Measuring Impact

One of the great challenges for corporate volunteering remains: how to effectively document and articulate its impact and value to the communities, organizations and individuals served, as well as to the company and those who volunteer.
Major Takeaways

▶ The search continues for the “holy grail” of corporate volunteering: easy to use, not very expensive, yet credible, tools to measure the impact of volunteering on those who volunteer, those they serve, on the company they come from and on the community into which they go.

▶ Qualitative assessment through documentation, case studies and storytelling are slowly growing in popularity based on recognition that not everything worth knowing and learning can be quantified and measured.

▶ It is quite common for companies to rely on the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) which they are serving to assess and report the impact of their volunteers’ work. Some companies are now helping their NGO partners develop the capacity to do that.

▶ Most companies are well aware of the benefits of volunteering for their employees and the accompanying value to the company itself; often they use employee surveys to quantify those.

▶ Thus far, there has not been a high priority placed on sustained, collaborative development, testing and refinement of shared tools with compatible approaches, measures and data to serve the entire field.
The Challenge

We’re really good at measuring the hours people volunteer and the funds they raise and the participation rate of our employees and the number of charities that we support; we do a really good job of measuring that. We have really good results, and we celebrate them.

I don’t think we’ve figured out a consistent way to go deeper than that and connect some of those outputs to outcomes or impacts. So, I think that’s where it drops off. I think we have isolated examples where we’ve done a really good job of looking at outcomes. Like some of our skills-based work. We’ve done a good job there. But we haven’t aggregated that up to the whole so that we can talk about the holistic impact of everything that we do.

Spoken by a single company, but representative of many, these words resonate across the vast majority of companies interviewed for this research.

If there is a “holy grail” of corporate volunteering, it is the search for tools to determine the impact of volunteering on those who volunteer, those individuals and organizations they serve, on the company from which they come and on the communities into which they go. And, of course, those tools should be easy to use, credible and not very expensive.

Experience over the decades since corporate volunteering was recognized as a definable field of activity has demonstrated that those specifications are virtually impossible to meet. Thus, it is not surprising that in the current research, that “holy grail” has not been found. However, the research has shown that there are significant efforts underway – by companies, NGOs and the bevy of consultants that serve the field – to pursue the goal of maximizing impact and to find ways to document it.

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the examples and experiences found. The framework: First, look at how companies are thinking about impact assessment and the challenges they face; second, evaluate approaches being used to measure impact on communities and NGOs served; third, consider the impacts on those who volunteer; and, finally, assess efforts to conceptualize and develop new generation tools to make meaningful impact measurement more feasible.
With the community outside, you can measure your success by the impact on the people. You see it in the people, in the change to which you contributed.

If you are working with an NGO, if the NGO succeeded in the initiative, it means that you succeeded too because you were a contributor to it.

When you are doing business, you always have return to the investment that you can measure in numbers. When you are doing corporate social responsibility (CSR), you have something called social return on investment that you see only in how things change. There is no one tool that you can implement on all the activities because it depends on what you are doing.

The **Fattal Group**, headquartered in Lebanon, articulates the fundamental realities and the challenges inherent in dealing with the impact of volunteering:

From a company with one of the largest and most comprehensive volunteer programs in the world: “Impact assessment to understand the difference being made at the community level is our most pressing challenge.”

To a great extent, this challenge stems from the complexity of defining impact, dealing with both conceptual and practical issues that surround its measurement and the investment that may be required to truly document and “prove” impact.
One company described how their volunteers leveraged their hours volunteered at an orphanage into a company financial contribution to help build a new library there. That is a positive, commendable result of collaborative action by employee volunteers and the company. But does it really get to what the higher value impact hopefully will be – for example, children having access to more or better reading material, a safe place to study, etc.? It also leaves unanswered the even larger questions of whether the students actually are learning more and doing better in school as a result of the new library.

Nevertheless, it is a good illustration of the importance of being clear about desired goals. It would be a perfectly acceptable goal to create a better library for the students. In this case, that goal was accomplished. But then the question would remain: What is the value, the impact, of achieving that goal?

