



# Developing Business Partnerships and creating an engaging Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator Program

a good practice guide

Business Partnership Program:

Engaging with employers to provide Emergency Management with leaders in spontaneous volunteer coordination

A good practice guide

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During any large scale emergency communities come together and want to help restore services and help those in need.

These spontaneous volunteers can be extremely beneficial for emergency services, but they also require careful management to ensure they are appropriately tasked and that their health and safety is maintained.

These guidelines encourage a business partnership program which will engage with local employers to provide leaders from within their organisations who can manage and lead spontaneous volunteers.

## ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Included in the good practice guide are the following documents and resources

- Health and Safety risk template and example
- Volunteer Health and Safety agreement
- Initial training PowerPoint and trainers guide
- Generic program factsheet and PowerPoint presentation
- Program strategy diagram
- Literature reviews of Corporate Social Responsibility programs, Employer Supported Volunteering and an analysis of what makes a successful volunteer program.

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## INTRODUCTION

For many organisations ensuring they have volunteer support is becoming increasingly difficult. Emergency management however, is the unique position in that we know from previous events that when really needed there will be no shortage of volunteer support through spontaneous volunteers.

The big issue for emergency management organisations is how to ensure these spontaneous volunteers are coordinated in a manner which is organised, safe and of most value to the communities involved.

Many businesses see enormous value in investing in their local communities and actively encourage an Employer Supported Volunteer program within their organisation. One often cited example is the BNZ and their “Closed for Good” program, when they close the bank for one day a year to allow all staff the opportunity to volunteer in their community.

Creating effective Business Partnerships is one option to ensure you have trained, experienced and engaged Volunteer Coordinators ready when needed. Under such a program local businesses will pay their staff to be available during work hours for training and to volunteer as coordinators to work with spontaneous volunteers during a response.

An employer supported volunteer program has many benefits for your operation:

- Employer Supported Volunteers are easier to keep engaged as they are not as reliant on regular volunteer activity to maintain their commitment.
- The volunteers are able to act as ambassadors for emergency management to support additional activities (such as Get Ready Get Through Week), within their organisation and the communities they connect with.
- It encourages increased preparedness in the community through providing workplaces with information and advice for preparing their businesses and employees for potential emergency situations.
- Increased levels of engagement with local business leaders and their extended connections in the community to increase the emergency organisations profile and goals.
- Helps forge stronger relationships with the local community as emergency management organisations are seen to be proactive and part of the community they operate within.

These guidelines have been designed to be just that, guidelines. They have been written to be an aspirational set of targets and pointers on how to establish and what to consider when developing a business partnership program. For the purpose of these guidelines those engaged to coordinate spontaneous volunteers will be known as Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators, the assumption will be made that they are Employer Supported Volunteers, not volunteers engaged through other means.

## SCOPE OF THE GUIDE

This guide will help Emergency Management Organisations tap into employer supported volunteer programs being operated or able to be operated by corporate organisations in their local communities. There are suggestions around training, informational materials and key issues which help ensure the program is able to be effectively established. The purpose of this guide is to provide advice on establishing employer supported volunteer partnerships to engage Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators, advice on the type of organisations to approach and ways to gain business buy in for the program.

Employer supported volunteering generally sits within an organisations corporate social responsibility program. For those who have never been involved with employer supported volunteer programs or volunteer programs, reviews of the literature into corporate social responsibility, employer supported volunteering and volunteer programs are included as associated documents.

It is envisioned that these Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators will be able to connect with and register the volunteers who are keen to assist during an emergency, as well as establish, manage and steer volunteer teams in a safe and coordinated way.

