

# Corporate Grants Program Guide

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A guide that provides creative ideas to help you manage corporate philanthropy and giving programs



Many companies are supporting their communities in several ways through corporate giving programs. An analysis of programs on the YourCause® GrantsConnect® platform shows that 65% of clients have more than one grant program and the largest number of programs for one company was 32! This guide reviews the many different types of grant programs for corporate philanthropy including examples and best practices we have learned from helping companies manage their programs.

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## Employee Volunteer Grants

The following types of grant programs include some form of employee participation where the employee decides or nominates a nonprofit to receive grant funding from their organization. These grant programs incorporate employee choice for where company dollars go to support causes they care about. Incorporating employee choice is a great mechanism for showing employees you care about nonprofits they are passionate about, as well as keep them engaged with your corporate philanthropy. Research shows that many employees are more likely to be proud of the place they work when consulted about CSR initiatives.

**85%** of U.K. employees consulted about their company's CSR program said they were proud of their company's reputation

– 2021 Report on Power of Purpose by Qualtrics

**92%** of employees are more likely to recommend their company if they work for a company with strong purpose

- Porter Novelli

This is important considering over half of global employees choose a place to work based on their belief and values. – Edelman 2022 Trust Barometer

You will find a short description and examples of volunteer grants, team volunteer grants, as well as tips for how to budget for these programs.

### INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER GRANTS

**Also known as Dollars for Doers** where a company rewards employees who donate their time to nonprofits by providing monetary grants to the organization where that employee volunteers. This is a great incentive to keep employees engaged with corporate volunteer

programs and shows your support to employees that are committing so much of their time to giving back to their community. The impact to the nonprofit is significantly increased from the value of the time and money donated by your employees and your company.

#### Example:

A corporation provides up to \$750 grant (\$15 per hour) to nonprofits after an employee volunteers for 50 hours in a year.

### TEAM VOLUNTEER GRANTS

A company provides a monetary donation to a cause when a group of employees volunteer together.

#### Example:

A corporation provides up to \$500 for a nonprofit when five or more employees volunteer at least an accumulated 25 hours.

Corporations offer these programs to promote team building, community service and to give back to those causes their employees care about. This is a great way to incentivize employee participation in volunteer projects and skills-based volunteering. There are a few other tangible benefits to encouraging group volunteer events including but not limited to:

1. Builds leadership skills for those employees that will lead the group
2. Encourages department crossover on teams when you need a variety of skills to complete the project for the nonprofit
3. Skills-based volunteering allows employees to build on their skills and use them in different scenarios that likely would not come up during their day-to-day tasks.

### BUDGETING TIPS

You can determine the criteria for your program based on your budget and goals. Use the CSR Industry Report to find the engagement rate, average volunteer hours per employee and average volunteer hours per group. These metrics are shown for company size 0 – 100,000+

employees. The example below shows an estimated budget for a Dollars for Doers program based on employees reaching a minimum of 20 volunteer hours per year.

### BUDGET ESTIMATE

- Company Size: 1 - 1,000
- Average Volunteer Hours: 18
- Volunteer Engagement Rate: 19.3%
- Program Criteria: \$200 volunteer grant for minimum of 20 hours

$$\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{Engagement} \\ \text{Rate} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{c} \# \text{ of} \\ \text{employees} \end{array} \right) \times \$200 \text{ Volunteer Grant Award}$$

$$.19 \times 1000 = 190 \quad \text{~190 employees eligible for the award}$$

$$190 \times \$200 = \$38,000$$

You can calculate the budget for any number of estimated employees that would be eligible for the volunteer grant and determine what the program spend would be. You can also set a maximum program spend and let employees know awards will be approved on a first come first serve basis until the grant funding limit has been reached.

Clients using YourCause® CSRconnect®, our employee engagement software, could facilitate an individual dollars for doers program or team volunteer grant program. The software makes it easy to track volunteer hours, manage approvals for grants and view collective impact across departments or locations.

The following types of grants throughout the rest of this guide could be facilitated with a grantmaking software like GrantsConnect.

## Employee Nomination Grants

A company provides grant funding to nonprofits that their employees nominate. These programs often require an application that the employee fills out to specify why a nonprofit should receive grant funding your company has set aside. There are a variety of ways to structure these programs to engage your employees in participating with your corporate philanthropy.