This is the dilemma that ultimately confronts companies and the organizations they serve. What is the difference between an obvious benefit and the impact of that benefit? How deep must a company go to demonstrate the value of their volunteering?

Companies also recognize the limitations inherent in their programs. As one company put it, “Realistically measuring human impact is not a universal standard. We can’t say we’ve gone into a town and the whole town is different now. But we can say we’ve gone into a school, changed everything so they now have Wi Fi and technology for the kids to have a chance to get hands-on design. Still, it is really hard to know what you have achieved.”

There also is an argument to be made for accepting what might be called “implicit impact” based on recognition that what was done is better than what existed before. Fosun in China, for example, reported that “by the end of 2019, (its) rural doctor project has covered 60 national poverty-stricken counties and 87 stationed team members have been sent to carry out first-line assistance. They have visited 1,289 township health centers and 6,769 village health stations and established assistance files for 10,925 rural doctors.” It would be fatuous to argue that there had been no value, no benefit, no impact from this work or that the work done had been harmful.

For some companies, it may be a matter of where they are in the evolution of their program. As one put it, “We talked about it, but how would we do it? We just don’t really have a good way to measure that right now. Our focus is really on getting the volunteering to happen and making volunteering a standard part of what we do. And I think measurement will be the next step on our journey.”

Practical considerations of cost also have been cited as obstacles. One company foundation, responsible for both philanthropy and volunteering, responded this way about impact measurement for both activities:
We made the decision very early on that we would do high level impact measurements...so, we don’t go into that much detail, and we probably wouldn’t spend thousands and thousands of pounds on those types of things. That type of (in-depth) impact measurement, is a waste of money. If you’re spending 3 million pounds on something, and it costs you another million pounds to do the research, clearly that’s just an absolute waste, so we don’t do that kind of granular impact reporting.

EDP, in its March 2021 presentation to IAVE’s Global Corporate Volunteer Council about its impact measurement practices, cited what it sees as four global challenges that the field will need to confront:

► Diversity of methodologies across companies.
► Insufficient benchmarking on impact assessment specific to corporate volunteering.
► Different approaches to corporate volunteering across companies and around the world.
► Companies sharing examples of practices typically happens neither easily nor often.

But, despite these conceptual and practical issues, there are companies that are doing a credible job measuring the impact of their volunteering on the communities they serve and on their employees. Collaborative efforts are underway, facilitated by third-party consultants and NGOs, to develop tools to document those impacts and to make the results available to the field. These companies are, in effect, serving as advocates for the growth of corporate volunteering.

The most significant collaborative effort to develop shared tools for the field was led by Impact 2030, the NGO created by companies themselves as an advocate and resource for human capital investment as a contribution to realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Initial development efforts revealed both the difficulty of the task and the challenge of developing it in a collaborative environment. Companies then partnered with the True Impact consultancy to develop and do initial testing on a model built on a “contribution claim” approach. This would enable companies “to claim a portion of a program’s social impact equal to how much of the program they supported.” The work was led by Farron Levy from True Impact who has been a leader in supporting both companies and NGOs in impact measurement. Sadly, before the tool could be fully tested, refined and launched, Impact 2030 made the difficult decision to close its doors. The “final draft” tool remains available for potential use.
EDP provides an excellent example of a company with a comprehensive conceptual and practical approach to impact measurement which was comprehensively presented in their report on 10 years of volunteering at the company (2011-2021). Expressing the company’s conceptual understanding of the importance of volunteering, EDP builds to a theory of change that leads from Purpose to Development to Impact on volunteers, local communities and the company itself. The company describes its approach to impact measuring as “pragmatic and...based on a process of continuous improvement.”

