

Creating a pathway to meaningful community engagement strategies and CSR initiatives



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About this guide

If your company does not have an effective Company Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy, or if your strategy needs reviewing to be more aligned with your company mission, this guide is here to help you:

- define your social mission
- set your Company Social Responsibility goals
- choose a strategic partner/partners
- decide what resources your company should donate
- and more...

Well-organised Company Social Responsibility activities enable your company to make a Return on Investment and deliver Social Return on Investment, as well as meet various stakeholder needs, including employee engagement. We advise including colleagues from HR, communications and finance in the strategy and planning process, to connect all the dots and make your initiatives truly holistic.

1. Your company mission and goals

The most effective and engaging Company Social Responsibility strategies tend to reflect the overall values and strategies of the company. It all begins with an understanding of your company mission, in other words, understanding what your company aims to change within society, not just through your CSR activities, but on an organisational level. This understanding will work as the foundation of your Social Mission Statement.

Your Company Social Mission Statement

Your Company Social Responsibility activities and investments will help you fulfil your social mission in practice. A good place to start is to define your CSR goals for these activities. You might want to think about:

- a. What is your long-term vision? In other words, what is the positive change that your company wants to see within society or environmentally in the next 5-10 years
- b. What are the short-term outcomes that your company needs to achieve to meet its long-term goals? (e.g. within the next 1-3 years)

We would suggest starting with at least 5 company impact goals

2. Strategic pathways to action

There are three approaches to consider when deciding on how you will reach your goals and which organisations you should choose as your partners to help you achieve them:

1. industry/knowledge approach
2. geographical/local approach
3. societal/environmental approach

The approach your company chooses will inform which strategic partners you work with, and what resources you will donate. Consider your chosen pathway as the foundation of your partnership strategy. We suggest choosing one as a minimum.

Company Social Mission

Industry / Knowledge Approach

Geographic / Local Approach

Societal /Environmental Approach

1. Industry / Knowledge Approach

You may wish to support charities and social enterprises that operate within the same field of expertise as your organisation.

For example: knowledge driven consultancy companies may choose to partner with charities that support underprivileged, talented young people transitioning into higher education through mentoring programmes and university tuition grants.

For example: construction companies with labour intensive operations may dedicate time and resources to charities and social enterprises that support the unemployed to transition into the industry.

It is also important to consider the resources your company intends to give as part of your Company Social Responsibility strategy. If you want to implement an extensive skills-based volunteering programme, the knowledge of your employees will influence which partners you choose. You will want to work with organisations that will benefit from your kind of specialist support.

For example: a finance company with a team of tax experts will need to consider whether their partner organisation would benefit from their advice. Would employees with extensive knowledge in corporate tax policies be able to help charities with a different organisational structure?

Ethical procurement / supply chain

In addition to giving donations or skills-based volunteering, an often overlooked form of support is establishing commercial partnerships with social enterprises and charities that trade or offer commercial services. By harnessing your company's purchasing power for Company Social Responsibility, you can multiply the social value of your organisation.

2. Geographic / Local Approach

If employee engagement and external stakeholder engagement is a priority, you might wish to consider the impact of your local presence and think about your Company Social Responsibility strategy from a geographic perspective. Prioritising local support over company-wide partnerships can work to improve employee engagement, local reputation and local customer loyalty. Arranging voting and internal decision-making processes for potential partners is a very good way of engaging staff and stakeholders and getting your Company Social Responsibility activities and social mission known, acknowledged and understood. This method will require lots of internal and external communications support, but will ultimately give some decision power to your stakeholders, making them feel valued.

For example: maybe you are bidding for government tenders or other public contracts, and need to demonstrate impact activities in certain counties, regions or towns. In this case, it is important to partner with geographically relevant organisations.

Money donations

If your company is donating money as part of your local approach, you may wish to consider how your funding streams can align with this approach.

For example, your local employees could be encouraged to fundraise within the community or through payroll giving. Alternatively, the contributions could be financed from the net profit of the company.

