

## **How to Build Corporate Social Responsibility Program for Member Companies or Affiliates**

**Corporate Social Responsibility**, or CSR, is generally a term applied to the initiatives taken by a company's effects on environmental and social wellbeing. Benefits include better brand recognition, positive business reputation, increased sales and customer loyalty, better financial performance and the ability to attract and retain better talent. Many member companies and affiliates within NAA have tremendous social and charitable presence across the country and beyond. Rather than recreating the wheel, the goal of this page is to share some best practices to help others start their own.

### **Where do I start?**

The best place to start is to find a charity that interests you, is aligned with your company, affiliate or town or just tugs at your heartstrings. People are more motivated to get involved and work for something if they have a personal investment.

- If you want to research charities in your area, try using [charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org). Here you can see charities by geographical area, by category, by size and by rating. You also want to make sure that the project you are considering is consistent with your organization's mission, vision, values etc.
- Companies may wish to check with the NAA affiliates in the regions where you have offices/properties, to see if there are already established charitable programs or events. Affiliates may want to talk to other affiliates to get ideas on what their current charitable efforts.
- It is always important to receive proper approval as needed from leadership.
- A lot of members and affiliates work with charities that provide housing, focus on health issues or benefit children and schools.

While almost all charities and non-profits deserve support, we strongly recommend a few simple guidelines. Stay away from anything politically affiliated, you do not want to isolate a customer base. Do your research on the organization you choose. Search the charity name and the founder's name online to make sure there are not any surprises. Try to align yourself with organizations that your owners, investors, team members and residents will be proud to say that are affiliated. Bottom line; ask the question if the organization engages in any activities that might be considered controversial by any of your stakeholders?

Once you have selected a charity, it is always a good idea to check them out on [Guidestar.org](http://Guidestar.org). This website will allow you to view the IRS Form 990. By analyzing the Form 990, you will have the ability to see the size of the charity. Additionally, you will be

able to view the percentage of your donation that is directed towards administrative costs versus the intended recipient.

### **Project or long-term relationship?**

Determine if this is going to be a short-term project or long-term relationship with the charity. If short-term, what are the goals of the project? (Ex. Engaging members or team members; generating positive media coverage; fulfilling your organization's mission statement; etc.)

Identify a project/team leader for each event. Having a specific cheerleader for every event not only lifts the workload, but also adds new enthusiasm to each project. Ensure this leader knows the scope of their authority including communication, budget and time resources.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers are the foundation for a successful event, fundraiser or campaign. Moreover, finding the right volunteer can be as easy as asking. People like personal invitations to volunteer; these are much more effective than mass emails (although both have their place). Identify strengths and recruit. Focus on the benefits of volunteering; making a difference, using their talents for good, meeting others, helping others, working for a cause they believe in etc. Provide varying levels of engagement, some volunteers are ready to jump in with both feet while others want minimal involvement. Once you recruit your volunteers, retain them! Make volunteering fun, rewarding and engaging. Something they not only want to come back to, but something they want to bring others to.

Everyone's time is valuable. Once the volunteers have contributed their time and the event has concluded, it is important to properly thank everyone for their time and recap the event. Let them know how much money was raised, how many hours were donated, how many items were contributed etc. Basically, what was your impact on the charity.

### **Okay, I have a charity and I have volunteers, now what?**

There are so many wonderful ways to volunteer with charities or to raise funds or other donations. We thought this would be a good space to share success stories from members and affiliates to help educate and motivate you!

### **Sharing Your Efforts**

You've got your volunteers, you're at the event and now you want to let people know that you are making a difference in your community. There are a couple of ways to share your experiences with residents and the community at-large. The first, and easiest, is to



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document your event on social media. Everyone with a phone has a camera, which means you can take candid shots and gather all the volunteers together for a group shot. These photos can be shared through social media channels, and you can even ask the group if they mind you tagging their accounts to broaden your reach. One thing to note is that many organizations, especially those that work with children, may have strict rules about taking pictures. Make sure that you check with the organization you're working with before you begin taking and sharing pictures. Encourage your volunteers to participate in social media as well.

The second method is to let your local media know. NAA affiliates and member companies around the country have large events that benefit a variety of causes. Inviting the media to come see, or even participate, what your group is doing to better the community is one way to promote the cause you've chosen. Again, make sure you coordinate efforts with the organization you're working with. They may be able to offer a spokesperson or even work with you on a joint press release.

Promoting your work is a great way to connect with your members, residents or employees, especially Millennials who are more engaged with organizations that have a CSR initiative.

If you have a large donation, monetary or in-kind, and your donor wishes to remain anonymous, make sure you respect their wishes. When promoting the donation, you can say that the organization received a generous donation from someone who would like to remain anonymous.

Use #NAAGIVES when sharing your efforts on social media.