

Your Guide to Communities and Business Working Together

**A step-by-step guide to help community and
voluntary groups work with business to
achieve sustainable community development**



Ireland

Business in the Community Ireland



Founded in January 2000, Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) is the first and only business led non-profit organisation in Ireland that promotes the adoption of corporate responsibility policies and practices through its services.

A primary service of BITCI is to guide and support top Irish companies through a process of strategising their community involvement programmes. Through our work in this area our experience is that Irish companies are very active in their communities and open to facilitating a flow of staff skills from business to the local community.

While many community and voluntary groups have already benefited from employer supported volunteers more can be done to encourage and maximise this wealth of volunteer energy.

By raising awareness within the voluntary and community sector about the type of business support available, groups can begin to consider how they themselves can successfully engage with business and thereby benefit from this transfer of skills and expertise.

National Irish Bank

The National Irish Bank Community Programme was launched five years ago and has proved to be rewarding for employees as well as having a positive impact in the local community. Business in the Community Ireland has supported the development of our programme throughout this time, and we are delighted to support this guide, providing encouragement and practical advice to others wishing to develop partnerships. Volunteering brings an exchange of ideas and skills, a mix of business cultures and style, and most importantly a sense of collective responsibility for issues and challenges that matter to all of us.

For National Irish Bank, Employer Supported Volunteering is not just about what we can give back to the community, but also about what we can and do learn from our community partners. Our Staff Grants Programme, launched last year, also forms part of our Employer Supported Volunteering Programme, and provides grants to charities and to community groups with which National Irish Bank staff volunteer in their own time. At National Irish Bank our employee volunteering programme and our corporate community partnerships have provided a hugely rewarding experience and one that we want to develop further.

National Irish Bank

Introduction

There is now great potential for community groups to work with companies and enlist the help of motivated and skilled volunteers. Many companies support and encourage their employees to volunteer their services to local community groups. Employer Supported Volunteering enables companies to bring the skills and time of their employees to areas of identified community need.

The aim of this Guide is to assist community and voluntary groups to see that funding, though important, is only an element of the resources available from companies and to consider how groups can avail of a skills transfer from business into their own group.

This Guide outlines the reasons why community groups should look for the support of a business and why it makes good sense for a business to develop links with the community. There are benefits for everyone. This Guide will take you through a step-by-step process of developing successful partnerships with business.

Case Study IBM

IBM's On Demand Community programme supports employees and retirees to be effective volunteers with their schools and non-profit community organisations. Through a specially designed web site, volunteers have 'on demand' access to IBM training materials, take-away volunteer materials, local volunteer opportunities and volunteer news. By logging their hours, volunteers may also be eligible for an IBM Community Grant of cash or new hardware to support their chosen organization.



This 24/7 online resource is designed to provide unique support to the community while recognising and supporting the volunteering aspirations of IBMers in Ireland and worldwide.

Above and left: IBM employees using the On Demand Community 'Science Toolkit' volunteer materials with school-children during Science Week Ireland 2004

The benefits of working together

Community Benefits

Resources

- ◆ Skills sharing can help provide expertise to your group
- ◆ Opens up a new pool of volunteers
- ◆ The donation of materials, services and resources
- ◆ Exchanging ideas and new approaches to problem solving that can meet community needs

Enhance Public Awareness

- ◆ Higher profile, increasing awareness in the local community of your work
- ◆ Lobbying power, a higher profile could bring greater attention or support for your group from the public

Positive Impact

- ◆ Make a difference to the people and cause you support
- ◆ Additional skills and expertise dedicated to your cause
- ◆ Morale boost for your group

Business Benefits

Company

- ◆ More positive company image
- ◆ Greater brand loyalty by customers
- ◆ Improved links with local community
- ◆ Increased company pride and loyalty by staff

Employees

- ◆ Improved staff morale, motivation and team spirit
- ◆ New skill development opportunities for staff
- ◆ Build teamwork

Case Study Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit

In early 2004, Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit, through the Tallaght Volunteer Bureau, developed links with Johnson & Johnson. Since then the Johnson & Johnson staff and management have got involved with the project on a number of different levels. The general manager joined the Management Committee, IT staff helped to develop a new monitoring database. In addition staff have assisted in fundraising drives and as an organisation, Johnson & Johnson have donated towels, plasters, baby-wipes and tooth-brushes to the project's clients.

