



# DIVERSITY IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



By Stachen Frederick

# OVERVIEW

There is a growing trend towards for-profit corporations and companies becoming more socially responsible. In the last decade, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a new and popular term that refers to the business practice of corporations incorporating economic, social and environmental requirements into their business.

CSR activities may include but not limited to:

1. Providing financial donations to not for profit organizations through a variety of avenues including grant-making, employee donation matching and employee giving platforms
2. In kind donations of products or volunteer initiatives that support charitable organizations
3. Procurement of products and services from social enterprises
4. Promoting equal opportunities for men and women, visible minorities and other areas of diversity at the executive level.
5. Following ethical business practices and only working with partners that also follow ethical practices
6. Developing environmental and/or health and safety programs within the community.



Diversity by definition refers to differences or variety. In the human rights and social justice sector, diversity refers to differences in individuals in areas such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, class and socio-economic status, just to name a few. The Canadian Society is very diverse. According to Statistics Canada, "1 in 5 Canadians, aged 15 and above, had one or more disabilities that limited their daily activities" and just over 20% of people in Canada belong to a visible minority group.

The world's problems are very complex and as Professor Scott E. Page once said, "Diverse groups of people bring to organizations more and different ways of seeing a problem and thus, faster/better ways of solving it". In order for corporations to make a meaningful impact in the issues that are important to their business, they must include the voices of a diverse group of individuals in their corporate giving strategy.



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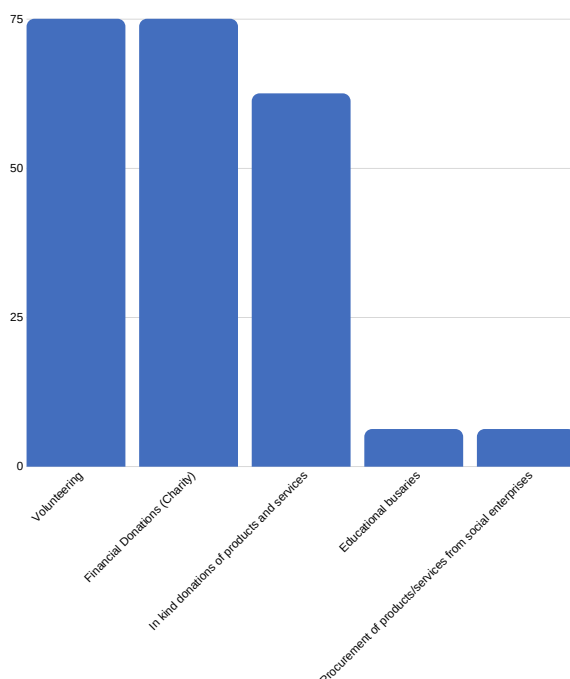
Professor Scott E. Page

This project seeks to explore practices of engaging diverse populations in the philanthropic aspect of corporate social responsibility committees, through numbers 1, 2 and 3 of the CSR activities listed above . This project also examined diversity as it relates to the engagement of staff at different seniority levels in the CSR committees of an organization and the different ways in which corporations give to the community. The project also gathered information on different diversity initiatives that exist in corporations and strategies for increased diversity in corporations.

A survey was sent out to individuals working in for profit businesses - small to large. There was a total of 16 respondents. Respondents of the survey were part of companies that were located all across Canada . Some respondents were part of companies that had offices all across Canada. Respondents answered the survey anonymously and there was no identifying information in the survey responses. All respondents reported that there is some form of philanthropy element in their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Volunteering and financial donations to not for profit organizations were the most popular CSR activities , followed by in kind donations and services. One individual selected that their company is involved in providing educational bursaries and involved in procurement of services from social enterprises.

This project does not make generalizations of the corporate social responsibility sector in Canada but the intent is to provide the view points of some individuals working in the for profit sector as it relates to diversity initiatives in philanthropy. This project does not explore the diversity of employees making decisions in corporations that do not have a CSR committee. This project does not include analysis of social inclusion and equity matters; whereby social inclusion is the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity and equity as to the process and practices of ensuring that everyone access to fair treatment.

To provide further information on diversity initiatives done by a few corporations, mention is made of different articles and websites that provide details of how corporations can engage in diverse philanthropy as well as mention is made of diversity initiatives done by Telus, RBC, and Home Depot.



