

The Value of Workplace Volunteering—Local and National Insights

United Way of Central Maryland

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workplace volunteering is pivotal in enhancing employee engagement, fostering professional development, and strengthening corporate social responsibility. Findings from the **United Way of Central Maryland (UWCM) Young Professionals Survey** underscore the significance of workplace philanthropy programs for young professionals in the Baltimore Metropolitan Region. Compared to national trends, local employees value opportunities to give back through their workplaces. This white paper explores the current landscape of workplace volunteering, compares local and national findings, and offers recommendations for enhancing corporate volunteer initiatives.

Workplace Volunteering: A Growing Priority

Workplace volunteering has become an essential component of corporate engagement strategies, benefiting employees, businesses, and the broader community. Studies indicate that employees increasingly seek employers that prioritize social impact. **The UWCM Young Professionals Survey (2024)** confirms that:

- 61% of young professionals in Central Maryland say employer-sponsored giving and volunteering programs are important to them.
- Job satisfaction is highly correlated with workplace philanthropy programs—95% of employees whose companies prioritize giving are satisfied with their jobs.
- Opportunities for professional development and community impact are key drivers for job seekers when evaluating employers.

National research reinforces these findings. According to Ares Management's 2023 study on workplace volunteerism, 76% of employees believe their company should take action to address social challenges, and 60% report that volunteering strengthens their sense of purpose at work¹.

Workplace volunteerism benefits both employees and employers by boosting employee engagement and retention, enhancing corporate reputation and brand loyalty, and developing leadership and professional skills. Employees engaged in workplace philanthropy programs are significantly more satisfied and likely to stay with their employer. Companies with strong volunteer programs are more attractive to job seekers and customers. Skills-based volunteering offers employees opportunities to grow while contributing meaningfully to their communities.

¹https://www.aresmgmt.com/sites/default/files/2023-09/Ares_Philanthropy_Purpose_and_Professional_Development_Why-Workplace-Volunteer-Programs-Matter_vF.pdf

Local vs. National Trends in Workplace Philanthropy

The **UWCM Young Professionals Survey** reveals that young professionals in Baltimore value workplace philanthropy more than their national counterparts. Key findings include:

- 38% of employees report having access to volunteer programs at work, while 44% have access to giving programs—demonstrating room for growth.
- Mid-size businesses (100-999 employees) and more senior employees are more likely to have access to and value these programs.
- Young professionals who are likely to leave their jobs are more interested in workplace volunteer opportunities—suggesting that expanding such programs can help with retention.
- Barriers to participation include lack of time and uncertainty about how to get involved, highlighting the need for better communication and accessible opportunities

Engaging in meaningful volunteer work can give employees a heightened sense of purpose and fulfillment. Studies at the national level highlight similar trends.

Many employees view volunteering as a pathway to develop core work skills. Data shows that 76% of individuals believe they have honed essential job skills through volunteering.² Group volunteering activities are known to strengthen relationships among colleagues. Approximately 80% of employees report that team-based volunteering enhances their connections with coworkers.³ For example, retirees and near-retirees also value volunteering as a way to stay engaged and contribute meaningfully.⁴ Expanding volunteer programs to include mentoring opportunities can bridge intergenerational engagement.

Donors of color are often more engaged in community-driven philanthropy. Research shows that communities of color engage in philanthropy at high rates, often prioritizing giving and volunteerism through faith-based and grassroots organizations.⁵ Research from Indiana University indicates that donors of color often engage in philanthropy through culturally specific organizations and prefer opportunities that resonate with their cultural identities. For instance, donors of color tend to focus their giving on religious, educational, civil rights, arts, and financial wellness organizations, reflecting a strong alignment with their cultural values and community needs.⁶

Lastly, integrating volunteer programs into professional development efforts has been shown to enhance employee participation and yield significant benefits for both individuals and organizations. Research indicates that employees who engage in work-sponsored volunteer activities report higher job satisfaction, with 79% expressing satisfaction compared to 55% not participating in such programs.⁷ Furthermore, participation in workplace volunteer opportunities has been linked to increased employee fulfillment and purpose, with 56% of employees reporting a boost in these areas.⁸ These programs also contribute to improved morale and teamwork, as 52% of employees note enhancements in these aspects through volunteering. Additionally, employer-sponsored volunteer programs can aid in employee retention by providing opportunities for skill development and improving morale.⁹

