

Almond Tree Strategic Consulting Ltd

ORGANISATION SIZE / Sole Trader (1-2 employees)

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BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF YOUR CSR APPLICATION

We are committed to ensuring that meaningful CSR remains at the heart of everything we do and have audited our activities against the accreditation requirements, developing the attached CSR Policy. As a micro-business serving the not-for-profit sector, with one employee and occasional associates (with no intention to grow further), there are capacity constraints on our CSR but we believe we go far beyond what would be expected of a micro-business. Our CSR Policy has been agreed by our Directors who are co-owners of the business (one of whom we employ). We publicise our CSR activities through our website (<https://www.almondtreeconsulting.co.uk/corporate-social-responsibility>) and our blog (see for example <https://www.almondtreeconsulting.co.uk/blog/csr-matters> and <https://www.almondtreeconsulting.co.uk/blog/please-sponsor-me>) as well as through networks and conference presentations. Our Environmental Policy ensures we take responsibility for environmental protection and sustainability beyond legal and regulatory requirements including minimising consumption of energy and resources, reducing the need to travel and eco-friendly purchasing. Our workplace CSR focusses on providing support, training, development and flexible working for our employee, valuing diversity in all our work, sound corporate citizenship and ethical practice and providing added value to clients beyond their purchase (and to enquirers whether or not they purchase our services). We support a number of community and charitable causes through philanthropy (at least 10% of pre-tax profits are donated) and directly through extensive pro-bono support and advice. This includes providing almost 30 days a year of free support to local and other charities including for our employee to volunteer as a charity trustee and school governor.

OVERALL SUMMARY

1.0 CSR Environment - Energy:

Our business is based in a home-garden office made from sustainable timber on a steel frame. It was sourced specifically because of its environmental credentials (see <https://armadilla.co.uk>), including:

- low energy under-floor heating that is both thermostatically and timer controlled to ensure it is not used when either the office is not occupied (subject to ensuring the temperature does not fall to a level that would damage office equipment) or when the temperature does not require it; and
- low energy lighting throughout.

We do not use air-conditioning and minimise energy used as much as possible, including switching off lights and office equipment when not in use.

As the office power is supplied from the house in which our Directors live (one of whom is our only employee, we do not have separate data on energy consumption or cost. Power is supplied by Bulb Energy (<https://bulb.co.uk>) which provide customers with 100% renewable electricity, ensuring that for every unit used a unit is produced and put on the grid by a renewable source including solar, wind and hydro. While we do not use gas for the business, Bulb also supply 100% carbon neutral gas.

We promote these and all our CSR practices more widely to other micro-business and charities through our website and blog. We aim to do more promotion, starting with the announcement of our CSR accreditation (if achieved) and through our promotion of CSR as a CSR Angel (e.g. at conferences etc).

1.2 CSR Environment - Natural resources:

N/A - There is no water supply to the office and the business does not consume water otherwise.

1.3 CSR Environment - Travel:

Our environmental policy is included within our CSR policy (attached) includes a policy on travel reduction and use of sustainable transport.

We reduce the need to travel through extensive use of telephone, conference call, video conferencing and electronic communications, only scheduling face to face meetings where required by the client or meeting in question. Where face to face meetings are scheduled, we aim to cluster a number of meetings with the same or other

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clients on the same day to minimise the need to travel.

Wherever practicable we use public transport for necessary journeys (or part of journeys where appropriate). This includes recognising that even where a train journey may take longer, it can be more productive due to the ability to work while on the train. We are located on the Midlands Main Line and within easy reach of the East and West Coast Mainlines. Therefore, other than to get to and from the railway station, we only use the car for journeys that would be prohibitively long or expensive by train and we use buses rather than taxis where feasible.

Our sole employee does not commute as the office is home-based.

1.4 CSR Environment - Environmental supply chain management:

Our environmental policy includes a policy on sustainable supply chains.

Other than sub-contracted associate consultants, our supply chain is very limited. Nevertheless, we aim to ensure the ecological footprint of our business is as small as possible including:

- using eco-friendly cleaning and other maintenance materials wherever possible;
- using local labour and materials where available to reduce CO2 emission and support our local community (e.g. local electricians were used to connect up the office);
- minimising the use of paper and other stationery products throughout the business and buying recycled and/or recyclable products wherever possible (and economical) to do so (including paper, printer cartridges etc.). We buy on average one set of printer ink cartridges a year, 2-3 reams of paper a year at most and very little else in the way of stationery and office supplies; and
- where feasible purchasing local or fair-trade products (e.g. tea).

1.5 CSR Environment - Waste:

Our environmental policy includes a policy on sustainable waste management.

We start by minimising use of resources (see above), including by purchasing recycled and/or recyclable products wherever possible. For those resources that we do consume we aim to reuse and recycle as much as possible, including all paper and printer cartridges.

