



# EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING IN IRELAND

A snap-shot of the prevalence of employee volunteering in Ireland, exploring the impact on businesses, and the factors that influence the expansion of employer-supported volunteering programmes.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Key Findings

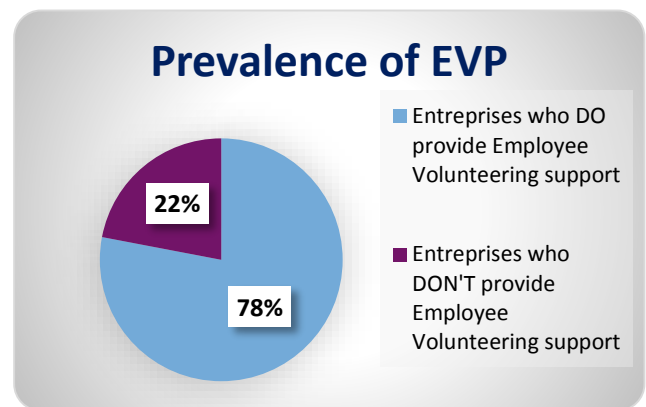
Volunteer Ireland, in collaboration with a research student from DCU, carried out research to gain a more detailed understanding of Employee Volunteering Programmes (EVP) in Ireland.

The research set out to explore;

1. The prevalence of EVP in Ireland,
2. The sector and size of enterprises investing in Employee Volunteer Programmes,
3. Enterprises' perception of the benefits and challenges of EVP,
4. The barriers to implementing Employee Volunteer Programmes, and
5. If enterprises measure the impact of their Employee Volunteer Programmes.

## Prevalence of EVP in Ireland

78% of enterprises surveyed support or encourage employee volunteering activities in the workplace. There was very little difference in the actual prevalence of EVP in large versus SME enterprises, or public v private sector.



## Benefits of employee volunteering to Enterprises

Across all sectors, the majority of enterprises agreed that employee volunteering had a positive impact on:

- Employee Engagement
- Organisation Reputation
- Staff Health & Wellbeing
- Employee professional development
- Brand awareness

## Challenges

Employees having limited time to devote to volunteering was cited as a challenge by 84% of enterprises that provide EVP. 55% also reported a lack of internal resources to manage a volunteering programme as a difficulty.

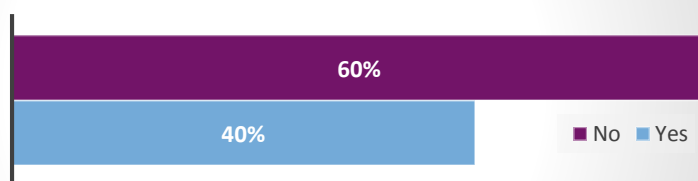
## Barriers

For enterprises that **do not** offer employee volunteering support in the workplace, 82% of them cited that **work demands** make it difficult to facilitate employee volunteering. Other factors included

- No internal resource to manage an employee volunteering programme
- Lack of finance.

## EVP Evaluation

DO YOU EVALUATE YOUR EVP ACTIVITIES?



### Key Observations

- ✓ Employee volunteering in Ireland is largely driven by **employee demand**.
- ✓ Only 11% of respondents referred to their volunteering activities as “corporate Volunteering”. The majority of enterprises preferred the term “**employee volunteering**” or simply “**volunteering**”.
- ✓ **Work demands** are a real barrier for both current EVP practitioners and for those wishing to implement employee volunteer programmes.
- ✓ Many enterprises cited a **lack of financial resources** as a barrier or challenge to EVP, recognising that volunteering is not “free”.
- ✓ While 60% of enterprises surveyed do not formally evaluate the impact of the EVP, over 90% of enterprises cited **employee engagement and reputation** as a real benefit of their employee volunteering programme.
- ✓ **Team Activity** is the preferred volunteering activity across all sectors.
- ✓ Enterprises in all sectors indicated they would like to know more about the **benefits of employee volunteering**.

### Recommendations

Volunteer Ireland recognises that Employee volunteering activities has merit both in a formal and informal<sup>+</sup> capacity and it’s development and implementation is dependent on the provision of resources (both human and financial). With this in mind our review and research has informed the following recommendations;

#### Enterprises:

- Explore solutions to facilitate time for employees to volunteer, and consider all types of volunteering activities that staff can get involved in.
- Recognise volunteer activities can be used as a tool as part of their training and staff personal development
- Commit financial and human resources to EVP activities, backed by appropriate measurement to justify expenses.

#### Non-Profits Organisations:

- Consider EVP as a valid source of volunteers in the organisation, and design flexible and appropriate opportunities to attract employee volunteers.
- Ensure that they have transparent policies and processes driven by excellence in governance and operations.

