

# The Role of Corporate Volunteer Councils

*For several years, leaders of various Corporate Volunteer Councils (CVCs) have expressed a need for greater collaboration and sharing of resources among their counterparts nationwide. Both corporate representatives and the Volunteer Center liaisons of local CVCs have looked to the Points of Light Foundation to provide these resources. As we build a national infrastructure to support CVCs, promote national awareness of the value and effectiveness of CVCs, and further develop our relationship with Volunteer Centers to start and support CVCs, we will develop a more mutually beneficial relationship with CVCs nationally. The CVC Partners Program aims to achieve these goals.*

## **What is a CVC?**

CVC stands for Corporate Volunteer Council, a coalition of local businesses and corporations who either have active employee and/or retiree volunteer involvement programs or are interested in initiating such programs. CVCs are also known as Business Volunteer Councils (BVC), Workplace Volunteer Councils (WVC), Employee Volunteer Councils (EVC), Community Relations Councils, etc. The variety of names merely reflects the differing preferences from community to community. The variety simply reflects differing preferences of the founding group.

## **How CVCs Began:**

The first CVC was created in the early 1970's when several company representatives, who were organizing their own corporate volunteer programs in New York City, met informally to exchange ideas and information. These informal meetings of half a dozen corporations gradually became the regular monthly meetings of the first Corporate Volunteer Coordinators Council (now known as Corporate Volunteers of New York). By 1992, more than 45 corporations had joined the New York group. Today, there are approximately 100 CVCs nationwide.

## **Why CVCs are Formed:**

CVCs are formed for a variety of reasons, depending on the needs of the local community and the composition of its membership. A CVC may define only one main purpose for its work or list several. Reasons a CVC are formed include but are not limited to the following:

- To network among peers
- To increase visibility through joint projects
- To provide an opportunity to share valuable resources
- To promote workplace volunteerism in local communities
- To provide avenues for professional development for member companies
- To provide recognition avenues for corporate volunteers in local communities
- To learn about community service agencies and their need for corporate resources
- To access best practices by exchanging information on employee/retiree volunteer programs
- To form partnerships to better impact social issues, particularly those too complex for one company to impact alone.

## **How CVCs are Structured:**

The local organizational structure of a CVC depends on how the council itself defines its overall mission, purpose and objectives. Much like its purpose, the structure is dependent upon the local community and the composition of the council's membership. The structure of a CVC falls into four sub-categories. They are: Membership, Membership Dues, Governing Body and Staff and Meetings.

## **Membership in Your Local CVC:**

The membership structure of a CVC varies among localities. Generally, primary membership is made up of a business representative with each company sending one representative to the meetings. In companies

that divide the responsibility for the employee volunteer program, more than one person may be authorized to join. Business membership in a CVC includes small, medium and large businesses within the local community. In some CVCs, the membership also includes other organizations such as colleges, universities, hospitals, etc. who have workplace programs. Some CVCs also establish an associate or affiliate membership category for nonprofit organizations that serve as clearinghouses for volunteering in the community. Some examples of associate or affiliate members include Volunteer Centers, United Way, State or Governor's offices on volunteerism, Junior Leagues or Cares organizations.

### **Membership Dues:**

Most CVCs collect annual dues, so they can implement community projects and carry out administrative work. The corporation and not the individual representative usually pay dues. Membership dues for a CVC have a tremendous range. Examples include but are not limited to the following: no dues structure; a flat fee for corporate members only; a flat fee for corporate and nonprofit members; a sliding scale fee structure based on the number of employees in the company; a fee structure based on categories (i.e., Primary Members are corporations, business and government agencies who have or are establishing an employee volunteer program; Associate/Resource Members are nonprofit organizations whose main objective for membership is to provide information and resources to managers of employee volunteer programs about community needs and trends in volunteerism).

### **Governing Body and Staff:**

The organizational structure depends on how the CVC defines its overall purpose and if the members see a need for a governing mission and programs. Most CVCs start with a fairly informal structure that may last through its first year of operation. This structure may take the form of an ad hoc planning committee, task force, or steering committee chaired by a member volunteering his or her services rather than by someone chosen through a formal process. As a CVC expands its membership and goals, more formal structures are developed. A number of CVCs elect officers and develop standing committees with committee chairs.

Some CVCs are supported by or affiliated with Volunteer Centers. Volunteer Centers provide a range of services such as information, technical assistance, and administrative support and also act as a CVC's fiscal agent. In most cases when a Volunteer Center provides support to a CVC, they are compensated through the annual dues of the CVC.