"As a small organisation with no prior interaction with the corporate sector the challenge for us is to build a relationship that is mutually beneficial and sustainable. Our main focus has been to consider the expertise and skills that Johnson & Johnson staff have and then to translate these to our service needs. The benefit for Johnson & Johnson is that they and their staff are connected to the community they work in and the benefit to us is that we get access to skills, knowledge and a volunteer base that we previously did not have."

Geoff Corcoran, Manager,
Tallaght Homeless Advice Unit

Tip Understand the benefits to business, this will help you promote the positive outcome a company can achieve by supporting your request.

7 steps to success

Step 1 Identify your need

Decide what business support you would benefit from. Assess your needs and understand the skills and expertise you would most benefit from.

Step 2 Prepare your organisation

You should be clear about why you want to make an approach. Everyone in the organisation should be agreed and you should ensure you have the resources to avail of any help offered.

Step 3 Plan for employer supported volunteers

Having identified your group's needs, it is important to define volunteer roles and activities and also how you intend to manage a new stream of volunteers.

Step 4 Target a potential business partner

Decide on the type of business you want to develop a partnership with. Think in terms of the company's core business or the expertise they have to offer.

Step 5 Make an initial approach

Having researched the potential companies in your area, start thinking about making a specific approach.

Step 6 Write your proposal

Each proposal should be very specific and tailored to the company you are hoping to engage with.

Step 7 Maintain the relationship

A relationship built up and developed over time can yield many benefits not even considered at the initial approach stage.

The following pages will take you through a step by step process to assist you in developing a successful partnership with business.

Step 1 Identify your need

Decide what business support you would benefit from. Assess your needs and understand the skills and expertise you would most benefit from. To help you in this process:

Review your work plan

Review your organisation's annual work plan. Consider which activities planned for the year will require expertise or additional supports.

Brainstorm with staff and board of management

Together think of ways the expertise or skills of Employer Supported Volunteering might enhance the project work or assist in moving forward initiatives that would otherwise be temporarily shelved.

Identify gaps in internal expertise

What skills and competencies does your organisation lack that Employer Supported Volunteers might provide? What professional expertise have you bought in, or would like to have bought in during the last year? Could these services have been provided through Employer Supported Volunteering?

Consider also the tasks that due to lack of time you are unable to get around to – could employer supported volunteers assist?

Case Study Churchfield Community Trust

Churchfield Community Trust is a small community based project on the north side of Cork city that works with young men who have spent time in prison or who are referred through the Probation and Welfare Service. The Trust offers training, education and enterprise skills to participants.

To engage business support Churchfield Community Trust began by examining what their needs were. They prepared a wish list of how business could support them in terms of skills, expertise and resources. Janssen Pharmaceutical responded to these needs and provided support in the following ways:

- Health and Safety Training
- E.C.D.L. Training
- Helped develop participant's interview skills prior to employment
- Supplied TAS software and training for accounts staff
- Assisted with other staff development and training.

"To a community project like ours on a very limited budget working with business has been of enormous benefit and all support was given with such goodwill and generosity that we feel really blessed to have availed of these services."
Eileen O'Brien Manager
Churchfield Community Trust

Step 2 Prepare your organisation

Before making an approach, think ahead and prepare your organisation, you should ask the following questions:

Why are we making this approach?

Be clear why you are engaging the support of business and what you hope to achieve.

Is everyone agreed?

Check that the organisation – including Management, Trustees, Staff and existing volunteers – is committed to developing links with Employee Volunteers.

If you are a local branch of a larger organisation check with the central office before approaching a company, they may have already developed a relationship.

Do we have enough resources?

Do you have sufficient staff or volunteer time necessary to utilise any offer of support?

Case Study National Irish Bank

National Irish Bank's After-school numeracy project is an initiative developed and delivered by Barnardos' Early Years. Each week the children spend time on numeracy activities guided by the bank's volunteer and Barnardos' staff members.

