

Corporate Social Responsibility

What is Corporate Social Responsibility?

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a company policy for the active use of resources for public interest by a corporation, usually a commercial company. This may take a number of different forms, frequently sponsorship of external organisations, or the creation of special Corporate Social Responsibility programmes enabling the use of corporate assets to support good causes.

Why do commercial organisations introduce Corporate Social Responsibility programmes?

Commercial organisations introduce CSR programmes for a variety of reasons, though the focus is market-led, not philanthropic. CSR can help a company gain a commercial edge on competitors, or reach new client groups, or contribute to staff engagement and retention. By working with a wider range of organisations, corporations and their staff are able to improve the impact and effectiveness of heritage organisations through, for example, volunteering or offering free services such as financial or legal support. At a strategic level, an on-going association with the arts raises brand awareness and can be used to enhance a corporate image. Heritage organisations should regard CSR programmes as an opportunity to develop a mutually beneficial partnership with the corporate sector and to engage with a new or wider audience.

How do Corporate Social Responsibility programmes work?

Large corporations often introduce special programmes to contribute to good causes. This may happen in different ways, for example, by allowing members of staff to contribute skills, knowledge or expertise to support the work of a smaller organisation with limited resources over a given period of time. These programmes establish a direct connection between the corporation, its employees and a good cause. Smaller businesses often provide indirect financial benefits, such as reductions on a commercial tariff for the hire of equipment or supplying refreshments for an event.

How can my organisation benefit from Corporate Social Responsibility?

Heritage organisations can benefit from Corporate Social Responsibility in different ways. Senior members of staff may join Boards to become Company Directors or Trustees. This can be a good means to recruit expertise, which can be hard to find, most commonly in Law or Finance. Staff secondment from a company to an organisation is another possibility (e.g. [John Lewis's Golden Jubilee Trust programme](#)).

An alternative approach is to utilise corporate resources to support a particular event or programme of work, for example, a conference can benefit from marketing expertise, technical support or the use of facilities at below commercial rate. A further possibility is the use of corporate expertise to take on specific tasks which are often beyond the scope of a small organisation. These could include updating the Staff Handbook or developing a new website.

CSR practice now focuses on contributing directly to areas such as:

- Staff development, for example, by training or mentoring
- Improving policy and practice
- Business Principles
- Marketing and communications
- Minimising waste and maximising efficiency
- Community engagement

Are there ethical considerations?

For many heritage organisations, and especially those which are registered charities, ethical issues surrounding associations with commercial companies are probably top of the concerns list. Organisations need to choose partners who share their values.

- Do the values and ethics of the company and its subsidiaries complement the organisation's objectives?
- Are the company's and the charity's brands regarded as valuable assets? With this in mind, will the association enhance or damage each brand?

In terms of assessing a company for its ethical behaviours/risks of reputation, the [Corporate Critic](#) database is a useful tool. This rates the Corporate Social Responsibility records of over 25,000 company groups. Research is categorised by five broad ethical areas and then rated using Ethical Consumer's 'ethiscore' rating system.

Is my organisation ready to be a Corporate Social Responsibility partner?

The following questions should be addressed before starting to approach prospective CSR programmes:

- Who will identify and approach prospective partners?
- Does the programme match with the company's CSR objectives?
- Has sufficient time been allowed to build a partnership?
- Are the benefits for each partner clearly defined?
- Are the necessary partnership arrangements in place?
- Is there an exit strategy?

Content above provided by Arts & Business Scotland

Opportunities for Heritage Organisations

Here are a few ideas to get you started in looking for opportunities that CSR could provide your organisation.

Neighbourly is an online platform which connects community projects and charities with local businesses.

<https://www.neighbourly.com/>

Warburtons provide support to local communities with:

- Financial assistance to projects, activities and organisations that will be of direct benefit to families
- Employee volunteering
- Product donations

<http://www.warburtons.co.uk/corporate/responsibility/community>

Ford provides grants to fund local education and other not-for-profit projects with their Ford Britain Trust.

<http://www.ford.co.uk/experience-ford/AboutFord/CorporateSocialResponsibility/FordBritainTrust>

American Express supports not-for-profit organisations that are:

- Preserving and sustaining historic places for the future
- Developing new leaders for tomorrow
- Encouraging community service where their employees and customers live and work

Funding is available to apply for, if your organisation meets the funding criteria.

http://about.americanexpress.com/csr/?inav=about_CorpResponsibility

The **John Lewis Partnership** favours charities local to the communities in which they operate or in which their staff are personally involved. Their programmes include:

- Golden Jubilee Trust – Volunteering programme
- Community Matters – Local giving opportunity
- JSL Foundation – Grant giving charity, priorities include environmental education and conservation.

<http://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/csr/our-communities.html>

J Sainsbury plc support local communities through supporting charitable causes, bringing businesses and charitable causes together and encouraging healthier lifestyles. Individual stores select their own local charity to work with each year.

http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/media/2385947/factsheet_community.pdf

Starbucks support local communities by:

- Providing coffee and refreshments to charitable causes/events
- Providing meeting spaces
- Assisting with fundraising

<http://www.starbucks.co.uk/responsibility/community/community-service>

Tesco plc supports local communities through the Tesco Charity Trust. They also match employee fundraising with a 20% top-up and individual stores can make charitable donations.

<http://www.tescopl.com/index.asp?pageid=754>

Dobbies Garden Centres support schools, communities and charities local to their stores with a variety of programmes including a 'Local Charity Partner' scheme for each store.

<http://www.dobbies.com/about-dobbies/dobbies-in-the-community/>

ScottishPower support local communities through a programme of activities including the 'ScottishPower Foundation'. The Foundation funds charitable initiatives promoting the advancement of education, environmental protection, citizenship and community development, arts culture and science, and the prevention of poverty.

<http://www.scottishpower.com/pages/community.asp>

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