**THEORY OF CHANGE**

**PURPOSE**

- Actively contribute to the development and positive transformation of the communities in which we are present through a volunteering programme that leverages people’s skills and talent and creates value for stakeholders and the company

**DEVELOPMENT**

**RESOURCES**

- Management team
- People's skills and the business’ skills
- Employee’s time (voluntary management and action)
- Material resources
- Financial investment
- Management platform

**ACTIVITIES**

- In-house communication and mobilisation
- Social and pro bono volunteering
- Themed campaigns
- Active that empower individuals and/or social organisations
- Project investment and support

**RESULTS**

- Employees volunteers involved (employees, family members, friends, former employees, clients and partners) – during work and outside work hours
- Participation of volunteers in activities
- Volunteering hours and hours devoted to volunteering
- Countries involved
- Recorded on the platform
- Employees’ organisations
- Financial investment, income and time (EDP partners/employees)
- Volunteer Promoter Score

**EDP**

- Management and funding relationships with stakeholders
- Reputation linked to social investment themes
- Employee appeal and motivation
- Enhancement of company’s culture and work climate

**VOLUNTEERS**

- Motivation
- Skills development
- Identification with the company and its purpose
- Healthy individuals and gender active involvement
- Greater awareness of surrounding circumstances

**LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

- Organisations empowered
- Children and young people empowered
- Improved facilities and energy efficiency/sustainability
- Development of local communities
- Involvement in biodiversity initiatives
- Awareness raising initiatives
Learning About Impact on Communities Served

“Impact assessment to understand the difference being made at the community level is our most pressing challenge.” This perspective from a major global company was echoed, with varying levels of intensity, through many of the interviews conducted for this research. But there also were significant examples of company efforts to accomplish that goal in a wide variety of ways.

In Latin America, InterCement, AB InBev, and Cargill are playing leading roles in their approaches to planning for impact and developing appropriate planning and impact measurement tools and processes for themselves and their community partners. AB InBev reflects what seems to be the companies’ shared view: “Measurement is always an important topic; we have to evolve and continue our learning. It is the subject that needs us most.”

InterCement has a well-developed infrastructure that empowers not only employees but also the community itself in planning and executing its volunteer programs, with a focus on achieving the desired impact through its actions. The infrastructure has three components: the Community Interaction and Volunteer Incentive Committee (CIVICO), local employee committees; Community Development Committees that include a range of actors from the community; and its Ideal Voluntary Action Group (GAIV for its initials in Brazil).

This approach enables community participation in the planning and execution of activities. It responds to the challenge they gave themselves: to make the community the protagonist of their actions, of strengthening citizen participation in each locality. It also leads to stories that reflect the impact of the work that is done. For example:

We transformed a square together with the community and it became an example of safety, of a beautiful space, and it began to positively affect other parts of the city. The members of the community took ownership of the idea, they were inspired and added services to the original idea and recovered other public spaces – even without our support, they continued to improve their environment. They ask us for materials, but they don’t ask us for volunteers because the community takes on the project with a local group.

This form of qualitative assessment through documentation and storytelling appears to be slowly growing in popularity based on a recognition that not everything worth knowing and learning from can be quantified and measured.
AB InBev describes itself as committed to developing resources for the institutional strengthening of NGOs. The company now provides a digital platform to help NGOs improve their management of both corporate and general volunteers. This has been a first step that enables organizations to keep the metrics of volunteer involvement. From this solid base, organizations can move on to collect and manage data on perceptions of and satisfaction with the volunteer program. The ultimate goal: to collect data that will help improve retention of volunteers by responding to their views and also letting them know how their actions are generating impact. The latter, AB InBev recognizes, is often difficult for NGOs to measure. So, a longer-term goal is to help the NGOs adopt measurements of social as well as numerical impact. “But that takes much longer.”

For Cargill, field research has been critical to knowing community needs directly from the community. "Projects thought from office boxes can be disconnected with the needs and realities of the community. You have to go out into the field and understand from experience and from strategic planning to decide how to support communities to really cover basic and elementary needs. You need to build projects based on field research. You have to focus on the long term in order to create a basis for sustainability.”

Work along these same lines can be found throughout the world.

MTN Ghana puts a priority on trying to determine if their social initiatives, including their volunteering, have “transformed the community.” Most of their work is in rural areas where the contrasting realities with those of urban areas is most sharply defined.

