

# SUCCESSFUL MODELS OF FUNDER INVESTMENT IN VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

## The Leighty Foundation



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FOUNDATION

The Pikes Peak Volunteer Engagement Initiative sought to increase the effectiveness of nonprofit volunteer engagement strategies in the Colorado Springs, CO area. The goal was to enhance organizations' capacity to fulfill their missions and meet community needs. Based on its core belief that volunteer engagement is a critical strategy to fulfill mission, The Leighty Foundation funded and led a five-year Initiative to increase the capacity of nonprofit organizations in the region. *As part of this Initiative, the Foundation invested in individual organizations through Volunteer Impact Grants: in the community through securing experts to provide training support to dozens of organizations, and in the future through its support of the Center for Nonprofit Excellence as host of the ongoing work.*

In its first phase, the Initiative convened and connected board and executive leaders, staff members and volunteers to identify needs and issues related to volunteer engagement. In addition, they fostered peer exchange and learnings through a community-wide symposium on volunteer engagement, seminars and reflection gatherings.

Phase II invested even more deeply in local organizations that demonstrated readiness to take their engagement practices to a new level. This phase kicked off with a half-day training on volunteer engagement trends and innovations, attended by 24 organizations. Participants were then invited to apply to be part of Phase II, which included in-depth training and support. Nine diverse organizations were then selected and encouraged to identify a strategy for accomplishing their mission through engaging volunteers. Each benefited from an orientation, a pre-project assessment, a full-day Summit on volunteer engagement, followed by seven months of team coaching as they implemented volunteer engagement innovations and infrastructure improvements. **Post-project evaluations demonstrate that all organizations measurably enhanced their volunteer engagement practices, learned new skills, developed new programs, engaged new volunteer leaders and increased their capacity to deliver services.**