Corporate Volunteers: Will they really pay you for their time?

The Corporate Volunteer Program at the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy

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Agenda

- Greenway History
- Volunteer Program Overview
- Corporate Volunteer Program
- Are Corporate Volunteers a good fit?
- Requesting Donations
Rose Kennedy Greenway Overview
The (other) Green Monster
Key facts about The Greenway

• 17+ acres across 1.5 miles from Chinatown to North End

• Complex infrastructure: underground equipment rooms, computerized lighting systems

• Organically maintained landscape

• 450 free events annually, free Wi-Fi, Mobile Eats food vending

• Temporary exhibitions of contemporary public art
Greenway record 2018 trackable attendance of ~1.4M! (Plus millions more casually enjoy the park!)

- Beer garden patrons
- Wi-Fi log-ons
- Food vendor patrons
Volunteers
Volunteer Program Mission

Engage with the community through first-rate volunteer experiences that provide beneficial contribution to the care of The Greenway

Volunteer Philosophy

• Critical support for high-end horticulture, hardscapes and special projects

• Opportunity to engage corporate groups, neighbors and individuals in our work, bringing a more diverse audience to the The Greenway

• Educating the public about the Conservancy and The Greenway to foster support for our mission and program

• Emphasis on high-quality experience attracts and retains good people and groups
Volunteers learn while they help with park stewardship

“I loved being outside and getting to know more information about the Greenway. I felt the leaders were all great. I would love to volunteer again soon!”

“I think it’s great to be working side-by-side with the staff who are so nice and very informative about the plantings and just easy to talk to.”
Volunteer Program Focus Areas

- Individual engagement
- Park Ambassadors
- Corporate program
- Department-based volunteer positions
Volunteers at Work

Autodesk

Credo

Goodwin Procter
“Gives me a better appreciation for the work that goes into maintaining the Greenway. I actually walk the Greenway a lot while in Boston, so it makes it that much more special knowing I had a hand in cleaning it up!”

Group Volunteer

“It was very nice to get outside of my own head and help out in a way that was noticeable. Just two hours made a big difference. Very gratifying and it's such a worthwhile effort as the Greenway truly is a special part of Boston.”

First time Volunteer
Corporate Volunteer Program

Overview
Corporate Program

• Calendar released in February to distribution list and online
  – 3 projects per month: can accommodate two groups of 15 per day or one group of 30 per day
  – Calendar fills over 50% by mid-March
  – Projects are typically on Wednesdays from 9a-Noon
• Corporate Engagement Fee covers time and supplies
  – $1,000 for groups of 10-15
  – $1,750 for groups of 15-30
• In 2018, we engaged with 609 group volunteers from 43 groups who contributed 1,761 hours
Are Corporate Volunteers a good fit?

• Things to consider:
  – Size limits for volunteer opportunities
  – Required training
  – Staff-to-Volunteer ratio
  – Background Checks
  – Timing
  – Demand of program
Recruitment

- Planning Ahead
  - Calendar of available projects
  - Advertising
  - Distribution List

- Booking Projects
  - Tracking requests
  - Waitlist
  - Collecting data
  - Invoicing
Managing Expectations

• For Groups
  – Preparing groups to volunteer
  – Regular follow-up
  – Clear communication
  – Evaluating returning groups

• For Staff
  – Emphasis on value of corporate volunteers
  – Upper management buy-in
  – Regular follow-up
  – Mid-season check-in
Corporate Volunteer Program

Requesting Donations
Local Benchmarking

- Based on benchmarking research we’ve found that:
  - Most similar groups charge a minimum of $1,000 for a day of service for groups of 25 and less.
  - Most similar groups charge $1,500+ for groups over 25
  - Corporate sponsorships start at $2,500
  - Some groups charge based on number of supplies used or number of volunteers
Evaluating

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<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<td>Offset costs of running a volunteer program</td>
<td>Potential to alienate groups</td>
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<td>Deepen financial partnership with area corporations</td>
<td>Asking for multiple donations</td>
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<td>Assign a real value to the experience</td>
<td>Lower booking rate</td>
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Create a clear message

Pilot rollout with recommended donations

Provide exemption for partners
Messaging and Price Point

• **Beginning this year**, we are asking our Corporate Volunteer groups to assist us in continuing this great program by considering a donation.

• We have seen **tremendous interest** in volunteering on the Greenway over the past few years, and are proud to provide **high-quality volunteer experiences** led by skilled horticultural staff trained in organic practices.

• On the strength of volunteers’ reviews, we have been a Top Rated organization by GreatNonProfits.org for two years running.

• Donations are fully tax-deductible and **help to support the Greenway parks**. For corporations who would like to provide up to 15 volunteers and share a volunteer day on the Greenway with another organization, the suggested donation is **$500**. For those corporations who would like to have a dedicated volunteer experience for up to 30 volunteers, the suggested donation is **$1,500**. Fellow non-profit organizations are invited to join us at no cost.
Results

Corporate Donations at The Greenway

- 2015: $10,000
- 2016: $20,000
- 2017: $30,000
- 2018: $40,000
Lessons Learned: Working with Corporate Groups

• Have a discussion about expectations and experience
• Recognize their different motivations
• High staff to volunteer ratio helps with quality control
• Make sure they can see a difference in the work they have done (or that we sell the difference)
• Use the opportunity to educate them about our organization and The Greenway
• Feedback is key: utilize surveys and monitor them
Lessons Learned: Charging Corporate Groups

- Consider your demand vs. need
- Benchmark your area for trends and price points
- Understand the value of what you are offering (and make sure everyone on your team understands)
- Work closely with your Development Department
- Start slowly and ask for feedback along the way
- Be clear and offer exceptional service and communication
- Make sure partners understand what they are getting
- Be flexible and creative—offer alternatives if groups can’t pay
Questions?

Thank you!

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