**75%**

**OF RESPONDENTS REPORT THAT THEIR COMPANY IS INVOLVED IN DIVERSITY INITIATIVES**

Volunteering  
Financial Donations

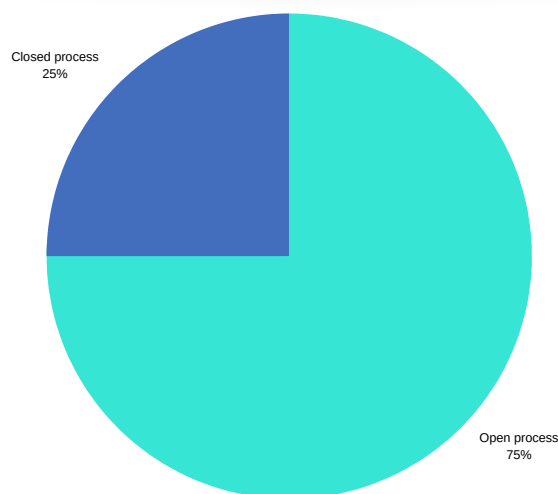
# PROCESS OF SUBMISSION FOR FINANCIAL REQUEST

Respondents were asked to select which statement best describes their company's selection process of organizations to support

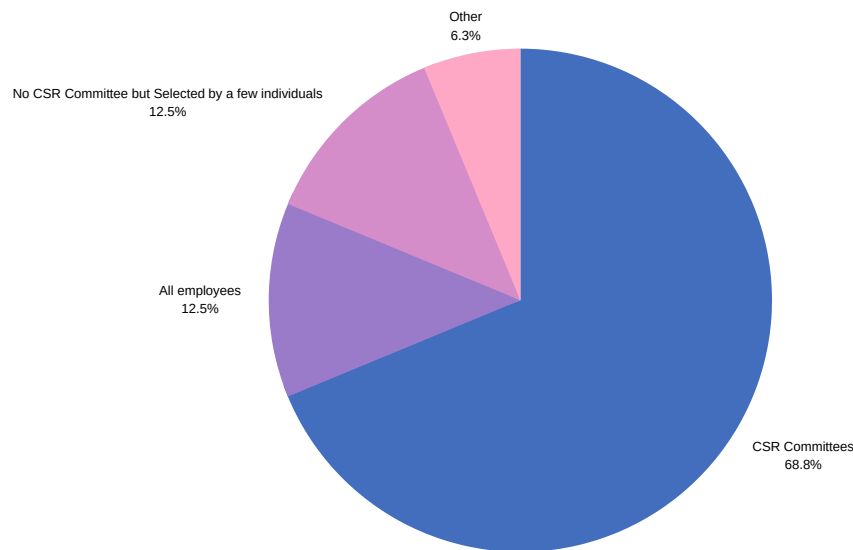
The three choices of answers were

1. Organizations can submit an application or nomination for assistance and the decision is made by company representatives
2. Organizations cannot submit an application for assistance, but organizations are chosen by company representatives
3. N/A

75% of respondents selected that organization can submit an application or nomination and the decision is made by company respondents. 25% respondents stated that it was a closed process but organizations can be chosen by company representatives. Areas for consideration to include diverse populations in this process will be mentioned in the section of Strategies for increased diversity in the CSR field.



# PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT OF STAFF IN THE SELECTION PROCESS



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75% of respondents selected that organization can submit an application or nomination and the decision is made by company respondents. 25% respondents stated that it was a closed process but organizations can be chosen by company representatives. One person mentioned a two tiered system of their organization in which all employees can nominate charities for smaller amounts of funding and for larger amounts and multi year funding arrangements, the CSR committee is in charge of these donation requests.

Areas for consideration to include diverse populations in this process will be mentioned in the section of Strategies for increased diversity in the CSR field.



# DIVERSITY IN CSR COMMITTEES

62.75 % of respondents said that was a CSR committee in their organization. Respondents reported that members of their CSR committees are chosen either by being hired to be on the CSR team or by volunteering to be on the CSR committee. One respondent mentioned that there is an application process for employees who want to be part of the CSR committee while there are also employees who are hired for that role specifically.

Respondents were asked to share their viewpoints on the diversity on CSR committees

## RACE

Most respondents felt that their company's CSR team were racially diverse. However two members made comments relating to it being racially diverse in terms of composition but final decisions rest on boards and higher committees that are not that racially diverse.

## GENDER

Most respondents felt that the gender composition of their company's CSR's team was not diverse. Some participants provided an explanation as to why they felt that it was not diverse. Most of them stated that their CSR's committee is composed of mainly women. One participant stated that the board level is mostly men, making decision.

