

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Bennington College is committed to contributing to the vitality of the broader Bennington community and offers time-off benefits to employees who wish to volunteer and engage with community-based organizations. We encourage all eligible staff to apply for an engagement assignment—whether locally or globally—sharing time and talent in ways that benefit our community and the greater world.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Throughout its rich and vibrant history, Bennington College has invited its campus community to creatively engage in a conversation about some of the world's most pressing problems. Bennington has always built deep connections between doing and knowing, action and reflection, the classroom and the world. The College's annual Field Work Term, like its teacher-practitioner model of teaching, are expressions of these connections. Bennington's Center for the Advancement of Public Action offers additional opportunities for engagement.

Bennington College invites staff to engage and support this mission by engaging and volunteering time at community organizations—both in the local and surrounding communities and on the national level. Staff are invited to spend up to one day each year volunteering at a non-profit organization, engaging in assignments that support the College's dedication to social responsibility and action in the world.

Each benefits-eligible employee is entitled to one full paid day off from work for community engagement each academic year (July through June). Volunteer assignments may be taken in any increment (single hours, half-day or full day), as approved by the employee's supervisor and department head. The maximum volunteer hours available to any eligible employee is the equivalent of the employee's daily hours worked; part-time, benefits eligible staff receive a pro-rated number of volunteer hours. Volunteer engagement hours do not carryover into subsequent academic years and hours are non-transferable.

Volunteer hours can only take place during the employee's regular work hours; the College cannot authorize hours beyond the employee's regular work day. Employees will be paid their regular rate of pay for their normal scheduled hours. Time spent in this volunteer capacity, or traveling for the volunteer work, will not be considered time worked for Bennington College for overtime calculation purposes. Please contact Human Resources if you have questions or would like additional guidance regarding this policy. Volunteer engagement assignments must take place at a 501(c)(3) organization.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

All benefits-eligible staff are eligible to apply for a volunteer engagement assignment once the employee has completed three months of employment. The employee must be in good standing. Staff will be offered this paid time off from work to engage with community organizations. The volunteer assignment will be considered work time and as such, the employee's pay and benefits will remain unchanged during the community engagement assignment.

HOW TO APPLY?

To apply, a staff member must complete a **Community Engagement Application**. Once completed, the application will be reviewed by the employee's direct supervisor, who will determine if the employee's proposed absence will be reasonable for the office. Human Resources will confirm that the employee is eligible to participate in the program.

Application requests must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the desired time away from work. As part of the review process, a supervisor or Human Resources team member may request a meeting with the employee to better understand the volunteer opportunity and/or to discuss how the time off may impact current projects. The employee's supervisor will notify the staff member of the outcome of the request.

Once an application is approved, the employee is asked to provide the Human Resources with a copy of the non-profit agency's insurance liability certificate, if one is available. Following the community engagement assignment, the employee will be invited to reflect on the engagement experience.

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Staff members who may need guidance or support in exploring and securing community engagement assignments are encouraged to review the **Community Engagement Database** for a list of available volunteer assignments or contact Office of Student Engagement, Human Resources or the Field Work Term and Career Development Office for assistance.