



# Information Sheet

Foundation for Community Dance • January 2011

## Making the most of Corporate Social Responsibility

Whether or not they have an agreed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy, most businesses large or small are aware of the need to behave responsibly and ethically towards their local communities.

Working with the voluntary arts and crafts groups that form the hubs of these communities is a great way for them to do this – and one that they might not yet previously have thought of.

This briefing looks at the benefits of the CSR agenda for voluntary arts groups, and gives advice on how to sell the opportunities they have to offer to businesses of all sizes.

### What is CSR?

CSR is a phrase that describes the way in which companies influence, and measure their impact upon, society and the environment. By engaging positively with their community and surroundings, business can help maintain a good reputation or reduce the damage of negative publicity.

As well as making good business sense and having a direct impact on profits and/or share price, many businesses have a genuine wish to invest in the communities that their stakeholders (particularly their staff and customers) come from.

Large corporations and multinational companies are more likely to use the term 'CSR', and have a written strategy to address it, but even small local business are aware of the need to relate well with their communities.

### A. Ideas on how to work together

Here are some ideas of areas in which businesses could work with you. Section B will go into more details about who to approach and how to pitch your idea.

#### 1. Employer Supported Volunteering

Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) is the term for a wide range of types of volunteering carried out by employees, supported by their employer. The employees benefit as they have time away from the office to develop new interests and support local projects. The business benefits from having a motivated and socially engaged workforce and the good publicity of having helped their community. And the organisation benefits from having some extra pairs of hands to help out with whatever tasks need doing.

In practice, ESV usually entails the employer giving staff paid time off to volunteer on an agreed project. Any additional expenses incurred, such as travel expenses and lunch, can either be covered by the business, the organisation or the individual themselves. This needs to be agreed in writing between the three parties (business, organisation and individual) in advance, along with details of the period of the volunteering placements, the hours required, location, dress code, etc.

ESV often works best when you have a specific project in mind, such as creating the scenery for a community play or stewarding at a local festival. Having a single project with a set cut-off date will give the volunteers a sense of achievement having seen a project through to completion and will make

a better story for the local media (which might be the main incentive as to why the business helped you in the first place).

Another great thing about ESV is that you can target specific businesses or departments depending on the skills you need to bring in. For example, you could ask an interior design agency to come and help you refurbish your venue or an IT firm to come and set up a video-diary booth to collect case studies of your participants for YouTube. Bear in mind though that those wanting to volunteer are probably doing so to broaden their horizons, not just to do what they do on a daily basis. You'll need to demonstrate that you are offering a unique experience, and not simply avoiding having to pay a contractor for something you would have to have done anyway, such as the annual accounts!

Be as professional as you can in welcoming the volunteers – remember you want to foster a good ongoing relationship, not just with them, but with their employers too. Think about how you are going to make them feel comfortable and aware of exactly what is required. Consider creating a written role description, which you can discuss with them prior to, and during, an informal induction. Make sure they are adequately supervised and have the opportunity to provide feedback and talk to you about any concerns. For more tips on how to manage occasional volunteers, see VAN Briefing 125 (available to download free from [www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings](http://www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings)).

If good publicity is one of the reasons the business has agreed to help you (and it usually is), make sure you bear this in mind from the beginning. What kind of stories do your local newspapers and radio stations like to run? Do you have a good relationship with editors and reporters? Be careful not to promise publicity to a business if you're not sure you can deliver it. It's better to word any agreements in terms of what you will do rather than what you expect other people to do (i.e. 'you will send a press release to local media followed by a phone call', 'you will send the business a copy of the release and photos for their website and annual report', 'you will allow the business to have a display stand at your event free of charge', not 'you will ensure that the story appears in the local paper, on the radio, on the local television news, etc.').

For more details on working with the media, see VAN Briefings 11, 74 and 77.

## **2. Team building**

This overlaps with ESV, but is slightly different in that the employees coming to your organisation are doing so in order to bond as a team rather than just to help you out. This might involve volunteer work of some sort, or it might involve participating in your art or craft activity – writing and performing a play, painting a mural or forming a band. The possibilities are endless!

Of course, if they're not going to help as volunteers, you will need to ensure that your group gets compensated in some other way. The most obvious way is by being paid, but alternatively you could receive gifts or services 'in kind' from the business employing them. Make sure everything is down in writing before going ahead, to the satisfaction of everyone involved. If you are going to incur extra costs, in materials or in employing a freelance artistic facilitator (preferably one who has worked with similar groups before), ensure that you are covered for this in the agreement and are not left out of pocket.

You know better than anyone the friendship and camaraderie elicited just by taking part in your art or craft. What kinds of exciting team-building opportunities could you translate this into? Perhaps you could put together a range of different team-building 'packages' for businesses to select from, and create a glossy leaflet or web page to sell the idea to interested companies.

## **3. Gifts and services in kind**

Gifts in kind are things given to you for free in lieu of a donation or payment. They could include office supplies, art or craft materials, computer equipment etc. As well as gifts in kind there are also services in kind, such as plumbing, design work or marketing consultancy.

