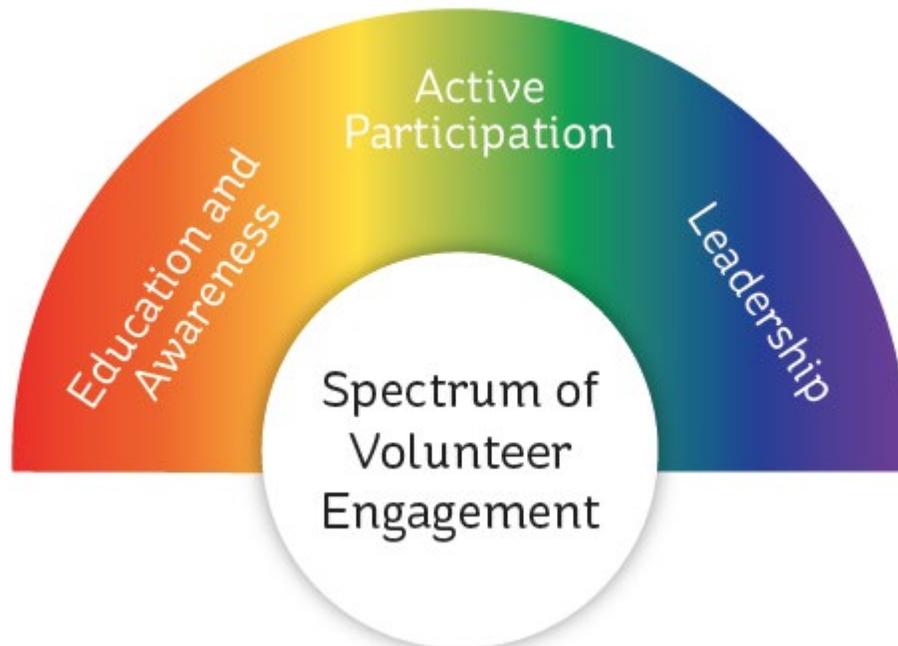
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## SECTION III APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer Canada promotes a broader definition of volunteering that includes a wide spectrum of volunteer engagement. **The spectrum spans a state of being informed to assuming a leadership position.** **Education and Awareness** of issues positions people to give voice and act on issues that affect local communities and society at large (e.g. organizing a Lunch and Learn session, attending a webinar, circulating a petition). **Actively Participating** in programs, activities and services directly improves people's quality of life (e.g. participating in a group volunteering event with colleagues, regular volunteering with a non-profit organization). Providing **Leadership** helps organizations to better achieve their missions (e.g. serving on the board of a non-profit organization, chairing a major campaign). All these roles are essential to building healthy and resilient communities.



The Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement recognizes the diversity of people's sources of inspiration, modes of putting their values into action, skills to contribute and capacity to donate time. For ESV, the Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement recognizes that each workplace has its own culture and strategies and that there is a range of capacities and interests within a workforce. Depending on factors such as the type and size of a business or the time of the year, different types of engagement may be possible. The most vibrant ESV programs offer opportunities within the full Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement.

## Appendix B

Elements of Employer-Supported Volunteering	
Day/Month of Service	Short-term activities performed by individuals or groups and completed within a set timeframe. These events are often company wide.
Dollars-for-Doers	A program where a business matches, in full or in part, the value of an employee's personal volunteer time with a financial contribution to a charitable or non-profit organization.
Flex Time	Allowing employees to alter their work schedule to accommodate their volunteering.
Group Volunteering	Short or long-term activities organized for a group of individuals.
In-Kind Contributions	Goods, products, services or equipment that are donated to a charitable or non-profit organization or cause. For example, donating computers no longer being used by a corporation, or purchasing food for a community event.
Leadership Opportunities	Activities that require a commitment to leading, supervising and/or mentoring (e.g. serving on a board or committee).
Mission	The overall goal of the organization. The reason for any organization's existence.
Non-profit organization	Self-governing organizations that exist to serve the public benefit and generate social capital but do not distribute private profit to members. The organization depends on volunteers and is independent or institutionally distinct from the formal structures of government and the profit sector. A non-profit organization can be a large structured organization or a small community or grassroots organization.
Paid Time Off	A policy which allows employees time off for hours spent engaging in a volunteer activity.
Pro Bono Service	A type of skills-based volunteering where there is as a commitment from a company to provide a service they normally take to market and provide it at no-cost to a non-profit with the same standard of service. Often the employee expertise directly supports a non-profit's internal operations by strengthening the infrastructure and capacity of the organization.

Skills-Based Volunteering	Volunteering by individuals or groups that capitalizes on personal talents, core business skills, experience or education. It helps build and sustain the capacity of non-profits to successfully achieve their missions.
Volunteer	Any person who gives freely of their time, energy and skills for public benefit, without monetary compensation.
Volunteer Council or Ambassadors Program	A group of employees who volunteer their time to coordinate and/or organize company volunteer activities or who act as advisors for the ESV program.

