

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE ARTS:

PARTNERING WITH BUSINESS TO
ENACT SOCIAL CHANGE



WHAT IS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)?

CSR can be broadly defined as “the economic, ethical, and discretionary (or philanthropic) responsibilities that companies should assume.” Essentially, it is the idea that businesses can “do well while doing good.”



CSR efforts often include:

- cash and in-kind donations
- matching gifts
- employee engagement programs
- cause marketing

WHERE IS THE ART IN CSR?

Corporate giving programs increasingly focus strategically and specifically on issues that align with their business interests and have a positive social impact—whether national or global—on their consumers and the communities in which they do business.

Three main CSR drivers guide this focus and provide insight into the kind of arts and cultural projects, programs, and organizations businesses are interested in supporting.

These drivers are:

1. To enhance corporate investments in community and economic development, education, health and other priority issue areas;
2. To promote and reinforce company mission, core values, and brand; and
3. To achieve internal CSR goals, such as employee engagement/volunteerism and work-force diversity.

These drivers relate to the [8 reasons businesses partner with the arts](#):¹

- Employees want to live and work in a vibrant community
- The arts help you build market share, enhance your brand, and reach new customers
- The arts help you get your message across in engaging ways
- Creativity is among the top applied skills sought by employers
- The arts challenge employees to be their best
- The arts create an environment that blends background, ethnicities, and cultures
- The arts are a great way to show you appreciate your employees
- When you partner with local arts, you partner with the whole city

“[WE’RE] SEEING TRANSFORMATION IN CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY... A MORE HOLISTIC, COMMUNITY-ORIENTED APPROACH IN WHICH CORPORATIONS ARE LOOKING TO PLUG IN WHERE THEY CAN BE MOST EFFECTIVE.”

–ANDREA TAYLOR, FORMER DIRECTOR,
CITIZENSHIP & PUBLIC AFFAIRS, MICROSOFT CORPORATION

¹[The pARTnership Movement](#)



HOW CAN CSR AND THE ARTS WORK TOGETHER?

The specific objectives of a CSR program vary from corporation to corporation. However, corporations and arts organizations often engage with each other to achieve impact in the following key areas:

Social Change

Many corporate leaders value the arts' capacity to contribute to the kind of positive transformational community or social change they see as critical to the success of their CSR investments. Social change encompasses a range of [typical social and civic outcomes](#) from increased awareness and understanding, attitudinal change, increased civic participation, the building of public will, and policy change that corrects injustice. Social change must start with the individual but aims for broader institutional, community, or societal change.

“COMMUNITY ARTS ANCHORS SERVE AS PURVEYORS OF CULTURE AND CONTRIBUTORS TO QUALITY OF LIFE. THE POWER THAT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE IS THEIR IMPACT IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES ON LOCAL ISSUES.”

–TIMOTHY MCCLIMON,
AMERICAN EXPRESS FOUNDATION



Storytelling

Corporate support for arts endeavors that tell the story of underrepresented voices is a direct way to make a powerful difference. In turn, contributing to social change through the arts creates powerful narratives that can help corporations tell their own story of corporate social responsibility in distinctive and accessible ways.

Community Development

Investments in smaller and mid-sized cultural organizations and neighborhood-based groups are integral to community development, a broad term given to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities. Corporations interested in community development invest in both small and large cultural organizations and/or communities.

Youth Arts

Many corporations invest in youth arts programs that educate and engage young people. Arts with social purpose can extend the impact of youth arts programs to encourage youth to take action on social issues and build leadership skills.

Employee Engagement

CSR activity helps corporations to create healthy work communities and to attract and retain employees. The arts are an effective means to attract, engage, reward, and retain employees, particularly next generation talent, and to foster cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly diverse work force.

ACCORDING TO THE 2013 BCA NATIONAL SURVEY OF BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS, AMONG RESPONDENTS THAT CURRENTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ARTS, 64 PERCENT SAID THEY MIGHT INCREASE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS IF THEY COULD SUPPORT OTHER SOCIAL CAUSES BY GIVING TO THE ARTS.