<sup>+</sup>Volunteering is formal where it is underlined by a formal policy and informal where there is no formal policy but volunteering still occurs.

## INTRODUCTION

While Ireland has a long history of volunteering, employee volunteering, (or employer-supported volunteering) is a relatively new, albeit growing, phenomenon. Having been previously practised only by US enterprises or very large employers in Ireland, more and more enterprises of all sizes and from across all sectors are engaging in employee volunteering. Whether done as part of a formal Corporate Social Responsibility agenda, or undertaken in spontaneous response to a local community need, employers (and employees) are realising the value of employee volunteering, and how it can have far-reaching positive impacts for both the company and the community in which it operates.

The National Plan on CSR, launched by the Irish government in early 2014, recognises employee volunteering as a tangible way that enterprises in Ireland can engage with and support their local community. Since the launch of its own Employee Volunteering Service to companies in 2012, Volunteer Ireland has been a source of information and guidance in increasing both the quality and prevalence of employee volunteering in Ireland. But little was known about how widespread employee volunteering is in Ireland, and if there were particular barriers affecting participation in this activity.

It is in this context that Volunteer Ireland, in collaboration with a research student from DCU, carried out research to explore employee volunteering programmes (EVP) in Ireland, its prevalence, and challenges.

This snap-shot into employee volunteering shows a growing practise of employer-supported volunteering activities taking place in Ireland, and it is not limited to large or multinational employers. With 78% of respondents supporting or encouraging employee volunteering activities, it is hugely encouraging to see how EVP is developing in Ireland in both a formal and informal capacity.

Volunteer Ireland sought to explore what are the real barriers and challenges associated with both the implementation and enhancement of employee volunteering programmes, to better understand how enterprises can be supported. It is clear from our research that increasing demands on business, and a lack of resources (both people and financial) were hindering the expansion, and in some cases, the introduction, of employee volunteering activities.

Another facet explored was whether businesses measured the impact of their EVP activities, enabling them to justify, and potentially optimise their investment (in time, people and money). 40% of respondents measured the impact of their volunteering efforts. If we consider that “What can be measured can be managed” then potentially the grassroots development and organic growth of EVP could benefit by underpinning these activities with impact assessment using tangible measurement tools.

### Volunteering

Volunteering is “the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society, local communities, and individuals outside the immediate family, the environment or other causes. Voluntary activities are undertaken of a person's own free will, without payment.”<sup>1</sup>

### Employee Volunteering

Employee volunteering, or employer-supported volunteering, is “Any action by an employer to encourage and support volunteer involvement of their employees in the community, by contributing their employee’s time, skills and resources”.<sup>4</sup>

### Volunteer Ireland

Volunteer Ireland is the national volunteer development agency and a support body for all local Volunteer Centres, and Volunteer Information Services in Ireland. Volunteer Ireland works to promote and celebrate volunteering in Ireland through campaigns such as National Volunteering Week and the Volunteer Ireland Awards.

Volunteer Ireland deliver a range of innovative employee volunteering services including training, consultancy and EVP project management service (Inspiration Days).

Inspiration Days connects companies with charitable organisations for one-day volunteering projects, assisting employee volunteers to undertake a short-term community project with a

In brief, the aim of this research was to;

1. Describe the current context of employee volunteering in Ireland;
2. Understand the issues enterprises face when managing an existing EVP or wanting to introduce an EVP;
3. Make recommendations across a number of areas to encourage and support sound principles and best practice for the continued success and growth of Employee Volunteer Programmes in Ireland
4. Present a comprehensive literature review and research into Employee Volunteer Programmes in other countries.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research looked at the operation of employee volunteering in Ireland today, to understand what supports are needed for enterprises to expand their EVP ambitions. The overall objectives of this survey were to ascertain enterprises views under the following key themes:

### *Programme Content:*

- Do enterprises offer or support specific Employee Volunteering activities in their organisation and how is generally referred?
- What specific volunteer activities do employees participate in?
- Is their EVP part of the organisation's overall business objectives?
- What are the challenges in undertaking a successful employee volunteering programme?
- What are the perceived benefits to the organisation in having an employee volunteering programme?

### *Impact Measurement:*

- What is the value of the EVP to their organisation and their partner non-profit organisation?
- How do they communicate employee volunteer activities?

### *Partnerships – Local Community Groups/Non Profits Organisation*

- What factors were considered when selecting a non-profit organisation partner?
- Were these non-profit organisations able to provide a positive volunteering experience for the employee volunteers?

## ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

As a general term to encapsulate the different types of companies, organisations, and sectors, surveyed, the term "Enterprise" will be used when referring to the employing entity, regardless of its size, or sector (private, semi state or state). The term "Non-Profit Organisation" will be used in reference to the Not for Profit partners who engage employee volunteers (charities, community groups, interest groups etc.).

