



## How to have an effective team volunteering experience.

People who work well together as a team are one of the most valuable assets any employer can have, whether Private, Public or Voluntary Sector. There are many team building tools available but few are as satisfying, inexpensive and as widely beneficial as volunteering together on a community challenge.

Rather than spending large amounts of money on a conventional team building day, connecting with a local community based organisation can provide both employers and teams with many benefits:

- Low cost
- An outstanding sense of achievement for all who take part
- A real team building experience impossible to replicate in the classroom
- An excellent public relations opportunity.

More and more companies, big and small, are now seeing the benefits of team volunteering challenges in their local community. This leaflet has been prepared to help guide you through the process and ensure that you get the quality experience that you are looking for.

### **Before you start**

Before you even start looking for a team volunteering challenge it is important to decide exactly what you want. Consider the following:

- How many people are in the team?
- Will everyone be required to take part?
- How much time do you have?
- What type of work are you attracted to?
- Are there any organisations that you would like to help?
- Are you willing or able to do any advance planning?

## **Selecting a project.**

- First of all you need to consider how many team members there are. This will naturally affect the sort of event you are able to choose. A team of 10 or less people will have more options than one with 30 or more people. Larger teams may need to restrict themselves to outdoors opportunities.
- You should consider whether it is important for all of the team to be physically in the same place? Successful team building projects have been done where a larger group is subdivided and the sub-teams who take responsibility for different aspects of the project while working towards a common goal. Alternatively you may prefer to have everyone working on one task together.
- The amount of time you are able to give will affect your choice. Most team events are designed to last one or two days. Longer commitments are possible, if this is preferred. You should however anticipate some advance planning for even the shortest challenge and factor this in to your time commitment.
- Often projects need doing but no budget for materials exists. Organisations may make part of the challenge sourcing the materials required to complete the task. You should consider whether this is something that you want to take on. It can be an excellent opportunity for teams to demonstrate resourcefulness. Care should be taken to ensure that any financial burden does not fall on individual members of the team. Sourcing third party donations or organising a fundraising event are popular and successful ways of resourcing a project.
- You are undertaking a team *volunteering* opportunity and any temptation to apply a three-line whip to get everyone taking part should be avoided. There is little point in forcing people to take part in a team building event. Peer pressure is a very effective tool for maximum buy in to a project.

## **Safety & Insurance**

- The safety of the team when undertaking a project is paramount. If specialist equipment – such as a platform for painting a high room – is required then it is essential that this equipment is supplied. Negotiation between you and the organisation you are volunteering for is important to ensure that any equipment required is supplied.
- It is unlikely that your team will have specific skills. They may have useful DIY skills but it is unrealistic to expect teams to re-wire electrics or other such skilled work. It is important not to agree to work that you cannot complete safely and within the skill set of the volunteers.
- Any organisation engaging volunteers must provide suitable insurance cover. You should check with the organisation that they have volunteer's insurance in place for one off volunteering events.

## Success is in the detail

Small things matter and to ensure that both the team and the organisation they are volunteering for have a positive experience it is important to ensure certain details are addressed.

- Someone from the team **must** always visit the project and check out the work the team are agreeing to do before the arrangements are put in place. This helps buy-in and also ensures that the team are aware of exactly what is required of them. It is also a good opportunity to consider what materials will be required and where and by whom they are going to be sourced.
- If you are volunteering for an organisation that provides a direct service it is good practice, where possible, for the volunteers to be introduced to the people they are going to help. It may even be possible for some of the service users – such as at a residential home – to join in with the team. This adds a valuable dimension to the project but everyone should be comfortable with this and it should be agreed before the project takes place. Regardless, everyone in the team should understand what the organisation is about, what their work involves and who they are helping.
- Don't let a great event be spoiled by small details. Remember to check whether the premises have a no alcohol policy. The social aspect of team building is important but many organisations have policies on alcohol.
- Induction by the organisation is valuable. Members of the team may be nervous about working in specific environments or with certain groups. A quick induction by the organisation will help put people at ease.
- Make sure that you have full contact details for the person coordinating the event for the organisation. Ensure that they have your contact details. .
- The organisation for which you are volunteering should be able to supply you with refreshments. Make sure you clarify what refreshments will be supplied and by whom.

## What to do next.

You can request our list of current team volunteering opportunities from [paul.wilson@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk](mailto:paul.wilson@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk)

If you cannot see something that you are interested in please contact us on 0131 225 0630 or [paul.wilson@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk](mailto:paul.wilson@volunteeredinburgh.org.uk) to discuss your requirements. We can, if you wish advertise the skill set/availability of your team with hundreds of organisations in Edinburgh via regular e-mail bulletins.



### **Team Volunteering Checklist**

Use this handy checklist to make sure that you have everything in place for your team volunteering opportunity.

- Contact details for organisation obtained.
- Contact details given to organisation.
- Number of volunteers confirmed and all volunteers given details of organisation's aims/work.
- Date for event agreed.
- Starting time for event agreed.
- Materials required identified.
- Agreement on who will provide what materials.
- Refreshments organised.
- Publicity strategy (if applicable) agreed.
- Any special information/induction given to team.