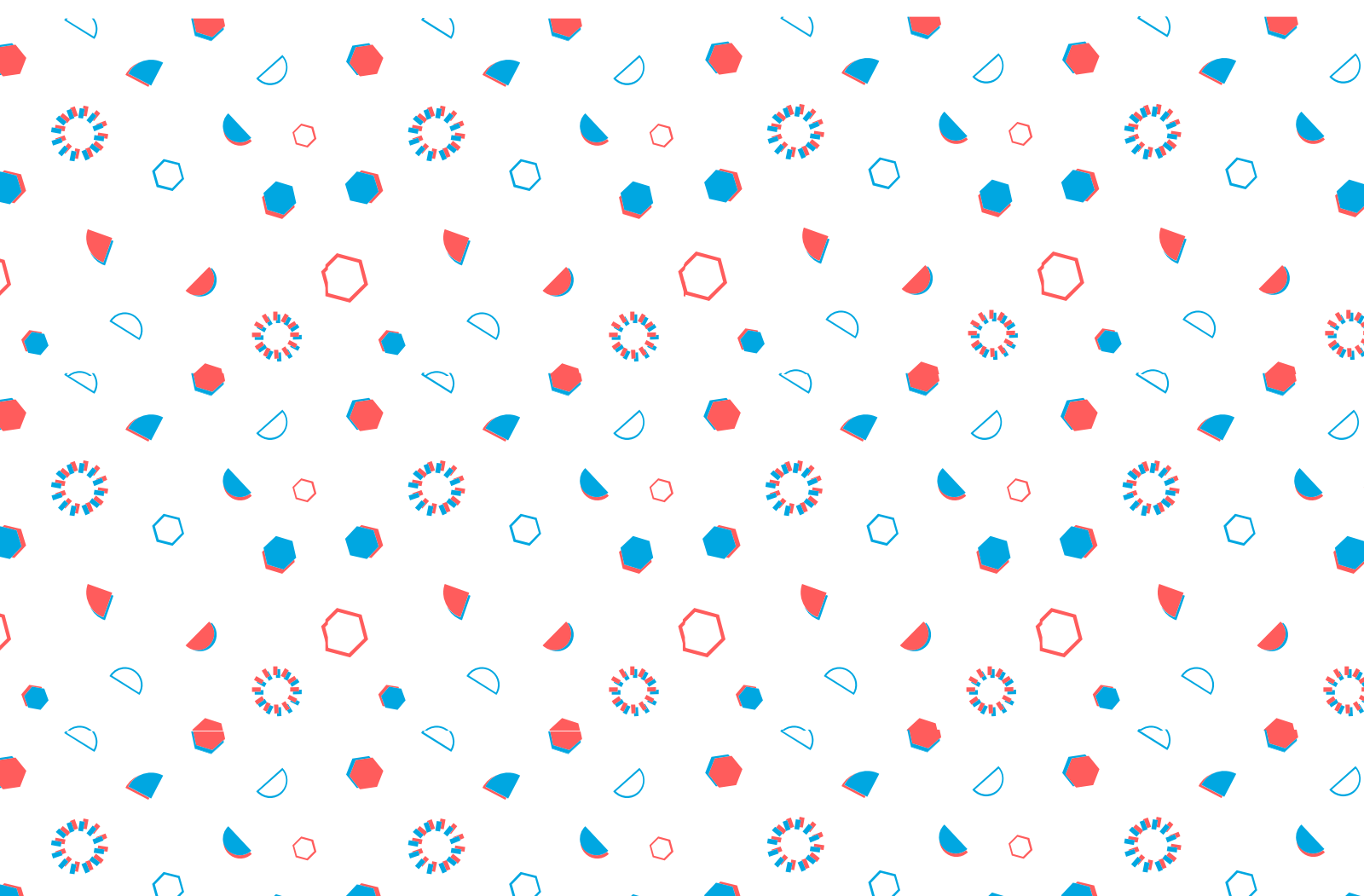


Best Practices for Developing a *Paid Volunteer Time Off Program*





Why Local Governments are Providing Paid Volunteer Time Off

Volunteers who work full-time jobs often use their weekends and evenings to participate in community service. Now, some employers are paying employees for their time mentoring at their local after school program or working at a nearby soup kitchen.

This growing movement to provide paid volunteer time off (PVTO), empowers more employees to engage in service, while acknowledging the ones already doing so.

Though the private sector has garnered most of the attention around PVTO, many local governments across the country are starting to develop their own programs.

For some governments, this type of program might seem well-intentioned yet idealistic given their limited resources. However, organizations are finding that these programs are not only supporting community service, they are also benefiting the workplace by strengthening co-worker relationships and improving productivity.



Best Practices for Developing a Paid Volunteer Time Off Program

1

Publish a clear process.

In order to avoid confusion about how the program works, make sure the PVTO limits and regulations are clearly laid out in writing. While your specifications might look completely different, the Town of Mooresville, North Carolina produced a great example of a clear PVTO policy.

2

Educate employees.

On top of creating a clear process, employees will benefit from follow-up education on how to take advantage of the program. “Just sending out a written policy was not enough,” says Keli Greer, Mooresville’s Director of Human Resources. “We had to do a few educational sessions with several employee groups to bring the policy to life.”

3

Have a point person.

Not all governments will be able to have a dedicated Volunteer Program Coordinator like Jamie LaDuke in Aurora, CO. But they will be more successful if they ensure that someone incorporates the program’s operational duties into their job.

4

Clearly justify approved agencies.

If your PVTO policy requires employees to volunteer with an approved list of agencies, be sure to set clear guidelines for the approval criteria. “Employees feel strongly about certain agencies, so know that going into the program,” says Greer. “Have a defined list of agencies that you will support and be prepared to justify this list to your employees.”



5

Leverage existing relationships.

As the company Buffer found when they implemented an employee volunteering program, many of your employees are likely already volunteering. Paying attention to what people already care about will help the program resonate and build off the momentum from people who already volunteer. For Mooresville, this meant expanding their approved agencies to include more non-profits as well as the local school system.

6

Ensure regular and open communication.

If employees need approval for PVT, the program coordinator should make sure managers know the process and policies. Open communication between coordinators, managers, and employees will also help avoid potential understaffing issues and increase opportunities for group volunteer trips.

7

Share your experiences!

One of the best parts about volunteer programs is the ability for employees to talk about how they were able to help their communities. Greer suggests talking the policy up at staff meetings, organizing group volunteer days, using employee testimonials to market the program, and honoring folks who volunteer. This both encourages employees to take advantage of the program and helps make it a part of the organizational culture.

Final Words of Wisdom

Aurora, CO's Volunteer Program Coordinator, Jamie LaDuke:

"In today's society, everyone is busy with responsibilities and obligations. The one thing we all need more of is time. I learned that there is no limit to what individuals can accomplish in a community when they are provided the time. Giving paid volunteer time off will make a difference in your community, and it will change your employees for the better."