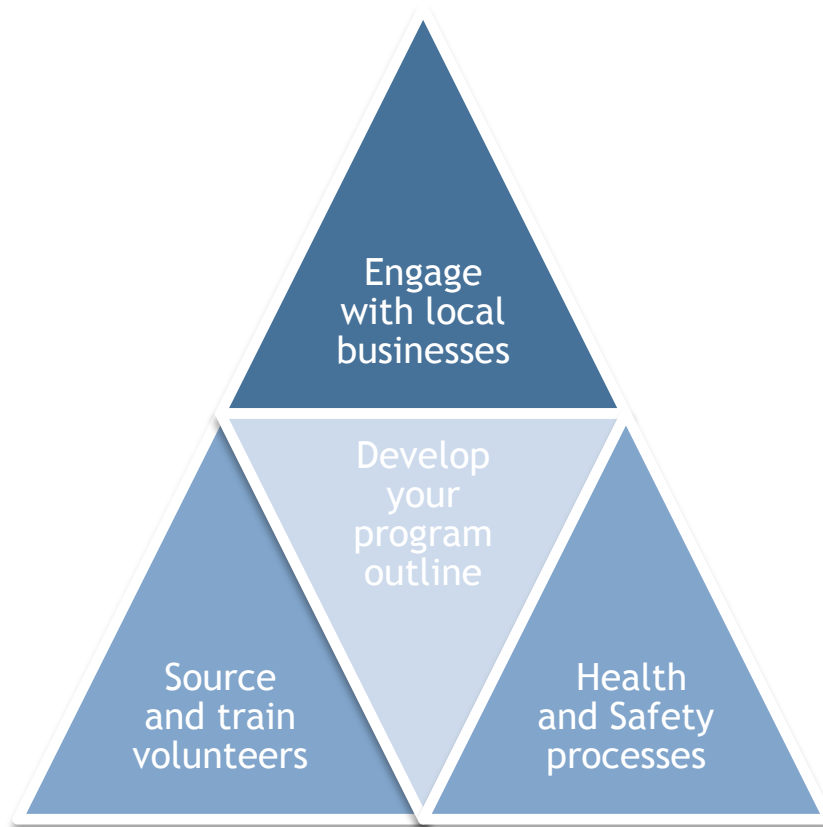


## GETTING STARTED

The Directors' Guideline for Volunteer Coordination in Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) provides guidance on the role of volunteer coordination, including the importance of preparing for spontaneous volunteers. Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators will be vital in ensuring we can work alongside volunteers from the community in roles directed by the coordinating agency rather than individuals working in isolation on non-directed tasks.

This guide is an outline for how your organisation can engage with local businesses to establish a program for the coordination of spontaneous volunteers during an emergency event. In order to establish a partnership arrangement with local business you will want to:

- Develop a program to ensure you have a strategy in place
- Engage with local businesses
- Source and train appropriate volunteers
- Ensure legal requirements, especially health and safety protocols are fulfilled



## WHAT IS AN EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEER PROGRAM?

Within an organisation there will be a number of individuals who spend their personal time in some form of volunteering. Often this is related to something of interest in their life such as a sports club, social service agency or an activity their children are involved in. Many organisations would not be able to function without the support of these volunteers and currently struggle to maintain skilled volunteer databases.

Today's busy lifestyles mean that people are often unable to give the time needed and as a result many volunteer dependent organisations are unable to operate effectively. On the other hand, many businesses are looking for ways to engage in corporate social responsibility programs as a way to increase their profile in the community. Employer supported volunteering is one way they can effectively do this and it is not only beneficial for their organisation, but their community as well. In an employer supported volunteer program, a business will allocate a number of hours during which they will pay their staff to take part in volunteer activities.

As well as raising the organisations profile in the community, employer supported volunteering has been shown to provide skill development for employees, increase employee motivation, develop business networks, attract higher calibre staff and improve staff retention. Employer supported volunteer programs take different shapes, some offer one-day staff volunteering time annually such as the BNZ "Closed for Good" program discussed earlier, others allow staff a certain number of days a year to volunteer where they want, others create partnerships with organisations and some do a combination of the different models. For this program we aim to partner with businesses to provide long term volunteers to be trained as Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators. We are asking for a set number of hours to be provided by the employer per year for training and a commitment during an emergency response.





## A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR MANAGEMENT

There are a number of reasons why emergency services management should consider undertaking a program which engages in business partnerships. The main thing to be considered is that the face of volunteering is changing, and if we don't change with it emergency management will be left behind. We cannot rely on the support of traditional long term volunteers as we have in the past. Not only is the volunteer pool decreasing, we also need to consider that we may not be able to attract volunteers with the skill sets required for the role.

People are becoming increasingly less likely to undertake voluntary activities than previous generations due to various factors including:

- An increasing need for two income families, meaning women are more likely to be in full time or near fulltime employment
- Young people are less interested in undertaking in traditional volunteer activities, especially long term assignments.
- Older people are remaining in paid employment longer

When considering different volunteer models, it is important to look at and discuss the key benefits of engaging in a business partnership program such as this:

- By investing time in sourcing and training volunteer coordinators prior to an event your organisation will have people in place for this time consuming and specialist role.
- By undertaking business partnership programs with local organisations you will create stronger links and relationships with leaders within your local community.
- It encourages paid staff within your organisation to look more deeply into engaging with specifically trained volunteers and think about other areas in which your organisation could employ such volunteers. It also starts a conversation around the role of volunteers within your organisation in general.
- Volunteers engaged through a business partnership program will take key messages from your organisation back to their workplace and their community. They will also be able to act as ambassadors for your organisation during key promotional and awareness campaigns.

