

## Bridging the Expectation Gaps in Corporate Giving



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## Executive Summary

This study on corporate giving found that corporations and non-profit organisations (NPOs) have different objectives when engaging in corporate giving. As a result, there are also differences in the preferred types of corporate giving. While corporations prefer to contribute in terms of employee volunteering, most NPOs would prefer to receive cash donations.

Secondly, the current commonly used channels need to be improved to enhance communication between NPOs and corporations. While referrals and nominations are regarded as effective methods, their effectiveness is limited to sharing contact information. As such, there is a need for a specifically designed common platform for corporations and NPOs to engage each other with the goal of corporate giving.

Thirdly, the manpower planning for corporate giving differs across organisations. While some corporations classify the corporate giving role under an existing business function, other corporations regard CSR as a dedicated function. Corporations that want to place a greater focus on corporate giving are encouraged to set up a specific function for this purpose. Another commonly found driver of volunteering activities among corporations is employee volunteering committees. These committees usually comprise employees who are passionate about volunteerism, who strengthen the volunteerism and philanthropic culture within the corporation.

Finally, most of the expectation gaps are caused by organisations failing to identify partners who share similar expectations in corporate giving. This is because the current channels do not allow organisations to identify in advance the expectations and needs of their potential partners. Such information is typically not readily available until NPOs and corporations have already begun working together. As such, it is essential to have a common platform which allows organisations to express their expectations and needs relating to corporate giving.

## 1. Introduction

In this study, "corporate giving" refers to the giving of time, money, services, skills or in-kind donations from the corporate sector to the community (including not-for-profit organisations) as part of corporate community investment or engagement.

Hence, corporate giving is a subset of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, with a focus on volunteerism and philanthropy for corporations. (Source: NVPC Corporate Giving Council FAQ)

In an effort to support NVPC, Spire Research and Consulting has undertaken this study on corporate giving on a pro-bono basis. The objective of this study is to define the extent of misalignment in expectations between corporations and NPOs in Singapore in regards to corporate giving.

## 2. Research Overview

This section outlines the research methodology, scope and limitations of this study.

### 2.1 Research Methodology

In this study, we focused on corporate giving, such as employee volunteering and corporate philanthropy, encompassing fundraising and donations in cash or in-kind, from corporations in Singapore (private sector businesses and public sector entities).

The methodology of this study involves in-depth interviews with 20 corporations and 20 NPOs to gather primary data. The corporations and NPOs were selected from the NVPC database. Corporations which are known to be involved in corporate giving in Singapore were selected. These corporations are embedded in a range of industry sectors, including: ICT, financial services, retail, telecommunications, construction, consumer products and public sector. NPOs were also selected to cover a range of causes, such as: elderly, children, animals and healthcare. All points mentioned in this report are raised by respondents from the 20 corporations and 20 NPOs during the in-depth interviews.

As this study is qualitative in nature, this report mainly focuses on areas of convergence among the points raised by the respondents.

A similar study conducted by the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CSV RD) in Canada was used as reference material for this study.

### 2.2 Research Scope

The scope of the study is broken down into four sections. The first section covers the fundamental objectives which corporations and NPOs have for engaging in corporate giving. The second section identifies and analyses the channels used by organisations to secure their corporate giving partners. The third section identifies and evaluates the

three common types of manpower planning adopted by corporations for corporate giving. Lastly, the final section identifies the ten most common expectation gaps which exist between corporations and NPOs.

Based on the gaps identified from the study, recommendations were made with the aim of fostering vibrant corporate giving in Singapore.

### **2.3 Limitations of the Study**

The 20 NPOs that were selected for interviewing spanned a range of charitable and social causes. As this study is qualitative in nature, quantitative analysis is not provided, so as not to exceed the scope of the study. Though considerable efforts have been taken to ensure that the organisations selected for this study have expert knowledge, the study, being qualitative in nature, may not be representative at the broader level.

### **3. Fundamental Objectives of Corporate Giving**

In this section, the fundamental objectives of corporations and NPOs are identified. In addition, this section also discusses the types of corporate giving preferred by corporations and NPOs.