² <https://doublethedonation.com/volunteer-time-off-statistics/>

³ <https://volunteer.ca/?MenuItemID=345>

⁴ <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/retirees-and-those-nearing-retirement-value-giving>

⁵ https://philanthropy.indianapolis.iu.edu/news-events/news/_news/2024/giving-usa-us-charitable-giving-totaled-557.16-billion-in-2023.html

⁶ <https://scholarworks.indianapolis.iu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/829fe636-91b6-4ea1-a683-e501148e2620/content>

⁷ <https://www.bonterra.tech.com/blog/employee-volunteer-program-stats>

⁸ <https://www.probonoinst.org/2024/07/15/driving-impact-and-engagement-the-business-case-for-corporate-volunteerism/>

⁹ <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/hr-magazine/employee-volunteer-programs>

Enhancing Workplace Volunteering Programs: The Path Forward

Young professionals in Central Maryland and nationwide cite gratitude, efficacy, and purpose as their top reasons for participating in workplace programs. However, the UWCM survey and national research indicate that while interest in volunteering is high, barriers such as lack of time, clear opportunities, and in-person experiences prevent higher participation. Many employees feel they lack the time to volunteer due to demanding work schedules. A study by NCVO found that 23% of individuals cited work or study commitments as a barrier to volunteering.¹⁰ The perceived need for ongoing commitments deters many potential volunteers. NCVO's research indicates that 33% of non-volunteers were reluctant to commit continuously. Lastly, employees are often not informed about available volunteering opportunities or how to get involved. Stanford University's research highlights that insufficient information and uninteresting roles are common deterrents.¹¹

Companies should align volunteer initiatives with these motivations by offering skills-based volunteer opportunities that leverage employees' expertise. Companies may also showcase the real-world impact of volunteering to reinforce a sense of efficacy and provide opportunities for personal and professional growth through philanthropy.

Creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere in volunteering programs is important to encourage participation from individuals of all backgrounds. To ensure inclusivity in workplace volunteer programs, employers should offer culturally relevant volunteering opportunities that align with the interests of diverse employees. It is particularly worth noting that employers need to partner with Black- and Latino-led organizations to create meaningful engagement opportunities and ensure that volunteer leadership roles are accessible to employees from all backgrounds. Employers should consider culturally relevant volunteer opportunities to enhance participation.

Companies integrating volunteer programs into professional development efforts see higher participation rates and more significant impact. UWCM has worked with partner organizations to design programs that allow employees to develop their professional skills in a volunteer setting,

organizing group activities that foster teamwork and strengthen interpersonal relationships. We also share volunteer outcomes that demonstrate the tangible impact of volunteering efforts, reinforcing the meaningfulness of participation.

The findings from UWCM's Young Professional Survey, alongside national data, highlight the critical role that workplace volunteerism plays in **employee engagement**, **corporate social responsibility**, and **community impact**. Employers that prioritize and expand their workplace philanthropy programs will strengthen their workforce and contribute to their communities' well-being.

UWCM offers volunteer and training opportunities emphasizing cultural competence and inclusivity to prepare volunteers for diverse environments. We regularly seek input from employees of various backgrounds to understand their interests and barriers related to volunteering and adjust programs accordingly. As we continue to support workplace volunteering, we invite current and prospective partners to:

- Expand in-person and skills-based volunteering opportunities to meet the growing demand.
- Leverage workplace volunteering as a tool for employee retention and engagement.
- Allowing employees to volunteer during paid work hours without sacrificing personal time can alleviate time constraints and encourage participation
- Regularly sharing information about volunteering opportunities and clearly outlining how employees can get involved can increase participation rates.
- Providing short-term or one-time volunteering options can attract those hesitant about long-term commitments.
- Enhance DEI philanthropy efforts to reflect employees' diverse needs and interests.

By aligning corporate volunteer programs with employee values and community needs, businesses can create a win-win scenario in which employees feel fulfilled, companies strengthen their cultures, and communities thrive.

¹⁰ <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023/volunteering-barriers-enablers/>

¹¹ <https://longevity.stanford.edu/three-reasons-why-people-dont-volunteer-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/>