

# ENGAGING CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS IN STUDENT SUPPORT ROLES TOOLKIT FOR NONPROFITS

## OVERVIEW

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Are you looking to create partnerships with corporate volunteer programs and engage them in meaningful service, supporting children in your community?

Companies are an integral part of their communities, and many recognize that their businesses and employees will be strained if local educational systems or the community itself are struggling. Corporate employers and corporate volunteers can play a critical role in helping students recover from the impacts of the pandemic and thrive. Encouraging employees to volunteer can be a powerful way for companies to give back to society while helping their staff to develop personally and professionally.

It is important for corporate employers to consider the benefits and business case for engaging their employees in service to support young people, not only to better their communities but to ensure they have access to an educated and highly trained workforce. If you are seeking engagement from corporate partners, you should be able to discuss how their support will not only benefit young people, but also the employers who need access to an educated and highly trained workforce.

This toolkit is intended for nonprofits, schools, districts, and out-of-school time programs as they consider where and how to bring corporate volunteers in to serve as tutors, mentors, student success coaches, student support coordinators, and/or post-secondary transition coaches in their programs.

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When engaging corporate volunteers in your school or nonprofit's programming, consider the following steps:

## **IDENTIFYING STUDENT/YOUTH NEEDS**

*Questions to ask your team & your data to determine support needs*

- *GENERAL QUESTIONS*
  - What data is already available (or could be reasonably collected) to help answer the following questions?
  - Are there substantial numbers of students who would benefit from an additional caring adult supporting them on a daily or weekly basis?
  - In the areas where you need additional student supports, do you need to find additional people power beyond your existing staff and partners?
- *TUTORING AND MENTORING*
  - Have large numbers of students had their academic progress significantly impacted due to the pandemic? Is this greater in some grades or among some student groups?
  - Is chronic absence a significant challenge? Is it high among a substantial number of the students whose academic progress was significantly impacted?
- *STUDENT SUCCESS COACHES*
  - Would teachers benefit from additional capacity in their classrooms providing holistic, individual or small group support?
  - Are schools in need of additional whole school climate support?
- *WRAPAROUND/INTEGRATED SUPPORT COORDINATORS*
  - Are there additional needs—beyond academic and social emotional support—that students or community members may need to thrive?
  - Are there groups of students whose physical and/or mental health or access to critical support systems was further impacted by the pandemic?
- *POST-SECONDARY ADVISORS*
  - Are all high school students receiving enough support to make informed postsecondary choices and complete all necessary application and financial aid materials?

## DETERMINING WHERE CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS FIT WITHIN YOUR MODEL

Review your volunteer opportunities or utilize the NPSS Hub/READY SET [Corporate Volunteer Menu of Services](#) to discuss internally where your greatest needs are and what opportunities might be a good fit for a corporate volunteer. Corporate partnerships may look different than other volunteer opportunities your organization offers. For example, they may not be able to volunteer for more than 1 hour per week, they may not be able to volunteer at the same time each week, they may have travel limitations related to work, they could bring unique content knowledge, etc

Consider direct service (skilled, working with students) or indirect service (no direct student interaction but service provider support, etc.) opportunities, and don't be afraid to think outside the box. Remember, students who have a relationship with a caring adult—as well as students who have an adult to talk to about educational and career decisions—are more likely to report strong social and emotional outcomes, avoid risky behaviors, and have better academic outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

## IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES FOR CORPORATE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

- *MISSION ALIGNMENT* - Mission alignment between volunteers (and, in this case, corporate volunteer efforts alignment) and the nonprofit is critical. If education and/or supporting youth in the community is not a key priority of the corporation, it will be difficult to create a meaningful program for their volunteers.
- *BUY-IN FROM THE TOP* - Similar to mission alignment, support from corporate leadership, and having a corporate champion who is a decision-maker at the organization is a huge help when building a program to receive support and aid from the corporation.
- *HAVE THE HARD CONVERSATIONS EARLY ON* - Expectation-setting is critical. Organizations needing support may often want to say yes to opportunities that present themselves. However, if the company does not or cannot align with the requirements of your program, other opportunities may need to be explored. It's also critical to revisit these expectations on an ongoing basis.
- *DEDICATED STAFF* - Both the nonprofit and the corporation must designate a staff person (or multiple based on the size of the organization) to manage the relationships being created.