The company primarily uses a qualitative approach, engaging with the community served, both by its own staff and external consultants and through the media. With the latter, “the beneficiaries themselves are interviewed to talk about what we have done, the impact it has for the community and how it’s actually going to empower or transform that community.” The company then is able to describe the perceived value of the work in very human terms.

Safaricom also recognizes the value of stories. “We have a monitoring and evaluation section that helps to amplify stories, find out what is working, and what is not.”
Medtronic, North America

NCBA Group in Kenya uses clear targets, operational tracks and ongoing performance monitoring to gauge the impact of employee volunteering and broader CSR activities. “Through continuous reporting, and being on the lookout, setting out goals that we achieve, we’re able to conclude (a program) as successful.” The company places a high priority on setting targets to be achieved and then assesses the work against those. For example, for its target of planting 5,000 trees in a year, the key questions become: “Were they planted? Are they surviving?”

The importance of detailed planning is echoed by CJ CheilJedang in Korea. When planning an educational program, the company develops a performance measurement tool with the school faculty. The results are measured by conducting annual research with participants. In the example cited, research confirmed that children participating in the company’s Donors Camp Cultural Club “find their dreams and prepare for a positive future.” Characteristic of this program is continuous development of performance management and evaluation tools. The company has analyzed performance of volunteers since 2013. Evaluation tools are being developed with a research team from the Seoul National University.

Cognizant in India takes a very organized and deliberate approach to collecting data on volunteering and to assessing its impact. An external audit helped the company create a dashboard with an “impact index” that measures volunteering activities every month. The company explains: “The index records and reports success rates and outcomes of all projects and initiatives under Outreach. The index also helps measure and quantify the level of volunteerism, volunteering hours, lives impacted and more.”

That effort has morphed over time into an index that allows schools to compete to be on top. That creates “a competitive spirit among volunteers to do varied activities.” As an incentive, schools get cash prizes every month, which they can use to buy a laptop or other technological equipment that benefits the school and ultimately the children.

The company also does pre-assessment, midline assessment and post assessment of programs.

“For education initiatives, volunteers use this method to understand and gauge the impact of intervention. Based on the learning level of a child as understood through a pre-assessment, focused coaching is provided. The improvement in competency is understood through a post-assessment. A similar approach is used for our pro bono initiatives. When we organized capacity-building workshops for NGOs, we
designed a detailed needs assessment survey. Our team members conducted one-on-one interviews with the NGO heads and staff members. The results were then analyzed and the top five needs of the NGOs identified. Based on that, we offered the training workshops. The volunteers executed the workshops. We also designed the post execution survey and sent it to all the participants. The feedback was then used to determine the topics of subsequent sessions.”

Cognizant believes that “volunteering which is consistent with the same beneficiary for a longer period of time is more impactful than the one-time engagement. Hence, frequency is a measure that we consistently track to measure the success of a program.”

**PIMCO** is supported by the True Impact consultancy in measuring the scope and impact of its volunteering and its entire philanthropic portfolio including priority hunger and gender equality portfolios. For volunteering, this includes a Volunteer Impact Scorecard, which provides the data to measure performance against peer companies and progress against key performance indicators which were set with True Impact’s support. Members of PIMCO’s staff underscore the value of having external expertise guide them through the process of developing the conceptual framework and practical tools that allow them to report with increasing accuracy on their work. They echo about True Impact what other companies have said about their consultants: “[It] now is like an extension of our team…a great thought partner...”

**Dell Technologies** offers employees who volunteer a special benefit that increases their contribution to the community. After volunteering ten hours in a calendar quarter, employees receive a virtual volunteer reward card worth a $150 donation to a vetted nonprofit of the employee’s choice. In India, Dell employees many times come together to decide where to jointly donate their rewards. Their report back to the company provides specific examples of how their volunteering and their reward dollars have increased impact on the organizations they are serving.
**Discovery**

*Discovery*, in partnership with the City of Johannesburg (COJ), has partnered with the Orange Farm community to support a shared vision of promoting thriving communities.

