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Nine In 10 Businesses Embraces Social Sustainability But More Can Be Done to Deliver Impact

Two in five businesses had engaged in Corporate Volunteering; SBF unveils VolunteerInc. programme to support businesses in their volunteering journey

Friday, 22 August 2025 [Singapore]

The Singapore Business Federation (SBF) today unveiled the findings of its inaugural Social Sustainability and Corporate Volunteering studies that show an overwhelming majority of Singapore businesses see social sustainability as essential to long-term success, with nine in 10 large companies and eight in ten SMEs recognising its role in shaping business value. Unveiled at a launch event attended by over 120 business leaders, sustainability professionals, and policymakers, the findings signal growing momentum behind corporate volunteering and call for stronger ecosystem support to help companies scale their social impact.

2. Commissioned by SBF and conducted by KPMG in Q2 2025, the study surveyed over 430 companies, with SMEs comprising 87% of the respondents. It examined the current state of social sustainability in Singapore's business landscape, including the prevalence of corporate volunteering and the key barriers and drivers influencing companies' engagement in socially impactful initiatives.

Social Sustainability Gains Momentum, but Gaps Remain

3. The Social Sustainability study found that, while many businesses are still in the early stages of embedding social sustainability into core strategy, 95% had already implemented at least one social sustainability initiative in the past year, in areas like employee training, health and safety, and progressive wages - signalling clear momentum.

4. This trend aligns with Singapore's Forward SG agenda to foster shared responsibility and inclusive progress, as well as global frameworks such as the UN Global Compact, which call on businesses to manage their societal impact through sustainable, people-centric practices.

5. However, SMEs cited competing priorities and limited resources as key challenges. Respondents expressed a clear need for more structured support, including practical tools, training, and clearer guidance, to help deepen their efforts. The study suggests that strategic integration of social sustainability efforts with business operations and strategy is key to long-term success, enabling businesses to move beyond ad-hoc initiatives and deliver sustained, meaningful social impact.

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Corporate Volunteering: A Strategy to Strengthen Employee Engagement & Community Service

6. The accompanying Corporate Volunteering (CV) Study found that 40% of businesses had engaged in CV initiatives. Participation was highest among large companies (with revenue above SGD 100 million) at 60%, compared with only 13% of micro-businesses (revenue below SGD 1 million).

7. Corporate volunteering is increasingly recognised as a meaningful way to strengthen employee engagement and stronger community ties. On average, companies typically contribute about 40 hours of volunteering per year, though some large organisations recorded over 1,000 hours annually, which is equivalent to more than 125 full workdays of community service.

8. Common barriers to CV include inadequate resources, while participating companies identified the need for impact measurement tools to better track and scale efforts. The studies recommend capability-building initiatives, improved access to volunteering opportunities, and incentives to help businesses start or expand their CV efforts.

Policy and Ecosystem Support Needed for Purpose-Driven, Sustainable Change

9. The research underscores the importance of policy and ecosystem support, including recognition schemes, clearer frameworks, and collaborative platforms. The challenges faced by businesses often reflect broader systemic issues such as short-term project design, lack of co-creation with community partners, and limited alignment between volunteering initiatives and local needs.

10. The studies highlight the need for stronger policy and ecosystem support to move beyond ad-hoc or transactional approaches. Clearer frameworks, recognition schemes for long-term impact and collaborative platforms can help address these shortcomings. By building intentional, equitable partnerships and embedding community voice into programme design, companies can shift from performative efforts to purpose-driven, sustainable change.

11. Recognising these barriers, SBF has developed VolunteerInc., a new corporate volunteering programme piloted to work with ecosystem partners this year. VolunteerInc. aims to mobilise businesses at all stages of their volunteering journey by offering tailored support, including access to volunteering opportunities, skills training, and frameworks for impact measurement, while helping companies align volunteering with their mission and overcome common challenges to achieve meaningful impact. (More details on VolunteerInc. in Annex C.)

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12. Mr Kok Ping Soon, Chief Executive Officer of SBF, said, "The findings reflect a powerful shift in how businesses view their role in society. Social sustainability is no longer a side initiative but a driver of business resilience, employee engagement, and long-term competitiveness. But intent alone isn't enough. We're calling on businesses to embed social impact into strategy and we're backing them with the tools, partnerships, and programmes to succeed."

