

Fueled by a belief that nonprofits have the power to radically strengthen their community, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE) has been serving the Pikes Peak region's social impact businesses for twenty-five years. CNE provides consulting, educational workshops, networking opportunities, valuable resources, and collaborative events to strengthen the nonprofit sector.

- In 1997 The Leighty Foundation provided \$18K over three years to launch a Volunteer Center under what was then the Colorado Springs Nonprofit Center.
- The Chamber Nonprofit Partnership, including the Volunteer Center, moved locations to co-locate with Pikes Peak United Way (PPUW) in 2004.
- In 2009, the Volunteer Center created a chapter of DOVIA, Directors of Volunteers in Agencies, modeling its work to train volunteer directors and managers.
- In 2010 DOVIA became a program of Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE).
- In 2011, The Leighty Foundation launched the Pikes Peak Volunteer Engagement Initiative (PPVEI), the goal of which has been to enhance organizational missions through high-impact volunteer engagement thereby increasingly meeting community needs.
- In 2013, PPUW terminated Volunteer Center programming and support of volunteer training and activities, with the exception of the volunteer website. PPUW and CNE agreed to close the local DOVIA chapter. All community-wide volunteer training and roundtable gatherings became the sole responsibility of CNE.

While participating in the PPVEI, CNE faced challenges in determining how much time and resources to invest in volunteer engagement activities, especially given that it had a staff of two. CNE's leadership and staff acknowledged volunteer engagement was valuable but were still in a "nice-to-have" mentality rather than adopting it as a strategy, not only for CNE's health and wellness, but for the wider community. They had not completely embraced the vision of volunteer engagement's ability to transform an organization, and expand its mission.

In 2015, CNE was able to bring on two new staff members and double its capacity. One was brought on to oversee the skills-based volunteer consulting program and support the PPVEI activities. Hiring a champion who invited the rest of the staff to imagine innovative ways in which volunteers could build capacity to achieve CNE's mission was a first step. In addition, simply working more directly with skills-based volunteers caused a major cultural shift to begin to occur within CNE. Their leaders engaged in deeper conversations about the importance of engaging volunteers in their own work. This led to attending trainings, reading books, and gathering input from their volunteers.

Over the last two years, CNE has come to believe that involving community volunteers is essential to achieving their mission and is committed to investing resources to support them. This includes a full-time position to ensure meaningful volunteer engagement is practiced at the highest levels throughout the organization. As a result of this shift, CNE is continuing to invest in its volunteer engagement strategy. Elements include:

- Leadership support
- Resource allocation
- Tracking and evaluation
- Outreach
- Funding
- Training
- Onboarding and supervision
- Technology and communications

All of this will be done with an eye toward empowering and partnering with other organizations to help them extend their reach as well. CNE's vision is that volunteers be recognized as a core strategy in addressing societal needs and that CNE is the critical resource for high impact volunteer engagement across Southern Colorado. CNE will model this as well as urge other organizations to adopt this powerful strategy.

The resources of nonprofits across the region are being stretched as never before, with the community seeing both a significant increase in needs and a measurable decrease in the financial resources available to meet those needs. In order to maintain current levels of service and increase their capacity to meet the growing challenges, nonprofits must access a variety of skills and expertise that may not be available within the organizations themselves. They must adopt the conviction that volunteer engagement is not an organizational program, but a critical strategy for achieving additional community impact.

Since 2011, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence has played a key role in the creation and evolution of the Pikes Peak Volunteer Engagement Initiative, led by Jane Leighty Justis, and funded by The Leighty Foundation. The mission of CNE, and the work they have done internally as well as their coaching of other organizations, has led the foundation to entrust the continuing work and the growth of the legacy of the initiative to CNE. The foundation will fund this transition, and continue in a support role. They are confident that the Center will expand to build the capacity of social impact businesses throughout Southern Colorado.

Key elements of the Pikes Peak Volunteer Engagement Initiative include:

• CONVENING • PARTNERSHIPS • TRAINING • LEADERSHIP • INVESTMENT • EVALUATION

CNE intends to be the leading resource for volunteer engagement, volunteer leadership training and volunteer advocacy in Colorado Springs through:

- Centralized Volunteer Center for posting volunteer opportunities and referrals.
- Board Leadership Matching: a nonprofit board matching service that educates boards to be more effective and helps them recruit new members. Individuals interested in board service may attend training and then use the matching service to find placement.
- Corporate Partnerships: Board leadership education and connection to opportunities; managed volunteer projects and referrals; Days of Service; highly visible sponsorship opportunities.
- Public Speaking Opportunities
- Advocacy on a local, state, and national level.

The goal of the Pikes Peak Volunteer Engagement Initiative at CNE continues to be creating impactful cultural shifts across sectors around the following four principles:

Principle 1: The volunteer ecosystem is more effective when all sectors participate in its evolution.

Principle 2: Make volunteering a core strategic function, not an add-on.

Principle 3: Focus volunteer engagement on true community needs.

Principle 4: In order to get a return, you have to invest.

In order for these principles to happen, the following tactics should be put in place:

- Establish a national and statewide affiliation to strengthen the credibility of the initiative and build significant partnership and leadership opportunities through:
- Service Enterprise Certification: the Service Enterprise Initiative (SEI) is a national initiative led by Points of Light. A Service Enterprise is an organization that fundamentally leverages volunteers and their skills across all levels of the organization to successfully deliver on its social mission.

- Strengthen and expand current programs to convene, partner, train and develop evaluation/measurement tools:
 - Monthly Volunteer Roundtables
 - Workshop Sessions for Directors of Volunteer Engagement
 - Volunteer Management Training
 - Board Leadership Training
 - Future Developments