**Open-Choice Program:** A completely open choice employee nomination program allows employees to choose from any nonprofit or cause that has passed vetting and eligibility requirements for giving. Companies usually create some criteria or guidelines for employees to nominate nonprofits and require employees to submit an application within a timeframe.

**Pillar-based Program:** Many corporations have defined missions or pillars they serve based on the strategy of their CSR initiatives. Defined pillars help develop long-term cross-sector partnerships and maintain a focus on impact measurement. In order to incorporate employee choice to support your mission, companies can create a nomination grant program with a defined group of nonprofits to receive grant funding. This type of employee choice could be facilitated with a voting engagement element in CSRconnect.

Your company is committed to decreasing world hunger and provides grants to organizations supporting this cause. Your employees can choose which organizations around the world receive funding by voting on locations.

### EMPLOYEE NOMINATION PROGRAMS IN ACTION

#### Southern Glazers Voluncheer of the Year Grant Award

Southern Glazer's combines employee volunteering recognition with a grant nomination program. Each month an employee wins the Voluncheer Recognition Award. At the end of the year all employees vote from among the group of Voluncheer winners and select who

will win the prize of \$5,000 donated to the charity of the winner's choice.

[See the 2021 Voluncheer of the Year and Holiday Campaign Results](#)

### **Blackbaud's Reward Your Passion Grant Nomination Program**

Blackbaud has a similar approach to showing their support for their employees' service. Blackbaud awards up to 30 grants each quarter to organizations where employees volunteer. Employees are directed to submit a grant application that has a quarterly deadline for review. Blackbaud uses an Engagement Element in CSRconnect to direct employees to information regarding the program including linking to the application in GrantsConnect and announcing the awards every quarter.

## **Community Investment**

In this section:

- Social Investment
- Define your Mission and Objective
- Define your Grantee Criteria
- Define your Review Process
- Communicate your Program to the Community
- Best Practices

All the varieties of corporate giving programs usually fall within two categories: Monetary Grantmaking and In-kind Donations.

### **Monetary Grantmaking**

Arguably the most common form of corporate giving programs where companies provide funding or cash donations to causes. These can be managed through formalized 501c3 corporate foundations or given directly from the company to the cause or organization.

### **In-kind Donations**

Any product a company donates from retail items, sports tickets, technology or even gift cards. Any company can

benefit from being able to track those donations and tally up their value and impact.

We have seen a lot of unique corporate community investment grant programs over the years. Before we dive into best practices, we thought it was important to show some of the benefits of developing long-term commitments and measuring impact as well as discuss how to build flexibility into community investment to allow for a more impactful response during times of need like disaster.

## **SOCIAL INVESTMENT**

Paul Klein recently released a new book, *Change for Good!*, where he differentiates between 'CSR Lite' and the idea of social investment or 'change for good'.

The idea of social investment is committing to solving a social problem, requiring the investment of human capital and financial capital. Companies and the community benefit from the solved social problem and this approach increases the likelihood of ensuring social change.<sup>2</sup>

**There has never been a time when so many people are aware of the need for social change and are taking action. By applying human capital in ways that make sense for volunteers and for the recipients of their service, we can help solve the world's most pressing social problems.**

**– Three Ways to Accelerate Social Change<sup>3</sup>**

This type of investment in making a difference and ensuring that social change results are measurable is more than making donations to effective charities. You will want to prove the value of your grants, volunteerism, and other philanthropic activities to the board and other stakeholders. And you will want to make investment decisions that move the needle on the causes your company and employees care about, then you will have



to set your program up for success in measuring your CSR Impact.

References:

1. [Change for Good: An Action Oriented Approach for Businesses to Benefit from Solving the World's Most Urgent Social Problems](#)
2. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christophermarquis/2022/03/15/canadian-author-and-fhttps://www.forbes.com/sites/christophermarquis/2022/03/15/canadian-author-and-founder-of-impakt-urges-companies-to-stop-csr-lite-and-start-to-solve-social-problems/?sh=120b1b9be578>
3. [Three Ways to Accelerate Social Change](#)

## DEFINE YOUR MISSION AND OBJECTIVE

When the world has so much constant 'need' it can feel like a heavy burden. How will you know where to provide support or if you are creating impact? Simple, by understanding your "why". We outline this concept in Mission and Goals: The foundation to your CSR Program's Success. Your "why" should translate into the ultimate outcome behind your support for this program. Document your mission and make strategic decisions that can be traced back to your program's mission. This documentation will also allow you to answer tough questions around who is eligible for funding, stay transparent with your employees and grantees and determine what reporting on outcomes you need to collect to continue to improve your programs success.

