

A Point of Light

The Civic 50 shines a light on community-minded companies.

Problems facing the world today are complex and wide-reaching. Leading global organizations are in a unique position to help communities build a better and more sustainable future for all. Social innovation is a means toward that end — a way to create lasting change by helping people reach their full potential.

Kim Dabbs leads global social innovation at Steelcase. She’s one of many working to reimagine the future of corporate responsibility in our world. With a history of community involvement and charitable giving, the organization was wondering: How can we do more? By leveraging its knowledge, networks and resources, social innovation programs can move beyond transactional giving to transform the way organizations and systems engage, improve and innovate.

Recently, The Civic 50, an initiative of Points of Light, recognized Steelcase as a 2020 honoree. Points of Light is an international nonprofit dedicated to engaging more people and resources in solving social problems through volunteerism. It is the only survey and ranking system that exclusively measures corporate involvement in community. It provides a national standard for superior corporate citizenship and showcases how companies can use their time, skills and resources to impact their communities.

“Points of Light believes that now, more than ever, companies must drive transformative social change around the world,” said Natalye Paquin, president and CEO, Points of Light.

Following the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Steelcase focuses its efforts on three priorities that closely align to work, workers and the workplace.

- Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Reducing Inequalities: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Sustainable Communities and Cities: Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The social innovation team at Steelcase delivers its mission by **connecting people to purpose** through volunteer opportunities and leadership programs. In fiscal year 2020, volunteerism increased 251%. They **foster a culture of innovation** by identifying and connecting changemakers who’ve offered to share their unique insights and learnings with others around the world. Ten Global Change Corp teams launched last year, tripling numbers from the previous year. And, they aim to **create systemic change** by identifying opportunities for impact, including charitable giving and matching grants, with all stakeholders including employees, customers, investors, suppliers and communities.

While The Civic 50 honors companies with U.S. operations, social innovation is a global effort at Steelcase. With 45 locations in 17 countries, the organization has an opportunity to leverage the passion of its 12,000 team members to accelerate its impact. Here's just a few examples of projects that are making a difference:

- ReDI School is a non-profit that breaks down barriers to opportunities for refugees and brings people together by empowering students with valuable digital skills and a strong network of mentors. Steelcase hosted ReDI school leaders for their kick-off and a semester long coding class. (Munich)
- LEADeres, a leadership program serving the LatinX community, leveraged Steelcase space and expertise to incorporate design thinking into their curricula. The program helps participants learn by doing, while also strengthening their professional network through connections with community partners. (Michigan, U.S.)
- Public Thread is a woman-owned and operated business that has created a new model for how to care for people and the environment. Public Thread makes accessories, apparel and other sewn goods that keep textiles (including those from Steelcase) out of the landfill and support living wage jobs. Steelcase is also able to leverage the beautiful finished products as gifts for visitors. (Michigan, U.S.)
- WMCAT, the West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (pictured above), curates opportunities for teens, adults and families through multidisciplinary programs and workforce development. A Steelcase Change Corp engaged in a workshop with WMCAT's Public Agency which helps organizations foster inclusive, innovative and action-oriented cultures. The initiative was both a learning experience and an opportunity for volunteers to support WMCAT's end of summer celebration for teen students.
- Camp IGNITE was organized in collaboration with World Vision. A team of Steelcase volunteers co-designed an engaging and creative environment for 50 teen girls and boys to increase self-confidence, encourage critical thinking and enhance awareness of the importance of gender equity and diversity. (Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
- Everybody Can Change by Design teaches children from under-resourced communities design thinking to help them learn problem solving skills and how to approach difficult situations creatively. Steelcase volunteers worked with 276 students on a program that resulted in identifying new solutions to systemic and cyclical issues students might encounter in their daily lives. (India)

"We believe business can be a force for good, and by leveraging our scale and resources around the globe, we can make a real difference in the communities where we live and work," says Dabbs.

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