Orange Farm is the biggest and most populous informal settlement in South Africa. Located almost 50 kilometers from the central business district, it is one of Johannesburg’s most geographically isolated and most deprived communities, home to more than 380,000 families. Orange Farm faces many socio-economic challenges: the area is marked by high levels of poverty and unemployment, low levels of literacy and poor access to basic services and health care facilities. The high levels of unemployment, drug-use and crime contribute to the social complexities of the community.

This flagship project is being implemented through strategic and creative partnerships among Discovery, the COJ and other key stakeholders from the public and private sector and civil society. “Ensuring a deep understanding of the needs of the community, was a critical step in shaping the nature and focus of volunteers’ time and in determining project focus areas. The emphasis has been on sharing Discovery’s employees’ time and expertise, rather than cash or donations.”

The program has three focus areas: youth, health and enterprise and supplier development. Each has its own objectives. Virtually all are amenable to the engagement of volunteers as a strategic and operational resource to support their accomplishment. For example, the youth-focused objectives are:

- To provide accredited training (including efforts by various partners) and place 500 youth at the Technical Skills Centre (TSC).
- To reduce the number of behavioral incidents at identified primary and secondary schools by 10%.
- To provide basic training and work readiness workshops for out of school youth (18- to 35-years-old), to improve their employability.

At the outset of the project in 2018, Discovery and COJ developed their Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) Plan. At its heart was its “logical framework” that for each objective outlined activities to be done, anticipated outcomes, indicators for each outcome, techniques for verification of whether outcomes were met, who was responsible for the evaluation and how frequently it would be carried out.

Outcome indicators were both quantitative and qualitative. Verification techniques include surveys, case studies, reports from mentors and mentees, school records and pre- and post-tests.
Understanding the Impact on Employees Who Volunteer

There once was a time when volunteering was thought of as a selfless act, done to help others without expectation of benefit to the person volunteering. Now, it is generally accepted that the act of volunteering has significant benefits to the volunteers as well as to the individual or institutional recipients of the service. There is a strong body of literature, developed over decades, that volunteering provides a way for people to build self-esteem, to learn new knowledge and skills, to develop new social relationships and to improve their physical and mental health.

Most companies are well aware of these benefits and the accompanying value to the company itself.

Yet, the challenge remains to continue to build the internal case for greater priority on and investment in volunteering. As Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) put it, “...figuring out ways to

NGO Partners

It is quite common for companies to rely on the NGOs which they are serving to assess and report the impact of their volunteers’ work. For example:

Linklaters tends to use the metrics that the organizations they are working with already use rather than expect them to run a new set of data for the company. Airbus asks their NGO partners to measure the impact on beneficiaries of their programs.

FirstRand Ltd. is able to quantify its volunteers’ output – for example how many children get meals in one year given that employees packed a million meals for distribution. Still, the company relies on the organizations they are serving to tell them what the impact of their efforts has been.

Randstad relies on the monitoring and evaluation tools of VSO, the implementing partner for their cross-border skills-based volunteering.

Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) is working with an external consulting firm to assess community level impact and to design key performance indicators and theories of change. The consulting firm is going to all of SCB’s partner organizations as part of this process.
make connections with employee retention, leadership development... are we building empathic leaders by having them go through these programs, are we building a more creative management style because people are doing pro bono work?”

This research offered clear evidence that companies are developing a variety of approaches to document these impacts.

**Banco General** in Panama perhaps captures the most significant overall impact, the one that gives greatest hope for the future. Some four thousand of its employee families participate in the Special Olympics. Their assessment: “[They] go to places they have never been before, understand social problems and become more aware of the fact that they have to fight for this change and then they have an impact beyond that.” They experience, they learn, they see what they must do to bring change. This reflects the potential for volunteering to be transformational for the volunteers, like a stone tossed into still waters creates ripples that reach out in ever widening circles.

**Woodside**, the largest Australian natural gas producer, uses surveys and employee-produced case studies to understand the value of volunteering to its employees. “Feedback is something really important to us and part of our partnership. It is done manually by employees at the end of an engagement to reflect their feelings. That is how we make sure that the volunteering quality is maintained.”