The project involved one volunteer from the Bank spending one and a half hours each week alongside two after-school Barnardos' Child Care Workers in the Family Support Centre in Roselawn, West Dublin. Children involved are senior infants aged 5-8 years.

The Bank provided games, materials and resources to stimulate the children's learning. Through focused play, confidence with adults and each other was built up as well as confidence with numbers and maths.

National Irish Bank is now working alongside Barnardos Ireland to determine how to further develop this programme as part of Barnardos' 12 year strategy and the bank's commitment to supporting confidence with essential skills.

This partnership with Barnardos complements the National Irish Bank Time 2 Count numeracy volunteering project launched with St Thomas' Senior School in Jobstown. Five volunteers from the Bank support children with maths through activities and numeracy games designed to enhance confidence and class participation.



National Irish Bank pilot Numeracy Project in Barnardos' After School group in Roselawn, West Dublin. The project aims to improve the children's confidence with maths.

"We have been extremely lucky with the volunteer who has become involved in the group. She has proved to be a real asset to the group and the children have really warmed to her. She takes a very practical approach with the children and spends all of her time chatting to them and carrying out the activities as organised by the After-school staff."

Mairead Mc Laughlin, Early Years Co-ordinator, Barnardos' Family Support Services, Roselawn.

Step 3 Plan for employer supported volunteers

Define volunteer roles

Having identified your organisational needs, it is important to define volunteer roles around your requirements. Consider the following:

- ◆ What specific tasks are involved?
- ◆ What skills are needed?
- ◆ How long will each take?
- ◆ Is there a cost associated?
- ◆ What type of activities will volunteers be involved in ?
- ◆ How will the volunteers be managed and by who?

Types of volunteer activities

Employer supported volunteering projects may involve a short-term or ongoing commitment from staff. It can be organised in response to unexpected community need, as a result of a long-term partnership, or as a one-off request from a community organisation. Volunteer work can be undertaken as an individual or in a team. Employees can choose to use their business skills or pick non-skilled tasks. Many teams prefer an outdoor to an indoor activity or opt to volunteer in work hours rather than out of hours.

The range of volunteering activities is wide and varied, for example:

- ◆ designing a news letter or information leaflet
- ◆ doing a 'makeover' of a local youth club
- ◆ joining a management committee
- ◆ helping create a sensory garden or cleaning up a local beach
- ◆ preparing financial statements
- ◆ setting up a website for a local community group or helping network its computers
- ◆ mentoring for staff or project participants
- ◆ running a fund raising event
- ◆ developing databases
- ◆ put together policies and procedures for health & safety
- ◆ computer skills training

Tip Corporate volunteers require the same management commitment and support as all other volunteers active with your group.

Managing volunteers

Preparation is essential, your organisation needs to know why it wants to involve employer supported volunteers in its work and how the volunteer positions will fit within your group. Make sure that jobs are clearly defined and worthwhile. Consider putting in place role and personnel specifications – these may be useful for those employer supported volunteers with personal development objectives.

Overall volunteer management is comprised of :

- ◆ Planning and preparation
- ◆ Job descriptions/ Role definition
- ◆ Recruitment
- ◆ Screening
- ◆ Orientation
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Ongoing support and motivation
- ◆ Feedback and evaluation
- ◆ Appreciation and recognition

Bol staff digging a community garden



Case Study Bank of Ireland

Bank of Ireland IT Solutions and Operations (Bol Cabinteely) include regular 'Challenge Days' as part of their community involvement programme. These team events bring a group of employees together to complete a regeneration project. Activities are conducted on company time and the teams regularly include specialists from the facilities department. Additional resources are available to the bank through their landscaping and restaurant suppliers.

"The buzz amongst staff members when it comes to 'Challenge Days' is palpable", says Nell Kavanagh, Programme Co-ordinator.

Where a volunteering opportunity is being considered that might involve access to children or vulnerable adults, check that appropriate procedures are in place to provide protection for these groups.

Give careful consideration to the type of volunteer activity covered by your insurance policy.