#### **3.1 Objectives of NPOs**

##### **Obtain Support for NPO's Social Programmes**

A large proportion of an NPO's resources is channelled towards its social programmes. Such programmes are usually resource-intensive, and require volunteers and donations. As such, these programmes generally need corporate or institutional financial and manpower support.

##### **Cover NPO's Operating Costs**

Most of the NPOs studied here were managed and operated by full-time staff members who are on a monthly payroll. Some NPOs also need space to run their programmes. These manpower and rental expenditures contribute to fixed costs. As such, NPOs would prefer to have the flexibility to use cash donations to cover either fixed or variable costs.

##### **Create Awareness for NPO's Social Cause**

Through employee volunteering activities, staff members of corporations are exposed to the social causes championed by the NPOs. This encourages employees to volunteer or give regularly on an individual level, resulting in an amplified giving effect. For this to occur, it is essential for corporations and NPOs to form long-term partnerships.

### **3.2 Objectives of Corporations**

#### **Fulfil Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporations believe that it is important to give back to the community. Not only are they concerned about the type of contributions they can make, more importantly, they are also mindful of the level of impact stemming from their corporate giving. As such, corporations would only contribute to programmes and activities which they perceive to be meaningful based on tangible, measurable or visible indicators.

#### **Promote Team Bonding among Employees**

Employee volunteering is regarded by most corporations as an opportunity to strengthen cohesion among staff. For multinational companies with a high proportion of foreign expatriates, volunteering activity is an ideal platform to integrate them into the company and the community. As such, corporations usually prefer volunteering opportunities that can accommodate as many of their employees as possible.

#### **Promote Work-life Balance among Employees**

Some corporations recognise employee volunteering as a platform to promote work-life balance among employees. Through volunteering, staff members get to take a break from their work and engage in activities outside the office. As such, it is important for the volunteering activity to be both meaningful and fun for the employees.



## 4. Channels for Securing Partners

A variety of channels are used by organisations, both corporations and NPOs, to secure partners for corporate giving programs. In this section, the effectiveness of two commonly used channels for securing partners will be evaluated.

### 4.1 Referrals and Nominations from Internal Stakeholders

While referrals and nominations are the most effective channel for securing partners, respondents are mindful that the effectiveness of this channel is largely dependent on the contacts of internal stakeholders. For an NPO that has a board of directors with few connections to corporations, the channel would be ineffective in securing corporate partners.

Likewise, for a corporation that lack employees who have contacts in the social sector, it would not be easy for them to source for NPOs. In addition, referrals and nominations, while being effective, are not commonly used by NPOs and corporations to engage one other.

### 4.2 Appeal Letters and Emails

Appeal letters and emails are regarded by NPOs and corporations as the least effective method for securing partners. Some NPOs mentioned that it is difficult to secure partnerships without having direct networks with people within the potential partner organization. In addition, some corporate respondents shared that some NPOs were not responsive to emails and calls. This accounts for the low success rate in securing partnerships through appeal letters and emails.

Although sending appeal letters and emails is ineffective in securing partners, some corporations and NPOs still use it for two reasons. Firstly, they are unaware of other channels which can be used to source for and engage partners for corporate giving.

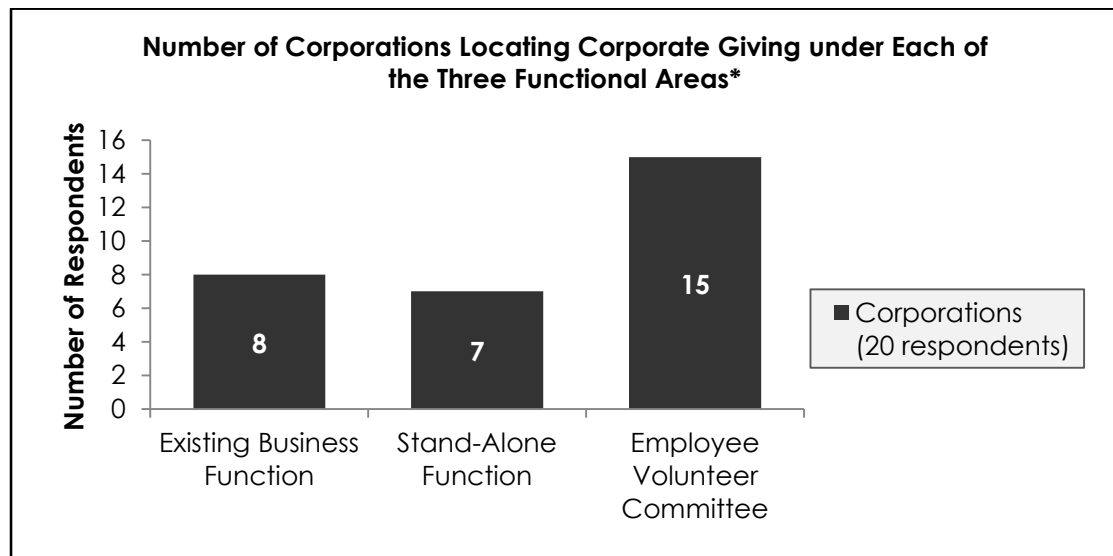
Secondly, this is the only method available to those organisations which do not receive sufficient referrals from their internal stakeholders.