## | CREATING A STRATEGY

We know that during an emergency event your organisation will be inundated with offers of volunteer support from the community. A major concern for those involved in emergency management is how to ensure these volunteers are kept safe during an event, how to make sure the community they are helping are kept safe and how to make the best use of their volunteer efforts. A robust strategy around an established business partnership program for employer supported volunteers will help ensure you are prepared when needed.

## PROGRAM DESIGN

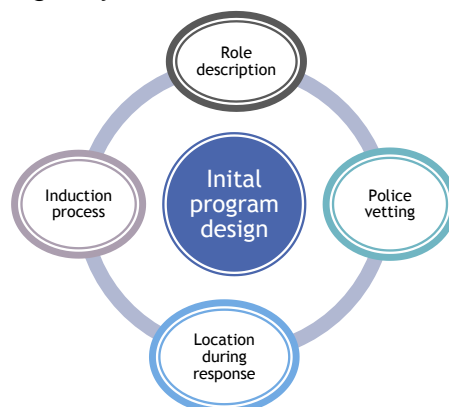
Your organisation will need to decide the details before engaging with businesses for spontaneous volunteer coordinators. This will help your organisation understand how many businesses and the number of volunteer coordinators you will need to engage with and where you will use them. You will need to decide on several factors before taking the next step.

**Role description:** Your organisation will need to develop a role description for the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators. You will need to include sections for reporting procedures, functional relationships, knowledge and skills, training requirements, role requirements during readiness, role requirements during response.

**Volunteer induction:** An induction process will need to be decided. You will need to develop registration forms/volunteer agreements for the volunteer coordinators, health and safety obligations should be included, role descriptions may need to be explained, your organisation may include a code of conduct and separate privacy agreement. You may want to consider including all this in with the first training for your volunteers to help with their orientation into the role. See the associated documents for a sample role description and health and safety agreement.

**Police vetting:** Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators will need to be police vetted before undertaking the role. In a response, they will be working with vulnerable people and therefore police vetting is a requirement. Even if they have been vetted for another organisation you will need to go through the process again. Under privacy laws in New Zealand agencies are unable to share this information with each other, so you will not be able to access the information from a previous vet. Secondly the police vetting is a snap shot off the current and past situation at the time it is carried out, and anything which may occur in between will not be added.

**Where they will be housed in an event:** The fear of the unknown is daunting when undertaking a new role. You can help ease some uncertainty by explaining to volunteers where they will be based during an event. Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators could be placed within a Civil Defence Centre (CDC) where they can set up a registration area for those interested in spontaneous volunteering. They may however be out with larger volunteer teams, or stepping in as team leaders depending on the size of the event. From wherever they are located they will usually be able to be in contact with their manager, the Volunteer Coordinator Supervisor who will be based at the Emergency Coordination Centre.



## DECIDING WHO TO PARTNER WITH

You will need to make decisions around which organisations to partner with and what commitment you will require from them. When deciding which organisations are most suitable for you, take a step back and also look at the program from their point of view. If it seems like a good fit for both sides, then the partnership is more likely to go ahead and the time you spend in talking with the local business will be a good investment.

**Organisational size:** Size really does matter when considering which businesses to approach. Larger business in the community will be better equipped to withstand the loss of employee hours during an emergency event than smaller organisations. They are more likely to be able support the release of staff and cover employee workloads for training and other events volunteers may attend such as exercises. It is also more likely that larger organisations will have employer supported volunteering programs in place and understand the associated benefits to their business of being involved in activities which support their local communities.

**Organisational values:** It may be that some organisations in your area have values similar to your own, or could benefit more from the association with your organisation than others. For example, larger manufacturing plants may have processes in place for emergency situations within their plants which align with emergency management principals. It may also be that these organisations can see the benefits of having a good working relationship with you as they require support for creating good practices within their own day to day operation.

**Specific skill sets:** An organisation may have staff with particular skill sets which compliment your organisational needs. You can discuss with your key contact within the organisation the traits which you decided would be important for the role, or characteristics which compliment or are missing from your team currently. This may be particular personality traits such as leadership or skills gained through their work experience like line management.

**Commitment level:** Employers will have the expectation that you will be able to tell them up front the commitment level you require. You will need to be able to clearly articulate your expectations and have definite timeframes set before undertaking any engagement.

**Location:** It may suit your organisation to have all your volunteer coordinators located centrally, but for many it will be useful to think about where these coordinators will be based. If you identify a risk area which is likely to be isolated during an event, you may want to consider engaging with a business which has a base in that area. That way you are more likely to have a trained volunteer coordinator ready to hit the ground running.

