



Considerations for In-Person Corporate Volunteering During COVID-19: Guidance for Companies

Created: 3/31/20

The [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) offer recommendations for health behaviors and those should be your controlling engagement guidelines for person to person engagements. Companies and nonprofits should independently establish guidelines for engaging volunteers. **This document is not medical, legal advice, or professional advice and is not inclusive of all possible considerations. We strongly recommend that companies and nonprofits consult with their independent legal counsel and insurance advisors for tailored advice on risk mitigation.**

The purpose of this document is to help companies operating in the United States make decisions regarding in-person corporate volunteering during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is meant as a supplemental resource to inform decision-making around activation of in-person volunteer opportunities for employees to meet community needs — some of which are more urgent than ever — during a time when there might be a public-health imperative to minimize in-person events. Should a company determine that it is feasible to proceed in offering in-person volunteer opportunities for their employees, this document helps inform project management during this unprecedented time.

The following are suggested steps to determine whether the corporate volunteer program might encourage employee involvement in a specific in-person volunteering opportunity at this time and, if so, how to incorporate safety considerations. The items below are *in addition* to the usual considerations your company uses to properly select and plan volunteer activities (such as conducting background checks, selecting nonprofits that are 501(c)(3)s, obtaining permission from appropriate company leadership, etc.) and should be used *in conjunction* with your usual relevant practices and policies. The steps below offer a framework to build upon incorporating tailored guidance from your advisors and leadership.



Volunteer opportunity being considered: _____

Step	√	X	Notes
1. Ensure the latest COVID-19 guidance, regulations and orders from local, state, and federal authorities along with health authorities allow for the service that the employee volunteers would support. (E.g., If your county has asked all non-essential services to close, ensure that the service your employees would support meets the definition of essential.)			
2. Ask the partner nonprofit that is offering the volunteer opportunity to align with, and provide confirmation via email, that they are aligning with, the guidance in: <ul data-bbox="203 919 927 1224" style="list-style-type: none">• Local, state, and federal directives/guidance related to COVID-19• “Considerations for In-Person Volunteers During COVID-19: Guidance for Nonprofit Organizations” (Appendix A)• Communications by the Points of Light Global Network local affiliate (www.pointsoflight.org/global-network/)			
3. Using messaging consistent with input provided by health authorities and your organization’s human resources guidelines, make it clear in the communications to employees that those at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19, or those likely to have been exposed, should not participate, but rather, could explore virtual volunteer opportunities. Your human resources department may be able to provide exact criteria on the volunteer event application to help inform employees about target participant criteria.			



Step	√	X	Notes
4. Check with your human resources department to see if your standard volunteer release form should be updated in light of the COVID-19 context; if you do not currently use a release form, check with your legal counsel for their recommendations.			
5. To help ensure knowledge of risks and appropriate precautions, consider having your nonprofit partner directly organize the volunteer opportunity, rather than having the engagement managed by a company employee. The nonprofit will likely have specialized information about risk mitigation, and you can leverage your partner's experience in facilitating projects in this context.			
6. Can you further support the nonprofit in preparing for a safe and effective volunteer opportunity, as needed? (E.g., provide funds, in-kind donations, etc.)			

If you can't check off all of the above items, it is prudent *not* to proceed with the volunteer activity in question. Share your completed checklist and notes with key project contacts in your organization to inform their decision-making.

About Points of Light

Points of Light is a global nonprofit organization that inspires, equips and mobilizes millions of people to take action that changes the world. We envision a world in which every individual discovers the power to make a difference, creating healthy communities in vibrant, participatory societies. Through affiliates in 250 cities across 37 countries, and in partnership with thousands of nonprofits and corporations, Points of Light engages 5 million volunteers in 14 million hours of service each year. We bring the power of people to bear where it's needed most. For more information, visit: www.pointsoflight.org.



APPENDIX A
Consideration for In-Person Volunteers During COVID-19:
Guidance for Nonprofit Organizations



Considerations for Using In-Person Volunteers During COVID-19: Guidance for Nonprofit Organizations

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) offer recommendations for health behaviors and those should be your controlling engagement guidelines for person to person engagements. Companies and nonprofits should independently establish guidelines for engaging volunteers. **This document is not medical, legal advice or professional advice and is not inclusive of all possible considerations. We strongly recommend that companies and nonprofits consult with their independent legal counsel and insurance advisors for tailored advice on risk mitigation.**

The purpose of this document is to help nonprofit organizations make decisions regarding their use of in-person (not virtual) volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic and, if they decide to engage them, how to do so as safely as possible. It is meant as a supplemental resource to help organizations determine whether they should engage individuals in in-person volunteer activities consistent with public health guidance during this unprecedented time. Organizations are encouraged to revisit these considerations regularly as restrictions and guidance during COVID-19 changes rapidly, even daily.

I. Yes/no decision on involving in-person volunteers

Following is a checklist with the recommended questions to help you consider if your organization should engage in-person volunteers at this time. The items below are *in addition* to the usual considerations your agency uses to properly engage volunteers (such as selecting needed skills, completing background checks, etc.) and should be used *in conjunction* with your usual volunteer engagement policies. This checklist can provide a framework to build upon incorporating tailored guidance from your advisors and leadership.

If you answer “no” to any of the questions in the table below, consider postponing your use of in-person volunteers until a time when you can meet all the above criteria.



Program/service being considered: _____

Question	Yes	No	Notes
1. Compliance with current public health orders is paramount! Do current COVID-19 guidelines and regulations from local, state, and federal authorities allow our organization to deliver services right now?			
2. Is it impossible to deliver our organization’s services without in-person volunteers? (E.g., Is there really no way to engage them remotely and still get the job done?)			
3. Do we have the capacity to deliver services while following the COVID-19 guidelines from local, state, and federal authorities?			
4. Do we have the capacity to appropriately screen volunteers to limit risk of COVID-19 exposure to others? (E.g., Do we have a way of excluding volunteers who are or may be contagious based on advance and day-of-event screening?)			
5. Do we have a way of excluding volunteers who would be put at high risk per guidance from local, state, and federal authorities by conducting in-person volunteering with us?			

Again, if you answer “no” to any of the above questions, consider postponing your use of in-person volunteers until a time when you can meet all the above criteria (and skip part 2 of this document).



II. How to involve in-person volunteers

Below are suggested actions in managing in-person volunteers.

Step	√	X	Notes
1. Recruit only volunteers that allow us to abide by COVID-19 safety practices per the most up-to-date guidelines from relevant local, state, and federal authorities.			
2. Train the volunteers as we always do and ensure that we also clearly communicate all COVID-19 safety practices per the most up-to-date guidance from local, state, and federal authorities for that day.			
3. Ask our counsel and/or human resources lead if they recommend liability waivers for volunteers, or whether existing waivers should be updated in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.			
4. Prepare the site for adherence to the safety practices as recommended by local, state, and federal public health authorities.			
5. Daily, assign an individual to monitor that the list of safe practices per COVID-19 (and otherwise) are practiced. If they find weaknesses that they cannot immediately remedy, give them instructions to bring this to the attention of someone with the authority to make the necessary adjustments and clear guidelines for ending in-person volunteer service.			
6. Send home any volunteers who cannot, or will not, abide by the safety practices or who present signs of illness. This is not the time to be lenient — there is too much at stake.			