84 enterprises responded to the survey, with an equal number of Irish based and multinational enterprises. The size of the respondent enterprise was also balanced, with a good representation from small, medium sized and large employers. Two thirds were private sector employers, the remainder public or semi state.

No. of Enterprises	No. of Employees
20	1-50
11	51-100
15	101-500
11	501-1,000
27	1,000+

## THE CONTEXT OF VOLUNTEERING IN IRELAND

Volunteering has long been recognised for its very significant contribution to Irish society and the influential role that it can play in the creation of;

- Social capital
- A more inclusive society and a better functioning democracy
- An improved sense of community with more active citizens

As the national volunteer development agency, Volunteer Ireland works collaboratively with the local Volunteer Centres, and Volunteer Information Services, striving to achieve a shared objective of an Ireland where everyone who wants to, can volunteer ([www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)).

Volunteer Ireland's research shows;

- ✓ 14,9000 people registered on IVOL (national volunteering database) in 2013 contributing over 500,000 volunteering hours' worth over €10million. (based on average industrial wage)
- ✓ The most popular areas of interests for volunteers registered with local Volunteer Centres in 2012 were 'Arts, Culture and Media', 'Health/Disability' and 'Youth/Children'.
- ✓ Of those who signed up with I-VOL to volunteer in 2013, two thirds were female. 58% of newly registered volunteers had never volunteered before.
- ✓ Over 35% of volunteers were aged between 16-25. Almost two thirds of volunteers were aged under 35.

Volunteers play an active role within the non-profit sector. In research conducted by The Wheel<sup>5</sup>, one third of non-profit enterprises reported that volunteers were essential part of their ability to function.

### Employee Volunteering in Ireland

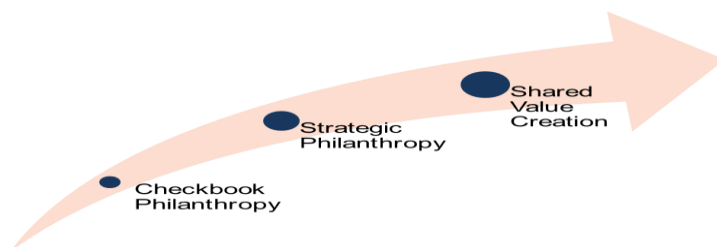
A 2012 survey<sup>6</sup> by Irish Small Medium Enterprise Association (ISME) reported that 72% of Irish SME owner-managers voluntarily give their time to support charitable non-profit organisations each year. In addition the survey reported 45% of SME employees engage in employer-supported volunteering.

In a recently published report<sup>7</sup>, the American Chamber of Commerce Ireland reported that, in 2012, US enterprises donated over 164,000 volunteer hours in Ireland alone. Over 2,200 projects in a variety of areas (community support, Arts, Education, Health and Environment) were completed involving over 80,000 employees.

Business in the Community Ireland's Business Impact Map<sup>23</sup>, showed that over 160,000 volunteering hours were recorded by their members in 2013 in the Ireland.

### National Framework

The recently launched National Plan on CSR<sup>9</sup> outlines the Governments position on the role enterprises both private and public can have in relation to community development.



The model of CSR has shifted over the previous few years with enterprises moving to a more sustainable model of CSR. It is recognised that employee volunteering has benefits, both for the staff member and organisation<sup>10</sup>. The current economic environment has resulted in business becoming more interested in creating better social and economic returns from their CSR investments<sup>11</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of research studies have been conducted in UK, Australia, and at European level, in the area of Employee Volunteering. The key pieces of research used to inform this report are:

### EU

In October 2011, the European Commission presented its new strategy on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) <sup>8</sup>, which includes its definition of the concept as: “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society”.

### Australia

Volunteering Australia research<sup>12</sup> identified some key principles;

1. Internal support is important to the success of a EVP
2. Staff are given a choice and encouraged to participate in the program
3. Commit to developing meaningful Not-for-profit Relationships

### UK

Volunteering England’s<sup>13</sup> report based on two online surveys (with 1,010 employees and 502 managers) identified that;

- Career development and increased self-confidence is cited as the most important skill to gain through volunteering.
- 63% of respondents reported raising funds was applicable to their organisation
- 56% stated that not having enough time prevented them from volunteering
- 64% of Managers stated barriers can be overcome with the help of specialist advice and work with brokers.

### United States

In their research of the top 50 civic enterprises in the US, the Points of Light organisation<sup>14</sup> found;

- 96% evaluate the business impact of civil engagement on at least one aspect of their bottom line, such as increased sales, brand loyalty or employee recruitment.
- 92% describe board, executive or senior leadership resolutions or directives that institutionalize corporate policies and practices related to community engagement.
- Employees are given more opportunities to volunteer and 88% of enterprises are including community involvement as a component of employee performance reviews.