3. Societal / Environmental Approach

There are plenty of societal issues that extend beyond the sole mission or business operations of an organisation, but that are important to tackle and are addressed by a variety of charities and social enterprises. Many illnesses, cultural causes, research and lobbyist charities, to name a few, struggle to get the support of companies. However, these causes often overlap with and impact a large proportion of employees or customers, whether directly or indirectly.

Mental health, stigmatised conditions, disabilities, equal opportunities and others, have a deep and widespread impact on society, yet are not always considered popular causes to support, and do not have an obvious link to companies' operations.

There are also many charities whose activities do not have an obvious link to their cause.

For example: an arts-based charity might actually support mental health, a charity emphasising the importance of songbirds might support climate change, and a museum might actually focus on offering free activities to low-income families.

Supporting one of these issues, and choosing an alternative organisation to strategically support, can help your company to really demonstrate some of your core values and engage with stakeholders in a powerful way by taking a stand using a unique approach.

3. What resources are you giving?

To make a real impact, the size and type of your donation must be relevant to the needs of the charity or social enterprise. Maybe your organisation wants to spend a team day out at a chosen charity, but you must assess whether your contribution is actually delivering value. The value of your contribution should exceed the time and effort put into co-ordination and organisation by the charity or social enterprise.

40%

of charities do not benefit from one off / one day voluntary input

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40%

of charities ranked unskilled time as the least important resource they get

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Over

50%

of charities reported taking on volunteers they did not need in order to secure partnerships with companies ⁵

Consider the following points:

1.

It is important to have a high-level definition of how much money, how many volunteering hours, products and service donations your company could be donating annually. It is good to keep in mind that Company Social Responsibility contributions deliver economic, social and environmental value, so they should not only be considered as 'donations' but also as investments that deliver benefits both for your employees and the company as a whole - increasing employee satisfaction and retention, boosting your brand reputation and customer loyalty.

2.

Consider how your donations could be linked to your chosen strategic pathway. What are the goals you wish to achieve with your resource donations? For example, if you seek to fulfil your social value obligations locally, it is important that your contributions can have a real tangible difference on the community. This is the only way to take your activities beyond tick-box exercises and create real social value.

3.

Assess whether you want to be the primary partner of a charity or social enterprise, or if you are happy to be one of many supporters (in line with any mutual agreements). If you are one of many supporters, you can compare your contribution to that of others, rather than the overall turnover of the charity or social enterprise.

4.

Companies are often eligible for tax reductions for various donations, so it's important to track all donations and work closely with your finance department to maximise these benefits.

5.

We recommend building an annual calendar for an organised overview of what to donate and when, including who is overseeing the process internally. Assessing grant applications or co-ordinating volunteering can be time consuming—this is where digital tools and co-ordination planning is crucial.

Creating win-win partnerships

Formulating deeper partnerships with social value organisations can also create innovation and commercial opportunities for companies, including opportunities for future investment. Partnerships built with care and with mutual goals and values in mind lead to win-win situations where both your company and partner charity or social enterprise can benefit from the collaboration.

4. What kind of organisations should we partner with?

There are many different types of social value organisations, especially in terms of how they are funded and run. Here are some key elements to consider for your partnerships:

Legal structure of impact organisations

Are you looking for charities or/and social enterprises to support? Charities are non-profit organisations, but some of them are also registered as companies, just like social enterprises. Although many of these organisations also sell their products and services (either to the government, private or third sector), their profit is either circulated fully or partly back to their operations. In many cases their sales income does not cover all of their beneficiary work, so voluntary income and volunteering makes a huge difference in their ability to deliver their services. One strategy could be to focus on the impact the organisation intends to make and the activities around it, rather than the organisation registration type.

Operational costs & key team members

Some social value organisations could be run purely by volunteers, by a single person or a small team, whilst others have highly experienced hired personnel. This makes a difference in their cost structure and how their money is allocated. It is crucial to evaluate how well an organisation is run—for example, how equipped they are to deliver their beneficiary work reliably and consistently, or how well they would manage a collaboration with your organisation—rather than solely making partner decisions based on low admin costs or turnover rates.