## HOW TO GAIN BUSINESS BUY-IN TO THE PROGRAM

The best way to engage a business in the program depends on the business you are approaching. Be prepared to adapt your processes to suit them, it's important not to use a one size fits all approach. What will work for one, won't for another, and some won't be interested in partnering with you at all.

**Most effective medium:** Often the people you are approaching are busy. While the best contact is face to face, it is unlikely that this will be the medium for your initial meeting. You will have to consider the most efficient way to make first contact. It may be that sending an email to arrange a face to face to meeting works. An email enables you to provide information about the project, and gives the person you are contacting the opportunity to absorb the information in their own time. You may need to talk to an assistant who manages the decision maker's calendar.

**Find the decision maker:** Make sure the person you are talking with is either able to make the decision or is the right person to take the information to the decision maker(s). It may be that your contact needs to run the concept past their governance board or their manager at another location. PowerPoints or documents tailored to their business that they can forward on may help explain your cause. See the associated documents for a generic PowerPoint example.

**Have promotional material available:** Develop promotional material to take with you to explain the program and what the commitment will be. It's useful to include information for both the employer and the employee. It may be a brochure, orientation booklet or fact sheet. See the associated documents for an example of a generic fact sheet.

**Ensure your program includes tangible benefits:** Include things in your training program which are appealing to organisations. It may be as simple as additional training in working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, as this will increase capability within their own organisations. It may be offering additional skills such as first aid training. It may be the opportunity to network with other businesses who operate in the local community or offering leadership training opportunities.

**Frame the opportunity well:** Consider how you describe the opportunity. It may be that there is way of explaining the program which aligns with their organisation. If they offer younger leaders training pathways, your organisation could use your ESV program to offer another stream to their leadership program.

**Offer publicity opportunities:** You will have to ensure you have processes in place for acknowledging the support from business in your partnership program. Think about how you may be able to do this, it may be you mention them in your newsletter, post on social media or have a section on your website dedicated to the employers who support your organisation.

## VOLUNTEER HEALTH AND SAFETY

Under the new health and safety legislation it is essential to seriously consider the health and safety of the volunteer coordinators, and how they in turn are trained to apply the legislation when working with spontaneous volunteers.

Any work undertaken by volunteers is covered under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (the Act). Volunteers are included under the same umbrella as paid employees and contractors and are covered by the organisations health and safety planning. The coordinating emergency agency will form the “person conducting a business or undertaking” (PCBU) for all the workers under their direction, and become responsible for their health and safety. A volunteer worker is defined as someone who carries out any work in any capacity for the PCBU, so long as it is with the knowledge and consent of the PCBU, on a regular or on-going basis and an integral part of the business or undertaking.

The risk rating table below is used so each activity undertaken by the organisation can be evaluated as to how high the risk is. It is colour coded so it can be easily understood and followed quickly. Risks valued extreme or high need serious consideration and would more than likely not be undertaken by spontaneous volunteers or Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators. Moderate and low risk activities need to be evaluated on a case by case example.

<b>Risk Rating Table</b>				
<b>Likelihood of injury or harm to health</b>	<b>Consequence of injury or harm to health</b>			
	<b>Insignificant</b>	<b>Moderate first aid and/or medical treatment</b>	<b>Major extensive injuries</b>	<b>Catastrophic Fatalities</b>
<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
<b>Likely</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Extreme</b>
<b>Highly unlikely</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>

You will be responsible for protecting volunteers in several ways including:

- Eliminating and minimizing risk
- Providing advice, information and training about health and safety
- Having accessible systems in place for feedback on health and safety processes
- Creating frameworks for continuous improvement to achieve higher standards of Health and Safety

Your primary duty of care is to provide and maintain:

- A work environment without risks
- Safe structures
- Safe work systems
- Adequate facilities for the welfare at work of volunteers
- Information, training, instructions and supervision
- Worker health and work condition monitoring

Under the legislation a workplace is defined as any place work is carried out for a business or an undertaking and includes any place a worker goes or is likely to go while at work. This includes but is not limited to vehicles, farm buildings and vessels on water. So the conditions of the Act will apply to volunteers and spontaneous volunteer coordinators regardless of their location.

The Act provides for the use of reasonable care. This means that workers are provided the highest level of protection that is reasonably practical and it is important to note that there is a level of personal responsibility from individuals for reasonable care in that:

- An individual is able to consider their own health and safety – by exercising common sense
- That their own acts or omissions don't adversely affect the health and safety of others by ignoring or not reporting a hazard or potential hazard)
- Complying with reasonable instruction given by the PCBU

All Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators need to be trained in health and safety protocols for your organisation and to be able to have input into these processes. They also need to understand and be able to explain the induction processes for spontaneous volunteers, the use of hazard registers, accident and near miss reporting processes and the need for briefings and debriefings. See the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator health and safety agreement and risk assessment template in associated documents.