## Other Research Findings:

### For Employers:

- Research<sup>15</sup> highlights the link between volunteer programs and ongoing employee recruitment and retention.
- Workforce Employability – increase in time management, communication, influencing and leadership skills
- Volunteers develop an improved understanding of community that they live/work in.

### For Non-Profits:

- Employee volunteering programmes provides an opportunity to access a growing legion of willing and able volunteers.<sup>14</sup>
- While a successful EVP can allow a Non-Profit organisation to develop their profile, an EVP does require the Non-Profit organisation to develop their capacity to take on employee volunteers.

## VOLUNTEER IRELAND SURVEY FINDINGS

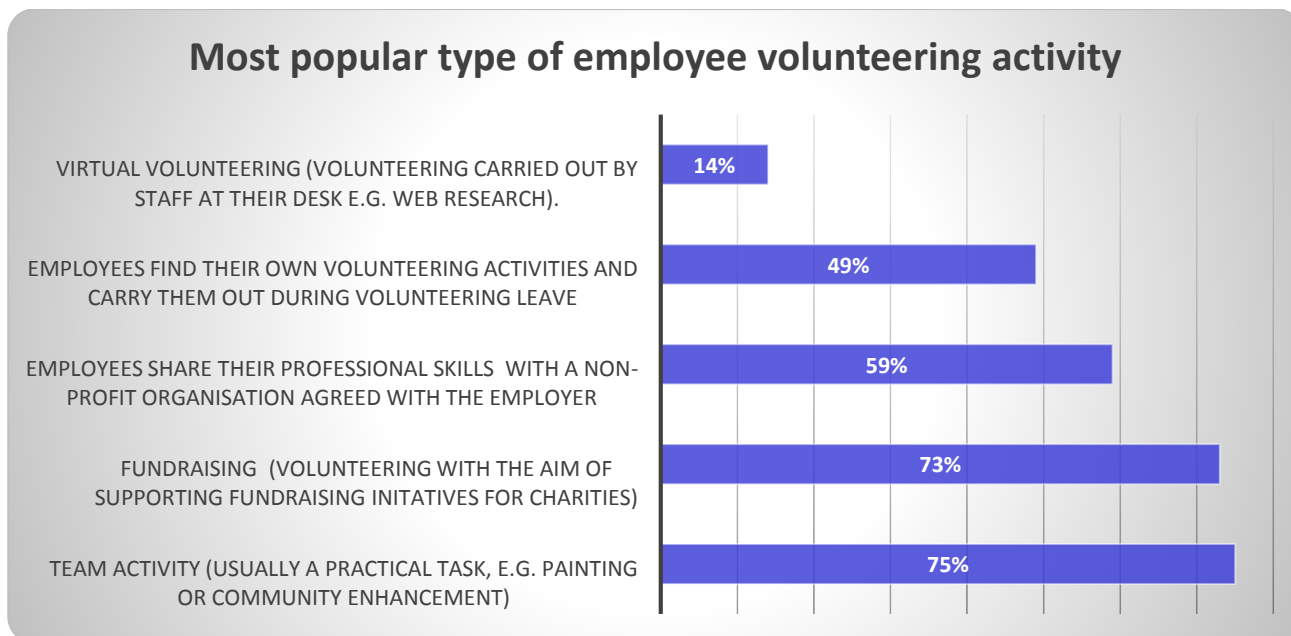
### A: Enterprises That Support Employee Volunteering Activities

#### 1. Structure:

- Despite the term *corporate volunteering* used extensively in academic research and online references, only 11% of enterprises in Ireland call their volunteering activities “corporate volunteering”, preferring “employee volunteering” (37%), or simply, “volunteering” (43%).
- The majority of respondents indicated that the management of their employee volunteering activities sits within their HR and/or CSR function.
- Of the respondent enterprises that support employee volunteering, less than half of them have a formal volunteering policy, outlining employee entitlements, supports and processes and objectives.
- Over 75% of enterprises engaged in employee volunteering do not recognise employee volunteering as a training resource.
- Over 70% of enterprises who have EVPs do not set targets for their EVP as part of their overall strategic objectives.

The lack of a formal policy would suggest that Employee Volunteering activities are not considered by some enterprises to be strategically aligned to their corporate objectives. This is further supported when we consider that over 70% of enterprises do not set targets for their EVP.

#### 2. Employee volunteer activities:



- Both public and private sector indicated that a team task was a preferred activity.
- In the public sector this was followed by employee finding their own volunteering activities with time off provided by the company.
- In the private sector fundraising initiatives was the preferred 2<sup>nd</sup> choice activity.