5 CSR CASE STUDIES

Social Change

StubHub expanded access and opportunity for at-risk youth by supporting local grassroots nonprofits that provide music education through the [Rising Stars](#) program.

Storytelling

Through involvement in the production of [The Weight of the Nation](#), Kaiser Permanente leveraged the power of documentary film to catalyze action around obesity prevention—a priority issue of Kaiser Permanente’s overarching goal to improve the health of members and the communities.

Community Development

[Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation’s Arts and Enterprise](#) program provides place-based support to mid-sized New York City cultural institutions that are “being left behind” by other funders and yet are critical in the revitalization of transitional neighborhoods.

Youth Arts

[Adobe Youth Voices](#) helps youth from underserved communities to develop their creative voices through powerful digital storytelling techniques so they can comment on their world and take action on issues that are important to them.

Employee Engagement

One pillar of [Aetna](#)’s social responsibility is employee activation in the community. With over 403,000 hours, “our employees are creating a richer brand,” said Floyd Green, while also contributing expertise and hands-on value for positive community change.



5 TIPS WHEN SEEKING CSR SUPPORT

- **Be informed**—do your homework to know what CSR goals are important to your potential business partners.
- **Refine your story**—articulate the unique selling points of your organization or program in ways that relate to the CSR strategy for community and societal impact of each corporation you approach.
- **Foster mutually beneficial relationships**—consider each corporate relationship to be an opportunity to achieve objectives that are beneficial to both parties.
- **Consider all possibilities for engagement**—remain open to a company’s “[total tool-box](#)” of opportunities for engagement, beyond a cash gift. This could include: technical assistance, employee volunteering, or cause marketing.
- **Learn from your peers**—[seek out examples](#) of exemplary corporate partnership models and approaches from organizations within and outside of the arts sector.

“THERE IS SIGNIFICANT ROOM TO GROW JOINT EFFORTS THAT TAP THE UNIQUE CAPACITIES OF ARTS AND CULTURE TOWARD CSR GOALS AND LEVERAGE FUNDING AND OTHER ASSETS OF CORPORATIONS TOWARD ACHIEVING SHARED GOALS.”

– FROM [CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY & THE ARTS](#), BY LYNN E. STEARN.



Additional Resources

Learn more about CSR and the arts from the report on which this tool-kit was based, Animating Democracy's [*Corporate Social Responsibility & the Arts*](#), by Lynn E. Stern.

The report brings into relief the current landscape of corporate support for arts and culture—one in which more corporations are focusing strategically on issues that align with their business interests and have a positive social impact on their employees, their consumers, or the communities in which they do business.

Animating Democracy Resources:

[*Trend or Tipping Point: Arts & Social Change Grantmaking—A 2010 Report & Resource for Funders*](#)

A first-time portrait of arts funders, social change funders, and other supporting civic engagement and social change through arts and cultural strategies.

[Arts for Change Funder Portraits](#)

A series of brief papers and podcast interviews featuring funders who are supporting arts and culture as a creative strategy to achieve community building and development goals, civic engagement, or social justice goals.

[Directory of Funders](#)

Companion to *Trend or Tipping Point*, this directory profiles more than 150 grantmakers who support arts strategies to make community, social, and civic change.

[Funder Resources on Evaluation and Impact](#)

This curation offers insight into funders' perspectives on evaluation and impact. These pieces highlight philosophies and approaches to evaluation and work to advance meaningful measurement and communication strategies.

Want more stats and numbers related to corporate support of the arts? Read [The 2013 BCA Survey of Business Support for the Arts](#). To learn more about private sector partnerships with the arts, visit the [pARTnership Movement](#), an initiative from [Americans for the Arts](#) designed to reach business leaders with the message that partnering with the arts can build their competitive advantage.

To learn more about how we can foster civic engagement and social change through arts and culture, visit the [Animating Democracy](#) website.