Employee surveys look at the impact of volunteering on dimensions of teamwork, communications and problem solving. “Problem solving, time management, active listening, adaptability and an enhanced work ethic are all outcomes we would expect from skills-based volunteering.”
The Role of Quantitative Data

Virtually all of the companies interviewed in this research utilize quantitative data to understand the operations of their volunteer programs. But they vary widely in the scope and depth of the data they collect and how they use that data.

**Bank of America** uses the quantitative data it collects in a wide variety of ways including in finding correlations between those who volunteer and employee satisfaction. The bank looks at things like overall satisfaction with the company’s response in the community and with its volunteering specifically. It is able to review year-over-year data about the scope of their volunteering by geography, lines of business, employee resource groups and other measures. The data are particularly helpful in understanding factors such as how well volunteer efforts represent employee diversity, how many friends and family of employees and retirees volunteered, how many were related to an employee network (Asian, leadership, professional, people with disabilities, Black, Hispanic, Latino, women, LGBTQ+, military support, Native Americans, parents and caregivers).

At **Telefónica Foundation**, “We have a scorecard with hundreds of indicators: by countries, unique volunteers, donors, hours, beneficiaries, entities and digital intervention. We can see each of the beneficiaries… We have data for projects. If we look at [data for] our World Volunteer Day at an international level, we can evaluate how many people have registered, how many are unique, how many are not, in which countries, by activity, by group. We have results related to COVID-19, which groups were served, who was impacted. We can see it at the level of details of beneficiaries and actions: how many beneficiaries have been reached, from what area they are, community, childhood, if it has been more of some than others, the names of the activities. We measure absolutely everything.”

When **Marriott International** redesigned its social impact and sustainability strategy (Serve 360, launched in 2017) the company recognized the value of data in building support from its C-Suite, including the board of directors and the continent presidents. All of these receive quarterly reports on progress toward each of the program goals, broken down by region. Using a baseline of 2016, they share what was done in a specific quarter, what was done through the calendar year and also how much progress is needed to hit goals that extend to 2025. They also indicate if they are on target to achieve, if they’ve fallen behind or if they achieved a target early and need to reset and/or increase a goal. Each goal is measured and presented each quarter to the CEO, his direct reports and during quarterly board meetings.

At the **Medtronic Foundation**, a scorecard and specific target metrics have driven more insights in terms of leveraging data analytics to understand more about employee segments – whether executive level or the sales, office or manufacturing segments. The data help build understanding of how those individuals volunteer and what the foundation can do to support them “where they are in their volunteer journey.” It also has led to a greater understanding of cultural nuances across the company, particularly internationally in how employees view giving and volunteering within their own cultural contexts.
The surveys also gather data on whether:

- Employees feel increased job satisfaction and motivation for their work, increased empathy and understanding of others, more pride in their work and increased sense of well-being and happiness.
- Employees would recommend volunteering to their colleagues.
- Employees report more positively about the company.

The results have been striking. In 2019, Woodside volunteers clocked 11,000+ hours benefiting 75 organizations directly through volunteering. About 88% of their 3,300 employees felt an increased pride in the company, and 90% reported an increased sense of well-being and happiness.

Impacts on critical thinking and decision-making are captured more from case studies that employees share on the company’s volunteering portal. After finishing a placement, whether skills-based or team-based, employees share stories with colleagues of different volunteering opportunities made available to them. Case studies are sometimes used in publications, including employee magazines that go to all employees and a range of external stakeholders.

**AXA**, headquartered in France, has measured the link between engagement in volunteer programs and engagement at work, finding a strong correlation between the two. “We have an annual opinion survey worldwide for employees because we want to monitor [their] mood...if they are they engaged or are federated around the strategy, HR priorities and so on. It’s within this annual survey that we have measured this correlation.”

Anatoly Sedykh, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Russian steel manufacturer **OMK**, is quoted on the company’s website: “We are sure that a life shouldn’t be restricted to a plant only. It is very important for us to make sure that our employees live in comfortable conditions, strive for self-realization, organize their spare time and take care about health. We offer wide possibilities for them in this direction.”

