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The Conference Board operates with a dual mission: to equip the world's leading corporations with the practical knowledge they need to improve their performance and better serve society. Our founders believed the first obligation of an enterprise is to build and sustain a successful business, which, in turn, creates employment and stimulates economic development. Today, our members also seek to contribute value to their communities in more specific and direct ways.

As part of our societal mission, we make a portion of our research available to the public at no charge so that a broader audience can benefit from our work. For our members, we offer a rich portfolio of activities focused on societal objectives, such as sustainability and education.

Funding for these activities comes from our 1,047 member organizations. Because of their support, we feel an obligation to report on our societal activities, both to make our members and the broader business community aware of our efforts and to hold ourselves accountable for delivering services that are valued. This publication covers the activities that we believe provided a societal benefit in 2013.

According to the 2014 edition of *The Conference Board CEO Challenge*<sup>®</sup> survey, respondents agree that they must stand for something other than products and profits. CEOs are focused on the importance of brand and reputation as a tool to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability. “Ensure sustainability is a part of the corporate brand identity and culture of the organization” is the number one sustainability strategy in the global CEO Challenge results and in every region/country except China, where it is number two.

Our investment in societal programs has nearly doubled over the past three years, reflecting both increased efforts by The Conference Board in these areas and the greater interest of corporations and citizens in addressing the world's most pressing challenges.

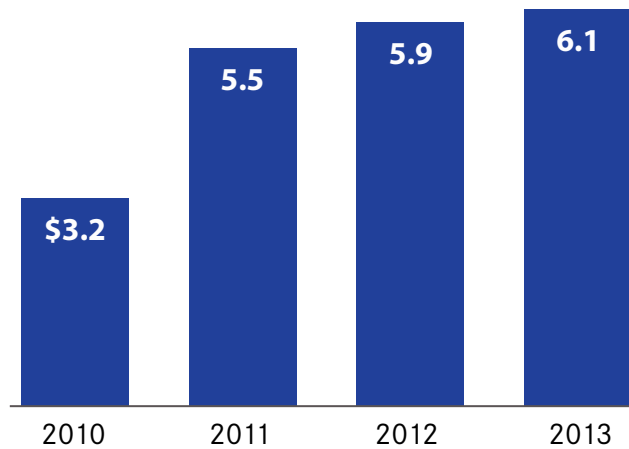


In FY2013, The Conference Board invested \$6.1 million in societal initiatives. These investments supported a wide range of products, ranging from our economic indicators, which are influential in public policy circles worldwide, to our portfolio of reports, conferences, and councils that are devoted to helping top companies meet their obligations to society.

This report summarizes our work as thought leaders for member organizations and the broader business community in six important areas:

- 1 Sustainability
- 2 Benchmarking and exploring corporate philanthropy
- 3 Peer learning and research in social investments
- 4 Diversity and inclusion
- 5 Improving education
- 6 Employees with disabilities

#### The Conference Board Investment in Societal Initiatives (\$ millions)



Note: The years represented are fiscal years, which last from July 1 to June 30, and not calendar years.



## 1. SUSTAINABILITY

In 2013, The Conference Board released the second edition of *Sustainability Practices*, an annual publication that analyzes how public companies from around the world disclose environmental and societal practices. As more and more businesses recognize the influence of these issues on corporate performance and long-term shareholder value and choose to make more nonfinancial metrics available, the importance of *Sustainability Practices* as a benchmarking publication can only grow.

The 2013 edition covers 76 environmental and social practices, which encompass atmospheric emissions, water consumption, biodiversity policies, labor standards, human rights practices, and charitable and political contributions. The five new practices added for this edition include total investments in sustainability and anti-bribery policies. The report details the percentage of companies disclosing each practice, as well as the median performance of the sample. This framework allows readers to identify progress and determine any remaining gaps in their own environmental and social disclosures. The second edition also introduced geographic comparisons, making it possible to benchmark across four regions.

Last year also marked the launch of the *Sustainability Dashboard*, a web-based tool that complements the *Sustainability Practices* report. The dashboard presents data from the report in an interactive, online format that allows users to easily select, view, and export the most relevant benchmarking data.

In 2013, we also published *Sustainability Matters 2013: How Companies Communicate and Engage on Sustainability*. While corporate sustainability reporting is on the rise, there is continuing debate

about what to report and the extent of corporate engagement with stakeholders on this topic. *Sustainability Matters 2013* compiles research from subject experts that can help companies address these issues and corporate directors understand how their peers are engaging in and reporting on their sustainability practices. The report features contributors from several leading academic institutions, including Harvard Business School, Northwestern University, Warwick Business School, and Copenhagen Business School.

In addition to the release of research publications, The Conference Board hosted the Summit on Sustainability in New York in June 2013, during which 200 senior executives discussed important topics related to sustainability, including strategies, solutions, and best practices for managing sustainability in the supply chain. Results from the summit were summarized in a Conference KeyNotes report.

We held a series of webcasts focused on sustainability, including “Transforming Our Aspirations: From Less Bad to Net Good”; “Social Innovation—Solutions for a Sustainable Future”; “A CEO’s View on CSR, Risk, and Reputation Management”; “Corporate Governance, ESG, and Sustainability”; “The Corporation of the Future: Integrating Trust and Sustainability with Creating Shareowner Value”; and “Human Rights Risk: A Critical Business Imperative.”