Here are a few questions for your executive team when outlining the why and your mission:

- Why is your company launching this program?
- Does this program aim to solve a social problem or exist to provide emergency funding in times of need?
- Will it align with your company's mission?
- Will this grant program resonate with your stakeholders- employees, community, investors etc.?
- Will this grant program increase the value of your business with your customers and investors?

- How will you determine nonprofit eligibility?
- How will you track outcomes?
- Will you provide reporting to your stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors and the community?

## DEFINE YOUR GRANTEE CRITERIA

Nonprofit eligibility can be defined by those organizations that serve a community where your company has a physical location, where your employees live and work or organizations that are committed to serving communities that align to your mission. This is where your strategy starts to come to life as you determine how to fund something that is going to make a difference in a certain geographic region or something that aligns to your commitment to climate change, the SDGs, social justice etc. Additionally, you should decide if the opportunity will be open to the public or a select group of nonprofit organizations that your company has a partnership with.

### Standard applications to help you get started

Document your definition and use this to help guide your grant application. You can save time for your reviewers and the nonprofits looking for funding by creating an online application with questions that weed out any organization that does not align to the causes you have dedicated to support.

### Why use software to create an online application?

This provides a secure way for nonprofits to enter sensitive information and tax identification to receiving funding from your organization. GrantsConnect has a pool of standard application templates you can look through to help you get started based on your program. Start with a template and use standard fields other organizations have used on their applications and then add your own. Even if your grant program is designed to provide funding for a single nonprofit partner that you have identified and committed to work with on a special project, you can still send them a private online application link. Your grantees will be grateful to be

able to check the status of their application, receive notifications for when it has been approved for funding and see all pending and past requests in one place.

GrantsConnect also provides peace of mind for the vetting process. Nonprofits that do not meet criteria set by your organizations will not be able to submit their application. Your reviewers can rest assured that the applications they receive will be from vetted nonprofits eligible to receive funding.

## DEFINE YOUR REVIEW PROCESS

Evaluate submissions with your grantmaking team or employees designated to review applications.

### Questions to Consider:

- How many people on your team need to review?
- How many levels of review do you want to incorporate?
- Will a member of your team local to the geographic region of the nonprofit review the request?
- Can you make the review process as timely as possible in order for the nonprofit organization to receive their funding or donations to begin using the grant?
- What information can you share about the review process with the applicants to be transparent as possible?
- What information does legal, accounting, or other departments need to know to approve monetary or in-kind donations and get the product or funds in the hands of the nonprofit?
- How will you notify nonprofits about the stage in the process and when their application is rejected, accepted, pending funding?
- Have you had grant programs in the past? If so, do you want to mimic any previous review processes?
- Communications – what communications would you like to go out to Grantees and Grant Reviewers?

- What follow-up forms need to be completed by applicants? What review forms should be filled out by Grant Reviewers? When should these follow-up forms be sent?
- Are there meetings and decisions that will take place externally to GrantsConnect that you would like to capture in GrantsConnect?
- What are your internal deadlines for each step of the process? Is your Grant cycle on a Quarterly, Annual, or custom basis?

## COMMUNICATE YOUR PROGRAM TO THE COMMUNITY

You have done a lot of hard work to get to this point! Share your story of why you are committed to driving social impact and investing in your communities. Whether your program is open to the public or designated for a select group of nonprofits, it is important to be transparent, clear, and responsive with your grantees. What information can you share about how to apply for, receive or report on a grant that will help a nonprofit determine if they should apply? Companies that commit to establishing transparency will see many benefits including: strengthening credibility, increasing public trust, improving grantee relationships, reducing duplicate efforts, facilitating greater collaboration, and building a community of shared learning. PEAK Grantmaking has helped funders create strategies for equitable and transparent grantmaking practices for over 25 years. They have a guide: *How to be Transparent, Clear and Responsive with Grantees*, designed to help funders create practices that support strong and trusting relationships.