We only use licensed and appropriate organisations to dispose of waste (although in practice we only dispose of about 1 or 2 waste paper basket-sized bins of waste a year.

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2. CSR Workplace

Our workplace CSR focusses on:

Relationships with clients – we respect our clients' mission by minimise the call on their resources and going beyond the requirements of our brief to support them.

Privacy – we are compliant with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation and support clients to ensure they are as well.

Employee development and well-being:

- Providing flexibility and equipment for our employee to work at any time and any location. This enables him to balance work and family and engage in a range of voluntary activities.
- Investing 3-5% of turnover in training and development through courses, conferences etc, educational materials and professional memberships and accreditations.

Valuing diversity – we support clients to access advice and enable them to implement good diversity practice. We seek input from a diverse stakeholders in our work, including from vulnerable or disadvantaged client beneficiaries.

Ethical investments and purchasing – we source from ethical suppliers (including fair trade and recycled products). Our employee's pension provision is invested in an ethical fund.

Corporate citizenship – our business supports organisations working for the good of their communities and our commitment to those communities is at the forefront of our work. We provide employee time to volunteer and provide pro-bono support (eg, free telephone advice to enquirers, whether or not they are likely to purchase our services; notifying past, present and prospective clients of funding opportunities; and our blog includes a wealth of advice, updates and insight to our target client base). We offer fearless advice, including pointing out where clients and enquirers may be running risks that could adversely impinge on the rights, responsibilities and/or aspirations of others. E.g. see testimonials at <https://www.almondtreeconsulting.co.uk/our-clients>

We would be happy to provide work experience opportunities for local young people and will explore opportunities in this area in the future.

3. CSR Community

Our CSR policy includes policies on community support and philanthropy.

We support a number of community projects and charitable causes through philanthropy (see below) and directly through our paid for and pro-bono services. Our whole business, in fact, is to support communities and those who support them. Beyond the provision of paid services we do this as follows:

We provide free advice to charities and community groups locally (e.g. our local parish church, local charities and voluntary groups) and more widely, e.g:

- we offer free telephone advice to enquirers, whether or not they have purchased or are likely to go on to purchase our services;
- we notify past, present and prospective clients of funding opportunities we come across that could be relevant to them;
- our blog includes a wealth of advice, updates and insight relevant to our target client base - <https://www.almondtreeconsulting.co.uk/blog/>;

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- our employee regularly supports our parish church with fundraising activities including by advising on potential sources of funding, helping write applications and volunteering at events; and

-we provide informal advice to other local groups (including churches, charities and schools) when requested.

We estimate that we provide on average 3-5 days per year to these pro-bono activities.

We provide time for our employee to volunteer: this currently includes:

- Trustee and Secretary of two charities (The Eikon Charity and Against the Grain).

- Governor at Bishop Stopford Academy including chairing the Curriculum Committee and the IT Strategy Group.

In both cases, we provide significant pro-bono advice and services to these charities. We estimate that we provide on average 2 days per month to enable these volunteering and pro-bono activities.

We support local businesses through our ethical and local purchasing decisions.

We are a CSR Angel, promoting CSR and accreditation on behalf of CSR Accreditation Ltd.

4. CSR Philanthropic

Our CSR policy includes policies on community support and philanthropy.

In addition to the considerable time and professional expertise we offer to community projects and charitable causes (see above), we donate at least 10% of our pre-tax profits to charitable causes.

We focus on charities supporting vulnerable young people and children, people with dementia and international humanitarian relief and development. This includes, and extends well beyond, the charities with which our employee volunteers. Charities we have supported in recent years (£8,500 or 19% of pre-tax profit in 2017-18 and £5,000 or 12% of pre-tax profit in 2016-17 - see attached accounts) include: The Eikon Charity, Against the Grain, Medicins Sans Frontieres, Dementia UK, Alzheimer's Research UK, Hear Our Roar, The Ideas Partnership, Service Six and various Disasters Emergency Committee appeals. Example thank you letters are attached as evidence.

In addition, from time to time we purchase advertising from local charities (such as in a school production programme) and/or take stands at local charity events/ conferences.

We aim to sustain long term relationships with the charities we support, in particular those with whom our employee volunteers, often sustaining our involvement for 5 or more years. Our involvement with The Eikon Charity has developed over the last decade, with Bishop Stopford Academy over the last 3-4 years and with Against the Grain, DEC and MSF over the last 2-3 years. Other than promotion on our website and acknowledgements in annual reports (e.g. Eikon and Against the Grain), our partnerships are generally low key and designed to ensure the charitable causes is always at the forefront rather than promotion of our brand. Many of our partner charities publish annual reports and other impact reports.

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