

The Business Case for Industry Associations to Adopt Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Sustainability Programs for Their Members

Attract and retain members: CSR programming increases the value and relevance of the association to current and prospective members. It can also reduce the risk that members will have their CSR needs met by other organizations.

Enhance innovation: Cost-effective pre-competitive CSR collaborations can result in industry innovation, enabling the industry to improve its collective CSR impacts.

Build positive government and NGO relations: Associations which increase their CSR expertise will be better positioned to contribute positively to regulatory initiatives by government and other agencies and to engage constructively with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders. As well, associations which have voluntary industry CSR standards which exceed compliance requirements are able to forestall government regulation.

Identify industry priorities: Many generic global CSR initiatives and standards are now available and this in turn can make priority-setting difficult. An industry approach can assist member companies to develop an industry relevant model tailored to the sector's most material risks and opportunities.

Fulfill association goals: Industry association goals are typically to assist its members to be competitive and profitable. CSR is one tool to enhance member profitability and competitiveness.

Build industry reputation and brand: An industry association CSR program demonstrates the industry's commitment to sustainable practices and leadership on CSR. It can build positive stakeholder relationships with customers, communities, NGOs, suppliers, and others, and enhance the sector's social license to operate and grow.

Enhance employee recruitment and retention: Industry associations with CSR programs are able attract and retain the best and brightest employees who prefer to work for organizations aligned with their values.