

## Virtual Volunteering Issue Brief

**CECP Overview:** As companies share examples and approaches on how they are responding to COVID-19, CECP compiled the following resources related to virtual volunteering—also known as online volunteering, remote volunteering or e-volunteering.

CECP's Giving in Numbers: 2020 Edition cited that 56% of companies offered virtual volunteering opportunities to domestic employees, while 18% did so for international employees. And, according to our [Corporate Peer Discussion](#) from April 2020, the majority of nonprofit's workplace activities have disappeared due to COVID and lack of volunteers.

When thinking about launching a virtual or remote volunteering program, it is best to start by reviewing and rethinking internal policies and processes related to community engagement. What programs do you already have in place that can be pivoted to be virtual? You will also need to find a way to ensure employees receive the recognition of their work.

It is also imperative to continually assess the wants and needs of the non-profit and/or community partners you are serving (whether that is time, money, or perhaps product).

When it comes to virtual volunteering, know that micro efforts of volunteering could result in macro impact! Providing opportunities for anyone, anywhere to participate are integral aspects to virtual volunteering. Consider tasks that could be completed in a short period of time. Examples are transcribing videos, handwriting letters of encouragement, making crafts, etc.

However, virtual volunteering is not only limited to short term/micro projects. Since it takes place out of the comfort of your own home, volunteer projects can be performed monthly, weekly, or even daily! We are seeing a shift to a much more informal classification of what volunteering is (i.e. grocery shopping for others or signing up with charity miles to collect pledges and donations while on your daily run). While there are some barriers to setting up a Virtual Volunteer program your company can always make a monetary impact by implementing a [Dollars for Doers](#) or Employee Match Program.

**If you have a resource to add, please email [insights@cecp.co](mailto:insights@cecp.co) to let us know.**



### INTERNAL STRATEGY

Strategies for engaging employees are ever more important when employees are not able to volunteer in person. Some strategies include matching a company's volunteer efforts with their company mission/corporate purpose/philanthropy goals, or [skills-based volunteering](#):

- Financial services company – offer financial literacy lessons/webinars to marginalized communities or teach people how to invest
- Intel philanthropic efforts focus on STEM education; potential volunteer opportunity could be tutoring students in underserved communities in STEM areas or providing resources
- “When suggesting volunteer opportunities, companies should understand the intrinsic motivation of their employees– is it to be social? Tied to a cause? Gain a skill for their resume?”

## **Corporate Example of a Community Service Hours Addendum:**

It is also imperative to formally recognize and discern what counts as “community service” or “volunteering”. An example by a company is as follows:

“We’re taking steps to encourage you to continue to support your community by lifting restrictions on 501(c)3 requirements for volunteer hours. That means that any volunteering in support of your community can go towards your allotted paid hours and unpaid volunteer hours. Here is what qualifies:

- General “good deeds” for neighbors in need, including running errands, purchasing groceries, and picking up prescriptions for neighbors, seniors, and those who may be high risk that you’re connected with.
- Providing lessons to seniors or children over Skype, FaceTime, or any other virtual platform.
  - Lessons must be free of charge.
  - Lessons can be provided to those who live with and are caring for an individual that is susceptible to becoming sick.
  - Lessons can be provided to families with children who are working from home while providing childcare simultaneously as schools are closed.
- Making masks for health care workers, essential employees or others in the community, if the masks are donated directly to organizations or individuals.
- Please refer to the following examples to support yourself in determining whether your activities qualify:
  - In normal circumstances, you are a reading volunteer and now with shelter in place orders, you are reading with your neighbor’s children over Skype.
  - In normal circumstances, you are a Food Bank volunteer and now you are picking up groceries for your elderly uncle.
  - In normal circumstances, you are a financial education volunteer and now you are delivering financial education programming virtually to young students while schools are closed.
  - In normal circumstances, you are leading a cooking class through the food bank and now you have connected with community members virtually to teach nutrition and cooking from your home kitchen.

