

Member Meetup



BOSTON COLLEGE
CENTER FOR CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

RECAP

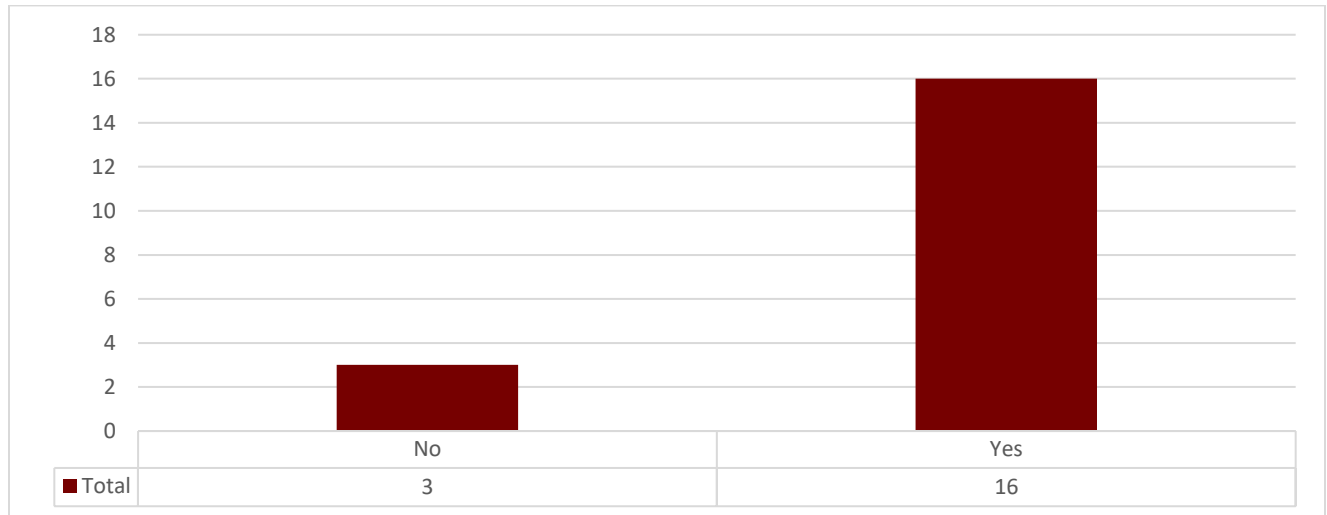
May 28, 2025

CSR and Government Relations

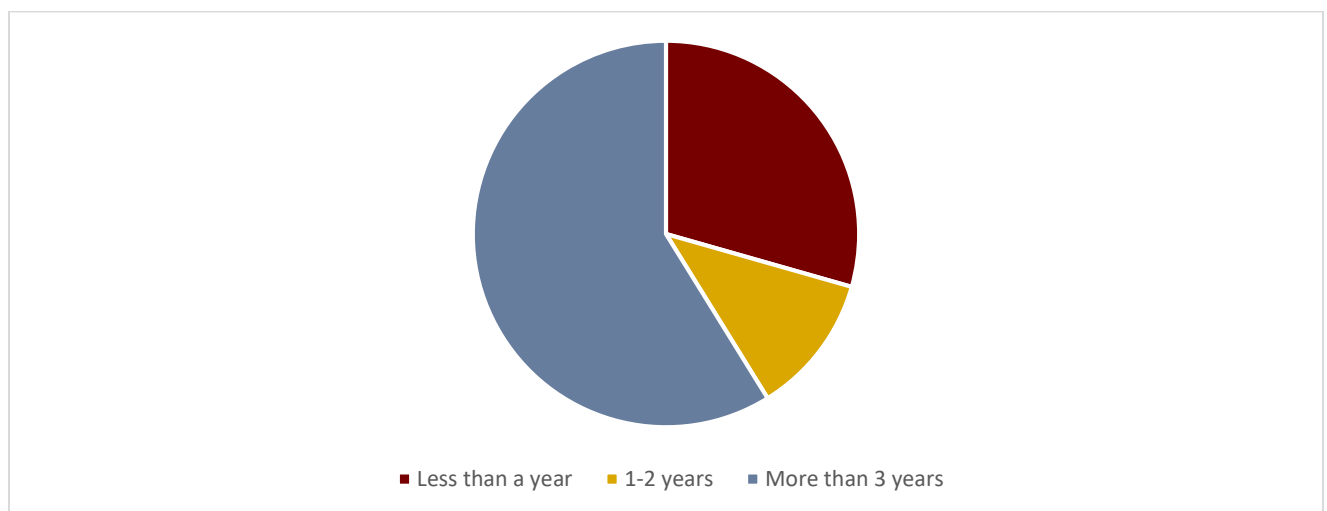


Polls

1. Do you currently work with your government relations teams?

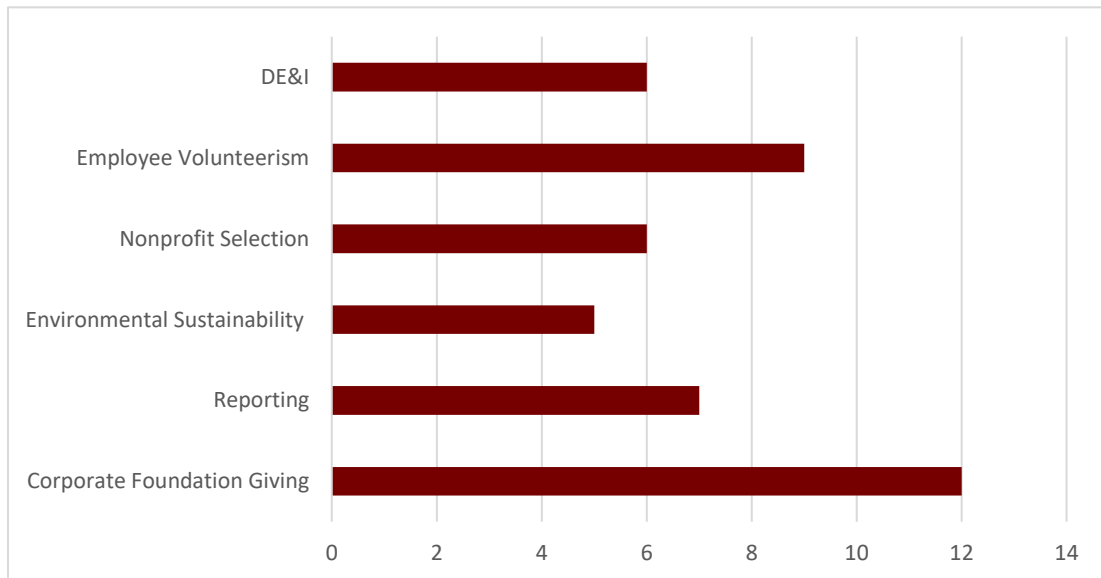


2. How long have you worked with your government relations team?



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3. Which areas do you collaborate on with your government relations team?



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Meeting Notes

Background Information

The May Member Meetup explored how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Government Relations teams can work together effectively within organizations. Companies shared their best practices and strategies for building collaborative relationships, aligning priorities, and enhancing both community impact and stakeholder engagement through coordinated efforts.

The first organization shared insights from their integrated approach where CSR and Government Relations operate under the same Public Affairs division. As a not-for-profit health insurance company with a regional focus, they emphasized the importance of staying mission-aligned and building trust with stakeholders across the political spectrum. Their success stems from establishing formal governance structures, including a cross-functional corporate citizenship working group that meets bimonthly, and maintaining regular communication channels between teams.

The second organization offered perspectives from a global company operating in multiple countries with separate CSR and Government Relations departments. They discussed overcoming initial challenges of reactive collaboration by implementing proactive processes, including adding lobbying and advocacy questions to their grant application process in 2024 and establishing regular communication cadences (meeting 