### 3. Investment in EVP in 2013

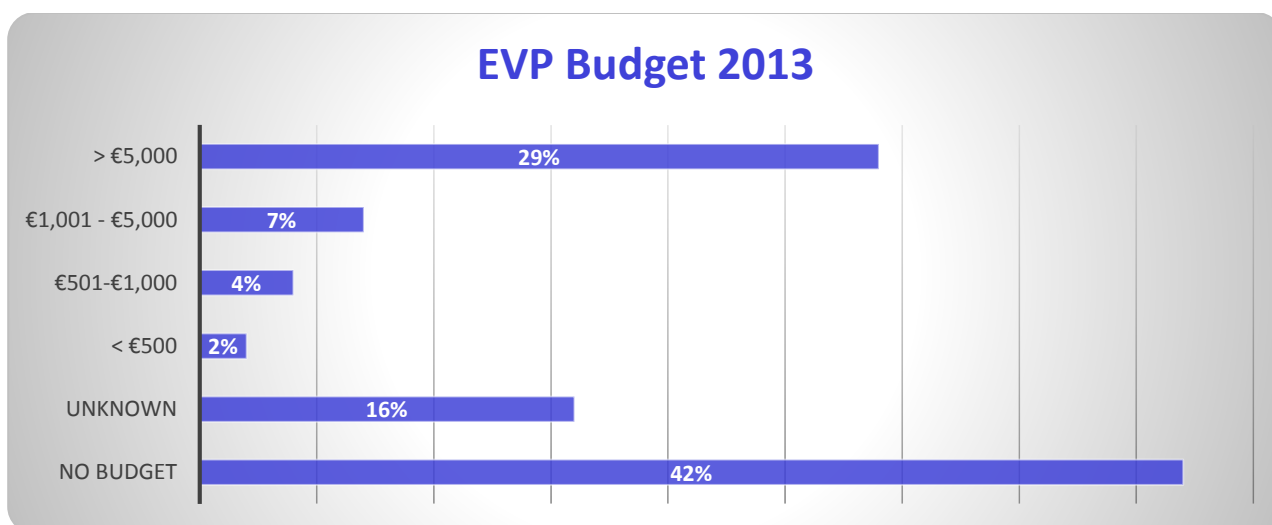
The recording or measurement of EVP investment (time, resources and money) varied from enterprise to enterprise, with no apparent trend in regards to enterprise size or type. In the private sector half of respondents indicated they do not record the amount of time spent volunteering by their employees. Respondents from the public sector indicated they did not record hours spent.

In those enterprises that did record volunteering hours, the participation rates are as follows:

<i>Percentage of Enterprises</i>	<i>Volunteers as a % of workforce in 2013</i>
8%	Data Not Available
13%	Up to 15%
17%	Up to 25%
38%	Between 25% - 50%
25%	More than 50%

When asked how much they spent on employee volunteering activities, 42% of respondents indicated that they did not have this data to provide. Without considering what has been spent, and what impact that investment made, it is difficult to seek further funding or resources to make either a bigger impact, or have a better quality employee volunteering experience.

A further 16% of respondents had no budget to spend on volunteering activities, all of these were companies with <500 employees. There is usually a cost involved in running an employee volunteering programme, particularly in organised team volunteering events, and this needs to be appreciated by relevant stakeholders. The majority of the large companies, (>500 employees) spend in excess of €5,000.



