



GUJARAT CSR AUTHORITY





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With the legislation of Companies Act, 2013, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has now assumed greater significance. The Government of Gujarat, with a view to optimally utilise the CSR funds of public and private sector companies for the welfare of the State, set up the Gujarat CSR Authority (GCSRA). The Authority has been established under the Industries and Mines Department, Government of Gujarat for the purpose of managing CSR funds and for coordinating, monitoring and implementing the various CSR activities in the State.

About GCSRA

Gujarat CSR Authority (GCSRA) was established by the Government of Gujarat in December, 2014. It has been created as a credible platform for launching CSR initiatives in Gujarat. It is registered as a Society since April, 2015 where its:

- Advisory Body is headed by the Hon. Chief Minister of Gujarat
- Governing Body is headed by the Chairperson of GCSRA
- Authority is headed by a highly experienced, retired IAS officer

Objectives of GCSRA

- Develop a framework for CSR activities in Gujarat
- Improve the outcomes of CSR initiatives through exchange of experience and identifying of best practices
- Assist mid-sized and small companies in the effective implementation of the CSR projects
- Set standards for training, capacity building, advocacy and rating of CSR initiatives
- Create a forum for CSR initiatives and their recognition
- Develop into an active umbrella organisation for advocacy to address policy and implementation issues faced by companies



Role of GCSRA

- Bringing clarity to the new CSR regime in India
- Facilitating optimal utilisation of CSR funds available in Gujarat
- Coordinating, monitoring and implementing various CSR activities in Gujarat
- Creating a portal to highlight and facilitate CSR activities in the State
- Channelising CSR funds towards the Human Development Index (HDI)-based priorities and 50 most backward talukas in Gujarat
- Creating a CSR fund by receiving contributions from various companies
- Creating a reliable database of credible implementing agencies



Current Challenges to CSR

In the existing scenario, companies are facing several challenges and issues in the practical implementation of CSR. In most cases, CSR is treated as a peripheral issue for their businesses, and is being handled as an appendage to their existing operations and responsibilities. As a result, CSR all too often receives low priority and does not have the desired impact.

At the implementation level, some of the common challenges faced by companies are:

- Lack of experienced staff to design and execute CSR projects
- Insufficient knowledge of the social sector to design effective projects
- Lack of information on assistance available for implementing projects
- Huge demand for donations from unscrupulous agencies and low-impact causes

Growing Demands in the Social Development Sector

The social development sector has evolved over the last few decades and has become increasingly complex. In fact, several practices that have long been used by industries are now being adopted in social sector projects. Practices such as the preparation of detailed project report, cost benefit analysis, risk assessment, outcome monitoring and piloting of new ideas are becoming more common in social sector projects. Rigorous research tools and IT resources are being harnessed in project implementation and monitoring. As a result, there is a growing need for highly skilled professionals in the development and implementation of CSR projects. There is also a need for unique solutions to long-standing issues Gujarat has been facing. Some of the successful CSR initiatives such as the 108 ambulance service and the Akshaypatra mid-day meal kitchen have already become a part of the regular government schemes.





How CSR Can Help Companies

Essentially, CSR is connected with an organisation taking responsibility for its actions and decisions that concern the society, the community and the environment. By engaging in CSR activities with high impact, the company builds good-will and a better image for itself.

CSR has the potential to:

1. Improve the visibility of the company

Put simply, the public is more aware and familiar with companies that are involved in CSR activities as these activities have a positive effect on the lives of the people. The company is therefore in a better position to differentiate itself from its competitors and increase customer retention.

2. Avoid and resolve conflict with local community

When businesses engage in CSR, they are more inclined to consider the social and environmental consequences of their business. They are thus better placed in avoiding or mitigating the adverse impacts of their business on the community.

3. Improve the branding of the company

CSR activities improve the brand value of the company. When an organisation has a robust CSR framework, it can genuinely build its brand value by focusing on how its services can make a difference in the community. The company is well-placed to improve its business reputation and standing.

4. Bring better credibility with clients, suppliers and new business partners

A strong CSR framework helps build and maintain trust between the company and its clients, suppliers and partners. It strengthens ties, builds alliances and is instrumental in nurturing strong working relationships.

5. Generate positive media and publicity

When a company engages in serious and high-impact CSR projects, it can generate considerable positive publicity and media opportunities for itself. The media is interested in ethical business activities and will play a positive role in improving the visibility of the organisation.