Guidance on all aspects of managing volunteers and developing policies and procedures around volunteering is available from your local volunteer bureau. Some useful contacts are contained at the end of this booklet.

Step 4 Target a potential business partner

Decide on the type of business you want to develop a partnership with. To do this start making a list of companies you would consider approaching then think in terms of the company's core business or the expertise they have to offer.

Strengthen current relationships or develop new partnerships

- ◆ You might have received support from a company in the past that can be built upon or developed.
- ◆ Board members, staff and existing volunteers may have contacts or relationships with companies.
- ◆ There are many companies offering numerous services operating in every community. Researching the companies in your own area should highlight a number of potential businesses you can approach.

Case Study Tesco Ireland

Through its Charity of the Year programme, Tesco Ireland partners a major national community based Charity active in the areas of health-care, the elderly, disability or the education of children, for one year. The co-ordinated efforts of staff and customers are focused on raising money for that charity throughout the year. Tesco staff form relationships with the Charity's local representatives and they meet regularly to plan activities and review progress. Monies raised are for specific community-based projects that benefit people all over Ireland.



Think about the type of company you want to develop a relationship with

- ◆ Do they have the expertise you require?
- ◆ Is the company's ethos compatible with your group?
- ◆ Can you identify a benefit to the company?

Step 5 Make an initial approach

Having researched the potential companies in your area, start thinking about making a specific approach.

Select a company to approach

Do they have a specific community interest or focus? This information may be found on company websites or in annual reports or through local knowledge.

Identify the correct person to contact

Call the company and ask who looks after community affairs? If the company does not have a nominated person it may be useful to check with the Human Resource or Marketing departments.

Make a phone call first

Call and introduce yourself and outline your need and how you think the company can support your group. Make sure that there is a good fit between the type of support you require and what the company may be able to offer. Indicate that you intend sending a written proposal.

Prepare and send a written proposal

Tailor each proposal to the company you are sending it to. Think about how the company will benefit by agreeing to your request.

Tip Relationships between business and community that stand the best chance of success are those that are mutually beneficial. A successful Employer Supported Volunteering programme will provide the community organisation with additional expertise, and will give the employer-supported volunteer an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way.

Step 6 Write your proposal

Each proposal you make should be very specific and tailored to the company you are hoping to engage with. Your message should be very clear and presented professionally. You want to give the company every opportunity to say yes to your proposal!

Components of a good proposal include:

An introduction to your organisation

Give brief details about what you do and who you support.

State the need and outline the support you require

Outline the social issue and how the company's support can help to address it.

Organisational ability

Detail the track record of your group in meeting community needs. If the group is new detail the individual capabilities of key committee members and their achievements to date.

The 'Fit'

Explain why you have chosen to approach the company. Your reason might be geographic area, target market, or a stated company policy for supporting similar projects.

The business benefits

Detail the benefits to the company if they choose to get involved with your group.

Monitor & report

If appropriate outline how you plan to report on the impact of the company's support.

Unique selling point

Don't be afraid to use a little emotion to make your argument more compelling.

Period of Commitment

Companies are more likely to commit to projects having a clear time frame, cost and outcome. Detail the extent of the involvement you are looking for.

Tip *Send your proposal to the appropriate person and get their name and job title correct. Keep your proposal as concise and focused as possible while still addressing all the important points*

Step 7 Maintain the relationship

A relationship built up and developed over time, can yield many benefits not even considered at the initial approach stage. For successful partnering:

- ◆ Ensure flexibility
- ◆ Issue ongoing invitations to visit your organisation
- ◆ Provide regular feedback on the company's involvement
- ◆ Credit company support in your annual report
- ◆ Show appreciation to the company and to individual volunteers
- ◆ Always say thank-you for the help and support received. Follow up with a letter or a card of thanks.
- ◆ Actively manage the relationship and nurture it.

Tip *ALWAYS SEND A THANK-YOU FOR ANY SUPPORT RECEIVED. BUSINESSES WILL APPRECIATE IT. AND THEY WILL REMEMBER YOU.*

Conclusion

Employer Supported Volunteering enables companies to bring the skills and time of their employees to areas of identified community need. This Guide explains the reasons why it makes sense to both community groups and business organisations to develop strong relationships. Benefits can be achieved by all involved. It is important to remember that this is a process and will take time and effort to get right. You may have to contact a number of companies before you find one that suits your group and is interested in and able to take on your project. However be patient, and keep trying as the case studies show once a partnership is established the rewards can be many and varied.

