

**NATION
SWELL**

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Pivotal moments

**Guidance and tools to help
companies respond
appropriately to social,
cultural, and political events**

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The bottom line

Frequent media headlines, debate on our national stage, and marked instances of backlash toward companies have mainstreamed the politicization of ESG over the past year. Thus far in 2023 we've witnessed [165 anti-ESG bills across 37 states](#), [state-level divestment](#) from ESG funds and asset managers, and [surges](#) in anti-ESG shareholder proposals. But in spite of these headwinds, corporate social and environmental responsibility continue to enjoy the affirmative support of investors, employees, and consumers by significant margins. And regulators, including the SEC, seem intent on shifting sustainability disclosures from voluntary to mandatory for many companies.

Although the underlying work of corporate social impact and sustainability remains in-tact and durable, newly mounting political pressures have created real headwinds for business leaders — headwinds that can fundamentally change how social impact and sustainability are practiced.

To get more clarity on what impacts political backlash is having on corporate practices, NationSwell surveyed 74 corporate ESG leaders (VPs and above), and conducted in-depth interviews with 12 more (whose ranks include senior leaders from Fortune 100 and 500 companies). This research illuminated that:

Only 15% of leaders anticipate that the politicization of ESG will be a significant influence on their strategies and decision-making in the next year, far below other pressures: macroeconomic conditions (64%), regulatory/legislative activity (51%), and actions of other companies (38%);

A significantly greater share of companies (35%) are using this moment to talk about the business advantages of social impact and sustainability work than have “eliminated or greatly reduced use of the term ‘ESG’ in public messaging” (15%);

Companies are currently lacking – but seeking – more data on the relationship between ESG and their (own) bottom line. This need is particularly strong for the social (“S”) aspect of ESG; storytelling helps to supplement this gap, but leaders increasingly require evidence for decision-making;

Building a culture of shared value between ESG and business priorities, specifically by integrating ESG throughout all core aspects of a company, can ensure that the underlying work of corporate social impact and sustainability persists.

In addition to these findings, our research surfaced one significant way that political pressure is impacting company behavior: it has sown a growing reluctance to speak out publicly on culturally sensitive and politically divisive topics. This tendency has presented new challenges for the day-to-day work of leaders, and has revealed some key gaps in knowledge, strategy, and collaboration around corporate response to pivotal moments.

Whereas the social justice movements of 2020 normalized the activist CEO, the current moment is introducing new doubt in the boardroom and among management teams about the relative risks and rewards of taking public and participatory action when an issue is polarizing. **If harnessed intentionally, this trepidation can provide a useful moment for companies to reflect, reevaluate, and reset the purpose and impact behind public responses. Companies need to consider their own credibility and opportunity for meaningful impact before making bold public statements or commitments. But too much restraint can be overcompensatory and damaging, both to society and to corporate interests.**

As we look ahead to the 2024 primary and general elections, the acuity of questions around if, when, and how to respond to social and political issues will only grow. In conversation with leaders and practitioners, we've surfaced **four recommendations** for companies to help them navigate ESG headwinds while considering the interests of their employees, customers, communities, and other stakeholders. These recommendations will be most effective if implemented together. We have also created **four tools** to support their direct implementation.



Recommendations:

1. Create mechanisms for understanding what employees and customers expect of your organization
2. Assess the impacts of sociopolitical issues on your company, and your company's opportunity to influence those issues
3. Use a decision framework to weigh and resolve the best available information before acting
4. Consult an external advisory council to expand your perspective



Implementation tools:

- A. Employee sentiment survey questions
- B. How to create a social response scorecard
- C. Template corporate social response scorecard
- D. Template Community Advisory Council charter

Strategic guidance

1. Create mechanisms for understanding what employees and customers expect of your organization

Without consistent, evidence-based information on stakeholders' values and expectations for your company, it is difficult to make a case for how to respond during divisive moments. Companies know that [majorities of customers](#) and employees expect them to engage in ESG, particularly around critical issues, and that they increasingly take material action when their expectations are not met (e.g., [boycotts](#), [turning down work assignments](#)). But even with this aggregate data on hand, it is challenging for leaders to: 1) accurately assess how important an issue is to their specific stakeholders; and 2) understand how their stakeholders want them to respond (e.g., privately/internally, externally, or both).

