



# Executive Summary Building High-Impact CSR Programs in India

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# Executive Summary

As India completes the seventh year of its unique experiment in mandatory corporate social responsibility (CSR), it is a good time to reflect on what we can learn from CSR programs that have made a difference. This playbook synthesizes interviews with eight Indian corporates into seven guidelines to inform impactful CSR giving in India.

<p><b>1 Focus on fewer impact priorities and align them with corporate strengths</b></p>	<p>Spreading CSR resources across many small programs can dilute meaningful impact, much as spreading corporate resources across multiple business lines often constrains business success. High-impact CSR programs identify a small number of impact priorities, and map them to long-term flagship programs or grant partnerships, enabling them to channel more substantial commitments toward more meaningful and sustainable impact.</p>
<p><b>2 Prioritize marginalized populations within existing programs</b></p>	<p>High-impact CSR programs effectively prioritize marginalized communities within their existing programs by explicitly articulating their areas of focus—such as scheduled castes/scheduled tribes, women, or people with disabilities. In addition, they either directly build trust with these communities or build partnerships with NGOs that have developed social capital with marginalized populations.</p>
<p><b>3 Embrace a participatory approach with communities and NGOs</b></p>	<p>Much as successful businesses listen to the voice of their customers, high-impact CSR programs place their constituents at the center of their work. They engage with NGOs and communities as partners across program design and implementation.</p>
<p><b>4 Partner with other corporate and private philanthropies</b></p>	<p>CSR programs can strengthen their work and multiply their impact by partnering with other CSR programs and philanthropies. Collaboration allocates more capital to programs, and spreads both costs and risks.</p>
<p><b>5 Harness corporate assets, competencies, and connections</b></p>	<p>High-impact CSR programs leverage their corporate assets, competencies, and connections in noncommercial yet strategic ways to strengthen the impact of their giving. Beyond writing a check, corporates can offer their CSR programs valuable competencies, such as project management, technological skills, and other specialist capabilities.</p>
<p><b>6 Hire a professional CSR team, champion CSR from the C-suite, and give CSR strong board governance</b></p>	<p>High-impact CSR programs hire professional CSR teams that bridge corporate and social sectors, and create advisory boards with expertise that complements their corporate boards. Also, a successful CSR program, like a good business, is incumbent on strong leadership. It helps when the CEO is passionate about achieving social goals through CSR programs.</p>
<p><b>7 Institute measurement, learning, and communication strategies tailored for different stakeholders</b></p>	<p>High-impact CSR programs apply the same reporting discipline to their CSR initiatives as they do to their core businesses. By measuring the right things, learning from the results, and communicating with stakeholders, they shape future activities and investments for the better.</p>

Source: The Bridgespan Group

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