The Conference Board also launched Sustainability Council I – Implementation and Execution and Sustainability Council II – Products, Technologies, and Solutions for Sustainability in 2013.



## 2. BENCHMARKING AND EXPLORING CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY

In 2013, we started *Giving Thoughts*, a blog addressing pressing corporate philanthropy issues ([www.conference-board.org/givingthoughts](http://www.conference-board.org/givingthoughts)). Some of the topics the blog has covered include effective altruism, social impact bonds, and social impact measurement.

For the third year, The Conference Board also partnered with the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy (CECP) on *Giving in Numbers*, a profile of corporate philanthropy

practices. The 2013 survey had a record 240 participants. In addition to the report, we held a webcast to discuss key findings, which included:

- The return of corporate giving to prerecession levels
- The fact that education is, for the first time, the most funded issue area
- The increase in noncash giving, including employee volunteering and product donations

## 3. PEER LEARNING AND RESEARCH IN SOCIAL INVESTMENTS

The Conference Board started the Global Social Investing Council in 2013. The council advances the practice of cross-border corporate social responsibility and strategic philanthropy on a global scale through continuous discussion of the latest trends, issues, and solutions. The group met twice last year to examine the following topics:

- The Companies Act in India and its implications for corporate philanthropy
- Matching gifts programs and overseas employees
- Equivalency determination for international nonprofit organizations
- Global volunteerism

Our Contributions Councils continued to meet and address critical issues in this area, including:

- Big data in the philanthropy world
- Immigration and its effect on philanthropy
- Foundation versus corporate giving

The Research Working Group on Measuring the Impact of Corporate Social Investments also met several times in 2013. Participants were executives with responsibility for guiding and executing corporate social investment strategies from 14 major companies, including Verizon, Walmart, Target, Intel, Lockheed Martin, and P&G. The results of the group's research will be published in the summer of 2014, but their findings are already influencing others. For example, the research working group's recommendations influenced CECP to include measurement questions in its annual *Giving in Numbers* survey.



## 4. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In October 2013, The Conference Board released *Vets Returning to the Workforce*, an Executive Action that offered information for organizations that seek to hire veterans. Employers face talent shortages, especially in technical fields, and returning veterans who possess a wealth of technical and applied skills—particularly in the areas of teamwork and leadership—are often overlooked. Employers can successfully hire veterans if their staffing departments know how to locate these job candidates, learn how to translate a veteran’s resume, and overcome mistaken beliefs about this unique group of applicants.

Last year, we also published three issues of *Human Capital in Review: Focus on Diversity & Inclusion*, exploring such hot topics as:

- Barriers to women’s advancement
- The lack of women in top management in Latin America
- The variation in ethical behavior between members of different generations
- Targeted strategies for organizational inclusion

- CEO actions at companies whose D&I is considered best-in-class
- The business case for LGBT-supportive initiatives
- Diversity and inclusion efforts regarding Asian and Asian-American talent

Millennials—those born between 1980 and 2000—will make up approximately 64 percent of the workforce by 2020. By that time, baby boomers (1946–1964) and generation X (1965–1979) will be far outnumbered by their millennial counterparts. Before long, millennials will find themselves in the same seats their managers occupy today. The Executive Action *Helping Millennials Help You: Managing Your Young Workforce* examines what companies are doing today to manage, train, and prepare these future leaders to succeed in an unpredictable global business environment.

Other diversity and inclusion publications from 2013 included *The 2013 Women’s Leadership Conference KeyNotes* and the Council Perspectives *Pillars of Employee Resource Group Success* and *New Career Models That Can Support Your Diversity and Inclusion Program*.



## 5. IMPROVING EDUCATION

Are new graduates ready to work? That question is the cornerstone of the Business and Education Council. The council, which includes both educators and corporate leaders, offers a forum to share insights about how to improve schools, promote workforce readiness, and increase the effectiveness of business and education partnerships. Recent discussions have focused on:

- Measuring the effectiveness of business/education partnerships
- Community college and business partnerships
- The impact of the Obama administration's policies on business/education partnerships

## 6. EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

In February 2013, we published *Leveling the Playing Field: Attracting, Engaging, and Advancing People with Disabilities*. This research report, which was based on the work of The Conference Board Research Working Group on Improving Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities, takes a comprehensive look at the business case for employing people with disabilities and details the steps companies can take to encourage the hiring and engagement of employees with disabilities. The report focuses on efforts to overcome workplace discrimination and addresses some of the myths and misconceptions that can make it difficult for organizations to hire and support people with disabilities.

Publications on this topic include the research report *Tapping Hidden Talent Pools: Recruiting, Developing, and Retaining Veterans and People with Disabilities*, which was released in June 2014.



## CONCLUSION

All of the activities covered in this report help us achieve our mission to equip the world's leading corporations with the practical knowledge they need to improve their performance and better serve society.

Ensuring our efforts are aligned with our members' priorities is critical to achieving this mission. And ensuring that our efforts are effective and have an impact—on the business community and on society—is an aspiration that we endeavor to meet each year. We hope this report is helpful in describing our work and offers those who benefit from our programs an opportunity to consider how our work could be improved further.

We encourage readers to explore the work of The Conference Board in greater depth on our website ([www.conferenceboard.org](http://www.conferenceboard.org)). If you would like to continue the conversation about our societal mission, please contact Carol Courter ([carol.courter@conference-board.org](mailto:carol.courter@conference-board.org)).



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