Stakeholder preferences should not definitively determine your company's response to pivotal moments; instead, information from employees and customers must be additive to other inputs, including your corporate values. To gather this information, companies should develop active and passive mechanisms for taking the temperature of their employees and customers. Specifically, they should consider:



Anonymous employee and customer surveys. Surveys can provide quantitative and qualitative data on the sentiments of your stakeholders. Explicitly asking your employees and/or customers for their opinions on what issues they think your company should take an active stance on – internally or externally – can remove the risks of assumptions. In certain cases, it may also be appropriate and useful to ask these stakeholder groups for their points of view on what action(s) your company should take when confronted by a pivotal moment.

Surveys should always be anonymous and optional. They can be fielded on a regular basis to understand opinions across a range of issues, or during pivotal moments. For example, one company found it helpful in the wake of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling to survey their employees on their sentiments toward the decision. Though they knew that abortion is not a 50/50 issue among the general public, they sought to understand where their own workforce fell.

Survey data can be used to support or contradict previously held beliefs about employee and customer opinion, ultimately strengthening decision-making around a response.



Implementation Tool A: Employee sentiment survey questions

Use or modify this selection of survey questions designed to help companies better understand employee expectations and preferences regarding corporate responses to pivotal social and political moments.



Digital employee comment boxes and other internal communications channels.

Digital comment boxes or messaging channels provide low-lift ways for employees to provide feedback to your company. One company we spoke with uses a digital comment box wherein employees can submit feedback and ideas anonymously. After the murder of George Floyd, the institution committed over \$1 billion dollars to racial justice in part as a response to comments made via this channel.



Engagement with internal Impact Committees, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), and related structures.

Leaders charged with making decisions about corporate response should welcome input from and dialogue with ERGs and other employee groups. One company has taken the additional step of creating internal Impact Committees composed of employees from across the business. The Committees channel feedback from all levels, elevate employees' impact work to executives, and provide an environment for cross-functional engagement on relevant issues.



Open lines of communication between executive leadership and employees.

Finding opportunities for all levels of employees to provide feedback to your CEO and executive leadership can add color to the information you receive from surveys or comment boxes. Additionally, it may help employees feel valued as an integral part of the social response ecosystem. In this vein, one company's CEO holds regular breakfasts and open office hours with staff, responds consistently to employee emails, and prioritizes direct sharing through their DEIB practices.

While leaders will inevitably still grapple with how to reconcile differences in opinion among employees and customer groups, and how much weight to assign these expectations relative to other considerations like company values, having depth of information will enable a more comprehensive understanding of key stakeholder sentiments around an issue.

2. Assess the impacts of sociopolitical issues on your company, and your company's opportunity to influence those issues

While employee and consumer input is valuable to decision-making, executives are bullish on having a clear business rationale for social response – optimally one tied directly to their core priorities (e.g., financial inclusion, technology, health equity, etc.).

Business ramifications need to be identified across issues and scenarios, in part to avoid reactive responses that are grounded in personal viewpoints.

Additionally, companies need to understand their positioning compared to competitors in order to align with, benefit from, or influence industry trends. To satisfy these needs, conduct an assessment – using the principle of double materiality – that is specific to social, cultural, and political issues. This assessment, which may be part of or separate from your standard ESG materiality assessment, is intended to diagnose how pivotal moments may impact your company, and in turn, what your company's impact may be in the case it makes a response.

An assessment should be performed at an established cadence (e.g., annually), prior to the onset of an event or time when your company would need to take action. In addition to the traditional aspects of a double materiality assessment (assessing existing policies and strategies, engaging internal and external stakeholders, accounting for investor inputs, identifying opportunities, conducting a competitor analysis, and more), we recommend the following:



Consult with internal subject matter experts to understand how certain issues materially affect their work or the operations of your company. In addition to gathering input from your C-suite and board of directors, collaborating with teams across your company will strengthen your understanding of how certain issues could materially affect their work, and subsequently, your bottom line. For example, one ESG leader that we interviewed finds that consulting with legal experts benefits their understanding of the current landscape, including disclosure and regulatory requirements. Other leaders have encountered material challenges for their business during global events like the Russia-Ukraine war, natural disasters, and more, which may be predictable through consultation with other teams (e.g., procurement, sales, etc.). In general, facilitating the exchange of information between unexpected team players can broaden your perspective of how an issue could ultimately affect your organization.