## BEST PRACTICES

A great way to show value in your employees is to involve your employees in the decision-making process when determining which direction to proceed. Rather than performing a traditional top-down approach, it can be more effective and more impactful to your employee population by considering bottom-up decision making to determine how your social good can impact the

community. Start with a simple survey in which you ask your employees what is most important to them, and what they value. Voting is also a great way to gather information from a large employee base, and allow each employee's opinion to be heard. For clients with a smaller employee base, employees can be broken out into focus groups and findings can be written down and taken to the leadership team.

Do not pass on the opportunity to internally announce any new programs and initiatives to your employees so they can celebrate with the company when new goals and plans are laid out. Depending on the program type (employee relief assistance vs monetary grants for charities), external communications should take place to solidify your commitment to both your community and employees alike. Finally, as grant programs have been finalized, communicate your impact both internally and externally.

Being successful with your grant programs is a multi-faceted effort with includes equal parts planning, communication, delivery, and celebration:

1. **Planning** can include employee input. Allow your employees' voices to be heard.
2. **Communication** holds you accountable to your goals, and explains your efforts to all stakeholders in a way that should be easy to understand and act upon.
3. **Delivery** is the actual process of delivering products (monetary, in-kind, recognition, etc.) in a timely manner to the awardees or grantees. It is following through on your promise as a company.
4. **Celebration** will highlight what you have accomplished together and could be as small as a token of appreciation, or as large as a company-wide in-person event.

## Community Investment Programs in Action

In this section you'll find examples from companies for the following programs:

- Disaster Relief
- Corporate Giving
- Product Donations
- Grant Awards

### DISASTER RELIEF

Many companies now have disaster response as a vital element of their Corporate Social Responsibility efforts and will set funding aside to be able to immediately respond should a disaster strike. For example, a company may pledge a total budget of \$1 million to support humanitarian relief, and organizations can apply for that funding as needed up to a certain amount. Allowing organizations to request funding as needed builds flexibility into your grant program. These grants can require less reporting on outcomes from the nonprofit, may require the organization to only use the funds to directly support the disaster and not be allowed for general operating costs.

The Community Action Fund at Sobeys Inc., is specifically designed to address the emergency needs facing frontline communities with tailored support to food banks and meal programs as they support neighbors in need during a crisis.

### CORPORATE GIVING

#### Sobeys Inc Strategy

Sobeys Inc., is one of Canada's largest retailers with grocery store operations across various banners in Canada.

Their business strategy and mission of their grant programs are aligned and uniquely positioned to support their two defined pillars, Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds, in the Canadian communities they serve.



**Healthy Bodies** – focuses on nonprofit partners like foodbanks and food-based organizations

**Healthy Minds** – focuses on child and youth mental health and partnerships with children’s hospital foundations in Canada

[Learn More](#)

## PRODUCT DONATION PROGRAM

### Kendra Scott Community Investment

Kendra Scott gives back in a variety of ways. We wanted to highlight their community giving program that aligns to their broader mission and provides local causes with pieces of jewelry to organizations to support their fundraising as an example of an in-kind donation program. In 2021 alone they donated 30,000+ pieces of jewelry. They also have the options for organizations to host events that empower women and youth where 20% of the proceeds made in-store or online using a code directly benefit the cause.

[Learn More](#)

## GRANT AWARD PROGRAM

This commonly looks like recognizing local leaders or leaders supporting a specific mission with a donation to a charity of their choice or to their cause. This is a unique type of community investment program that asks for nominations from stakeholder groups to nominate leaders to be recognized for their efforts. The leaders could also receive mentorship, access to networking and a community.

### L’Oreal Women of Worth Grant Program

L’Oreal has recognized 150+ extraordinary nonprofit leaders over the past 17 years to be a part of the Women of Worth Program. Each woman receives \$20,000 in charitable funding, mentorship from the L’Oreal Paris network and community as well as a platform to spread their mission.

[Learn More](#)

## Scholarships

Companies understand that a well-educated workforce of tomorrow depends on accessible education today and set aside funds for a variety of scholarship programs. Companies develop these programs for their employees and their families as well as for the general public. These programs may be need-based, merit-based or target specific career disciplines that align to talent gaps they would need to fill. These programs allow companies to remain competitive in acquiring and maintaining talent as they support the education of their own employees or people interested in fields of study that support their business growth.

