

Business Leadership in Society

How are initiatives responding to COVID-19?

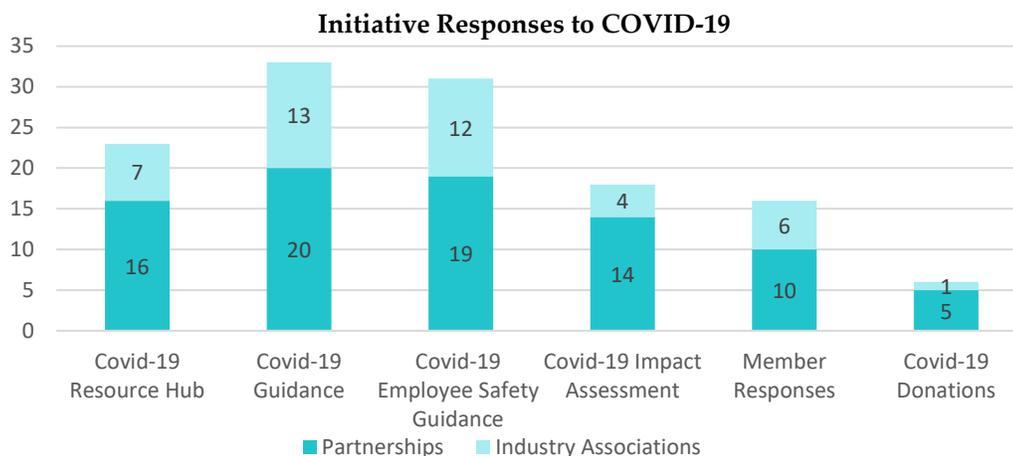
Initiative Responses to COVID-19

During the COVID-19 outbreak, company responses have been scrutinized with a strong focus on employee health and safety. In light of investors and other stakeholders placing more emphasis on the “S” in ESG, we explored whether initiatives with a purpose to improve the social issues of “Employee Health & Safety” and/or “Labor Practices” responded to the pandemic and what kind of content they provided. We analyzed the responses of initiatives included in the [Business Leadership in Society Database](#).

In the database, 45 initiatives focus on “Employee Health & Safety” and/or “Labor Practices,” including:¹

- 14 on “Employee Health & Safety” and “Labor Practices:” 11 partnerships and 3 industry associations.
- 4 on “Employee Health & Safety:” 1 partnership and 3 industry associations.
- 27 on “Labor Practices:” 16 partnerships and 11 industry associations.

Out of the 45 initiatives, 37 responded to the crisis and we identified five main types of responses: COVID-19 Resource Hub, COVID-19 Guidance, COVID-19 Impact Assessment, Member Responses and COVID-19 Donations. As these initiatives concentrate on workers, we also analyzed whether they provide specific guidance on employee protection.



COVID-19 Resource Hub

Most of the initiatives that responded to the crisis created a dedicated COVID-19 hub to provide information or resources to assist their members. Our analysis shows that 50% of initiatives working on both “Employee Health & Safety” and “Labor Practices,” 48% on “Labor Practices,” and 75% on “Employee Health & Safety” have created a special hub on their websites. For example, Better Work published a [special COVID-19 page](#) that includes information on country measures and updates, stories from the field and guidance on managing COVID-19. Other initiatives shared blog posts, webinars or podcasts in their COVID-19 hubs.

COVID-19 Guidance

33 initiatives provide guidance on managing COVID-19, which makes it the most common action taken by initiatives. The results show that almost all of them provided specific guidance on employee safety as well. In addition, some initiatives enacted or shared guidance on restarting operations, rebuilding a more sustainable industry, protecting communities and adapting their operations or supply chain. Business Call to Action published the [“Guidelines for engaging with the Base of the Pyramid”](#) in March. The report gives recommendations to members on how to manage employee, supplier and consumer needs.

¹ The full list of initiatives included in this sample can be found in the database. In order to access the relevant sample, please select “Employee Health & Safety” and/or “Labor Practices” in the “Theme” dropdown menu on the left side.

COVID-19 Impact Assessment

The pandemic had disastrous impacts on many sectors and some might be long-lasting. 18 initiatives have published reports that evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on specific industries, workers or communities. Our analysis shows that partnerships are more likely to conduct impact assessments, regardless of the social issues they are working on. For example, Sedex published a special report which investigates the "[COVID-19 Impacts on Businesses](#)." The initiative requested 60,000 members to answer a survey to understand the impact on businesses and their supply chain.

Member Responses

As companies face unprecedented challenges, particular attention is paid to their responses. 16 initiatives in the database are tracking how their members or companies are responding. Some initiatives share members' press releases or actions, while others have developed special trackers. For example, the Worker Rights Consortium has launched the "[COVID-19 Brand Tracker](#)." This tracker shows which brands are acting responsibly toward suppliers and workers and which ones are not.

COVID-19 Donations

6 initiatives have launched a crowdfunding campaign to support workers and communities hit particularly hard by the coronavirus.

→ Overall, these findings show that initiatives can play a prominent role in times of crisis by helping companies to navigate through challenging times.

Forbes' Global 2000 list of the World's Best Employers: Top 10

For this research, we also examined the top 10 world's best employers and whether they signed up for the 54 initiatives addressing "Employee Health & Safety" and/or "Labor Practices." The following list shows that a majority of these top employers are engaged in one or more of these initiatives. This result is aligned with the findings in our [latest research](#) that most of the large global firms are engaged to some extent in one or more of these kinds of "self-regulatory" and social responsibility initiatives.² The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) emerges as the most common initiative among the best employers. The WBCSD operates across various sectors. A key part of its agenda is driving the Sustainable Development Goals, so naturally it addresses labor practices.

1. **Alphabet:** 1/45

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development

2. **Microsoft:** 6/45

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development
- 100,000 Opportunities Initiative
- Alliance for Responsible Mining
- Consumer Goods Forum
- Decent Jobs for Youth
- Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance

3. **Red Hat:** 0/45

4. **Apple:** 1/45

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development

5. **SAP:** 1/45

- Business Call to Action

6. **Costco Wholesale:** 2/45

- Consumer Goods Forum
- Marine Stewardship Council

7. **Contemporary Amperex Technology:** 0/45

8. **Cisco Systems:** 0/45

9. **Neste:** 2/45

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development
- European Chemical Industry Council

10. **Amazon:** 2/45

- Consumer Goods Forum

² Please note that some initiatives do not publicly disclose a list of their members. Thus, it may be possible that some of the below mentioned companies are, in fact, engaged with more initiatives than stated.