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1 Research for and preparation of this chapter was completed in 2021.
Their volunteer program is key to achieving this vision and to fulfilling their social responsibility commitments to the communities where they live and work.

Charities Aid Foundation Russia has conducted external audits and social impact assessments using the SROI (Social Return on Investment) model, based on qualitative methods and interviews with various stakeholders within the company and in the local community, including beneficiaries.

The SROI results demonstrated an increase in community social impact and enhancement in employees’ soft skills and professional skills, as well as an economic impact. Latest estimates revealed that the OMK Partnership program attracts three extra rubles for each ruble invested. Corporate volunteer projects as well as those of local NGOs participating in the OMK’s grant competition achieved that impact. The SROI results are presented to the top executives as an argument for continuing corporate volunteering and the OMK grant program.

“The success of individual volunteers reflects horizontal or vertical mobility within or outside the company when employees are actively committed to the social life of their towns and grow as social activists and nonprofit leaders.” For example, one of the company’s employees, who worked in a manual labor position, organized her own NGO in the city to search for missing persons. Her nonprofit works in partnership with a large regional volunteer rescue center.

A second example is a case of social entrepreneurship in which a volunteer project to clean up the Chusovaya River has grown into a regional ecotourism organization. “Such activities have broad social impact and help with the growth of domestic tourism, and employee development.”

A unique component of the volunteering at House Foods in Japan is focused on providing an intensive development opportunity for a single staff member each year to have an international experience, working with social enterprises and local NGOs. So far, seven volunteers have participated in the program with placements in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. They have been drawn mostly from the company’s Research & Development and Sales teams. Each volunteer has worked full time for at least six months on a project with support from a remote group of two to three colleagues helping from the head office. The program is done in partnership with Cross Fields, a Japanese NGO that, among other programs, manages international skills-based volunteer programs that pair Japanese companies with NGOs and social enterprises.
in Southeast Asia. The placements are focused on enhancing volunteers’ knowledge of global markets while building innovative skills and co-creating unique solutions. They have developed new food items and drinks, redesigned the packaging of existing products and created marketing strategies to improve sales volumes.

Cross Fields project managers do one-to-one weekly sessions to understand the changes a corporate volunteer is going through and also communicate with the partner organization regularly so that House Foods gets their feedback as well.

Teams from the House Foods HR department also visit the corporate volunteers while they are in their placements, especially at difficult stages of the project. They also meet with the leaders of the NGOs to get their feedback on the engagement. The goal: to gather information from different stakeholders and collect “diverse perspectives and angles.”

The impact the program makes on the company differs from person to person. For some volunteers, the effect may be immediate while for others it may take years. The HR department also seeks to understand how, in the long-term, the culture changes and leads to innovation in the company.

At CJ CheilJedang in Korea, “competency development” through volunteering is a high priority. A satisfaction survey is conducted at the end of volunteering for participating employees. It generally shows a high score for “one’s growth of work contribution.” Other questionnaire responses show the degree of improvement in “soft skills” such as teambuilding, confidence, leadership, mentoring and coaching.”

For Apple, the “overarching goals (of the employee volunteer program) are to increase awareness, increase participation and to create exceptional experiences for our participants. We can measure the first two simply by comparing reports from Benevity,” the contractor that tracks Apple’s volunteering through an online portal. “But, the experience piece is harder. We generally listen to feedback from our employees which we receive mostly via email.” Apple is now considering additional ways to better measure impact.

Looking at volunteering from the employee perspective has revealed interesting insights. For example, results of an impact assessment undertaken by Tata’s Sustainability Group highlighted locations where employees are more interested in volunteering compared to employees at other locations. The analysis gave a peek into the employees’ backgrounds,
the cultures they come from, social issues they have witnessed in their neighborhoods and what steps can be taken as a response. One of the insights that emerged: younger-generation employees look at volunteering as a way to improve skills, increase networks and gain knowledge, whereas more accomplished colleagues look at it as philanthropy and a way of giving back to the community.