We recommend partnering with organisations that have an operational structure in place to receive and maximise your company's donations and/or volunteers in addition to being responsive and communicative. whatimpact.com has templates and features in place for reporting and communication, but it is essential that both parties have internal management processes.

What resources your company will offer

When your company offers resources (money, volunteers, goods and services), it is essential to find organisations that will fully benefit from the donation. This means conducting an assessment of their needs within your criteria or your due diligence is very important. You might also have an open dialogue with the impact organisation on what their most pressing needs are and how they can make the most out of your company's contribution.

For example: if you provide high level consultancy for strategic planning, the impact organisation might still need the funds and labour to implement the proposed plans. Alternatively, when giving large financial donations which might help the social value organisation to scale and grow, there might also be a need for some professional advice e.g. legal, finance, HR, etc.

Define your donation types and criteria (you can use this list to build the skeleton of your donation approach)

Money

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- How much are you donating?
- How many grants are you giving?
- What are the main criteria for impact organisations to apply? (based on the strategy and goal work above)
- What kind of due diligence must your organisation do before any donation is given?
- Who will co-ordinate these donations internally?
- What is the process of donating funds to a charity or social enterprise?

Product and service donations

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- What are the service packages or physical products your company will donate and when?
- What is the retail value of these donations?
- What are the main criteria for impact organisations to receive your company donation (based on the strategy and goal work?)
- What are the quality and delivery standards of your donations? (We suggest they meet your normal service standards)
- What kind of due diligence does your company require to do on a charity or social enterprise?
- Who will coordinating your donations internally?

Volunteering

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- How many of your employees are eligible to volunteer?
- How many volunteering hours/days per person and how many people do you expect to use their allocated time? Are volunteering days calculated pro-rata?
- What is the cost of volunteering? (most companies take the average salary and multiply this by the number of days)
- If you have a remote work force, who and how will volunteering be co-ordinated?
- Are you donating professional skills or unskilled time?
- Is your company volunteering done in groups/teams or individually? How will this be co-ordinated internally?
- Does your organisation have the required insurances in places for your employee volunteering? Depending on the type of volunteering, some charities or social enterprises might require your employees to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS).
- What are your main criteria for potential charities and social enterprise partners (based on the strategy and goal work)?
- What kind of due diligence does your company require you to do on a charity or social enterprise?

5. Social Impact Report

In order to demonstrate your social value to your employees, your shareholders and your customers, your Company Social Responsibility activities should be reported. This can be done on whatimpact.com.

- The whatimpact social impact reporting tool has been developed in line with the BS8950 and is compatible with the UK government's PPN 06/20*, so companies can effectively report back on their impact with confidence

** The changes to the Procurement Policy Note 06/20 mean all companies that are bidding for public contracts must consider **how the goods or services they provide, would also benefit the community.** Social value now forms a new score of 10-30% in the evaluation criteria for companies bidding for tenders.*

- All donations worth >£5000 will receive a social impact report that is generated from the data in your profile. This also includes input of impact and testimonials from the charities or social enterprises that you have supported
- All other donations generate sharable impact greetings that you can distribute throughout your networks to evidence your impact
- Any additional donations made outside of whatimpact.com are also captured as the data is pulled from your profile

Congratulations!

You have made it through this long list of tips to create a successful, actionable Company Social Responsibility / Community Investment package for your company. You are now very well equipped to complete your company profile on whatimpact.com.

Need any further help?

When you create a whatimpact account for your company profile, you will find a number of resources to help evolve your Company Social Responsibility strategy, including How to Guides and videos on creating the most impactful profile to start matching with fantastic social value organisations today.



Get in touch!

Get in touch with **Sara Murphy**, our Key Account Manager, if you need further help.

sara@whatimpact.com

whatimpact.com

Stay impactful!