

Corporate Social Responsibility - A way forward for wellbeing of deserving seniors



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Inspired by the encouragements showered by Shri V.K. Bhadane, President AISCCON and Shri R.N. Mital Chairman AOSC-H Trust here are my inputs for those who wish to reorient their mindset from charity & welfare to wellbeing of deserving seniors through the funding avenues of Corporate Social Responsibility. In addition to the budget for welfare measures from the Government of India's exchequer, since April 01, 2014, it is compulsory for companies to spend 2% of their average profit of the last three years on social welfare. This is called Corporate Social Responsibility. This is applicable to companies having Rs. 1000 crores revenue or net worth Rs. 500 crores or a profit of more than Rs.5 crores per annum. Vide notification dated 27.2.2014 the Ministry of Corporate Affairs included the welfare of senior citizens activities in Schedule VII of the Indian Companies Act 2013 on all India basis.

In order to tap this avenue there are certain pre-requisites we must have. Starting with we need to be either a Section 8 company (not for profit entity) or a Trust under Act 1882 or Society under Act 1860 or corresponding State Act. Thereafter there are documentary evidences like Registration Certificate, PAN number, three years existence and more. The pre-requisites are listed in the 32 page background study material titled "CSR Workshop Template" available on AISCCON web site under icon "News & Events". All the subsequent documents mentioned in this Article are also available on the website. Once you attain this stage you are now ready to start thinking about tapping the CSR funding. Please be informed that over Rs. 25,000 Crores of CSR funding is being spent every year and it is a growing reality. Due to our inability to put up worthy proposals, large chunk of CSR funds are getting syphoned back to the Governance through schemes like Prime Minister Relief Fund, contributions to research & development, educational institutions etc., and we get below 1% share despite being 13% of the population. The probable causes are our ignorance of this avenue, reluctance to groom in pace with the lifestyle evolution process and procedural requirements, NGO's are choosing soft options to get the CSR fundings for education, health care and women empowerment domains etc., Corporate Houses are mostly unaware of needs of deserving senior citizens at grass root level and more.

Having said that now let us look at the way forward. Get registered with Ministry of Corporate Affairs and their website www.csrxchange.gov.in. Begin browsing this website for couple of weeks to get a feel how the CSR implementation agencies are placing their project concepts for seeking CSR funds and what are the priority areas of Corporates Houses. Lot of other

information is also available in this website which is dynamic in nature and therefore demands browsing at regular interval. Having done that now study the issues of concern for the deserving senior citizens in your area, find in which area you are passionate to take up some projects / programs for wellbeing of this segment. Prepare a concept note downloading all your thoughts supported by the evidences of the field work, cost estimates, sustainability aspects and assessment of impact that your program is going to make in improving the lives from the baseline scenario. Then your concept note has to fall in line with the provisions of Schedule VII (Section 135 of Act). This Schedule describes broad avenue like eradicating hunger poverty and malnutrition. It includes preventative health, sanitation, safe drinking water, promoting education including vocational skills and livelihood enhancements (this is important for all those elderly who are constrained to earn their livelihood until their life transition), measures to reduce inequality, ensure environmental sustainability, ecological balance, protection of flora & fauna, animal welfare, conservation of natural resources and many more. For full details please go through the website and read the Schedule VII. Please rewrite your proposal in such a way that it fits into one of these broad categories. In addition to this there are 17 Sustainably Development Goals identified by United Nations. You need to see where your project / program fits into one or more of these SDGs. This will enhance your chances of getting the CSR grants. In case you are having limited in-house resources to complete all the requisite steps there are now consulting organisations available at a nominal charges to provide the services. It is desirable to avail their services as that would help bring in synergy with the system requirements. The key factors for success are finding the baseline scenarios, identification of deserving senior citizens, trust & confidence that you demonstrate your passion to own and operate the project / program sustainably, financial analysis, transparency in financial dealings evidenced by external audit processes, impact evaluation techniques and the credentials of the Governing Body.

We the CSR Committee comprising undersigned, S/Shri M.K.Raina, VP AISCCON, Nageshwar Rao, VP Telangana, Sarvesh Gupta, President Haridwar Association, Suresh Palgay, Director Shehjaar Homes with the organisational support of Shri P. Ramachandraiah President Telangana Federation and his team had organised a three days workshop in Hyderabad during August 07-09, 2023. For those who are keen to move forward in this direction are welcome to watch on Youtube live the entire proceedings. There are six links uploaded on the AISCCON website (two for each day). In addition to this all the presentations made by eminent speakers can also be downloaded from the website. Going through all these would require considerable patience and likely to emanate queries in your mind. The CSR Committee shall be sportingly receiving such queries through email for response to the best of our competence. There is one typical sample CSR proposal also available in the website that was prepared in June 2022 for your perusal and reference to move ahead. Those who are more ambitious with clear long term vision and mission in this direction would be happy to know that now there is “Social Stock Exchange” also in place where the social organisational shares can be listed for funding by the public similar to the ongoing commercial organisations share business market. You are welcome to browse through the website www.bsesocialexchange.com.

In concluding of our workshop we observed that a large of number of AISCCON affiliates are already doing a good number of welfare activities by seeking charity funds and donations. An expertise to implement the projects / programs in the health care domain, education, digital literacy, mitigation of environmental issues, nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation,

geriatric care and more exists. The missing link is to consolidate these experiences, develop a well structured projects / programs in synergy with the provisions of CSR regulations to avail the funding that in any case Corporate Houses are obliged to spend as per the Companies Act. Therefore it is not a process of seeking charity or grant or donation but taking share of our cake that we deserve as our social right by giving praiseworthy proposals. This surely calls for harnessing our collective intelligence and team spirit, I believe. I wish that the participants of the 21st Annual Conference will rejuvenate their mind set and ensure redirecting their efforts from charity & welfare to wellbeing through CSR avenues. Wish you all good luck in your endeavour to improve the lives of deserving senior citizens. Comments / Inputs from mentors shall be sportingly received. Embosom nice thoughts. Best wishes...

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