- *CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND DELIVERABLES* - Consider drafting a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**, partnership agreement, or statement of work that clearly outlines expectations on both sides of the partnership and expected deliverables. An MOU is a non-binding agreement that states each party's intended action to take, agreed upon by both parties. Consider including who is responsible for what actions on each side of the partnership. Additionally, consider including an initial timeline for the partnership, even if the intention is to continue a sustained relationship as it will allow you to revisit the agreement with your partner liaison to ensure all needs/expectations are being met and will allow you to adjust if necessary. More on this below.
- *EQUITY, ACCESS, INCLUSION* - Take the time to consider equity and access of your programming to those students that need it most. One way to connect with champions of this work is to research and reach out to employee resource groups at the corporation with which you're working. There are often BIPOC resource groups, LGBTQ+ affinity groups, racial or ethnic affinity groups, STEM education, and many others depending on the organization. LinkedIn is also a great resource when trying to find organizational contacts and/or prospective champions.
- *TRACK IMPACT* - Set goals with corporate partners and metrics to track progress and success. Communicate regularly with partners to share this progress, gaps, and what's needed to attain the goals set.
- *EVALUATION* - Consider sharing a survey with your volunteers at the end of their term to gather important evaluation information such as impact, satisfaction, and opportunities for improvement.
  - [Here is a sample survey](#) specific to mentoring that can be tailored to other student support areas.
- *ACCOUNTABILITY* - Regularly refer back to the MOU or statement of work to ensure expectations are being met. We often hear of challenges arising due to staff turnover. Leads on both sides of the partnership are critical to running a smooth process and if leads leave either of the organizations, top priority must be placed on fulfilling these roles and responsibilities.

## DEVELOP STRATEGIES SPECIFIC TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

Research organizations to determine alignment:

- What are their community engagement priorities?
- What do they care about / what issues align with their engagement?
- Do they support employee volunteer efforts and, if so, how?
- What resource groups exist at the organization?
- What are their educational and academic goals, if applicable?

Ideally, try to get a warm introduction from someone in your network. Utilize LinkedIn, the company website, and your network to find a contact within the organization that can introduce you to the decision maker within the company, ideally in corporate social responsibility. This isn't always possible and email may be your best option. Here are some sample emails to help you think about how best to approach this in your situation.





# PARTNER PROSPECT EMAIL TEMPLATES

## COLD EMAIL

*If you're not fortunate enough to make a warm connection first, keep it brief and offer a date and time — that way you're asking them which time works for them, not if they want to meet you or not.*

Hey there, I saw on LinkedIn that you are involved in (related project). I would love to connect and get your input for similar work I'm doing in/with/at (community name or org) to support P-12 students in our community. Are you free Tuesday at 3:00?

[Your Name]

## FOLLOW UP/WARM EMAIL

*This email sample shows how you would follow up with a connection made at an event. Instead of leading with the proposal, take the time to gather information and learn who's who at the company.*

Hey there, It was great to meet you last week at the XYZ event. Any chance you can suggest the best contact for those in the CSR or marketing side at your company?

Thanks,

[Your Name]

## MEETING REQUEST

*Once you've identified the decision maker, the next step is to request a meeting with them. This example shows how you'd follow through with an introduction to the decision maker and request a meeting. The message focuses on the prospect and offers a date and time to discuss a potential opportunity that will be mutually beneficial.*

Hi Prospect's Name,

Your colleague, [Their Name], mentioned you were manager for Department X. I would love to set up a quick call to discuss your goals and objectives and see if there is some common ground between your priorities and our plans for 2024. How does your schedule look on Wednesday? Does 3:00 work for a phone call?

Thanks,

[Your Name]

- Draft a call agenda to start this conversation with pitch (or similar)
  - Background on your organization
  - Summary of where priorities align
  - Summary of potential ways to get involved and benefits to company of engaging in this work
  - Request to create partnership
- Consider hosting a lunch and learn at the start of new partnerships to onboard corporate partners.
- When recruiting new volunteers, spotlight current volunteer experiences in ways that reach your target audience. Some ideas include:
  - Panel discussion
  - Blog/post
  - Social Media Post
- Pitch Deck - draft a pitch deck to use in new conversations with potential corporate partners that outlines the requirements of your program, benefits of participation to the company, its employees who will volunteer, and students/the school/the community, as well as positive outcomes of your program.
- Use partner language as often as possible - Join us as a partner, “we,” learning together, creating opportunities together, etc.
- Consider putting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), partnership agreement, and/or statement of work in place. Below are some suggestions for components of these documents to consider. Please note each MOU, partnership agreement, and statement of work (SOW) is unique to the organizations participating and may require legal review in your city/state.