Assess your company’s unique assets and capabilities in relation to social and political issues. Different business units can also contribute ideas on what assets and capabilities your company has that can be leveraged (potentially uniquely) for an external response. For example, in 2022, [Yelp found](#) that they were uniquely positioned to respond to the Dobbs ruling because they had a mechanism to back up their words with actions. They identified the potential for individuals to go to incorrect locations for abortions, and that they could counter this by clearly labeling “crisis pregnancy centers” (organizations that do not provide abortion services) on their platform. This strategy was effective in leveraging their product to support employee and customer values while meeting a broader social impact aim.

Focusing on this bi-directional relationship of materiality can enable you to answer the question of “why us?” or “why not us?” that is inevitable during pivotal moments.

3. Use a decision framework to weigh and resolve the best available information before acting

With better information on employee and consumer sentiment and the material impact of certain issues, companies still need to weigh and factor these inputs into their best course of action. Decisions on how to respond to significant events often happen behind closed doors, in parallel conversations, and without clear rationale for the end result. As ESG becomes more politicized, under-developed processes risk skewing toward retreat over action.

A codified framework provides parameters for how to make a decision, and creates more generative, measured dialogue among decision-makers – ultimately reducing bias.

We’ve reviewed some frameworks in use by large companies. Typically, a designated group of cross-functional leaders formally evaluates the potential impact of a particular social or environmental issue on employees, customers, core business performance, company values and mission, leadership and operations, and other stakeholders. Through a simple scoring system, the framework prescribes a response strategy based on a predetermined set of options, often ranging from monitoring the situation to proactively and publicly engaging with the issue. Frameworks should be engineered to reflect leadership and organizational tendencies, including inclination toward cautious vs. market leading responses.

To create a strong response framework, corporate leaders should:



Bake in compatibility with quantitative data. In order to use the employee and consumer feedback gathered through surveys and other mechanisms, ensure that your framework is designed for compatibility with quantitative data. Often, frameworks are built to be used as quickly as possible, limiting the amount of data or information that is considered and relying heavily on predetermined assumptions of stakeholder interests, business values, and more. The decision resulting from your framework will be stronger if you incorporate quantitative elements – even if it requires gathering information from other teams or sources.



Engage relevant leaders across your company early and often to build out and implement a framework. The use of a social response framework is most effective and consistent if contributed to and adopted by key leaders across the business, including your CEO. This is particularly critical for large companies with complex or diffuse structures (e.g., parent companies), in which alignment on overall corporate response is likely to require a large mix of leaders who may not have frequent overlap in their job duties. We recommend revisiting your framework every 18-24 months to incorporate input from new leaders and/or teams.



Develop an accountability mechanism that meaningfully incentivizes compliance with its recommendations. Even if teams across your company are aligned on the idea of a framework, it can be challenging to ensure its consistent use. And at times, cross-functional teams will disagree on an outcome but still need to move forward with united talking points and plans of action. Therefore, your framework should include a decision-maker and the details of their role – such as how they form consensus among parties. Additionally, company management teams should keep a record of pivotal moments that required response (internally or externally), including information about whether a response framework was used, what the framework recommended as a response, and whether the ultimate response aligned with that recommendation. This exercise in transparency can create opportunities to audit flawed processes, recalibrate decision-making frameworks, and increase accountability to closing the gap between recommended and actual responses.



Implementation Tool B: How to create a social response scorecard

Follow this process for building a decision-making tool to use when responding to pivotal social and political moments. The tool may also be applied to natural disasters and other crises that potentially impact company interests.



Implementation Tool C: Template corporate social response scorecard

This template is intended to provide companies with a starting point for developing their own social response scorecard. The template should be adapted and completed as described in *Tool B: How to create a social response scorecard*.