## 5. Manpower Planning by Corporations

Generally, there are three approaches to manpower planning for corporate giving within a corporation.

- Firstly, the role of coordinating corporate giving can be assigned to an existing business function such as Human Resources, Administration or Corporate Communications.
- Secondly, a new position or department can be created with the core responsibility of managing the corporations' corporate giving activities.
- Thirdly, employee volunteering committees can be set up to drive volunteering activities.

In this section, we shall look closely at these three approaches.



\*Numbers exceed 20 as some corporations have employee volunteer committees in conjunction with another approach to coordinate Corporate Giving

### **5.1 Corporate Giving as a Role under an Existing Business Function**

8 out of 20 corporations in this study allocated the role of coordinating CSR activities under an existing business function such as Human Resources, Administration or Corporate Communications. Corporations pursuing this approach usually regarded the corporate giving role as a small portion of the work done by the existing business function, resulting in corporate giving assuming a lower priority. As a result, the frequency of giving is usually lower as compared to corporations pursuing the other two approaches. In addition, the length of partnerships with NPOs is usually limited to one to two years.

Depending on the business function which the corporate giving role is classified under, the nature of the activities would differ. Corporations which classify the corporate giving role under the Human Resources function would prioritize the team bonding element in designing these activities, whereas the Corporate Communications function would tend to seek branding-building opportunities when designing corporate giving activities.

### **5.2 Corporate Giving as a Stand-alone Business Function**

7 out of 20 corporate respondents have a department or dedicated personnel with the core responsibility of managing the organisation's CSR activities. Such an approach tended to be seen in multinational companies which accord a higher priority to corporate giving.

Corporations pursuing this approach usually have a structured CSR programme, and regard corporate giving as part of the overall corporate mission; aligning corporate giving with their CSR strategy. In addition, the length of corporate giving partnerships in such organisations tends to be longer and the giving occurs more frequently.

### 5.3 Employee Volunteer Committee-led Corporate Giving

Most of the corporations Spire interviewed had an employee volunteer committee to plan and coordinate employee volunteering activities within the organisation. The committee is usually made up of staff members who are passionate about volunteerism, and are selected on a voluntary basis. For some corporations, employees are selected from various departments to form a cross-functional committee. This cross-functional committee would also take up the role of coordinating volunteering opportunities.

The presence of a volunteering committee is not mutually exclusive from the two types of manpower planning mentioned above. For some corporations, these volunteering committees work closely with the personnel-in-charge of CSR to form a hybrid volunteer committee, so as to organise corporate giving activities. As such, the volunteer committee acts as an additional driver for the organisation's corporate giving.

Given that the committees are made up of employees who are passionate about volunteerism, they are most concerned about the social impact of the activity. They would tend to only engage in activities which they perceive to have a positive social impact. In addition, they would prefer to take on the responsibility of organising the corporate giving activity themselves.

## 6. Identification of Expectation Gaps

From the study, ten expectation gaps relating to corporate giving were identified. Some of the expectation gaps are more apparent, while others are less obvious but more far-reaching. Expectation gaps that have their roots in the miscommunication and misinterpretation of the needs of NPOs can be rectified with effort. However, other expectation gaps of a more complex nature need to be resolved with tact and sensitivity. An elaboration on these expectation gaps is given in this section.