The benefits of receiving gifts and services in kind are obvious to you – providing that they are things you want and need. The benefits to the business supplying them can be various. They might receive publicity (e.g. helping the local community by donating their old PCs to charity), free tickets to your events, or regular team-building days for their staff.

Make sure you have a written agreement regarding any gifts or services donated or paid in kind, including details of what is expected in return, signed by both parties. Ensure also that you keep a record of all gifts and services in kind you receive in

terms of their financial equivalent (assets). You might need this information in future for tax or charity accounting purposes.

If you are receiving old computers, it is in the interests of both parties that all sensitive data is wiped from the hard-drives prior to you receiving them. If the donor business doesn't know how to do this properly, tell them to search online for 'certified data erasure' and that you can only accept computers accompanied by proof of erasure from a certified company.

Gifts and services in kind to registered charities may have a further benefit for the business in that they are sometimes eligible for tax relief. For more details of how this works in the UK, see the link to the HMRC website in the Further Resources section of this briefing.

#### **4. Sponsorship**

The topic of business sponsorship is covered in greater detail in VAN Briefing 115 – Attracting business sponsors, available to download from [www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings](http://www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings).

The most important things to bear in mind when planning a sponsorship deal, is that it is not simply a donation. Sponsorship is a business transaction and there should be some parity between the benefits received by both parties. For the business these benefits could include marketing (including branding of literature and display materials and title sponsorship of events, e.g. the Guardian Hay Festival or Man Booker prize), publicity (in local newspapers and on radio and television) and employee development (such as team building) – or a combination of all of these. The package you put together will be more likely to succeed if you take into consideration the specific needs and characteristics of the business you intend to approach.

For businesses that sponsor registered charities, sponsorship payments are treated differently to simple donations for tax purposes. The way they're treated, and whether or not the business can claim tax relief for them, depends on the nature of the sponsorship arrangement and on the particular circumstances. For more details of how this works in the UK, see the HMRC link in Further Resources.

#### **5. Bringing art into the workplace**

Many businesses have offices and conference facilities that make wonderful settings for visual arts

and sculpture. Knowing that they have sourced their artworks from a local community group contributes towards the company's CSR aims and provides a welcome talking point for clients, customers and other stakeholders visiting the premises.

There are many ways of setting up such an exhibition. The business could simply buy the artworks from your group's members, or hold them on permanent or temporary loan, or just act as a gallery, selling the work to employees or visitors on a commission-free basis. Either way you need to be clear from the start about the exact nature of the arrangement and get this in writing.

Another way to bring art into the workplace is through performances, either during a normal working day for the benefit of the employees and visitors, or at specific events and conferences for the benefit of customers or delegates. A string quartet in the background adds a touch of class to a formal dinner, while a local street dance group provides an exciting break-out session during a 'stuffy' two-day conference. These performances can be provided in exchange for a single payment, or as part of a wider package of benefits agreed between you and the business.

Don't forget, ESV projects or team building can also take place at the premises of the business, making it even more convenient for the employees taking part.

#### **6. Venue sharing**

As well as bringing art into the workplace in the ways outlined above, your group and the business may be able to find other ways to make use of each others' premises. For example, perhaps they have a conference or exhibition space that they could lend to you during evenings or weekends for practice or rehearsals.

Alternatively, you might have a gallery or dance studio that would make an interesting and unusual venue for business meetings or corporate events. You could just provide the venue on its own, or combine this with a performance or workshop, depending on the nature of the event.

If you rent or borrow your premises, be careful to ensure that such use doesn't constitute illegal sub-letting. Also, it's vital to check which of the parties' insurance covers the usage, whether additional cover is required, and, if so, who is responsible for organising it.

## 7. Payroll Giving

Payroll Giving is mainly of interest to voluntary arts and crafts groups that are registered charities. It is a way for employees to make regular payments to a charity directly from their pay. They can donate as much or as little as they want. Payments are deducted from their pay before tax, meaning that employees are given tax relief on their donation immediately, and at their highest rate of tax. It's cheap and easy for businesses to set up a Payroll Giving scheme and many will be able to adapt their existing payroll system to operate it. All they have to do is sign up with an approved Payroll Giving agency. HMRC has a list of approved UK agencies (themselves registered charities) on its website (see Further Resources section for the web address).

If you have a good relationship with a business and you are a registered charity with clear charitable aims that match the values and interests of its employees, you might want to consider asking them to set up a Payroll Giving scheme, or, if they have an existing scheme, suggesting to their employees that they donate a proportion of it to you.

### B. Making your pitch

#### Researching the business

Researching the best possible businesses to approach is time well spent, as demonstrating that you have a good knowledge of their activities, values and reputation, and how they complement your group, will make your proposed package much more attractive. Once you have identified those you want to pursue, pore over their websites and any other literature available in the public domain. Annual reports are a great way of finding out about a company's CSR priorities and anything similar it has done in the past.

