



# REPRESENTATION OF PWD IN CSR PROGRAMS

## CSR PROGRAMS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

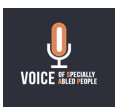
Corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs enable companies to aid under-resourced communities and create positive social impact, while also improving company image and performance. CSR programs expand brand name recognition and increase customer loyalty with value alignment. Most importantly, they offer support to communities directly affected by company business practices. Depending on the corporation, CSR initiatives have widely varying goals, such as reducing carbon emission to the environment, increasing food accessibility to impoverished communities, or supporting marginalized social groups. CSR has evolved over decades into the sector known today, one committed to diversity and inclusion. Many companies across various industries are still trying to understand how to better include disability initiatives in their CSR programs. Some companies are leading this initiative, such as CVS Health who has built affordable homes for PWD and PepsiCo's partnership with Ability Beyond Disability. Despite the evident need for an increased focus on disability in CSR programs, many companies have not yet understood the importance of including PWD in their public-facing CSR initiatives. **The Return on Disability Group's analysis of 1,293 of the largest publicly traded U.S. companies finds that nearly 72% (930 companies) exhibit "no publicly observable activity in relation to disability."** A more specific examination of 100 CSR reports of companies across various sectors reveals that less than half (44%) have CSR initiatives supporting PWD in the general public. These companies' CSR reports mention disability most often as a group of consideration in terms of employee diversity and inclusion, as well as supplier diversity for some companies, and about 56% address accessibility considerations for their consumers. While most companies seem to at least consider PWD internally within their employee and existing customer bases, there remains a lack of adequate CSR programs designed to support PWD in the community. As many companies have yet to establish disability-focused CSR programs, businesses overlook the needs of a large segment of society while foregoing the brand-building opportunities of CSR. Disability touches a total of 73% of consumers in the market who are either PWD or friends and family of PWD. To cater to the needs of such a large portion of society, businesses need to take action beyond internal diversity initiatives—especially as international standards raise expectations for CSR. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights contributed a global framework for CSR, with Guiding Principle 12 outlining businesses' responsibility to "respect the human rights of individuals belonging to specific groups or populations that require particular

<sup>1</sup> Galbreath, Jeremy. "How Does Corporate Social Responsibility Benefit Firms? Evidence from Australia." *European Business Review* 22, no. 4 (2010): 411–31.

<sup>2</sup> Gould, Robert, Sarah Parker Harris, Courtney Mullin, and Robin Jones. "Disability, Diversity, and Corporate Social Responsibility: Learning from Recognized Leaders in Inclusion." *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 52, no. 1 (2020): 29–42.

<sup>3</sup> Donovan, Rich. 2020. "Design Delight From Disability - 2020 Annual Report: The Global Economics Of Disability". The Return on Disability Group. <https://www.rod-group.com/sites/default/files/2020%20Annual%20Report%20-%20The%20Global%20Economics%20of%20Disability.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Donovan, Rich. 2020. "Design Delight From Disability - 2020 Annual Report: The Global Economics Of Disability". The Return on Disability Group. <https://www.rod-group.com/sites/default/files/2020%20Annual%20Report%20-%20The%20Global%20Economics%20of%20Disability.pdf>.



attention...[including] people with disabilities. This study sought to establish understanding of the current landscape of disability-related CSR programs, identify potential areas for improvement, and inform recommendations for next steps for companies to improve their CSR programs for PWD. With little comprehensive research existing on this topic, data was collected through two methods—surveys sent to current CSR managers and analysis of 100 companies’ CSR reports and websites—determining companies’ CSR spending, existence of disability-related CSR programs, disability-related program types, and expandability of programs to include PWD. **The survey received over 700 views, yet only 5 complete responses, raising questions about CSR managers’ hesitancy to disclose information about the representation of disability in their company’s CSR programs.** The analysis of publicly available CSR information from 100 Fortune 500 companies, however, yielded several major findings. Spending patterns indicate that disability is not a major priority in the CSR space, with the vast majority of companies allocating less than 2% of annual revenue to CSR programs overall and much smaller fractions of CSR budgets to disability. **Less than half of the 100 companies (44) have disability-related CSR programs, with 36 companies having PWD-specific programs and 8 companies having PWD-inclusive programs.** While it appears that business practices that are inclusive of PWD customers are becoming more common, disability-related CSR efforts for the general public and communities are still progressing more slowly. Nonetheless, analysis of the 44 companies that do have disability-related CSR programs revealed major program types and industry leaders in the disability and CSR space that can serve as models for other companies to follow. **From the explored 56 companies that don’t already include PWD in their CSR programs, 84% could incorporate PWD in their already established CSR programs with some brief alterations.** A few companies that have CSR programs expandable to PWD are Amazon, Boeing, and Facebook. The inclusion of PWD would not be too hard of a task in comparison to the negative impact on society that comes from the exclusion of externally-facing programs that benefit PWD. From the research into groups benefiting from the CSR initiatives, it was found that many categories are clustered into one large category and labeled ‘diverse’. Removing the ‘diverse’ label would benefit the targeted groups. Companies could view these groups separately and provide exact amounts of donations and funding toward these different groups to promote better inclusion. Some successful programs that are geared specifically towards PWD are American Airlines, Adobe, Citi Group, and CVS Health. The growth and enrichment of PWD helps the overall population as much of it is disabled or will eventually become disabled. For future research on PWD representation in CSR programs, it may be beneficial to do a more in-depth look at the financial aspects of these programs—how much they cost, how much they benefit the companies financially and reputation-wise—to inspire more companies to include PWD in their CSR initiatives, which may also help combat low participation in the survey sent out.

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<sup>5</sup> Cordero, Juanjo, Tania Ortiz de Zúñiga, and Marleen Rueda. 2014. Disability and corporate social responsibility reporting: an analysis comparing reporting practices of 40 selected multinational enterprises. <http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4432340>.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sharon Wang was the project manager for this project and Brandy Hoang and Ayanna Montegut were researchers.

Sharon Wang is a student of Cornell University who is encouraged of making a social change to allow PwD the accessibility to resources with help of top companies around the world.

Brandy Hoang is student of University and desires to contribute to more accessible and equitable world for all.

Ayanna Montegut is a student of Prairie View A&M University is motivated to be a part of change towards making world inclusive and accessible place.

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## WHY THIS MATTERS TO VOSAP

VOSAP has been a champion of advocating for the inclusion of Specially Abled People, especially by advocating for a truly representative, authentically inclusive, and empowering-of-all corporate America. This study sought to establish understanding of the current landscape of disability-related CSR programs, identify potential areas for improvement, and inform recommendations for next steps for companies to improve their CSR programs for PWD.

## ABOUT VOICE OF SPECIALLY ABLED PEOPLE INC

Voice of Specially Abled People (VOSAP) is a global advocacy organization built on the principles of Empowerment of Specially Abled People. In Special Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, VOSAP is working to create an Inclusive and Accessible world by accelerating implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and goals of UN CRPD (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) treaty. In addition to enabling individuals with assistive devices, surgical interventions, scholarships etc, VOSAP has created innovative digital transformation tools to promote inclusion of Person with disabilities such as (a) Virtual Art Gallery on Disability to educate masses on disability and promote inclusion, (b) create crowdsource demand for accessibility of public places and create mass movement of virtually connected  $\approx 10,000+$  volunteers/changemakers using VOSAP App.