Useful contacts

If you require more information on Employer Supported Volunteering contact your local volunteer bureau who will help you develop opportunities for employer supported volunteering.

Alternatively contact your county council offices and ask for the Community Enterprise Development Officer dealing with voluntary and community services.

Ballyfermot Volunteer Centre

Ballyfermot Civic Centre
Ballyfermot Road
Dublin 10
Telephone 01-6207123
Fax 01-6215974
Email info@volunteerballyfermot.ie
Website www.volunteerballyfermot.ie

Bray Volunteer Bureau

Lewis Room
Madeley House
Eglinton Road
Bray
Telephone 01-2040885
Email info@volunteeringbray.ie
Website www.volunteeringbray.ie

County Kildare Volunteer Centre

4 Ard Ná Ri
Francis Street
Newbridge
Co. Kildare
Telephone 045 – 438844
Email newbridgevrc1@eircom.net
Website www.newbridgevrc.ie

Cork Volunteer Bureau

c/o Farranree CDP
98 Knockpogue Ave
Farranree,
Cork
Telephone 021 4211822
Fax 021 4211823
Email corkvolunteerbureau@eircom.net

Drogheda Volunteer Centre

Unit 8 Workspace
Mayoralty Street, Drogheda
Co Louth
Telephone 041-984-5256
Fax 041 9845496
Email info@volunteerdrogheda.ie
Website www.volunteerdrogheda.ie

Galway Volunteer Centre

33 Beach Court
Grattan Road
Galway
Telephone 087 6351797
Email joanmkavanagh@eircom.net

Tallaght Volunteer Bureau

512 Main Street
Tallaght
Dublin 24
Telephone 01 462 8558
E-mail info@volunteertallaght.ie
Website www.volunteertallaght.ie

Tralee Volunteer Bureau

Tralee Volunteer Bureau
Partnership Trá Li
37 Ashe Street
Tralee
Co. Kerry
Telephone 066 7129544
Email tvb@partnershiptrali.com

Volunteer Centre Fingal

Mainscourt

23 Main Street

Swords

Fingal

Co.Dublin

Telephone 01 890 6731

E-mail swords@vcf.ie

Website www.vcf.ie

or

Volunteer Centre Fingal

Fingal County Council Public Library and Offices

Blanchardstown Town Centre

Blanchardstown

Dublin 15

Telephone 01-8905106

E-mail swords@vcf.ie

Website www.vcf.ie

Volunteering Ireland

Coleraine House

Coleraine Street

Dublin 7

Telephone 01 872 2622

Fax 01 872 2623

E-mail info@volunteeringireland.com

Website www.volunteeringireland.com

Comhairle

Hume House

Ballsbridge

Dublin 4

Telephone 01 605 9000

Fax 01 605 9099

E-mail comhairle@comhairle.ie

Website www.comhairle.ie

Please see website for details of regional offices and to access their resource database.

Acknowledgements

This publication has been written to complement the Business in the Community Ireland series of workshops entitled "Engaging Business Support." These workshops are funded by the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs and will be hosted nationwide during 2005 and 2006.

Business in the Community Ireland would like to thank the business and not-for-profit participants for their input and sharing.

Thanks also to Business in the Community Northern Ireland and the Volunteer Development Agency Northern Ireland as well as Volunteering Australia for the information provided in the compilation of this Guide.

Thank-you to the National Irish Bank Community Affairs team for its support and input to this publication.

This publication is intended as an information guide only. All information included is correct at time of going to print.

© Business in The Community Ireland (BITCI)



Ireland

Business in the Community Ireland

32 Lower O'Connell Street

Dublin 1

Telephone: 01-874 7232

Fax: 01-874 7637

Email: cci@bitc.ie

Website: www.bitc.ie

Supported by

National Irish Bank



Printed on recycled paper

February 2005