## PRESENCE OF JUNIOR STAFF AND SENIOR STAFF

Most respondents felt that the CSR's committee of their organization was diverse in the presence of junior and senior staff. One person mentioned that there is a two tiered system in the organization in which junior and senior staff are separated on two committees and make decisions based on the size of donation.

## ENGAGEMENT OF EXTERNAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL ISSUES

No respondents selected that their CSR committees engage external individuals with lived experience of social issues.

# CURRENT DIVERSITY INITIATIVES IN THE CSR ACTIVITIES OF THE COMPANIES OF RESPONDENTS

Respondents were asked to share ways in which their organization has increased diversity in their CSR initiatives. Here are some strategies implemented by corporations include

1. Allowing charitable organizations to develop their own measurement of impact rather than a prescribed notion of what impact means for a particular issue.
2. Having diversity affinity groups decide on what charities and not for profits to support that are doing work to support their communities.
3. Allowing employees to suggest charities that are worth supporting and ensuring that diverse staff are aware on channels to select their charities of choice
4. Allowing a community nomination process so that individuals from all across Canada can nominate charities and individuals
5. Focusing charitable giving on low resourced neighbourhoods

# DIVERSE PRACTICES THAT RESPONDENTS WANT TO SEE IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

Respondents provided ways in which they would like to see increased diversity in CSR activities in their organizations. Some of the ways include

1. Increased representation of diverse populations in their CSR Committee
2. Developing diversity metrics to compare how diverse is their company's diversity initiatives in CSR with other companies
3. Creating a CSR committee in organizations that focus on philanthropy and that gives opportunities for all employees to volunteer or apply to be on.
4. Increased awareness of issues for staff in CSR so that they can best understand the issues that they are trying to solve.
5. Identify specific diversity committee positions



# RECOMMENDATIONS

**All the current diversity initiatives mentioned by respondents that their companies' are doing, as well as the diversity initiatives that they would like to see in their companies are noteworthy.** (See page 7 and 8)

Here are some other initiatives worthy to be mentioned:

1. Developing community boards or community advisory committees that involve members of the community with lived experiences of the issues and/or members of diverse communities i.e visible minorities or people living with a disability . Telus is one organization that have members of the community that sit on boards that make decisions around funding. Home Depot Foundation also engages youth with lived experiences of homelessness in their grant reviews.

2. Funder networks that involve groups of funders coming together , discussing issues, understanding each other's strategies on a specific issues and ensuring funding goes to different organizations. An example of this can be found on this website <http://www.funderstogether.org/>

3. Viewing charities and not for profits as partners and working collaboratively with charities to solve issues. RBC Future Launch is an example of a funder working collaboratively with not for profit organizations to create meaningful change in the lives of young people.

4. Procurement of services and products from social enterprises

This list is not exhaustive and additional resources are shared on the next page.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are other resources to explore diversity in corporate social responsibility sector

<https://www.greatplacetowork.ca/en/articles/215-corporate-giving-and-employee-engagement>

<https://insights.benevity.com/ebooks/csr-diversity-inclusion-belonging-guide>

<http://www.cof.org/sites/default/files/documents/files/Diversity%20and%20Inclusion%20Solutions%20Brief.pdf>

[https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/import/embedded/anchors/files/diversity\\_primer\\_chapter\\_13.pdf](https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/import/embedded/anchors/files/diversity_primer_chapter_13.pdf)

## CONCLUSION

The Corporate Social Responsibility sector is growing rapidly and more than ever, organizations are realizing the importance of giving back. Diversity must play a part in the conversation around philanthropy to ensure that diverse voices are heard so that corporations can create deeper impact on the issues that their company is passionate about supporting. Beyond diversity, we must seek for inclusion and equity for all in the conversation of philanthropy.

# FELLOW: STACHEN FREDERICK



This project was done by Stachen Frederick.

Stachen Frederick has over 20 years in the field of community/program development. She is the Executive Director of Weston Frontlines Centre: a youth charity in Toronto. [www.frontlines.to](http://www.frontlines.to)

She is Founder of BrAIDS for AIDS, a not-for-profit to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS in the African, Caribbean and Black Communities in Canada and internationally through a culturally relevant practice of hair braiding. [www.braidsforaids.com](http://www.braidsforaids.com)

She is also a consultant providing grant writing workshops and grant coaching sessions for her clients. <https://stachennaomifrederick.eventbrite.ca>

Her work has also been recognized by L'Oreal Paris, 100 Accomplished Black Women Network, Black History Ottawa, the High Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, YMCA Canada, How She Hustles with CBC Toronto, Black Health Alliance and The Minister of Immigration and Citizenship

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