### **Meetings:**

The majority of CVCs meet on a regular basis. Meetings occur monthly, bimonthly and quarterly. Meetings are held to make committee reports, provide training for members or have speakers present information on specific topics related to workplace volunteerism. Meeting locations generally rotate between member companies, although some CVCs hold their meetings at the local Volunteer Center or United Way.

### **The Role of a Volunteer Center:**

The role of a Volunteer Center with a CVC has proven to be integral in the formation of a number of CVCs. Volunteer Centers are local organizations responsible for connecting volunteers with opportunities to serve; building the capacity for effective local volunteering; promoting volunteering; and developing strategic initiatives to mobilize volunteers to meet local community needs.

Volunteer Centers are capacity builders—teaching schools, businesses and nonprofit organizations how to use volunteer power effectively. They provide local leadership for national volunteer initiatives and provide a national network of local organizations poised to implement initiatives in communities across the nation. In fact, the Volunteer Center National Network – in partnership with the Points of Light Foundation – is the country's largest local delivery system for mobilizing people and resources to tackle serious social problems within local communities.

### **The Role of a Volunteer Center Continued:**

Many Volunteer Centers assist in the planning of a CVC by providing staff support to help get it off the ground and serve as associate members of the CVC. Consequently, the Volunteer Center and CVC maintain a mutually beneficial business relationship. Examples of the services provided by a Volunteer Center include: locating volunteer opportunities; providing administrative support to the Council (staff); serving as primary contact to nonprofit agencies; acting as the contact point for new CVC members; providing information on local social problems and serving as a fiscal agent.

## **HandsOn Network**

On August 1, 2007, Points of Light Foundation and Hands on Network decided to join forces and merged into a single organization with a shared vision and a shared set of goals. The new organization, now called Points of Light Institute, is implementing a bold new strategy to create unprecedented scale and people-centered community impact through volunteerism and civic involvement. HandsOn Network is the leading business unit within the Points of Light Institute portfolio and the activating arm. It is the largest volunteer and citizen action network in the nation.

HandsOn Network supports the formation and strengthening of CVCs, because they provide opportunities for businesses and corporations to learn how to support their employees in community service directed at solving the most serious social problems. CVCs are a powerful resource to businesses, as they develop and direct corporate volunteer programs. Corporations, the community, and nonprofit organizations all benefit from the efforts of a CVC.

Additionally, the Corporate Volunteer Council Network works together with the business community to fulfill local needs and meet strategic business goals. These objectives are met through the development of employee volunteer programs, Corporate Volunteer Councils, consultations and training, and membership. By bringing businesses together with Volunteer Centers and other nonprofit organizations, HandsOn Network helps companies integrate workplace philosophy and values with community needs and employee interests.

### **Benefits of a CVC:**

**Member companies** gain visibility and are seen as a leader in the development of employee volunteer programs; gain greater recognition as projects make a greater impact on serious social issues; enhance the capacity of the managers of employee volunteer programs, as a result of the trainings received; gain a greater understanding of the community, its needs and trends, which enables better management of company resources; and gain access to best practices by exchanging information regarding employee/retiree volunteer programs.

**Communities** are enhanced by the partnerships of companies working together to impact serious social problems; nonprofit organizations learn to work more effectively with business volunteers; more companies with employee volunteer programs mean more volunteers; and joint projects allow businesses too small for independent work to partner with others to ensure a better community.

**Volunteer Centers** benefit by a closer working relationship with companies possibly leading to more resources for the Volunteer Center (money, board members and in-kind donations); and the partnership with the CVC also helps the Volunteer Center reach its mission.

### **Membership with HandsOn Network**

**Corporate Volunteer Council Membership** with HandsOn Network serves as an opportunity for the Points of Light Institute to provide the resources and support vital to the success of CVCs. HandsOn Network will help start, build and sustain the capacity of your CVC to achieve results in your local community.

As a member of the Corporate Volunteer Council Network, your local CVC will benefit immensely from being part of a national network. Efforts of your Council will be enriched, as a result of greater visibility, recognition and networking opportunities, as well as sharing of resources.

**Business Membership** with the HandsOn network is for companies with local, national or worldwide employee volunteer programs or is in the process of building its volunteer program. Designing and maintaining a viable employee volunteer program is like any other business investment--it involves time, strategy and training. Employee involvement in volunteer programs benefits the community and benefits the company—when it's done right. HandsOn Network is there to guide you in setting up, building and sustaining a strategic workplace volunteer program.

### **For More Information:**

Corporate Volunteer Council Network  
HandsOn Network  
600 Means Street, Suite 210  
Atlanta, GA 30318

CVCinfo@HandsOnNetwork.org  
404-979-2900