Please Note: When volunteering, please practice social distancing and follow CDC guidelines.”

## **How to Create an Inclusive Volunteer Program**

- Nonprofit organizations that serve diverse communities provide more culturally relevant services when volunteers of diverse backgrounds are involved at all levels of the organization
- Engaging volunteers from immigrant and diverse communities allow cities, countries, and nonprofit organization to begin building relationships with these communities, inviting community members to learn more about the services provided and opportunities for involvement

- Best practices:
  - Changing how we understand what volunteering is /shift language used/ volunteer vs. help:
    - Volunteerism is often used to describe formal volunteering—donating time to an organization or other entity in a supervised setting, which often includes an application process and ongoing tracking of hours and activities
    - Whereas, informal volunteerism is when people help one another as friends and neighbors, and this is more prevalent in communities of color and immigrant communities.
  - Build relationships in a specific & authentic way:
    - All communities are different. So, you need to identify the specific communities you are hoping to engage with and build relationships in each of them
  - Embrace skill-based opportunities
    - Skill-based volunteers are people who bring a specialized skill set—often one that typically would be paid to perform
  - Remove barriers from volunteering
    - Such as background checks, flexibility, policies, language,
  - It is important to NOT center the volunteer over the participants, community, or organization that they are supposed to be serving (understanding positionality within the volunteer activity)

## Sources:

- [https://community.pointsoflight.org/posts/power-privilege-and-volunteerism?channel\\_id=2763-nonprofit-essentials](https://community.pointsoflight.org/posts/power-privilege-and-volunteerism?channel_id=2763-nonprofit-essentials)
- [https://community.pointsoflight.org/documents/engaging-volunteers-from-diverse-and-immigrant-communities?channel\\_id=2759-volunteer-engagement](https://community.pointsoflight.org/documents/engaging-volunteers-from-diverse-and-immigrant-communities?channel_id=2759-volunteer-engagement)

## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

### B:Civic

Source: [Virtual Volunteer Brief](#)

- **Revere Software:** Offers a private-labeled, online platform that connects in-house experts (as skills-based volunteers) with knowledge-seeking partners and grantees.
- **Taproot+:** A new marketplace for short-term, individual pro bono consulting projects, curated by the Taproot Foundation. Many of these volunteer projects can be completed remotely.
- **Prepr:** Empowers individuals and teams to build both soft and hard skills by tackling real-world challenges to create business opportunities and unlock their infinite learning potential.
- **MovingWorlds:** MovingWorlds builds the leaders and doers behind grassroots, world-changing ideas. Their mission is to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals by getting talent to the parts of the world that need it most while ensuring a transformative experience for those who share their skills.

- **Forgood:** An online platform that connects passionate people with needy organisations. It is a social marketplace where skills, goods, services, and information can easily be offered and asked for.

## CatchaFire

Source: [Supporting our nonprofit community with time-sensitive COVID-19 needs](#)

We have short-term projects and an active virtual volunteer pool who can assist with time-sensitive requests including:

- Website updates and configurations equipped to take an influx of new financial donations
- Operations management to ensure that healthcare and housing facilities are stocked with critical supplies
- Grant proposals to access emergency funds
- Email marketing setup to spread awareness about health and safety best practices
- Translation material explaining CDC and healthcare facts in hard to reach communities
- HR support to protect employees from getting sick and accessing healthcare options
- Consultation on remote working best practices and affordable teleconferencing tools

## DoSomething

Source: [9 PLACES TO VOLUNTEER ONLINE \(AND MAKE A REAL IMPACT\)](#)

1. [United Nations Volunteers](#)
2. [Catchafire](#)
3. [Smithsonian Digital Volunteers](#)
4. [Amnesty Decoders](#)
5. [Translators Without Borders](#)
6. [Crisis Text Line](#)
7. [Zooniverse](#)
8. [Project Gutenberg](#)
9. [DoSomething.org](#)