### 6.1 Preferred Types of Corporate Giving

Corporate giving can be broadly classified into three categories: employee volunteering, cash donations and donations-in-kind. The type of corporate giving preferred by corporations and NPOs are shown in the table below, where rank 1 represents the most preferred type of corporate giving.

Ranking	NPO	Corporations
1	Cash Donations	Employee Volunteering
2	Employee Volunteering	Donations-in-kind
3	Donations-in-kind	Cash Donations

In general, NPOs prefer to receive cash donations as opposed to employee volunteering and donations-in-kind. Firstly, the financial sustainability of an NPO is solely dependent on monetary support from institutions and the public. Secondly, cash donations can usually be directed in a flexible manner to the functional areas of greatest need within the NPO. Hence, most NPOs regard cash donations as the most preferred type of corporate giving.

On the other hand, employee volunteering is the most preferred type of giving by corporations for two reasons. Firstly, most companies want to go beyond the conventional corporate giving, which is mainly centred on donations. Some corporate

respondents commented that donations might not be the most meaningful way of giving back to the community. Secondly, not only does employee volunteering allow corporations to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities, it also provides opportunities for team bonding and morale-raising. Hence, most companies prefer to give in terms of employee volunteering.

## **6.2 Length of Partnership**

NPOs generally seek to build long-term partnerships with corporations which would last for two to five years. As mentioned by some NPO respondents, the rapport forged through such long-term partnerships gives NPOs a better understanding of their corporate partners. More importantly, long-term relationships allow NPOs to bridge expectation gaps. However, most corporate respondents felt that the partnership should last for one to three years. A few corporate respondents commented that they preferred a short-term partnership, as they preferred to expose employees to a wide variety of volunteering activities catering to different social causes.

Given that corporations may have different expectations from NPOs about the length of partnership, it is important for corporations to communicate their expectations clearly to their NPO partners in this regard. In addition, NPOs and corporations with similar expectations should be linked up together.

## **6.3 Frequency of Corporate Giving**

Most corporate respondents preferred to engage in corporate giving once to twice a year. The corporate respondents commented that busy work schedules, as well as the time needed to plan volunteering activities, were reasons for not being able to commit to corporate giving on a more frequent basis.

Most NPO respondents recognised the time constraints which their corporate partners faced. As such, they did not expect corporations to be able to volunteer frequently.

However, some corporate respondents mentioned that they preferred to work with NPO partners with whom they could volunteer on a monthly basis. Such corporations usually had a large number of employees, which enabled them to maintain a regular volunteering routine with an NPO partner by sending different employees to each activity. As such, NPOs seeking partners who can commit to regular activities should approach such corporations.

#### **6.4 Misalignment of Organisational Values**

Most NPO respondents indicated that they would be willing to work with any corporation that wants to give back to the community. However, a few corporate respondents were only willing to work with NPOs which were aligned with their CSR strategy. This was usually the case for large corporations with structured CSR programmes. Smaller corporations just embarking on corporate giving were more open to working with a variety of NPOs supporting different causes.

In order to minimise the number of cases where potential partnerships fall through due to a misalignment of organisational values, it is necessary to have a platform which matches the corporations to the right NPOs. In addition, corporations need to communicate their CSR strategy clearly. This would help NPOs assess the feasibility of a corporate giving partnership.

#### **6.5 Allocation of Cash Donations**

Most corporate respondents preferred to contribute directly to specific programmes and activities, as opposed to the donation pool for general use. This is because corporations want to know how their money is being used, especially for donations which involve large amounts of money. However, NPOs prefer corporations to donate directly to general funding as opposed to project-specific or activity-specific funding. This gives them the flexibility to allocate funds to functional areas that generally receive less monetary support.



In addition, most NPO respondents would prefer corporations to provide financial support to the NPOs' operational expenditure (i.e. fixed costs) rather than merely the project-specific expenditure (i.e. variable costs). This was especially important for large NPOs which ran multiple centres and hired many full-time employees. However, corporate respondents mentioned that they preferred to have their donations used on programmes and activities that would directly help the beneficiaries. This was driven by the premise that corporations wanted to be sure that their contributions could directly help the beneficiaries.

