

# Adapting a Corporate Giving Program

## *Leadership in Difficult Times*

In times of economic distress, corporate giving officers need to demonstrate that corporate giving programs are still vital to business objectives. While some companies have maintained last year's giving levels and remain optimistic about continuing their work, others have lost funding for their programs, and many are struggling with the question, "If I do have to make cuts, what will I cut?"

One of the first things a corporation should do is to review its corporate giving goals to identify how to best realize budget restrictions while maintaining a social and business impact. Corporate giving officers should be asking themselves these questions:

- *Who are my priority stakeholders, and which programs are reaching them most effectively?*
- *How can I make the internal business case to sustain the programs and grantees I want to keep?*
- *How can I best support the organizations that I will continue to support?*

Most companies already have a 'portfolio of programs' to accomplish a broad set of goals and impact a range of stakeholders. This can range from a signature program to employee

programs to local giving in communities where the company has plants or offices.

### *How to Prioritize Stakeholders*

*To what extent does the stakeholder have influence or power that can affect the company either positively or negatively?*

*How does the stakeholder scrutinize, evaluate, and perceive the company and its general business activities?*

*What are the interests and needs of the stakeholder? What are their expectations of the company? Are their expectations being met through existing corporate citizenship programs?*

Programs in a company portfolio should be targeted, complementary, and focused on maximizing social and business impact. This means the programs match the company's core competencies and address the issues of priority stakeholders. The programs ideally are innovative, impactful, measurable, and associated with the brand identity.

Examine company's corporate citizenship goals and ensure that giving programs align with those goals. Then ask if programs are helping to meet the needs and interests of both the internal (executives, employees) and external (customers, community leaders, government officials, NGOs) stakeholders.

### *Sorry, We Don't Have the Funds This Year*

No one wants to cut back on funding, but if that happens, companies are uniquely positioned to provide a range of other support. Sometimes cash isn't always the most valuable thing a company can offer.

Companies must look for creative ways to support organizations:

- ▶ *Donate products or pro bono services. Share corporate expertise, be it communications, marketing, human resources, real estate, or technology.*
- ▶ *Help foster connections with other funders or government officials. Hosting a "local issues" breakfast to introduce nonprofit groups to local and state officials can be mutually beneficial.*
- ▶ *Offer to facilitate a convening for grantees and invite an expert in the field to serve as keynote speaker. This provides an opportunity for face to face networking and peer exchange around best practices.*
- ▶ *Request the support of partners, vendors and employees who want to volunteer their time or make donations.*
- ▶ *Look for other types of program grants you hadn't considered previously such as matching gifts, providing recycled technology (laptops, cell phones) and capacity building grants to enable grantees to continue their work.*

When companies put their unique assets to work on social problems, they create a resource that almost no one else can offer.

Furthermore, they can typically make an impact utilizing their existing skills and processes more cost-effectively than grantees could purchase them on the open market.

This type of value added grantmaking helps corporations build deeper relationships with targeted sets of grantees, creates good will ambassadors for the company, and ultimately achieves greater outcomes for the nonprofit community.

*For more information about Corporate Citizenship and Community Involvement, contact Vice President and Director of the Corporate Practice, Tom Knowlton, at [knowlton@tccgrp.com](mailto:knowlton@tccgrp.com).*