### CONTENT TO CONSIDER FOR **MOU'S**:

- Company info
- Partner info
- Effective date for the agreement discussions
- Start date
- Commence from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_
- Program details:
  - [Partnership Goal]
  - Implement agreed-upon deliverables including:
    - [deliverable 1]
    - [deliverable 2]
    - [deliverable 3]
- Requirements for background checks
- Payment terms and grant information (if applicable)
- Reporting requirements

### CONTENT TO CONSIDER FOR **STATEMENTS OF WORK**:

- Program staffing
- Communication
- Measurements of success
- Organization responsibilities:
  - Program support
  - Access
  - Training and support
  - Reporting
  - Volunteer recruitment
  - Student recruitment
- Partner responsibilities:
  - Communication
  - Recruitment
- Timeline
- Program Implementation Steps

### CONTENT TO CONSIDER FOR **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS**:

- Company info
- Partner info
- Effective date for the agreement discussions
- Start date
- Commence from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_
- Term \_\_\_\_
- Partner assignments (if applicable)
- Nonprofit/school/district responsibilities
  - “\_\_\_\_ shall be responsible for...” Consider which party will be responsible for recruitment, training, management, etc. of volunteers, which party will be responsible for covering program costs such as supplies, materials, and background checks, and which party will be responsible for each aspect of fundraising, and information reporting.
- Partner responsibilities
  - “Partner shall...”
  - “Partner shall provide training...”
- Program fees or shared fundraising
  - If the partnership involves fees and/or shared fundraising responsibilities, consider including details on pricing, fundraising responsibilities and amounts for each party, rules around exceeding or not meeting these requirements, and background check requirements (including the process and which partner will cover associated costs).
- Review entire understanding
- Signatures of partner and company



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENSURING QUALITY PROGRAMMING INVOLVING CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

Align your programming with research-backed standards such as the [NPSS Support Hub Voluntary Quality Standards](#)

Develop a basic **Volunteer Information Session Guide** for program coordinators with volunteers.

1. Greet your volunteers, make them feel welcome
2. Discuss the goals of volunteering & why volunteers are needed
3. Have an icebreaker with volunteers
4. Discuss volunteer requirements
5. Q & A
6. Wrap up/reflection, what did you learn? What will you take away?
7. Share next steps

## SPOTLIGHTS

*High quality programs involving corporate volunteers.*

- [iCouldBe](#)
- [Reading Partners](#)
- [StepUp Tutoring](#)



## TRAINING AND SUPPORTING CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

Ensure that corporate volunteers receive robust training, similar to training that may be provided to employees for their day-to-day roles, to ensure that they are well prepared to support students and provide high-impact support. Training considerations for tutors, mentors, student success coaches, postsecondary transition coaches, and wraparound/integrated student support coordinators are outlined in the [NPSS voluntary quality standards](#).

Document partnership and program information outlined in this toolkit and beyond for your organization, considering branding, staff roles, staff capacity, etc.

- Put materials specific to your organization, program, and partnership in a central location to ensure that it is a sustainable reference for future staff at your organization, district, or the corporate partner.
- Include contacts, titles, and roles.
- Include timelines for your specific programs.

## FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

- [Corporate Menu of Services](#)
- [Business Case for Mentoring - MENTOR](#)
- [Queerspace Collective resources](#)
- [Background Checks](#)
- [National Student Support Accelerator's contracting guidance](#)
- AmeriCorps Day of Service Opportunities:
  - [Martin Luther King, Jr., National Day of Service](#)
  - [September 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance](#)

This resource is a publication of the NPSS Support Hub at the Johns Hopkins Everyone Graduates Center and READY SET, along with a subset of READY SET coalition members and NPSS supporting champions, including the following contributors:

***AARP Foundation Experience Corps***      ***Creative Artists Agency***  
***Cricket Media***      ***iCouldBe***      ***Play Like a Girl***      ***Reading Partners***  
***Step Up Tutoring***      ***VolunteerMatch***      ***Young Storytellers***



**The National Partnership for Student Success** (“NPSS”) is a public-private partnership between the U. S. Department of Education, AmeriCorps, and the Johns Hopkins University Everyone Graduates Center which houses the NPSS Support Hub. The NPSS supports a nationwide three-year effort that brings together experienced organizations to recruit, screen, train, support, and engage an additional 250,000 caring adults in roles serving as tutors, mentors, student success coaches, wraparound service coordinators, and post-secondary transition coaches.

**READY SET** is a national tutor, mentor and service recruitment campaign created by the CAA Foundation in partnership with MENTOR, VolunteerMatch and AmeriCorps. READY SET aims to increase volunteer engagement by making it easy to support students who have suffered increased learning and relational losses contributed to by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