Businesses to consider might include those already known to you (or your staff, volunteers or board members) or businesses that already supply goods or services to your group. Finding out who to contact within the company can be tricky as CSR may be based within the human resources, business development or public relations departments. For smaller businesses you may be better off contacting the Chief Executive or Managing Director personally. Always address correspondence and telephone calls by name – you can usually find these out from the company's website or switchboard operator.

#### Developing the package

Remember, this is a commercial opportunity for the business. You need to be able to provide, in measurable terms, exact details of what they'll be getting out of the deal in such a way that any Chief Executive or Board of Directors would understand and agree to.

Which combination of the seven ideas laid out in this briefing (or others) would be most beneficial to the business? What is it about your group that particularly resonates with the image they wish to portray?

Always think about your proposal from the perspective of the business. Just because something is quite cheap and easy for you to provide, it doesn't mean it isn't valuable to them, and vice versa. When weighing up a fair deal always base your estimations of worth on the value to them the recipient, not just the cost to you the supplier.

#### Delivering the proposal

Keep the proposal brief so that it prompts further questions and discussion in person or over the phone. The proposal should contain:

- a brief covering letter (no more than A4) explaining why they should work with you – don't be shy to mention CSR specifically;
- a brief reminder of who you are, what you do and who your stakeholders are (members, volunteers, audience, etc.);
- a brief outline of the package you are suggesting (you may wish to suggest more than one option), with a note that you would welcome further discussion on the details;
- the benefits to them; and
- any fees such an agreement would entail, if relevant. Phone your contact after a few days and ask what they thought of the proposal and whether they would like to arrange a meeting to discuss it further. Don't be disappointed if they don't want to work with you – ask for feedback and take the lessons learnt with you into your proposal to the next business.

If you do agree to a deal, make sure to get it in writing in the form of a signed letter laying out what each party has agreed to. Well done and best wishes for what will hopefully be a long and fruitful relationship!

## Further Resources

### VAN briefings

Available to download for free for individual use from [www.voluntaryarts.org.uk/briefings](http://www.voluntaryarts.org.uk/briefings). If you wish to reproduce or disseminate material from the briefings more widely please visit our VAN Briefings Licensing Policy page at

[www.voluntaryarts.org/14452](http://www.voluntaryarts.org/14452) for more details.

- 🌀 135 – Gift Aid and tax effective giving (June 2010)
- 🌀 125 – Fostering a long-term relationship with occasional volunteers (March 2009)
- 🌀 115 – Attracting business sponsors (March 2008)
- 🌀 77 – How to write a press release (December 2003)
- 🌀 74 – Publicity explained (December 2003)
- 🌀 11 – Get into print (March 1996)

### Other resources

- 🌀 Business in the Community – works with business to build a sustainable future for people and planet – [www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk)
- 🌀 Business in the Community Northern Ireland – Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. – ireland

- 🌀 Business in the Community Ireland – [www.bitc.ie](http://www.bitc.ie)
- 🌀 Business in the Community Cymru – [www.bitc.org.uk/wales](http://www.bitc.org.uk/wales) and [www.bitc.org.uk/wales/cymraeg](http://www.bitc.org.uk/wales/cymraeg) (Welsh language site)
- 🌀 Art & Business – connect companies and individuals to cultural organisations – [www.artsandbusiness.org.uk](http://www.artsandbusiness.org.uk)
- 🌀 Business to Arts (RoI) – [www.businesstoarts.ie](http://www.businesstoarts.ie)
- 🌀 Giving to charity: businesses, HMRC (UK) – [www.hmrc.gov.uk/businesses/giving](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/businesses/giving)
- 🌀 Payroll Giving – approved Payroll Giving agencies, HMRC (UK) – [www.hmrc.gov.uk/businesses/giving/payroll\\_agencies.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/businesses/giving/payroll_agencies.htm)
- 🌀 Corporate Social Responsibility – What's your view?, Chartered Accountants Ireland – <http://tinyurl.com/293rl4b>
- 🌀 Employee volunteering, Timebank – <http://timebank.org.uk/employee-volunteering>
- 🌀 Employee volunteering, Do-it – [www.do-it.org/wanttovolunteer/evsvolunteering](http://www.do-it.org/wanttovolunteer/evsvolunteering)

---

Published by Foundation for Community Dance, January 2011

© Foundation for Community Dance. All rights reserved.

Every care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, but is not intended to be legally comprehensive or to replace professional/legal advice. No responsibility can be accepted by the publishers, author(s) or contributors for any errors, omissions or changes not for any harm, however caused, which results from the information presented.

This information sheet was first produced and published by Voluntary Arts: [www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings](http://www.voluntaryarts.org/briefings)



### Foundation for Community Dance

Web: [www.communitydance.org.uk](http://www.communitydance.org.uk)

Email: [info@communitydance.org.uk](mailto:info@communitydance.org.uk)

Tel: +44 (0)116 253 3453

Fax: +44 (0)116 261 6801

Registered charity no. 328392

Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in England and Wales no. 2415458

Registered office: LCB Depot, 31 Rutland Street, Leicester LE1 1RE



Supported by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

