

Community Investment - Top Tips

Giving back to the local community can benefit both the businesses and the region. We've put together a list of some practical things to consider, along with a variety of organisations who can help you with projects and programmes when you start your Community Investment journey:

1. If you are going to be working with children and/or vulnerable adults you will need to hold an up to date DBS check – there are organisations that you could work with who may provide a check for you or you can find help here www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service
Apply for a DBS certificate: www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service
2. Get buy in from your management team if staff are going to be offered time out of their usual working hours to volunteer. You may want to develop an internal policy on this so staff can take up the offer with confidence.
3. Volunteering usually breaks down into three loose areas, based on the activity you'll be doing and your time commitment:

Regular volunteering is when you offer time on a weekly or fortnightly basis, so you will need to be sure your business can accommodate this. Mentoring or helping vulnerable people usually falls into this category because you need to build rapport with the beneficiary.

One-day volunteering is when a group of staff volunteer for a whole day but on a one-off basis. This can be to share skills (e.g. teaching young people about employability skills in a school) or stewarding at a fundraising event.

Episodic volunteering or micro volunteering are more recent trends to help out using just a short amount of time or for a clearly defined project (e.g. knitting a hat for an Innocent Smoothie bottle for Age Concern's annual campaign, or proof reading an article for a charity). They can be good ways to share skills and you can go back to volunteer as many times as you like.

4. Think creatively about what your staff want to do. Are they keen to use their existing skills and expertise to help a charity, become a trustee, or would they prefer something that allows them to leave their day job behind? You may want to offer a range of opportunities to suit different people in the organisation, in which case you may need to partner with more than one charity.

5. You might be asked to pay – some charities will charge for a partnership. This is because they have to cover staff costs (to manage the partnership) in their budget. In some

cases these costs can be raised as part of a fundraiser across your organisation by, for example, making them your charity of the year.

6. Agree your parameters when you sign up to a partnership. The charity is going to need a point of contact to liaise with and you will need feedback on the impact your partnership has on the organisation to evidence your CSR activity. Agree these up front so each side knows what they should be providing and when.
7. It makes sense to partner with an organisation that has some synergy with your company, so if your workforce has carpentry skills, helping a local wood recycling social enterprise would be ideal. However, be careful about setting your strategic aims too narrowly. Charities that support a wide range of beneficiaries will shy away from partnerships with a company that stipulates it only wants to help people aged 16 to 18. This would greatly limit the scope of the partnership and a charity will be looking to get the maximum impact from the time they invest in managing a partnership.
8. Review the partnership regularly – it's much better to make a quick change that will improve outcomes half way through a year than leave it until the end of the year when you can't recover the time lost.
9. Create a structured, meaningful work experience programme. Get your best team thinking about how you can make it a great programme. Make it time bound and have learning points for the participants. Ask some of your team to volunteer as mentors for the participants and get them to meet regularly. Include sessions on employability, group work and thinking creatively. As an example, one utility company asks their work experience cohort who are on a three week programme to plan (using 3D models) a water supply network. Get the programme accredited by an external organisation so participants leave with a certificate. Give each one a full written reference from their mentor. Link up with your local college to see if they can offer courses linked to your work experience programme that will cover the skills the participants need.
10. How can the organisation you are supporting help you? Can they make mention of the support you offer on their website? Will they include your contribution in any press coverage?
11. Do you have a meeting of minds with the business owners and/or business ethos? Partnerships should be a mutually beneficial two-way process and you and your employees need to benefit as well as give.

12. Volunteers need to be reliable and committed. When working in schools with children, it is important to ensure that you are reliable and ensure you turn up at the arranged time.

13. When working with children, it helps to have a training session prior to ensure what you are teaching and how you are teaching is the correct way and to cover off any important safeguarding issues (such as what to do if a child tells you something personal or asks to talk to you in confidence).

14. Individuals need to be enthusiastic and flexible as often schools change their agendas for the day at short notice and forget to make volunteers aware.

15. Need wellbeing/charity champions within your organisation that can co-ordinate these activities so there is only one contact for the charity/school etc. to liaise with.

16. You'll need to ensure you record all your CI activities, at the end of the year you'll need to show your executive board what a difference you've made to the local community. When recording staff hours think about using a standard industry calculation of £25 per hour for staff time – this way you'll be able to give a financial investment figure for the time your staff have donated by volunteering for an activity. Try and record your activities in groups, such as schools, young people, job-seekers, community groups; you can then have sub categories under these groups such as; employability skills, careers guidance, STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths), work experience, pro-bono etc. This will allow you to report a clear picture of where your staff are interested in volunteering the most, and where you are making the most difference.