To overcome this expectation gap, it is essential for corporations to change their mind-set towards the use of donations. Although helping NPOs cover overhead costs does not directly help beneficiaries, it contributes to the NPOs' financial sustainability, which is necessary to keep that help flowing. In the long run, funding the operational costs of NPOs allows them to continue delivering positive social impact. At the same time, NPOs could be more accountable to show how their general funding is used within the organisation. This would require NPOs to present cost breakdowns and communicate this information to their donors. They could also make their financial reports available for potential donors to refer to.

#### **6.6 Use of Business Competency in Corporate Giving Activity**

A few NPO respondents mentioned that they prefer corporations to incorporate their business competencies into their volunteering activities. This coincides with the view of some corporate respondents, who were also looking for ways to tap on their employees' skills and utilise them in their corporate giving activities.

Although there is some alignment in the expectations of the NPOs and corporations in this aspect, both NPOs and corporations shared that this is not common in Singapore currently. This could be due to two reasons. Firstly, corporations are unsure of how they can tap on their corporate expertise in corporate giving. Secondly, it is difficult to

match the business competencies of a corporation to an NPO which is in need of them. As such, the gap can only be bridged if corporations can be linked to NPOs with a need for their specific skills, products and/or services.

### **6.7 Responsibility for Organising Corporate Giving Activity**

Most NPO and corporate respondents agreed that the responsibility of organising the volunteering activity should be taken on by the corporations. From the corporation's perspective, the organising role engages employees in the corporate giving process. Likewise, most NPOs indicated that they preferred to play a supporting role as they lacked the time and manpower to plan these activities.

While both corporate and NPO respondents had the same expectations in this regard, a few corporate respondents felt that the organising role should be undertaken by the NPOs instead. Their rationale is that the NPOs would have a better understanding of their beneficiaries, and would be aware of the key considerations associated with organising a volunteering activity.

For corporations which do not prefer to take on the organising role, they should approach NPOs which have pre-planned programmes that are in need of ad hoc volunteers. This requires corporations to source for the right NPOs which have such volunteering opportunities available.

### **6.8 Volunteer Group Size for Corporate Giving Activity**

Most corporate respondents preferred to involve as many employees as possible in the corporate giving activities. Depending on the size of the corporation, the volunteering group size could range from twenty to a few hundred staff members. However, not all NPOs have programmes and activities that require such a large volunteer pool. Most NPO respondents commented that they only required a small group of volunteers for

their regular activities and programmes. Large volunteer pools are usually only needed for annual fundraising projects and events.

Right-sizing the volunteering group to each activity can only be achieved by NPOs communicating their required number of volunteers explicitly, and corporations sourcing for the right activity to accommodate all of their employee volunteer pools.

### **6.9 Social Impact of Corporate Giving Activity**

Both corporations and NPOs preferred to engage in meaningful corporate giving activities. However, an expectation gap exists due to the differing interpretation of “meaningful”. From a corporation's perspective, a volunteering activity is deemed to be meaningful if it involves interaction with the beneficiaries. Engaging the beneficiaries assures corporations that their giving will translate into a positive social impact. However, some NPOs feel that engaging the beneficiaries might not be the most meaningful way for creating positive social impact. From an NPO's perspective, corporate giving is only meaningful if it meets the NPO's needs. Such giving might include essential yet labour-intensive work which does not involve interacting with the beneficiaries, but where help is needed due to a lack of manpower.

To bridge this expectation gap, corporations need to focus on fulfilling NPOs' needs. While this may translate into activities without the opportunity to interact with beneficiaries, this would be more meaningful as it helps NPOs perform better and deliver greater social impact. Hence, corporations are encouraged to learn more about the needs of the NPOs before engaging in corporate giving.

### **6.10 Social Impact Assessment of Corporate Giving**

Corporate respondents mentioned that there is a need for NPOs to be more accountable in terms of the use of cash donations. Corporations, especially those that donate large quantities of funds, would like NPOs to provide social impact

measurements for their contributions. To the corporations, social impact assessment includes quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the impact of their cash donations, and may also be applied to donations in-kind and employee volunteerism. A few corporate respondents mentioned that some NPOs have already established quantitative assessments – for example, the number of beneficiaries that received help through donations. However, they would also like these assessments to include qualitative components. Suggestions include gathering qualitative feedback from the NPOs and beneficiaries after corporate giving activities, including verbatim feedback from the beneficiaries during or after the activities. However, since social impact assessment is multi-faceted and complex, not all NPOs currently have the internal capability to measure their social impact.