4. Consult an external advisory council to expand your perspective

Using a framework can provide much-needed clarity and confidence during pivotal moments, but internal stakeholders don't necessarily see all strategic angles of a response. For example, employees may not be attuned to the expectations or pressures of their company's board. Additionally, executive leaders may be removed from the realities of communities affected directly by social and political issues. Therefore, as new, nuanced issues arise – like the recent Supreme Court decision on affirmative action – experts across sectors can help to weigh risks and rewards of different courses of action.

An external advisory council that is separate from your board can help you frame and pressure test your approaches, and support translation of what you are hearing from your employees and customers.

While the right composition of an advisory council will depend on factors unique to each business, consider having an executive from your company helm the council, with leaders at relevant NGOs, think tanks, advocacy groups, and community-led organizations as members. Your company should carefully consider the guidance of this advisory council, yet treat it as non-binding.

One company has formed such a council, and has found significant value in hearing their feedback around how to respond to pivotal moments. The council has prompted the company to speak out on issues, and has also questioned the company at times that it hasn't. The council has also provided feedback on products and marketing campaigns to ensure alignment with best practices (e.g., avoiding discrimination), and generally has afforded the company an opportunity to provide their rationale for social responses and receive real-time feedback in a closed door setting before taking actions that are difficult to course-correct.



Implementation Tool D: Template Community Advisory Council Charter

Use or adapt this template charter document to build your own community advisory council.

Coda: A call for collective action

Despite the rhetoric, the legislation, and the flare ups of “anti-woke” consumer and investor activism, there’s no real sign that ESG’s march is slowing down. The stakes are too high and its momentum is now baked into business, regulation, and the capital markets. But the question of whether – and how – to respond during pivotal moments will become more relevant over the next 12 months than it has ever been.

In our conversations with ESG leaders, we observed emphatic interest in greater collaboration and pre-competitive exchange of information before and during pivotal moments. Companies heavily consider the actions of their peers and competitors before responding to an issue. While some companies embrace first-mover status, many others prefer to follow the leader and enjoy the safety of moving in a pack. But if too many companies are waiting for someone else to act first, too few will end up acting on their values.

Currently, information sharing between companies is ad hoc and incidental, often occurring through press releases, social media, and informal conversations between peers. In part, this remains the status quo due to time constraints and the pressure that leaders feel to rapidly bring information to the decision-making table.

To solve for this, corporate leaders should preview their intentions with each other and engage in coordinated, collective action when the need arises. The operating mechanisms for this type of exchange are already known to the field: standing or ad hoc bull sessions, benchmarking, and formal communities of practice rank among the options. What’s needed now is a new form of compact, one that seeks to ensure that the benefits of exchanging information outweigh the risks. The essential ingredients of this compact are mutual trust and reciprocity.



Appendix: **Implementation tools**

Tool A: Employee sentiment survey questions

The following sample survey questions are designed to help companies better understand employee expectations and preferences regarding corporate responses to pivotal social and political moments. The sample questions are intended to provide a picklist and a starting point for further thinking, though they may also be used verbatim if desired. Many of these questions can be adapted to a consumer audience as well.

In general, how active should our company be in engaging externally (i.e., publicly) on sensitive or divisive social and political issues (e.g., affirmative action, abortion, gun laws, etc.)?

- More active than we typically are
- Less active than we typically are
- About the same as we typically are
- Don't know / No opinion

In general, how active should our company be in engaging internally (i.e., with employees) on sensitive or divisive social and political issues (e.g., affirmative action, abortion, gun laws, etc.)?

- More active than we typically are
- Less active than we typically are
- About the same as we typically are
- Don't know / No opinion

In your opinion, how well does the company live its values when engaging on sensitive or divisive social and political issues (e.g., affirmative action, abortion, gun laws, etc.)?

Extremely poorly 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely well

To what extent do you believe the company operates and engages in ways that are consistent with your personal values and beliefs?