17. If you don't already have an apprenticeship or graduate scheme in place at your organisation, think about including this as part of your overall CI strategy. This will enable you to develop relationships with schools, colleges and universities and you could be providing jobs for local people via this route.

18. Think about using your work experience, interns, apprenticeship and graduate placements as a way of encouraging your existing staff to develop mentoring and supervisory skills. By buddying a junior team member, or someone who would like to develop their career into management, they can develop staff management skills – an excellent way of giving free staff training that is not only beneficial to the company but to the individuals as well.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Sometimes it can be difficult to know where to start so we've put together a list of some local and national community and voluntary organisations that could help you establish CI programmes with your business. This list is by no means exhaustive and just represents a selection of trusted partners.

EMPLOYMENT ORGANISATIONS

Shaw Trust: is a national charity that helps people facing disadvantage to gain skills, find work and take control of their futures. Over the past thirty years, the charity has striven to combine its charitable heart with its commercial brain to provide the very best support to the people it was set up to serve. The charity is the largest third sector contractor for Department for Work and Pensions and delivers both mainstream (Work Programme) and specialist (Work Choice) employment support schemes across Britain, helping over 50,000 people per year. The charity also helps people into work via a wide range of other activities including education, retail and volunteering as well as health and social enterprise projects. www.shaw-trust.org.uk

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Southampton Voluntary Services: Southampton Voluntary Services is the umbrella body for local voluntary and community groups working in Southampton. They provide a wide range of services including specialist support, advice and training to our membership. We also provide and promote information to individuals and organisations on volunteering in the city. www.southamptonvs.org.uk

Community Action Hampshire: Working with local not-for-profit organisations to help make Hampshire and Portsmouth better places to live, work and invest in. The term not-for-profit represents community groups, charities and social enterprises - any non-governmental organisation that is primarily motivated by a desire to 'make life better'. www.actionhampshire.org

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation: HIWCF is an independent charitable foundation dedicated to connecting donors with the local causes and charities they care about. HIWCF specialise in awarding grants to smaller, lesser known charities and community groups who offer the support, services and activities that can really make a difference to local people's lives. See more at: www.hantscf.org.uk/

Business in the Community: Building on over 30 years of action, Business in the Community is working to shape a new contract between business and society, in order to secure a fairer society and a more sustainable future. Being a responsible businesses means healthy communities and a healthy environment. www.bitc.org.uk/

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS

The Prince's Trust: The Prince's Trust supports 13 to 30 year-olds who are unemployed and those struggling at school and at risk of exclusion. Many of the young people helped by The Trust are in or leaving care, facing issues such as homelessness or mental health problems, or they have been in trouble with the law. The Trust's programmes give vulnerable young people the practical and financial support needed to stabilise their lives, helping develop self-esteem and skills for work. Three in four young people supported by The Prince's Trust move into work, education or training and they have returned £1.4 billion in value to society over the last 10 years alone. www.princes-trust.org.uk

The Rainbow Project : Since 1981, the Rainbow Project has evolved and grown to meet the changing needs of young people in and around the city. Rainbow has provided supported housing and floating support services to over 8000 young people in Southampton; including the Life Chances and Moving 4ward programmes. www.therainbowproject.co.uk

EDUCATION ORGANISATIONS

EBP South: EBP South (Education, Business Partnership South) are a registered charity, established in 1997 providing career inspiration, preparation and experience to young people that is accredited by the Matrix award. EBP South works with young people from Primary Schools to Colleges in the Solent area providing a range of in-house career guidance programmes and activities; as well as external events. www.ebpsouth.co.uk

STEMNET: The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network creates opportunities to inspire young people in STEM. They aim to work with thousands of schools, colleges and STEM employers, to enable young people of all backgrounds and abilities to meet inspiring role models, understand real world applications of STEM subjects and experience hands-on STEM activities that motivate, inspire and bring learning and career opportunities to life. www.stemnet.org.uk

Design Engineer Construct!® (DEC!): is an accredited learning programme for secondary school age students and has been expertly developed to create and inspire the next generation of Built Environment professionals. Through a project-based approach, DEC! applies pure academic subjects to the latest construction industry practices. The result is young people with real-world practical experience and employability skills. www.designengineerconstruct.com

Inspiring the Future: Inspiring Futures works with a range of organisations to help educate young people about their study options and the skills needed in the modern workplace

WORKFORCE SOUTH



through a range of tailored activities to suit both the student and employer.

www.inspiringfutures.org.uk

ENTERPRISE ORGANISATIONS

Young Enterprise: Young Enterprise is the United Kingdom's largest business and enterprise education charity. Every year they help 250,000 young people learn about business and the world of work in the classroom under the guidance of a network of 5,000 volunteers from 3,500 companies. www.young-enterprise.org.uk

There are many other local charities to support www.localgiving.org/search may also be a useful research platform.