In its Latin America region, AB-InBev has been a leader in building the capacity of NGOs to promote and manage volunteering, providing them with a volunteer management platform. The next step is to capture data on volunteers’ perceptions of their involvement and their level of satisfaction. This may help volunteers know if their action is generating impact and whether that correlates to their continued engagement – all part of their overall goal to build the “habit of volunteering” regularly and throughout the year with actions in their communities.

For Credit Suisse, the focus over the past 11 years has clearly been on the impact of volunteering on employees who participate in the company’s flagship international skills-based volunteering opportunity, the Global Citizens Program. The now 12-year-old program is “designed to promote the transfer of skills and expertise between employees and social organizations. [It also] provides an exceptional opportunity for employees to leverage and develop their talents while at the same time building the capacity of our partner organizations in the areas of education and financial inclusion.”

Credit Suisse’s Global Citizen Program was presented at IAVE’s 2019 European Regional Corporate Volunteering Conference in London. The program has demonstrated the following benefits for partner organizations served, employees who participate and for the company.

For partner organizations:
- Additional capacity and capability to tackle challenges.
- Opportunity to learn from high-caliber Credit Suisse employees with specific expertise that the partner may not be readily able to access.
- Deepened partnership with Credit Suisse.

For employees:
- A chance to develop existing and new skills in a different context.
- Opportunity to gain new perspectives and think outside the box.
- Deepened understanding of Credit Suisse’s Corporate citizenship.
- Opportunity to support a nonprofit partner’s mission.
- Insights into how to put Credit Suisse’s values into action.
Dell Technologies has established the social impact goals it is pursuing for 2030, driven by what the company calls its “moonshot goals,” described as “our highest aspirations reflecting how we’ll make our positive social impact real and measurable.” To hold the company accountable to these goals, Dell reports annually on its progress. There are four groups of goals: advancing sustainability, cultivating inclusion, upholding ethics and privacy and transforming lives.

For example, the moonshot goal for transforming lives is “With our technology and scale, we will advance health, education and economic opportunity initiatives to deliver enduring results for 1 billion people by 2030.”

A key element in achieving that goal is “Each year through 2030, 75% of our employees will participate in giving or volunteerism in their communities.” The company explains: “Dell employees who volunteer consistently score higher on all measures of job satisfaction in our annual Tell Dell employee survey than those who don’t, so we make it easy for employees to give back.”

With its annual reporting, Dell holds itself publicly accountable for progress toward its ambitious goals, sharing both successes and shortcomings. These performance reports on their volunteering goals reflect the challenges the field has faced: “In FY21, 51% of our global Dell team members participated in giving or volunteering. This represents an 8-percentage-point decrease compared with our FY20 baseline. We attribute this decrease to the negative impact COVID-19 had on in-person volunteerism.”
For the company:

- Development of future leaders.
- Deepened employee engagement.
- Demonstration of Credit Suisse's values and social responsibility.

The program is supported by the UK-based consultancy Emerging World which focuses on employees’ leadership development through experiential learning and what it terms “immersive experiences” through “corporate international service learning (CISL).” Such programs “are defined by the fact that employees travel across international borders to apply their work-based skills to a project or to other assignments that serve a third-party constituency.”

In 2015, Emerging World produced the first comprehensive benchmark study to examine the longer-term impact of CISL programs on participants and the associated return on investment for their employers. That study was done annually through 2019, suspended in 2020 and was being taken up again in 2021.

There is not universal agreement on whether pro bono activities are necessarily volunteering, given that in some professions or in some businesses, there is an affirmative expectation or even a clear requirement that employees will provide services to the community at no cost. But given that at the heart of both volunteering and pro bono is service to the world outside the company, it is important to note the work being done by Global Pro Bono LEAD, which describes itself as “an exclusive community of corporations advancing the field of Global Pro Bono (GPB).” It “provides companies implementing GPB programs, programs that engage the skills of corporate employees to build the effectiveness of social sector organizations, with a no-cost networking opportunity to connect around four pillars” – Learning from one another, Exchanging ideas and tools, Adapting and innovating, and Delivering programs that deliver benefits for all involved.