### 4. Reason for engaging in employee volunteering activities

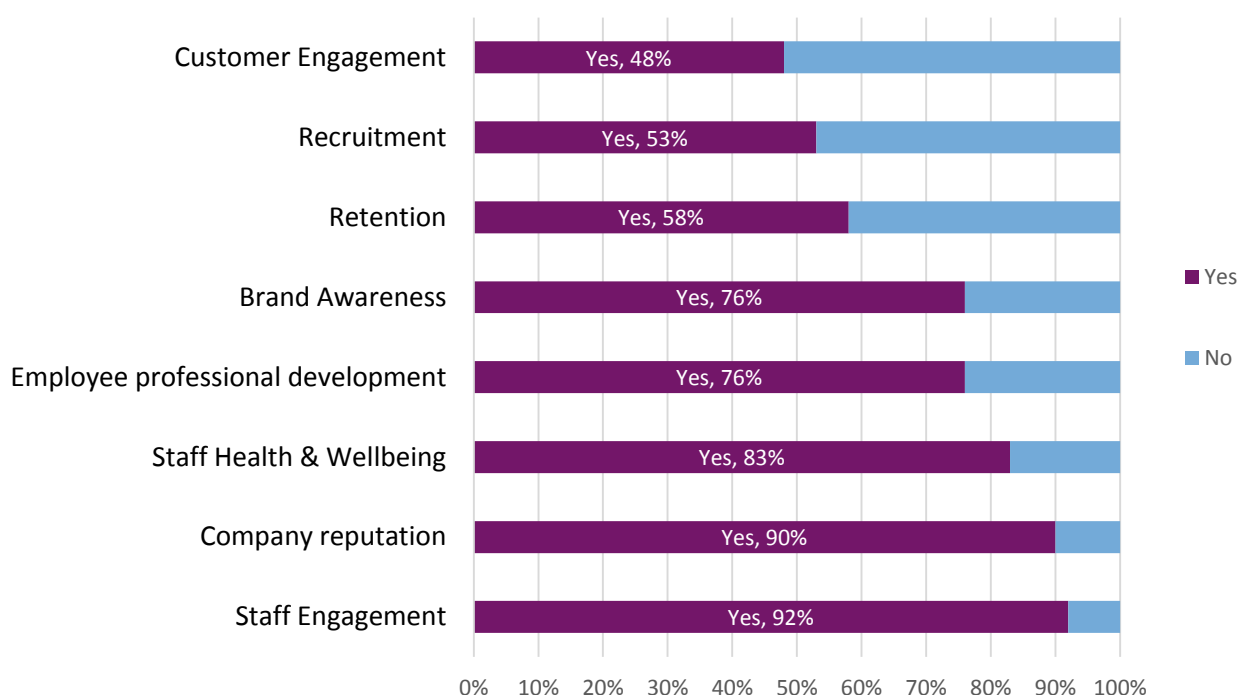
- In the Private Sector half of the respondents cited *staff demand* as the main reason for engaging in Employee volunteering activities, closely followed by *Overseas Parent Policy, Board Request* and then *Public Relations*.
- Conversely, in the public sector, *Public Relations* was cited as the main influencer when considering employee volunteering activities.

## 5. Impact

As highlighted previously over 60% of enterprises do not formally measure the impact of their EVP. This does suggest that perhaps enterprises are not applying the same management principles to their Employee Volunteer Programme that would result in measurable reportable metrics. Despite this, the majority of respondents believe their employee volunteering activities have a positive impact on;

- Staff Engagement
- Reputation
- Health & Well Being of Staff
- Employee Professional Development
- Brand awareness

### Q. Does your EVP have a positive impact on the following:



#### *Volunteering and Employee Engagement*

Employee engagement can be defined as “the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his/her organisation and its values”<sup>17</sup> Highly engaged workers, it is claimed, are likely to be more productive, less likely to want to leave the company and can have a positive effect on the reputation of the company. Research from Deloitte<sup>18</sup> 2012 suggests a powerful link between frequent participation in workplace volunteer activities and several measures of employee engagement that, in turn, contribute to employees’ perceptions of positive corporate culture.

#### *Volunteering and Organisational Reputation*

Research<sup>19</sup> shows that employee volunteering one of the key mechanisms by which corporate philanthropy is assumed to contribute to shareholder wealth. It can also improve the firm’s reputation<sup>20</sup>. This view is mandated by the results of this survey, with respondents highlighting organisation reputation as a key benefit of an EVP. It should be noted though that a poorly managed EVP can have negative impact for all stakeholders.

## Volunteering and Professional Development

In research <sup>21</sup> over 50% of executives and CR managers interviewed believed that volunteering helps build and/or enhance professional and leadership skills. This is mirrored in our research, where 76% responded that EVP has a positive impact on staff professional development. Despite this belief, 75% of enterprises do not use an EVP as a potential training resource. It appears that some enterprises, while recognising the up-skilling benefit of the EVP do not harness this opportunity for upskilling in a more structured training approach.

## Volunteering and Recruitment

Almost half of respondents don't believe their employee volunteering activities has a positive impact on recruitment. This contrasts with research carried by Deloitte indicating that a successful EVP does have a positive impact on recruitment and retention. Deloitte Volunteer Impact<sup>18</sup> survey found that millennials were more likely to work for a company who engage in employee volunteering, than ne who didn't.

## 6. Partnerships with Local Community Groups/Non Profits

- 75% of respondents reported that their Non-Profit partner had provided a positive volunteering experience.
- The majority of respondents use staff referral initially when seeking an organisation to partner with. Employees may already volunteer in a personal capacity with an organisation, or are a supporter / admirer. Partnering organisations who already have an internal champion is a factor in ensuring high participation and engagement.
- When asked what factors influence their choice when selecting their non-profit partner organisation, the respondent enterprises ranked the factors as follows;

Rank	Factor
1	Reputation of partner organisation
2	Ability to make real impact in partner organisation
3	Aims of partner organisation
4	Location of partner organisation
5	Size of partner organisation

'Reputation of Partner organisation' as the main factor is perhaps a reflection of the negative publicity around governance issues in the sector when this research was undertaken. However the increasing focus on internal compliance and governance in business in general does demand similar standards of governance in all organisations or enterprises these businesses partner with.

