

CSR CASE STUDY

Company Name: Youth Work Ireland

Business Type: National not-for-profit Youth Organisation

Location: Nationwide

Mission Statement: Our Vision is of a world full of possibilities for all young people

No. of Employees: 15 staff in the national office and approx. 1000 nationwide across 21 Regional Youth Services

Overview of CSR Initiative:

Work to Learn is a proven, effective work experience programme for at-risk young people. It supports them in finding self-esteem and pathways to work, and it strengthens engagement in education.

Project team:

This is a multi-way partnership which has been growing since 2010

- Youth Work Ireland is the Programme Designer & Coordinator.
- A number of youth services around Ireland support their individual young people in going through the programme.
- StateStreet fulfils an essential on-going advisory function, provides financial support for the programme and supports employee engagement such as in the form of interview practice.
- Local employers provide the work placements and invest their time and energy in mentoring the young people.
- The Irish Youth Justice Service provides strategic guidance and monitoring.

Resources required:

- We have identified a large cohort of young people facing educational and work-readiness challenges, who could benefit from Work to Learn. We are looking to further expand the programme in 2020 and beyond and we are looking for additional employers to provide work placements.

Challenges:

- We know from talking to employers of all sizes across Ireland that they want to and need to better understand how to support young people who are very distant from the marketplace. This is something employers identify not only as a support they wish to provide to their communities, but also as a business need to fulfil their own recruitment and retention requirements.

- Through this programme, with nearly 10 years expertise behind us, we can support employers and young people into a win-win solution.

Benefits:

Benefits for the beneficiaries have been measured as follows:

- The programme evaluation has proven an increase in self-esteem and grit on validated psycho-metric tests.
- Young people report increased skills and competencies.
- Younger participants improve attendance and orientation towards school.
- Older participants transition into paid work and apprenticeships.

Employers have benefited from:

- Help with workload/manpower.
- Staff development in terms of their training and mentoring skills.
- Improved community engagement at the level of the business.
- Personal satisfaction at the level of the staff member.
- Delivery of strategic CSR goals.

Outcomes:

- The programme is growing in size year on year since 2010 and in 2019 75 young people are participating across 20 sites nationwide.
- The outcomes in terms of work capabilities, life skills, education attendance and self-esteem have been overwhelmingly positive. The consistency of the measured results over time and across locations prove the quality and universality of the programme.
- The fact that the young people receive a wage has been shown to be the crucial difference compared to other non-paid placements programmes.
- The engagement of employers has been one of the successes of the WTL module; the experience is that once local employers are engaged they become active elements in the process and the vast majority of employers continue involvement into follow on activities too.

How was/is this initiative promoted?

Work to Learn is promoted in many ways at national level such as online and at sector events but really many of the key relationships and partnerships were and are developed at local level between the youth workers, the Youth Justice staff and local businesses who host work placements, and now the word keeps spreading because it is such a win win scenario.

Do you report on CSR in the Annual Report?

Yes

CSR Dimension:

[Towards Responsible Business' Ireland's National Plan on CSR 2017-2020](#) identifies 4 core dimensions of CSR – Environment, Community, Workplace and Marketplace.

- **Environment** - minimising negative environmental impacts
- **Community** - interaction with your local community partners and organisations
- **Workplace** - supporting and engaging with your employees
- **Marketplace** - interaction with your local community partners and organisations.

Please select the dimension(s) that you apply to your CSR Initiative and why?

For the companies involved, both for StateStreet who support us strategically and financially, and for the employers who provide the work placements, **Community** is the primary dimension: enhanced community engagement, improved education and work-readiness levels among the young people in the local area, future investment in the community etc.

There is also a strong **Workplace** dimension with staff supporting the Young People with interview practice before the programme, mentoring during the programme/placement and granting completion awards at the end.

Business Impact:

How has the CSR initiative benefitted your business and demonstrated a win:win in the short-term and/or long-term?

While the objectives are usually more formally stated within the larger Corporate Partners than within some of the SMEs who host some of the work placements, their CSR goals are the same across the board; our Partners strive to:

- Enable Success in Basic Education,
- Build Basic Job-Readiness Skills,
- Increase Employment Experience,
- Increase Job Placement,
- Increase Job Retention.

On all of these indicators Work To Learn has consistently been successful and demonstrated that a well-structured, well monitored programme significantly benefits both the businesses and the beneficiaries: it makes economic sense while also enhancing the future of local communities.

[Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

Please identify which SDG goal(s) that apply to your CSR initiative.

Work To Learn addresses many of the SDGs:

[SDG 4](#): Quality Education

[SDG 8](#): Decent Work and Economic Growth

[SDG 10](#): Reduced Inequality

[SDG 11](#): Sustainable Cities and Communities

[SDG 16](#): Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

[SDG 17](#): Partnerships to achieve the Goal

Learning:

What did you learn from your experience of creating and implementing a CSR initiative?

What advice would you give a business starting on their CSR Journey?

- Look for programme partners that have clear goals and share your core CSR values, yet are also open to new ways of working.
- Consider multi-partner programmes and look for synergies that harness the best of what each partner can provide, be it financial support, expertise, in-kind support, employee time etc, and thus achieve a powerful multiplier effect on communities and beneficiaries.
- Spend time getting to know each other as organisations and planning the programme well.
- Communicate, meet and review progress and future plans often, to ensure the programme is achieving everyone's goals especially as those evolve over time.

Case Study provided by:

[Youth Work Ireland](#)

June 2019