

# Developing a Sustainability or CSR Policy

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## Introduction

The following is the result of a high-level content analysis of CSR and sustainability policies. It gives insights into scope and policy language for the development of a CSR or Sustainability Policy. It addresses the following elements:

1. Characteristics
2. Philosophies
3. Components
4. Sample language

### Characteristics

Sustainability / CSR policies tend to have these characteristics:

- High-level
- An umbrella policy
- Long-lasting
- General language
  - Avoid use of terms that may not be in currency 10 years out
  - Accessible language and style
- Concise
- Cross-references to other items
- Recognition of the interconnection between environmental, social and economic sustainability
- Considers long-term perspective, e.g.
  - We need to operate in consideration of future generations
  - We should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs
- Considers life-cycle costs and precautionary principles
- Holistic approach
- Helps staff understand their role and see themselves as champions
- Informs operational day-to-day decision-making and is part of the decision-criteria for projects, new ventures, products, risk assessments and cost-benefit analyses.
- It guides staff to ask: how does this project, venture or product help promote sustainability?

## **Philosophies**

Policies embed different philosophies, some of which include:

- Leadership and advocacy
- Reduce negative impact
- Make a positive impact
- Embed environmental and social considerations throughout the organization
- Seek business partners that respect the environment and society
- Use resources and expertise to create solutions to environmental and social issues
- Incorporate environmental and social features into products and services
- Build partnerships and motivate stakeholders to improve their sustainability impacts
- Encourage staff to adopt and promote sustainable practices
- Build partnerships that foster sustainable communities
- Manage, measure and report environmental performance

## **Components**

These are some common components of sustainability / CSR policies:

- Definition of sustainability
- Vision for the future
- Purpose of the policy
- Goals of the policy
- Scope of the policy
- Role of the organization
- Sustainability principles
- Commitments
- Stakeholders
- Implementation statement
- Monitoring statement
- Reporting statement
- Graphics

## **Sample Language**

The following is sample language organized according to purpose, scope, financial stewardship, business ethics, customers, employees, environment, community, governance, transparency and accountability.

### **Purpose**

Example:

- CSR touches every aspect of our work

- We integrate CSR into everything we do
- CSR is an important element of our way of doing business
- Our aim is to strengthen our long-term business while contributing to the well-being of our customers, staff, communities and the environment
- We will take a long-term perspective
- Is supported by specific social, economic and environmental policies and strategies
- We advance sustainability by providing sustainable products and promoting sustainable customer choices and behaviour, developing strong partnerships to pursue common sustainability goals and objectives, working collaboratively to ensure sustainability is advanced with our partners, managing and operating our business in an environmentally, socially and financially responsible manner

### **Scope**

Example:

- All employees are required to adhere to the principles of this policy and will actively promote its adoption by suppliers, etc.
- The policy applies across all our operations and is incorporated into our governance, management, business strategy and daily decisions and actions
- We strive to align our business operations, products and services and stakeholder relationships with these principles
- It serves as guidance for our decisions and actions
- It is integrated into our business activities and applied in our spheres of competence and influence
- Articulates our commitment to making sustainability a key factor in all our strategies, plans, business practices, decisions and operations
- Applies to all our employees and activities including subsidiaries and service contractors

### **Financial stewardship**

Example:

- We will be responsible and effective financial managers
- We will make sound business decisions to achieve solid financial results
- We will manage risks responsibly to safeguard our assets
- We will prudently exercise fiduciary responsibility with customers' deposits

### **Business Ethics / Business Conduct / Business Integrity**

Example:

- We maintain the highest standards of integrity and corporate governance practices
- We pursue highest ethical standards in the way we do business
- We are committed to conducting business responsibly at all times

- We will conduct every aspect of our business with honesty, integrity and openness, respecting the interests of our employees, customers and third parties
- We aim to develop strong relationships with our suppliers, stakeholders and others with whom we have dealings based on mutual trust, understanding and respect

### **Customers**

Example:

- We will provide you with outstanding service
- We will treat you with respect and dignity
- We will offer products and services that meet your unique needs and provide good value
- We will protect your right to privacy

### **Employees / Employee Relations / Employment Practices**

Example:

- We respect safety and health
- We provide a healthy, productive and enriching workplace for employees
- We will ensure that employees are treated fairly and with dignity and consideration for their goals and aspirations and that diversity in the workforce is embraced
- We value diversity and promote equal opportunities in recruitment, employment, development and retention
- We are committed to developing a workforce where there is mutual trust and respect
- We are committed to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment
- We will ensure that our company is a great place to work
- We will create a workplace that is healthy, diverse, stimulating and rewarding
- We encourage and recognize the efforts of employees, subsidiaries, service contractors and partners for their sustainability practices and innovations
- As an employer we will:
  - Cultivate an inclusive and respectful workplace
  - Provide a safe and healthy work environment
  - Encourage employees to innovate and play an active leadership role in the pursuit of our sustainability goals
  - Empower staff with the resources they need to make responsible decisions regarding sustainability in the workplace and to encourage them to expand this into their personal lives

### **Environment / Environmental Management**

Example:

- We continually evaluate and apply ways to reduce the impact of our operations on air, water, land, resources and biodiversity
- We set targets to minimize waste and steward our products throughout their life cycle to protect people and the environment
- We are committed to environmental protection and stewardship
- We preserve the environment in areas impacted by our operations
- We are committed to making continuous improvement in the management of our environmental impact
- We can create solutions to environmental issues
- We should take responsibility for the direct environmental impacts of our operations
- We have a role in influencing environmental choices of our stakeholders, including customers, employees and communities
- We can help facilitate sustainable choices in the marketplace
- We can leverage our resources and expertise to improve environmental conditions

### **Community Involvement / Investment**

Example:

- We will take collaborative, consultative, partnership approaches in community investment programs
- We are committed to fostering good relationships with the communities in which we work and building community partnerships that deliver positive change
- We act as a catalyst for community-wide sustainability
- We are committed to being a responsible, respected and committed contributing member of communities in which we operate and the province as a whole
- We will leverage our unique skills and expertise to create solutions to social, environmental and economic issues
- We encourage and support our employee's engagement in volunteering and local community work
- We will foster positive community impact and build community capacity
- We will work with our stakeholders and community partners to foster the livability, sustainability and resilience of our region

### **Stakeholders**

Example:

- We are committed to maintaining open and regular dialogue with all stakeholder groups in matters that affects their interests
- We identify and engage with stakeholders
- We will engage stakeholders clearly, honestly and respectfully
- We have timely and meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders

- We will conduct transparent, inclusive and respectful consultations with our stakeholders and the public to obtain meaningful input into our activities

### **Governance, Transparency and Accountability**

Example:

- Reporting:
  - We are committed to measuring and publicly reporting performance on CSR
  - We will involve our customers, staff and communities in measuring our performance and report the findings in a public report
  - We will seek to be transparent and accountable in our pursuit of CSR
- Continuous improvement:
  - We will make continuous and measurable progress in meeting our commitments
  - We will aim for continual innovation and improvement in all aspects of our business
- Monitoring:
  - We will regularly monitor implementation of this policy
- Targets and integration in business:
  - We will incorporate sustainability commitments into our business processes and practices
  - We will set clear priorities and targets for all our material activities
  - We will set economic, environmental and social targets appropriate to our vision, mandate and values
  - We will make decisions that consider economic, social, and environmental objectives and reflect our commitment to sustainability and leadership