Support Available from GCSRA in Assisting Companies with their CSR Obligations

I. Development of CSR Strategy

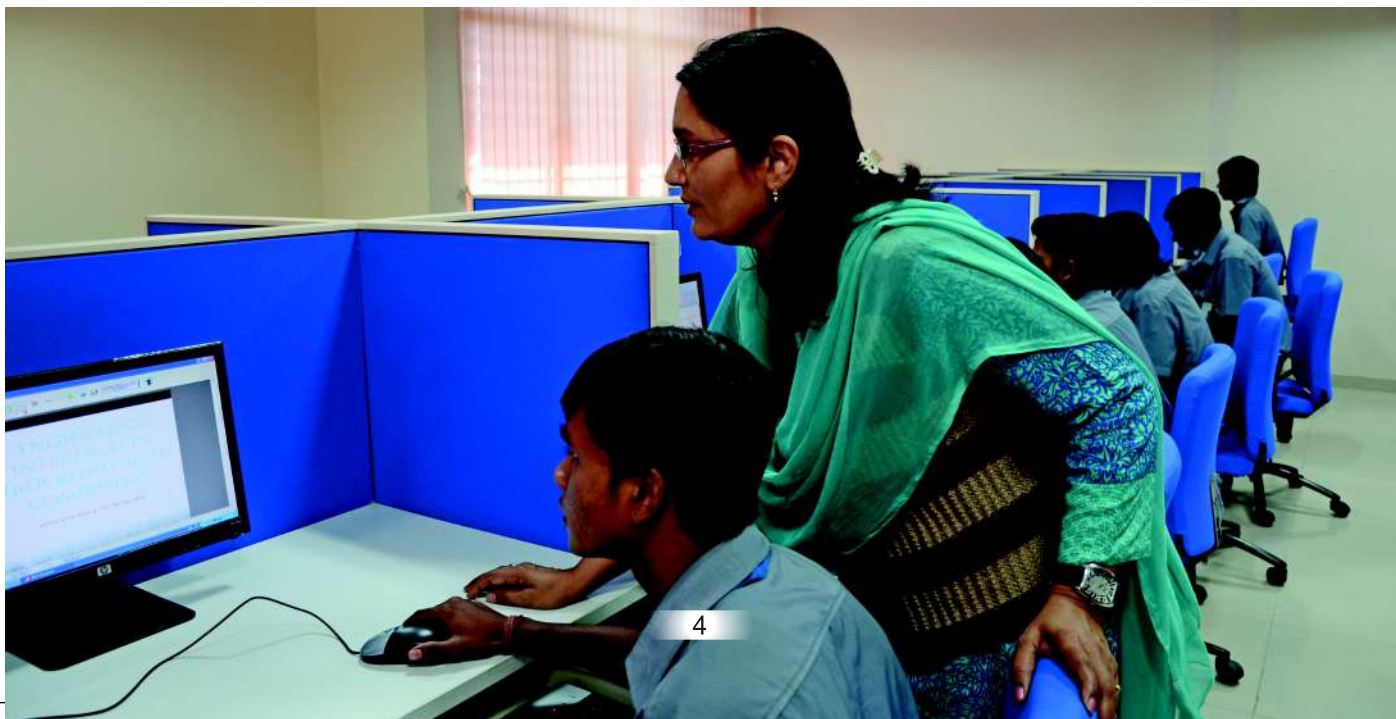
GCSRA will provide assistance to the company to develop its CSR strategy by helping it focus on the following areas:

- Avoiding replication of existing social schemes unless value is being enhanced
- Developing sustainable & replicable projects that can be up-scaled by others, including government
- Design & implementation that draw from the existing skills of the company
- Recommending that support be limited to few areas only in order to improve impact

II. Support for creating a dedicated CSR team

GCSRA will help the company to appoint a dedicated CSR team in the following ways:

- Help in recruitment of quality personnel through collaboration with reputed institutions for campus placements
- Developing systems for effective administration
- Training of team members by developing training modules and arranging of field visits for better understanding of CSR programmes



III. Development of innovative project ideas

GCSRA will offer assistance to companies who are looking for innovative project ideas to fund under CSR:

- Project ideas that are open for funding are available on GCSRA's website while new ideas are regularly being sought and developed into concrete project concepts
- Identifying of credible implementing agencies who can support the company's CSR efforts at the ground level
- Assistance in developing detailed project reports by making a panel of professional project writers available

IV. Creation of sector-specific funds

GCSRA has created seven sector-specific Funds for companies to effectively and meaningfully contribute and manage their CSR obligations. These Funds are:

- Gujarat Education Equity Fund
- Malnutrition Control Fund
- Health & Sanitation Fund
- Livelihood Security Fund
- Vocational Training Fund
- Rural Entrepreneurship Promotion Fund
- Special Children's Fund



V. Improving visibility for CSR initiatives

GCSRA will help companies get better visibility for their CSR initiatives by:

- Providing a platform on social media sites such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter
- Launching a CSR newsletter
- Documentation of top five companies with most notable CSR programmes every year
- Organising an annual national conference for experience-sharing
- Organising annual CSR Awards for noteworthy contributions
- Certification of CSR expenditure of mid-size companies

VI. IEC Activities

GCSRA will organise a series of seminars in its initial round of IEC activities to sensitise companies and key leaders on CSR:

- Regional and national sensitisation seminars
- Idea-generation sessions with Company Secretaries & Chartered Accountants
- Brain-storming sessions with CSR Heads of major companies

VII. Creation of database

GCSRA will create a database of CSR initiatives in Gujarat that includes:

- A CSR Register of Companies and their CSR plans
- Certification of CSR expenditure

VIII. Implementation support

GCSRA will provide the following support to organisations towards the implementation of their projects:

- Documentation and external evaluation support
- Registration of individual company's CSR plans on Authority's website and linking it with a query builder software for obtaining information of other companies involved in similar projects
- Organising regional consultations and seminars for better understanding and networking

IX. Forging wider networks

There are a number of areas where GCSRA will provide meaningful support for large CSR projects by developing:

- Large-scale, high-impact modular projects which can be implemented by any company on a stand-alone basis
- Few big scale projects which can be co-funded by many companies
- A scheme for PPP by creating a fund for co-implementation of well-targeted interventions
- An online data base of credible vocational training agencies in the State
- A data base of youth interested in training

Establishing Transparent Systems

GCSRA is establishing transparent systems within its own organisation to foster a positive and sustainable environment with its partners and alliances. Efforts towards transparency have already been initiated in the following areas:

- CSR Approach
- Gender framework
- Ethics
- Monitoring & evaluation
- Fund release to implementing partners







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