Extremely poorly 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Extremely well

Please select the three issues below that you believe the company has the greatest responsibility and opportunity for meaningful public engagement:

- Abortion access
- Environment and climate issues
- Gender equality
- Global conflicts
- Immigration and refugee issues
- LGBTQ+ rights
- Racial equity and justice
- Voting access and democratic participation

Please indicate the degree to which you expect the company to take an external / public stance or action in response to divisive social and political moments on the following issues:

ABORTION ACCESS

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ISSUES

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

GENDER EQUALITY

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

GLOBAL CONFLICTS

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE ISSUES

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

VOTING ACCESS AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

Please indicate the degree to which you expect the company to take an internal stance or action in response to divisive social and political moments on the following issues:

ABORTION ACCESS

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ISSUES

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

GENDER EQUALITY

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

GLOBAL CONFLICTS

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE ISSUES

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

VOTING ACCESS AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

No expectation 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very high expectation

Tool B: How to create a social response scorecard

The steps below describe a process for building a decision-making tool for companies to use when responding to pivotal social and political moments. The tool may also be applied to natural disasters and other crises that potentially impact a range of company interests.

Please refer to Tool C: Corporate social response scorecard template when completing this process

Categorizing impacts (inputs) and available actions (outputs)

The two most important elements of your response scorecard are 1) the factors that decision-makers must consider about the potential impacts a pivotal moment will have on your business and its interests, and 2) the available range of response options your company can and will consider as a result of their understanding of those potential impacts.

To develop your response framework, begin with identifying and categorizing the potential impacts and potential actions.

1. Identify the relevant **categories of impact** that your company should consider when weighing a response. These categories should reflect the areas where you anticipate the greatest range of risk / reward in getting your response right. Sample categories include:

- A. **Employee impacts**
- B. **External stakeholder impacts**
(i.e., investors, customers, suppliers, government, and community)
- C. **Business operation impacts**
- D. **Values and beliefs impacts**
- E. **Brand and reputation impacts**

2. Identify the relevant categories of action that your company may take in relation to a given crisis. These categories should reflect overall approaches toward a response, but should leave room for a range of specific tactics depending on the details of the scenario. Sample categories of action include:

- A. **Monitor and watch** - The company does not take immediate action but continues to observe developments on the issue at hand and collect new information from stakeholders to inform potential future actions.
- B. **Internal engagement** - The company mobilizes action directed toward employees on the issue at hand but does not engage externally.
- C. **Reactive external engagement** - The company mobilizes action directed toward employees, and takes steps to engage externally when prompted by media, partners, and other stakeholders.
- D. **Proactive external engagement** - The company mobilizes action directed toward employees, and initiates public engagement with media, partners, and the community on the issue.

3. Create a simple **table** in which your categories of impact (Step 1) become row headings and your categories of action (Step 2) become column headings. Categories of action should be arranged from least to greatest degree of activation.

4. For a given category of impact (row), describe 2 or 3 **observable indicators** (information and evidence) that should correspond with a given category of action (column). For example, what information about potential “Employee impacts” would be necessary to trigger plans for “Reactive external engagement” versus “Proactive external engagement”? Repeat this exercise until every category of impact has observable indicators that correspond with every category of action.

Calibrating your decision framework using a points allocation system

Now that your company has a table that relates categories of impact with categories of action using observable indicators, it is time to create a scoring system that will enable your organization to make well-calibrated decisions when considering a range of impacts and a range of actions. The reality is that for any given crisis, some indicators will point toward more proactive engagement while others will point toward less proactive engagement. Here’s how to calibrate your scoring system:

5. Replace the column headings (categories of action) in the table you created in Steps 3 and 4 with corresponding **numerical points values**. This is the number of points decision-makers will award to each category of impact based on the observable indicators. Points values should ascend in value according to the intensity of the category of action. A simple approach is to replace your lowest intensity category of action (e.g., “Monitor and watch”) with a point value of 0 and then increase the value by 1 point for each subsequent category of action.

6. Determine the **total points possible** in the scorecard by multiplying the highest point value in your table column heading by the number of categories of impact (e.g., 4 points for the highest category of action X 5 categories of impact = 20 points possible).

7. Divide the **total points possible** in the scorecard (Step 6) by the number of categories of impact (e.g., 20 points possible / 4 categories of impact = 5 points).