To overcome this expectation gap, NPOs should invest more time and effort into measuring their social impact. Given that NPOs have a close working relationship with their beneficiaries, they would be in the best position to decide on the appropriate measures for social impact assessment. Incorporating both quantitative and qualitative assessment will make it even more meaningful to corporations, and may encourage more corporations to give to NPOs.

## 7. Recommendations for Broad-based Measures

The findings from this study suggest that the current set of channels can be improved to foster a more vibrant corporate giving scene in Singapore. Furthermore, some corporations have shown a need for more guidance to develop their corporate giving strategy.

Our study suggests exploring the possibility of using technology to bridge the gaps between corporations and NPOs, in the form of a common platform to allow corporations and NPOs to engage each other more effectively and foster better mutual understanding and communication.

Another area of consideration could be to address concerns from corporations which have just embarked on corporate giving, as they would need more guidance in developing their corporate giving strategy and initiatives. Such corporations are generally unsure about where to start in corporate giving, and are interested to develop a long-term corporate giving strategy that is aligned with their corporate vision. Hence, there are opportunities to address this need which could encourage these corporations to conduct corporate giving in a more meaningful and sustainable manner, thereby improving the corporate giving climate in Singapore.

## 8. Recommendations for Corporations and NPOs

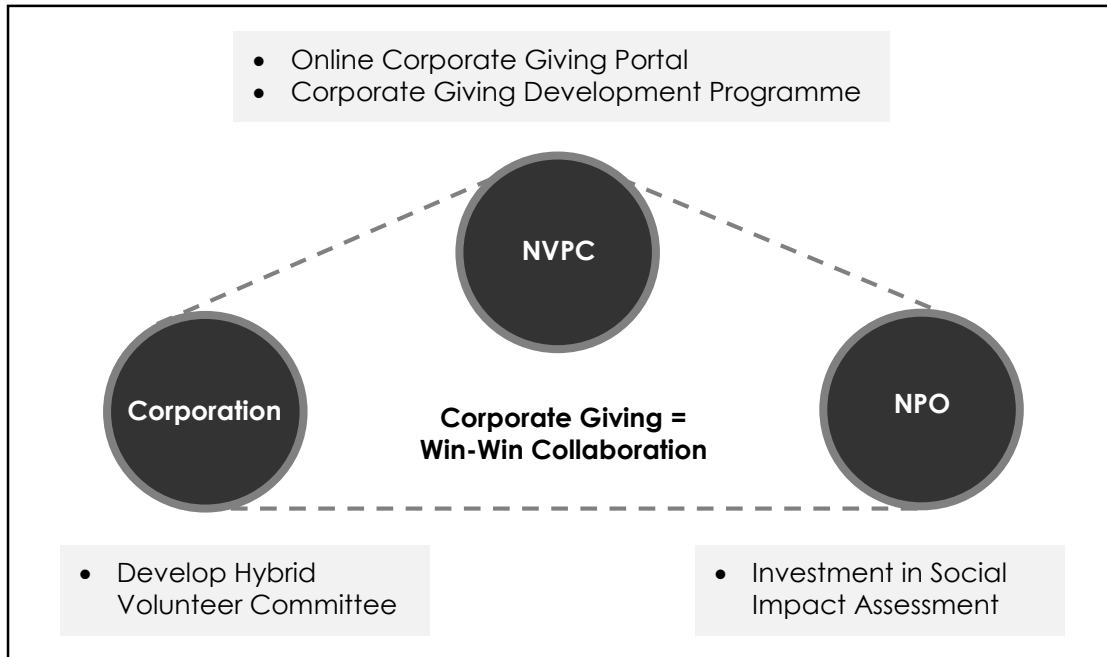
A growing number of corporations are becoming more interested in giving back to the community. While NVPC has the ability to create an environment conducive for corporate giving, the quality of the corporate giving experience ultimately depends on the corporations and NPOs. Going forward, corporations and NPOs must take a proactive stance in structuring corporate giving programs so as to benefit both parties and the community at large.