## Idealist

Source: [How to Get Involved with Virtual Volunteering](#)

- **Established virtual volunteer programs**
  - [Red Cross:](#) During times of disaster, the Red Cross utilizes digital volunteers to monitor online discussions to find people who need help, and to share important updates on social media. If you are active on Facebook and Twitter, this could be a great opportunity for you.
- **Share your story**
  - Think about what you are passionate about, and what you may have overcome in your life. Your story may convince someone to make a donation or help somebody dealing with similar struggles.
- **Take online action**
  - If you have just a few minutes and you want to make an impact, it is easy to take an action online. Many nonprofit advocacy groups have links to email legislators right on their websites. But you can do this on your own, too.
- **Local opportunities**
  - The smaller nonprofits in your area may not have formal virtual volunteer projects, but that doesn't mean they can't use the help.

## Points of Light

Adding to their database of thousands of volunteer opportunities ([All For Good](#)), in March 2020, Points of Light launched its platform for [Global Volunteer Month](#) to recognize people for their current and longtime support of their communities. Global Volunteer Month recognizes everyday volunteer heroes and supports employees and community members meeting community needs. It can also support achieving valuable outcomes.

They are calling on corporate, nonprofit, and individual partners to be a **#LocalLight** by doing the following:

1. **Learn:** explore our resources on virtual volunteerism and safety recommendations for people that choose to volunteer inside and outside of their home.
2. **Find:** search our database for virtual volunteer opportunities, DIY projects that you can do from your home, and contact your local Points of Light affiliate to learn what your community needs.
3. **Share:** inspire others with the stories of people who are taking part in virtual volunteerism or uplifting their community in new and inventive ways by posting on social media, sharing how you're being a local point of light in your community. Use the hashtag **#LocalLight** so that we can demonstrate to the world that, in fact, there is a light.

## Realized Worth

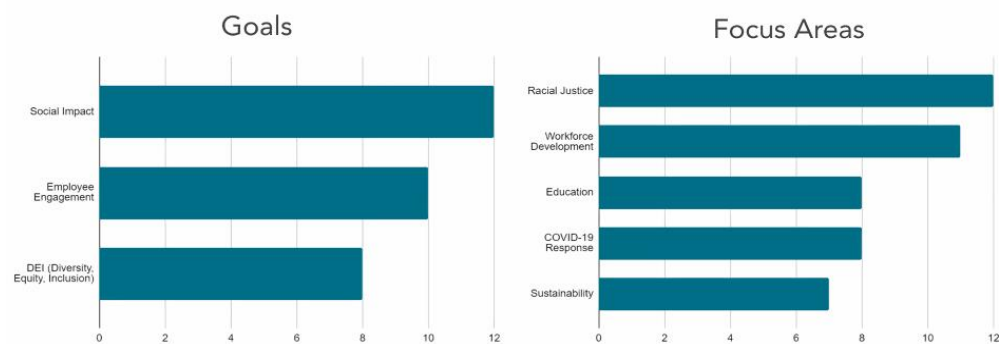
- [Virtual Volunteer Accelerator](#): Still wondering when the pandemic is going to end? We are, too. In the meantime, we and many of our clients are choosing to give employees the opportunity to help right now, when help is badly needed. Your employees are busy, you are busy – and there's no time to wait.

## Team4Tech

Source: [Pro-Bono Toolkit](#), Key to Impactful Volunteering Programs:

- **Nonprofit vetting and matching:** find very intentional interactions. Assess what is the best thing you and your employees can offer. Try to find a nonprofit you will work with for the long-term
- **Project scoping:** do you have the capacity to take this on?
- **Volunteering selection:** find who fits what project. Consider utilizing employee's passions and prior engagement with local organizations
- **Project management:** in order to successfully partner "virtually" with a nonprofit or community organization, all logistics must be managed and established early on in the project
- **Logistics coordination:** who will be doing this? Do not rely on the nonprofit to figure things out
- **Impact tracking and storytelling:** find the best way to showcase your company and employees. You want a program that ALL people can benefit from. What metrics are you tracking