Grantee Criteria Examples:

- Full-time and part-time associates enrolled in accredited schools and demonstrate financial need.
- Dependents graduating high school whose parents or guardians are employees. Applicants must be enrolled or plan to enroll in accredited school.
- Females, minorities, or historically under-represented backgrounds in the general public pursuing degrees in disciplines that are linked to the company.

### Tip:

Partner with Human Resource and Diversity Equity and Inclusion departments to strategically manage and promote a scholarship program.

## Innovation or Research Grants

These grant programs are designed to facilitate partnership and community while accelerating finding new solutions. This funding could go to a nonprofit or for-profit organization that furthers the research or work towards a cause or innovation. We often see these types of programs in the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, healthcare, engineering, software or other technology industries. Some unique programs that fall under this category are Challenge Grants and Startup Programs. Companies create a program that provides funding or

donations to advance research or sponsor challenges and/or startup competitions.

## INNOVATION OR RESEARCH GRANTS IN ACTION

### Blackbaud Social Good Startup Program

This is a year-long accelerator designed to support early-stage software companies whose solutions are focused on solving problems that matter to the social good community. The companies chosen to participate have strong potential for providing value to Blackbaud customers. Companies receive access to Blackbaud resources, marketing opportunities and nondilutive grant funding.

[Learn More](#)

### WellsFargo Innovation Challenge

This challenge connects WellsFargo with U.S. based startups, accelerators, and venture capitalist to create forward-looking financial solutions. The challenge winners and up to seven finalist companies are awarded a cash prize.

[Learn More](#)

## Employee Relief Funding

### What can companies do when one of their own employees is the victim of a disaster or sudden financial hardship?

A company can set up an Employee Assistance Fund. It is not ideal to wait for disaster to strike to establish employee relief (but it can be done). Planning ahead and starting the conversations with leadership about potential impact is the fastest and most efficient way to get your employee assistance fund off the ground. Gather the right team of people across your organization, including legal, finance, HR and CSR to engage and collaborate on goals so nothing is left unconsidered. When discussing what the organization should establish in its programs, overlay the company's

## Creating and Managing an Employee Assistance Fund

[VISIT THE RESOURCE ONLINE](#)

ESG (environmental, social, governance) investments with employee needs to create a strategic relief program.

There are many components that go into setting up and providing an Employee Assistance Fund. Make sure that the fund and its assistance is in compliance with all legal guidelines. We walk through some of the tough decisions that come along with starting an employee relief fund and we hope this tool helps simplify the numerous steps involved in the process and helps you make the best decision in regard to your recipients and company.

CSR software allows employees, or retirees to donate to an employee assistance fund and grantmaking software allows organizations to create applications where employees can enter confidential and sensitive information without the need to sit down in an HR office and fill out a form. You can ensure you are not violating an employee's privacy by reviewing settings and filtering information in GrantsConnect.

You'll find additional resources for managing employee relief funds on our website.

## Sponsorships

Corporate sponsorships are a form of support that companies provide to nonprofits for an event or project. There is a benefit to the nonprofit, the community they serve and the company receives a positive boost in their brand image from supporting the cause. Generally, sponsorships consist of the nonprofit recognizing the

corporation throughout various materials including signage, merchandise, or other branding on printed and digital event details. Common types of corporate sponsorships include monetary, in-kind donations, or media. A media sponsorship may consist of a company paying the cost of or providing creative services to promote the event.

Companies do not always consider sponsorships to be grant funding for accounting and budgeting purposes, however this is still a program that can be managed with a grantmaking software solution. For example, an HR department might budget to sponsor a walkathon for an employee health initiative, or a marketing department might budget to sponsor a gala event at the local art museum, so this funding would not come from a typical corporate grant budget.

At YourCause® from Blackbaud®, we have been helping companies support employee engagement initiatives that connect to corporate purpose and drive meaningful change towards critical social issues since 2007. We support over 500 organizations from Fortune 500 companies to small and medium sized business to drive employee engagement in giving, volunteering, DEI programs and more. Our clients in the Global Good Network™ engage employees from 116 countries with opportunities to drive social impact. The tips, best practices, and resources are curated by our team of experts that help companies maximize the use of the YourCause platform, launch new programs, grow and scale.

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