8. Determine the **maximum total point value** that prompts each category of action. The maximum total point value for each category of action should be a multiple of the outcome of Step 7. For instance, if Step 7 yielded 5 points, then the maximum point value for the first category of action (e.g., “Monitor and watch”) should be 5 points. The maximum point value for the next category of action (e.g., “Internal engagement”) should be 10 points, and so on.

9. Determine the **minimum total point value** that prompts each category of action. The minimum total point value for each category of action should be 1 point greater than the maximum total point value for the preceding category of action (e.g., 1-5 points = “Monitor and watch”, 6-10 points = “Internal engagement”).

Tool C: Corporate social response scorecard template

This template is intended to provide companies with a starting point for developing their own social response scorecard. The template should be adapted and completed as described in [Tool B: How to create a social response scorecard](#).

	1 Point	2 Point	3 Point	4 Point	
Employee impacts	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Points subtotal:
External stakeholder impacts	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Points subtotal:
Business operation impacts	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Points subtotal:
Values and beliefs impacts	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Points subtotal:
Brand and reputation impacts	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Observable indicator 1 Observable indicator 2 Observable indicator 3	Points subtotal:
					Total points:

0-5 points: Monitor and watch	6-10 points: Internal engagement	11-15 points: Reactive external engagement	16-20 points: Proactive external engagement
Tactic 1	Tactic 1	Tactic 1	Tactic 1
Tactic 2	Tactic 2	Tactic 2	Tactic 2
Tactic 3	Tactic 3	Tactic 3	Tactic 3
Tactic 4	Tactic 4	Tactic 4	Tactic 4
Tactic 5	Tactic 5	Tactic 5	Tactic 5

Tool D: Template Community Advisory Council Charter

Charter Document

[Company Name] Community Advisory Council

Purpose

The Community Advisory Council provides [Company] and its leadership with objective, informed, and diverse guidance on a range of issues related to its social impact and sustainability activities. The Council provides perspective, feedback, and recommendations to [Company] on the design and implementation of programming, corporate response to socially and politically sensitive moments, and adherence to best practices and emerging standards related to environmental and social impact.

Membership

The Council is composed of leading experts and practitioners from across a range of disciplines and sectors including [research, policy, community development, civil rights, environmental advocacy, and consumer advocacy].

The Council is chaired by an individual nominated by [Board committee], who may be an executive of the company. The Council includes a minimum of (#) # members and a maximum of (#) # members. Members may not serve simultaneously as Directors or Trustees for [Company]. The Council may include up to (#) # current [Company] employees serving ex officio.

Council members are nominated by [group] and can serve up to (#) # consecutive (#) # year terms beginning [Month Day] and ending [Month Day] of the year.

Authority

Council members shall have no power to make decisions about [Company], nor may they instruct employees or the board to take specific actions. Council members shall not speak on behalf of [Company] without prior authorization. This includes speaking to the press or discussing confidential business matters with employees, clients, or vendors.

Responsibilities

The Council will:

- Advise [Company] leaders on social impact and sustainability practices, governance, strategies, programs, and initiatives
- Advise [Company] leaders on responding to sensitive social, cultural, and political issues
- Identify and notify [Company] leaders of emergent trends, themes, best practices, challenges, and opportunities relevant to its social impact and sustainability goals
- Offer a range of objective opinions based on individual perspectives, experiences, and expertise in service of [Company's] social impact and sustainability goals

Meetings

The Council will meet at least [twice] annually in person or virtually, and as often as its Chair or [a majority] of its members deem necessary. Meetings will include an agenda distributed by the Chair in advance, along with other logistical information and preparatory materials. Meetings may include participation by relevant executives of the corporation. Minutes will be recorded and shared back with the Council.

Recommendations

Council recommendations and reports will be submitted in writing to the [Company] board for consideration.

NationSwell would greatly appreciate your feedback on this resource so that we can continue providing valuable insights to you and your organization. Please consider taking 30 seconds to complete [this brief questionnaire](#). For more information about this project, please contact Liesl Schnabel (lieslschnabel@nationswell.com).

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