### Priorities for the Next Year



Source: Social Impact & Employee Engagement Survey August 2020

team4tech

## VolunteerMatch

Source: Blog on [volunteering in uncertain times](#)

Right now, there are over 600,000 [virtual volunteering](#) opportunities available on VolunteerMatch that offer the chance to stay involved in causes that want your support. From [mentoring a small business](#), to helping [reduce isolation for an elder](#) over the phone, to offering your [civil engineering skills to create a sustainable community](#), virtual volunteering takes many forms. And, if your passion is to help those most vulnerable to this immediate crisis, you can find specific opportunities to lend your skills, for example, by becoming an [online tutor](#) for a child experiencing homelessness, or [performing research and writing grants](#) for organizations that take on community safety and health year-round. Giving of your time virtually can be a great way to ensure consistency and continuity of volunteer resources for nonprofits, as it is so easily done from the comfort of your own office or home.

## YourCause

Source: [Going Virtual – An Alternative Volunteer Event Guide](#)

- **Skills-Based Volunteering**
  - [SIFMA Foundation – InvestWrite](#): This is one of the easiest ways to support financial education from the comfort of your home or office, completely online, and credited with 2.5 hours of community service. Through the acclaimed Stock Market Game (SMG) program, a program of the SIFMA Foundation, schools, and after-school programs grades 4 – 12 learn about investing through a virtual, state-of-the-art capital markets simulation. InvestWrite is the innovative writing competition that complements SMG and integrates critical thinking and language arts components to reinforce the financial decision-making skills that students learn in the classroom.
  - [CommonImpact](#): Skilled volunteering can be a powerful way to support communities in preparation for and in times of crisis, both as a way to continue to engage with your community when traveling isn't an option, and overall in supporting the resiliency of communities.
- **Apps**
  - [CharityMiles](#) For every mile you move, you help earn money for your charity from their corporate sponsorship pool. There are individual and corporate programs available to participate!
  - [SeenIt](#) Build the most powerful and trustworthy on-the round storytellers in the world. Turn your employees into content creators. Hosting a virtual or local day of service? Using this platform enables organizations to create engaging, multi-perspective videos with their employees. SeenIt enables organizations to truly scale the way they produce video by engaging their own employees to become their content creators and brand ambassadors. The solution is 100% remote but with a human-first approach – all barriers of traditional production are broken down since you're no longer tied to accessibility, schedule, and resources to capture employee activations and CSR initiatives.

## EXISTING INITIATIVES

Here is a list of virtual volunteer opportunities that CECP affiliated companies are exploring:

- [7Cups.com](#), be a volunteer listener in this emotional support app
- [Amnesty Decoders](#), allows volunteers to use their computers or phones to help our researchers sift through pictures, information and documents for human rights.

- [Be My Eyes](#), an app that connects blind and low-vision people with sighted volunteers and company representatives for visual assistance through a live video call
- [Bookshare](#), eBooks for people with reading barriers. Volunteers scan and proofread, describe images.
- [Career Village](#)
- [Create the Good](#), an initiative by AARP
- [Crisis Textline](#), crisis counseling
- [Cuso International](#), e-volunteering program connects volunteers to international partners remotely
- [GenerationOn](#)
- [Humanitarian Open Street map \(HOT\) mapping](#)
- [iNaturalist](#)
- [MicroMentor](#), matches small business owners with volunteer business mentor
- [Missing Maps](#), an open, collaborative project to put places that literally 'missing' from a map, allowing humanitarian organizations to meet the needs of vulnerable people
- [Rodan and Fields "Serve at Home"](#)
- [Translators Without Borders](#)
- [Try Engineering Together](#)
- [TutorMate](#), pairs corporate volunteers with thousands of young people learning to read