

INTERNSHIP PROJECT

City Leader Initiative: Empowering Local Leaders to Foster National Engagement

1. Statement of the Problem and Specific Goals

The company supports its employees' engagement in volunteer service by offering 8 hours of paid time off (PTO) annually. However, despite this benefit, participation in volunteer activities has historically been uneven across the organization's 18 major cities. This disparity is largely due to inconsistent communication, lack of local leadership, and minimal awareness of events and opportunities within each city.

This gap presented an opportunity for a solution to boost local engagement through leadership empowerment. The **City Leader Initiative** was developed to implement a new role: the **City Leader**—a local employee advocate serving as the central point of contact for community service activities in their region.

The key goals of the initiative included:

- **Improving communication** between the Community Engagement team and city-based employees.
- **Increasing awareness and participation** in volunteer events by using localized leadership.
- **Empowering employees** to take active roles in shaping community service in their cities.
- **Creating a replicable model** for future engagement and leadership across new regions.

By installing City Leaders, we not only aimed to address logistical coordination challenges but also to cultivate a more inclusive and sustainable culture of service—one that reflects the company's broader social responsibility mission

2. Plan of Action and Evaluation

The plan of action was designed as a strategic roadmap divided into four clear phases—**initiation, planning, execution, and evaluation**—each with well-defined activities to meet the project's goals.

Initiation

- Defined the project scope, including role responsibilities and ideal outcomes.
- Engaged stakeholders across departments (HR, Communications, and Marketing) to support the rollout.
- Presented the plan to leadership for review and approval.

Planning

- Designed and distributed a survey to employees in all 18 cities to assess interest in volunteering and identify individuals interested in leadership roles.
- Developed a clear **City Leader job description**, outlining expectations such as promoting events, rallying local teams, and representing their city.

Execution

- Trained the City Leaders in their new roles via virtual sessions and one-on-one check-ins.
- Collaborated with each leader to tailor volunteer opportunities to their city's interests.
- Helped create a central platform for all city group communications.
- Helped them coordinate logistics, generate enthusiasm, and track local engagement.
- Distributed regular internal updates highlighting active leaders and local events.

Evaluation

- **Formative (Ongoing) Assessments:**
 - Tracked survey responses and event sign-ups.
 - Collected monthly feedback from City Leaders on event success, communication clarity, and team morale.
 - Adjusted event timelines and roles based on participation feedback and city-specific challenges (e.g., scheduling conflicts, co-lead needs).
 - Held debrief sessions with City Leaders and shared results with leadership for future planning.

This strategic plan ensured the City Leader initiative not only met its objectives, but created a replicable, long-lasting engagement model that will continue to benefit the company well beyond the internship period.

3. Procedure

Implementation followed the planned timeline with minor adjustments. Surveys were distributed in the initial weeks and yielded strong insights, helping to match events with employee interests. City Leaders were successfully appointed in all 18 cities. Regular virtual meetings and support emails ensured that leaders felt connected and equipped to fulfill their roles.

Challenges included aligning event schedules with varied regional calendars and managing communication consistency across cities. Adjustments such as co-leadership in larger cities and customized outreach methods improved responsiveness and outcomes. In one instance, a leader stepped down due to scheduling conflicts, prompting a quick nomination and onboarding process for a replacement, demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability of the framework.

4. Outcome

The results of the initiative were highly positive. There was a 35% increase in the number of employees using their volunteer PTO hours, and qualitative feedback highlighted a stronger sense of local community and team morale. City Leaders played a key role in this shift,

providing the localized support that was previously missing. Their personal engagement stories helped build momentum, and their leadership encouraged others to participate more actively.

Additionally, the Community Engagement team noted improvements in event planning and execution efficiency. The structured model allowed for easier data collection, quicker adjustments, and more targeted communications. A calendar shared via Outlook also helped visually align all fundraisers and events for easy team-wide access. Leaders expressed enthusiasm about being ambassadors for their cities and felt more connected to the company's mission.

5. Evaluation of the Outcome

Surveys conducted post-implementation revealed that 87% of respondents were more aware of volunteer opportunities due to the influence of City Leaders. Leaders reported feeling empowered and recognized in their new roles, and the program received praise from the supervisor for its impact and sustainability.

A few key learnings emerged from the evaluation process: first, that visibility matters—leaders who were active on company communication channels had higher participation rates in their cities. Second, recognition is a powerful motivator—acknowledging the efforts of leaders both internally and externally increased retention and morale. Finally, adaptability is crucial—flexibility in how leaders approached their roles led to innovative practices and tailored strategies.

The City Leader Initiative left behind a scalable, replicable framework for community engagement that continues to foster local leadership and national unity. By investing in employee-driven advocacy, the company has laid the foundation for a long-term, impactful volunteer program that reflects its values and supports its mission. Moving forward, the City Leaders model offers a path to even deeper community connections, professional growth for participants, and a more inclusive company culture of service.