3-4 times per year). The organization emphasized the value of community engagement in supporting government relations efforts, with their Government Affairs team noting that employee volunteering in local communities creates positive constituent relationships that benefit broader advocacy efforts. They also highlighted successful capability alignments in areas such as disaster relief, specialized logistics (including animal transportation), partnerships with organizations like the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes program, and climate solutions including natural carbon capture initiatives and circular supply chain work.

Analysis:

Whether housed in the same department or operating separately, successful CSR and Government Relations collaboration requires intentional relationship-building, clear communication processes, and aligned priorities. Some factors to consider when building these partnerships include:

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- **Structural Alignment:** Understanding how organizational structure impacts collaboration opportunities, with integrated departments naturally facilitating more organic communication while separate departments require more deliberate coordination efforts.
- **Mission Consistency:** Ensuring all external-facing activities and communications reflect the organization's core mission and values, creating consistency across stakeholder interactions.
- **Proactive Communication:** Establishing regular information-sharing mechanisms to avoid reactive situations and enable strategic coordination of activities and messaging.
- **Stakeholder Mapping:** Identifying mutual stakeholders and understanding how different teams' work impacts shared relationships with government officials, community leaders, and other key audiences.
- **Community Engagement Strategy:** Leveraging employee volunteerism and community involvement as a bridge between CSR activities and government relations objectives.

