

## AbaF

# Responding to corporate responsibility in partnership proposals

Corporate responsibility is identified by business as one of the key drivers for developing and maintaining arts partnerships. If you want to maximize the longevity of your business partnerships or develop a new business partnership, it's in your interest to know as much as possible about the corporate responsibility objectives of a business.

When a business is assessing opportunities to engage with and support the arts, many will look for clear alignment of potential projects with their business drivers, including their corporate responsibility objectives.

Demonstrating how an alliance with your organisation or project could help meet those objectives should be a key part of the partnership proposal.

Here are some tips on how to make corporate responsibility a winning part of your partnership proposal.

### **1. Research the corporate responsibility objectives of the business**

Information about the corporate responsibility commitments of a business can often be found on the business' website and this is the best place to start your research. It is commonly located in the corporate section, 'about us' area, or community relations section of a website. Different terminology may be used by the business to explain its corporate responsibility position. Interchangeable terms may include corporate social responsibility (CSR), community investment, corporate accountability, corporate citizenship, community relations or sustainability.

Other useful areas to look are the vision, mission or values section, or the strategic plan that outlines specific action areas that may have an alignment with the objectives of your organisation.

A company's annual report might prove a useful tool in your research. Some companies publish annual sustainability reports, and these outline the organisation's economic, environmental and social values, goals and activities.

### **2. Find out the specific corporate responsibility priorities of the business**

Almost all Australian businesses, of all sizes, declare a commitment to being a good corporate citizen, so it is no longer enough to try to appeal to a company's corporate responsibility commitment in a general way.

Most businesses and larger corporations in particular, will have stated specific economic, environmental and social commitments. You may find these commitments described in different ways such as health and wellbeing, community investment or engagement, or employee relations.

Corporate responsibility is a broad term, so it is important to find out the particular focus or target of a business. For example, an organisation that is developing a new operation might have a focus on environmental responsibility or community engagement, while a business

that has had to reduce staff numbers might be concentrating its commitment on employee engagement activities.

Doing research and keeping abreast of the company's news and developments might well differentiate you from other potential partnership contenders.

### **3. Look at other partners that the business may have**

Find out how these partnerships help the business deliver the particular focus of their stated corporate responsibility objectives. Some will seem a logical fit, while others may surprise you. Examine those closely to glean the ways in which the partnership has been leveraged or extended to deliver benefits to both parties.

If your research shows that the business has an existing partnership with an organisation that is similar to yours, make sure you demonstrate how your proposed partnership or project will complement and add value or difference. Consider how you might use your activities to offer a more innovative or creative approach to partnership.

If possible, talk to other organisations that are in partnership with the business, to get a feel for what works.

### **4. Is there a strategic fit between your organisation and the corporate responsibility objectives of a business?**

If you think there is a good fit, compile a list of the opportunities and benefits you could offer that would help a business meet its corporate responsibility objectives.

Remember that many businesses are seeking to make a difference to society -they are looking for partnerships that are innovative or creative and that can help them address challenges in different or more effective ways; 'same old' projects are generally not as appealing as those that tackle old problems in new ways.

### **5. Measurement and evaluation**

Increasingly, businesses are measuring their corporate responsibility and sustainability achievements. Look at the measurement and reporting systems that a business uses and make sure you have the capacity to provide qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the activities you undertake with the resources contributed by business.

### **6. Make contact with the corporate responsibility manager**

Once you have done the groundwork and identified a potential good fit with a business, you should make contact with the corporate responsibility manager. You may find that the person in the organisation who manages the corporate responsibility is called the Community Investment, Sustainability, Community Engagement, External Affairs or Corporate Affairs Manager. You may find that there is an established process for submitting an expression of interest, or that the corporate responsibility manager will meet with you to discuss your proposal. Where possible, meet with the relevant manager, explaining that you would like an opportunity to discuss ideas at a broad level and find out pertinent information, ahead of sending in a formal proposal. Many managers prefer to do this, rather than receiving something cold.

### **7. Partnering proposals**

Remember you will need to follow through all of the protocols for completing a partnership proposal in which corporate responsibility is one component.

**Appendix:**

(1) Arts Sponsorship Outlook Survey 2009,

[http://www.abaf.org.au/files/Research/Arts\\_Sponsorship\\_Outlook\\_Survey\\_\\_\\_Findings\\_\\_\\_Recommendations.pdf](http://www.abaf.org.au/files/Research/Arts_Sponsorship_Outlook_Survey___Findings___Recommendations.pdf)