'Ability to make real impact' at number two is significant in demonstrating the move towards sustainable impact, however there may be a need for more awareness of how skill-based volunteering can make a bigger impact, despite the preference of once-off team (practical) volunteering activities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENTERPRISES

The research highlights issues which need to be addressed to ensure that enterprises continue to operate effective employee volunteer programmes that have a real and sustainable impact in their community.

### *Make time to volunteer*

The issue of making time available to volunteer is a key practical issue for enterprises who do support EVP, and for those enterprises that don't. The demands on employees' time at work does affect the implementation and success of an EVP. Enterprises should consider adopting some of the following practises to better facilitate time for employees to volunteer;

1. Formalise the employee volunteering experience at work by having a written and detailed Volunteering Policy, outlining the support offered to employees, and the reasons for this support.
2. Consider aligning employee volunteering, and other Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, to strategic objectives, applying the same attention and priority as other activities that have an impact on the bottom line.
3. Ensure senior management, and just as important, line management buy-in to make it acceptable to facilitate staff time off to volunteer, and making it culturally acceptable for staff to request time for volunteering as part of a formal policy.
4. Communicate the benefits of employee volunteering to all levels in their enterprise.
5. Recognise that, when done appropriately, employee volunteering can be a useful tool in a Training & Development programme.

### *Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of EVP*

A key trend highlighted from the survey is that very few enterprises actually measure and evaluate the impact of their EVP. Indeed it can be inferred that whilst many respondents were able to point to key benefits there was no collaborative data.

A key recommendation is that enterprises adopt a strategic approach to measuring the impact of their EVP by considering the following;

1. Identifying the key relevant business goals of the EVP
2. Clearly define the outputs and measurement of these goals
3. Implement the measurement to assess if the EVP is meeting goals
4. Investing in tools to record, report and administer employee volunteering activities

This approach as outlined above is transparent and allows enterprises to both benchmark their EVP and report on it. This in turn will allow for better recognition of the EVP both internally and externally to all stakeholders.

### *Allocate appropriate resources*

Lack of internal resources, (people and finance) was identified as a key barrier when both managing and implementing EVP. While the volunteering activities are undertaken without payment, there is a cost to the employer that needs to be acknowledged. Employers have direct and indirect costs when undertaking employee volunteering activities, which may include some of the following:

- Allocating a staff resource to manage programme or activities and the partnership with a non-profit
- Where no internal resource is available, paying external consultants or Broker Organisations to manage employee volunteering activities on their behalf
- Time lost by employees volunteering during work time
- Costs of materials to realise team volunteering projects
- Potential reimbursement of expenses accrued while volunteering.

There is a need for employers to design their employee volunteering support based on their available resources. Where this support extends to facilitating team volunteering or employing external assistance, employers must allocate an appropriate budget, as they do with other company activities.

### *Consider the business case*

Our research showed that getting this financial support and allocated resources is challenging for many enterprises, especially for those who are new to employee volunteering or have yet to engage in EVP. There is a desire for more publically available information to enable enterprises to garner that support internally, outlining the benefits of EVP, and the practical support tools to implement effective programmes.

There is also an opportunity for multiple agencies, (both statutory, Not-for-Profit, employer representative bodies and membership organisations) to offer practical support and advice to businesses wanting to engage in employee volunteering activities, either as a stand-alone activity, or as part of a wider CSR remit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

Lack of suitable opportunities was cited as a barrier to EVP in our research. There is an onus on not-for profit organisations who want to engage employee volunteering (and the resources that they bring with them) to be clear on what assistance they need, and to develop suitable volunteer opportunities that are attractive to companies and employee volunteers.

Whether they choose to be reactive to employer enquiries, or proactive in finding appropriate corporate partners or volunteers, non-profit organisations have an important role to play in promoting their attractiveness and suitability with enterprises committed to EVP.

The research showed enterprises are looking to make a real impact and the majority of respondents use staff referrals when searching for a partnering non-profit organisation. Existing volunteers or supporters, who may also be employees elsewhere, are a valuable source when looking for a business to partner with, as they can champion their cause and open doors for further discussion.

Enterprises want to work with non-profit organisations who have a good reputation. With this in mind non-profits need to ensure that they have transparent policies and excellent governance. To make the employee volunteering partnership more successful, non-profits also need to clearly define their aims and be confident in articulating them to their partner organisation.