Challenges, Solutions, and Strategies:

- **Building Relationships Across Departments**
 - **Challenge:** CSR and Government Relations teams often operate in silos with limited interaction, leading to missed collaboration opportunities and potential conflicts.
 - **Solutions:**
 - Find one or two champion individuals in Government Relations who can facilitate relationship-building and ongoing communication
 - Engaging in "shameless self-promotion" to educate Government Relations colleagues about CSR activities and their potential policy implications
 - Establishing regular touchpoints, such as monthly one-on-ones between team leaders
- **Managing Policy Implications of CSR Activities**
 - **Challenge:** Nonprofit partners and community initiatives may have policy positions or advocacy efforts that could conflict with company positions or create unexpected government relations issues.
 - **Solutions:**
 - Adding lobbying and advocacy screening questions to grant applications to identify potential policy activities
 - Creating transparency around nonprofit partnerships and their policy positions

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- Expanding corporate contributions committees to include government affairs representation
- Redirecting funding when necessary to avoid controversial policy alignments while maintaining community impact
- **Coordinating External Communications and Stakeholder Engagement**
 - **Challenge:** Ensuring consistent messaging and avoiding conflicting communications with shared stakeholders, particularly government officials and community leaders.
 - **Solutions:**
 - Sharing communications for review before external distribution
 - Coordinating invitations to elected officials for community events and volunteer activities
 - Establishing clear protocols for stakeholder engagement across both teams
- **Maximizing Limited Resources and Time**
 - **Challenge:** Government Relations teams have limited time as their most valuable commodity, requiring CSR teams to balance thoroughness with conciseness when collaborating.
 - **Solutions:**
 - Scheduling regular but focused meetings (3-4 times per year) with Government Relations leadership
 - Providing concise summaries and recommendations quarterly
 - Using AI tools to help create more efficient communications
 - Implementing impact measurement tools to track and report outcomes effectively
- **Maximizing Synergies Between Community Impact and Policy Objectives**
 - **Challenge:** Identifying opportunities where CSR activities can support government relations goals and vice versa.
 - **Solutions:**
 - Leveraging employee volunteerism to build positive relationships with constituents in key districts through community engagement funds
 - Aligning community investments with policy priorities (such as supporting climate solutions through carbon capture initiatives and circular supply chain work)
 - Using impact measurement data to provide concrete examples of community benefit for government relations conversations
 - Coordinating capabilities around disaster relief, specialized services, and strategic partnerships

Actionable Steps:

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- **Start with Relationship Building**
 - Identify key contacts in Government Relations and initiate regular communication
 - Educate Government Relations colleagues on CSR activities and their community impact
 - Seek to understand Government Relations priorities and key issue areas
- **Establish Communication Processes**
 - Create regular meeting cadences (preferably face-to-face or video calls, 3-4 times per year)
 - Develop information-sharing protocols for external communications and stakeholder engagement
 - Build transparency around nonprofit partnerships and community investments
 - Provide regular summaries and recommendations to government relations teams
- **Align on Strategic Priorities**
 - Ensure CSR activities remain consistent with organizational mission and values
 - Identify opportunities for CSR activities to support government relations objectives
 - Coordinate responses to emerging issues that affect both teams
 - Track specific metrics and opportunities that benefit government relations efforts
- **Leverage Community Engagement**
 - Utilize employee volunteerism as a bridge between CSR and government relations goals
 - Create community engagement funds to support local employee volunteer initiatives
 - Coordinate invitations to elected officials for community events in their districts
 - Focus on local efforts to "break the DC bubble" and engage team members in their communities
 - Use community impact data to support government relations conversations and advocacy efforts
- **Create Formal Structures**
 - Establish cross-functional working groups that include both CSR and Government Relations representation
 - Expand corporate contributions committees to include government affairs representation
 - Develop governance processes for activities with potential policy implications

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- Implement screening mechanisms for partnerships and investments that could have government relations impacts
- Codify process steps so all parties understand their role in giving and collaboration decisions

Additional Resources:

- [Regulatory Radar](#)
- [Media Monitor](#)
- **Blog:** [Early Impact Assessment of Executive Orders on Corporate Citizenship Initiatives: Part One](#)
- **Blog:** [Early Impact Assessment of Executive Orders on Corporate Citizenship Initiatives: Part Two](#)

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