Corporations can implement a hybrid volunteer committee as part of their manpower planning relating to corporate giving. Similar to the employee volunteer committee, this hybrid team would include passionate volunteers, as well as the personnel-in-charge of corporate giving. Such a manpower structure marries two benefits. Firstly, the presence of the CSR personnel ensures that the corporate giving activities are aligned with the corporation's CSR strategy. Secondly, the corporate giving initiatives would be driven by individuals passionate about volunteerism; ensuring the meaningfulness of the corporate giving.

NPOs could build up their internal capability in social impact assessment, as corporations are concerned about the impact of their contributions to the community. Some corporate respondents hoped to receive support in measuring the social impact of their contributions in a more quantitative manner. As such, NPOs could nurture the capability to measure social impact. This would induce corporations to engage in more corporate giving. Alternatively, corporations could develop templates for social impact assessment and make these available to NPOs.

In conclusion, the quality of a corporate giving experience is dependent on the way corporations and NPOs engage each other. It is essential that NPOs try to understand the needs of their corporate giving partners. As mentioned by most respondents, a

successful relationship is one where corporations and NPOs accommodate each other to achieve corporate giving that is most beneficial to the society.



## Appendix

Spire would like to express its gratitude to the respondents who participated in this study, for investing their time and sharing their insights and opinions throughout the course of this project.

Spire would also like to thank the dedicated management and staff of NVPC for giving us the opportunity to undertake this study.

### List of Participants – Non-Profit Organisations

1. Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centres (AMKFSC)
2. Ang Mo Kio Thye Hua Kwan Hospital
3. Association of Women for Action & Research (AWARE)
4. Beyond Social Services
5. Cat Welfare Society
6. Children's Aid Society
7. Children's Charities Association (CCA)
8. Christian Outreach to the Handicapped (COH)
9. Filos Community Services Ltd
10. Hong Kah North Day Care Centre for the Elderly
11. Malay Youth Literary Association (4PM)
12. MCYC Community Services Society
13. Nam Hong Welfare Service Society
14. One Hope Centre
15. Singapore Children's Society
16. Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO)
17. The New Charis Mission (TNCM)
18. Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2)
19. World Toilet Organisation (WTO)
20. Yong-en Care Centre

### List of Participants – Corporations

1. ACP Computer Training School Pte Ltd
2. ANZ Singapore
3. Aviva Ltd
4. Citibank Singapore Ltd
5. Club 21 Pte Ltd
6. Davis Langdon & Seah Singapore Pte Ltd
7. Hilti Far East Pte Ltd
8. Keppel Corporation Ltd
9. Land Transport Authority
10. Life Technologies Holdings Pte Ltd
11. Maybank Singapore
12. Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)
13. Mondelez Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
14. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
15. Resorts World at Sentosa Pte Ltd
16. SAP Asia Pte Ltd
17. Singapore Telecommunications Ltd (SingTel)
18. Standard Chartered Bank Singapore
19. Turner & Townsend Pte Ltd
20. Anonymous (at company's request)



## About NVPC

The National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) is an independent not-for-profit organisation (NPO) that exists as the nation's leading connector of volunteers and donors with the non-profit sector.

The centre is an advocate of giving and helps people and organisations give well to causes they care about, so as to build engaged and compassionate communities for all in Singapore. This is done through working with other non-profits, companies, and public sector bodies to facilitate and strengthen giving in Singapore, whether of time, money or in-kind.

NVPC also develops capacity, leadership and professionalism in the sector through training in various aspects of volunteerism and philanthropy, and conducts key research on the giving landscape in Singapore.

## About Spire



Spire Research and Consulting is a strategic market intelligence consultancy providing market growth and entry studies across 18 Asia-Pacific countries as well as all other global emerging market regions. Spire's clients include over thirty Global Fortune 500 companies and Government agencies in 10 countries. Spire Research and Consulting was established in 2000 to address a gap in the research and consulting industry in global emerging markets. Unlike most agencies that focus on traditional consumer research, our founders saw a profound need for holistic research projects that integrate traditional customer research with knowledge of the broader business eco-system. Spire exists to undertake such projects with distinction.