This communication is critical for a successful EVP and can result in;

- ✓ Enterprises and employee volunteers fully understanding the aims of the NPO and their role in helping them achieve these aims
- ✓ Volunteer expectations been successfully managed
- ✓ A well planned and communicated EVP for all stakeholders

## CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore the prevalence of employee volunteer programmes in Ireland, its benefits and challenges. We also looked to research the barriers to EVP and establish if enterprises were measuring the impact of their EVP.

There were limitations to the report, namely the scope of this report was based primarily on business feedback. We did not seek to explore the views of the employee volunteers themselves, or those of the partnering non-profit organisations. We believe that this could be an area for further additional research, which could positively impact the development of good policy and practice.

Our findings showed a significant portion of respondents support employee volunteering programmes or activities, either formally or informally, which is welcoming. A well-managed EVP can have the potential to become an important source of volunteers for non-profit organisations. Employee volunteering has moved from the idea of 'a gift of time' to a more mutual exchange relationship between business and non-profit organisations, and a successful EVP can facilitate this.

However, finding the time to volunteer is a major challenge for those employers who already engage in EVP, and those enterprises that are considering it. Lack of internal resources, (people and finance) was also identified as a key barrier when both managing and implementing EVP.

While the practise of EVP in Ireland compares favourably with employee volunteering trends in the UK, it does differ to the US who are at a more mature stage in the EVP journey, having had a much longer history of EVP. 96% of US enterprises evaluate their EVP, while our research showed only 40% of Irish enterprises evaluate their EVP. US research also suggests that professional skill based volunteering is their preferred choice, and there is certainly the belief that individual skill sharing activities makes a more sustainable impact in non-profit organisations than practical team-based activities.

That is not to say that preference for team volunteering events make a lesser impact in communities. They are a huge source of support for organisations, and can make a real impact in organisations that simply would not be able to achieve certain tasks without a team of employee volunteers, and the financial support they bring with them. There will always be differing opinions on "real impact" versus "sustainable impact", but there is a place for both in our communities. What is important is organisations and enterprises who work together consider all forms of employee volunteering to see which best suits their individual objectives and resources.

Having appropriate resources, a formal employee volunteering policy, and effective metrics in place to evaluate the EVP, are all regarded as best practise in employee volunteering. However, consideration should be made to the fact that 99% of the companies operating in Ireland are SME's, and over 98% of them have less than 50 employees. Resources are limited, and complicated impact measurement systems unnecessary. Informal, ad-hoc employee volunteering activities, undertaken with due consideration of all stakeholders, can still make a valuable contribution to local communities.

The inclusion of employer-supported volunteering in the National Plan for Corporate Responsibility (2014-2016)<sup>9</sup> presents an opportunity for all stakeholders to work strategically together, helping to ensure employee volunteering activity remains a tangible activity for Irish enterprises.

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*Volunteer Ireland would like to thank Elaine McGauran for her valuable assistance in researching and developing this report. Go raibh mile maith agat.*

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## Appendix 1: Research Methodology

A questionnaire was designed (sample questions attached in appendix X) to which a total of 84 enterprises responded. We sought to get a representative selection from a cross section of enterprises both Multinational Corporations (MNC), Large and Small Medium Enterprises (SME), in the private and public sector.

### 1. Survey Process

The survey covered four key areas:

1. **Company Details** – the section collected data regarding the respondent and the company demographics (size, sector, type and location).
2. **Content** – this section looked at what employee volunteering is called in their organisation? Was there a
  - Formal volunteer policy?
  - Budget and resources for the EVP?
  - What type of volunteer activities they participated in?
3. **Impact Measurement** – this section sought to ascertain how the impact of a volunteer programme is measured.
4. **Partnership with Local Community Groups/Non Profits** – here we examined the relationship between enterprises and their partner non-profit organisation.

Research<sup>2</sup> into designing questionnaires recommends where possible to keep the survey under seven minutes, test and pilot the survey and use a mix of open and closed questions. This survey conformed to all the above to encourage maximum participation.

In total there were 25 questions. The majority of questions were closed ended to allow for standardisation leading to robust comparative analysis. Closed ended Questions – multi choice questions and numerical questions were also used. The questions including 'other (please specify)' and 'none of the above'

### 2. Delivery process

In today's online world, academics and researchers are using social media for research<sup>3</sup>. A variety of resources were used;

- Volunteer Ireland's Twitter and Facebook feeds, and its website
- Author's personal Twitter and Facebook account

In addition the Author met and contacted the following enterprises who provided support via Twitter and email to distribute the survey.

- American Chamber of Commerce
- Irish Small Medium Enterprise (ISME)
- Great place to Work
- Small Firms Association (SFA)

## Appendix 2: References / Resources

<sup>1</sup> Volunteer Ireland, [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)

<sup>2</sup> Multiple sources:

Baruch, Yehuda, and Brooks C. Holtom. "Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research." *Human Relations* 61.8 (2008): 1139-1160

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