## TRAINING

Often volunteer programs will be inundated with well-meaning people who lack in the essential skills required. By engaging with local businesses in employer supported volunteering partnerships you will be able to define the specific qualities preferable for the role being undertaken.

These volunteers however will still require specific training to be able to undertake their role effectively and within your organisational guidelines. Training helps new volunteers to get to know the people and environment they will be operating within and helps maintain higher levels of long term volunteer engagement. For volunteer organisations, as well as teaching volunteers the specific skills they need to undertake the role, training can also act as a mechanism for identifying those suitable for alternative volunteer roles either within or outside your organisation.

When designing a Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator training package key outcomes need to be identified, these could include (but are not limited to):

- Your organisational background, CDEM systems and structure
- Role information
- Working with diversity
- Volunteer motivations
- Personal preparedness

Initial training can be undertaken in-house, but further more in-depth training should include experts from the local community. This may be experienced volunteer coordinators or industry experts from specific organisations or agencies, such as immigration support agencies, disability services, privacy specialists or management coaches.

It's important to remember that while ethically we should want and strive to include people who come from diverse backgrounds it is also legislated for through various Acts in New Zealand including the Human Rights Act 1993 and the Civil Defence and Emergency Management Act 2002, it is therefore important to include specific training for the spontaneous volunteer coordinators on working with CALD Communities and people with disabilities. It's also important to remember these trainees can also be teachers and have many transferrable skills which your organisation may be able to learn from.





## SPECIFIC TRAINING FOR LEGISLATION

### CALD COMMUNITIES

Part of the training for Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators will need to include cultural awareness training on working with CALD Communities. Members of the Volunteer Coordination team may work within or alongside CALD communities and members of these communities may present as spontaneous volunteers. It may also be necessary to tap into these communities for information and advice on how to best support the community and meet the community's needs when they assemble volunteer teams during a response.

Cultural induction training will increase a person's effectiveness and confidence in the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator role.

### UNDERSTANDING AROUND WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Training for Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators needs to consider not only how they may be able to work alongside people with disabilities during a response but also how emergency management organisations can create opportunities for people with disabilities to volunteer. Specific training on working with spontaneous volunteers with mental health issues also needs to be considered, it is important to understand and recognise that for some individuals the decision to volunteer may come from a need for social connectedness and a referral to supporting agencies may be another option.

See training guides included in the associated documents for basic first stage training suggestions. It is expected that more in depth training will be offered to Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators as training needs and pathways are developed by an organisation.

## KEEPING EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED

While employer supported volunteers may not require the same level of engagement and encouragement as traditional volunteers they still need to be acknowledged and feel part of your organisation. You can offer these volunteers various opportunities such as:

- On going training your organisation is offering
- Opportunities to take part in discussions about role development and position specifications
- Invitations to take part in or observe exercises
- Inclusion in newsletters or information your organisation extends to your wider networks
- Yearly or biannual social occasions



## ONGOING PROGRAM MAINTENANCE

Once established the program needs to be maintained. Ways to keep volunteers engaged have been mentioned above but there are some other details which need to be thought about:

**Employer relationships:** While you will have a definite relationship with the nominated volunteer, you also need to maintain the relationship with their employer. This includes checking with them if their employee is ok for additional time off, catching up about how they feel the partnership is going, inviting them to special events and including them in your communications plan for things like newsletters.

**Volunteer movement:** There will be some volunteer drop off as the program progresses. If the volunteer decides that the program isn't for them, then you can renegotiate another nominee from the same employer, or look towards other businesses. The volunteer may change employers. If the volunteer is keen to stay part of the program, they may wish to negotiate with you and their new employer about them becoming partners with you as well.

**Staff time:** You will need to ensure you have a staff member who will be responsible for the program. In the initial stages the time allocated will need to be significantly higher than in the maintenance stage, when it should only be periodic emails to touch base, twice yearly training and any exercises or social occasions. The Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators however should be introduced to all staff and made to feel part of the team.

## SUMMARY

While it may seem like a large job, setting up an employer supported Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator program for spontaneous volunteers is a worthwhile exercise. As well as creating stronger links into the community by working with local businesses, you will have trained Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinators ready for an emergency response. This will ensure that spontaneous volunteers and those they are helping are kept safe and that nobody is being put at unnecessary risk. It will also significantly decrease the strain on paid staff during an emergency event and ensure spontaneous volunteers are utilised in ways which will benefit the community the most.