13. Ms Jean Tan, Chief Executive Officer of SBF Foundation and Chief Social Sustainability Officer of SBF, said, "No single business can achieve social impact at scale alone. It takes a connected eco-system where governments, corporates, and community partners come together with shared purpose. Corporate volunteering is one way businesses are stepping up, not just with dollars, but with time and talent. With the right frameworks, shared learning, and support, we can activate more companies to build inclusive workplaces, engaged employees, and resilient communities."

Annex A: Social Sustainability Study Report
Annex B: Corporate Volunteering Study Report
Annex C: Factsheet on VolunteerInc.
Annex D: Company Profiles

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About Singapore Business Federation (新加坡工商联合总会)

Singapore Business Federation (SBF) is the apex business chamber with over 32,000 members across diverse industries. With a vision to advance Singapore towards a globally competitive and sustainable economy, SBF mobilises the business community to be future-ready and magnify transformation opportunities through policy advocacy, partnership platforms and capability programmes.

For more information, please visit: www.sbf.org.sg.

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Annex C: Factsheet – VolunteerInc.

Overview
VolunteerInc. is the Singapore Business Federation's (SBF) national corporate volunteering initiative that empowers businesses, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), to make a meaningful difference in the community. By bridging the gap between companies and community needs, VolunteerInc. enables businesses to contribute their time and talent towards a more inclusive and resilient society.

Strategic Alignment with SBF
Corporate volunteering is a key programme under SBF's Social Impact pillar, one of six action agendas driving business transformation. VolunteerInc. strengthens Singapore's business ecosystem by embedding responsibility, resilience, and community-mindedness into corporate culture.

Why VolunteerInc.?
With VolunteerInc., social responsibility is not just as a side effort, but as a core part of doing business. Here's how:

- Purposeful Alignment: We help companies integrate volunteering into their business mission and growth strategies.
- Tailored Matching: We match company strengths with community needs for the right volunteer opportunities and impact.
- Capability Building: We provide training, research, measurements and reporting tools to drive adoption and impact.
- Community Bonding: We strengthen business-community ties while supporting national efforts in social cohesion.

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Annex D: Company Profiles

Coface Singapore

Coface Singapore, global leader in trade credit insurance and risk management solutions has launched its first corporate volunteering programme through VolunteerInc, SBF's national initiative that helps companies participate in purposeful volunteering to make a positive difference in the community. With nearly 80 years of experience and a presence in 100 countries, Coface is committed to supporting sustainable growth of businesses and its communities around the world. This milestone not only reflects Coface's deepening commitment to social responsibility in the region but also exemplifies how businesses can harness employee skills and passion to create meaningful community impact.

For its inaugural activity, Coface Singapore is taking time away from the office and spending it with the community, frallying employees to support seniors through Adaptive Sports. In collaboration with Allkins, a volunteer management centre dedicated to empowering seniors, Coface volunteers will facilitate and play adapted floorball in a two-hour session with seniors. This unique initiative blends the fun of sport with a deeper mission: fostering friendships, encouraging active engagement, and bringing joy to seniors through accessible and inclusive sports.

"This [SBF's VolunteerInc.] is the first purposefully designed corporate volunteering programme for Coface Singapore. Corporate volunteering allows us to align our business values with meaningful action, creating a positive impact for both our employees and the community we serve."

Grishma Kewada
Chief Executive and Country Manager
Coface Singapore

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Cook Medical

Cook Medical is committed to creating a positive and lasting impact through responsible business practices, what they call doing good business while doing good in the world. By striving to improve lives, safeguarding our shared environment, and fostering inclusive social progress, the company is driving meaningful change. Its efforts include reducing carbon emissions, advancing sustainable innovations, promoting equity, and strengthening community connections - all with a view to building a better future for generations.

Cook Medical in Singapore is also no stranger to community initiatives, having worked with local community organisations like Filos and Trampolene on various initiatives like donation drives, training, and community outreach. This year, however, marks their first step into sustained corporate volunteering.

As an SME and first-time participant in the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) Foundation's Community Marketplace 2025 - a platform that connects corporates with charities aligned to their values - Cook Medical has identified MENDAKI, New Hope Community Services and Project Dian as social service agencies whose causes resonate with their social impact interests. The company is now actively exploring volunteering opportunities with these partners.

"We hope that through the scaling up of our corporate volunteering efforts, it will pave the way for a stronger, more impactful relationship with the local community in Singapore."

Samuel Teh
General Manager
Cook Medical Singapore