

Pikes Peak Volunteer Engagement Initiative: Unleashing the Energy of the Most Valuable Renewable Resource!

Grant Type: **Dollar and nondollar initiative**

Dollar Amount: **\$40,000 per year**

Foundation Name: **The Leighty Foundation**



What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

"We as funders must recognize that volunteer engagement is not a program but a critical strategy to assist all organizations and community groups in accomplishing their missions in this time of rising needs and decreasing resources." —Jane Leighty Justis

Organizations at all levels are recognizing that they must actively commit to volunteer engagement as a core strategy in addressing these challenges. The Leighty Foundation saw an opportunity to help 25 local organizations expand their impact by tapping into the rich pool of local human capital. Since 2011, the foundation has convened community leaders, funders, and organizations at the board and executive levels, and also staff and volunteers. It has partnered with them in offering vision, training, coaching, peer learning, cohort projects, and networking opportunities. The foundation offered time and talent, as well as treasure, and has produced measurable results in terms of high impact and mission expansion.

What were the results of this grant or initiative?

Through restructuring processes and the addition of supervisory volunteers, a local food pantry was able to increase its distribution by thousands of pounds of food. Other results included the following:

- ▶ A volunteer speakers bureau was established—and speakers were trained—for a local advocacy organization.
- ▶ Student and adult volunteers opened a clothing store for other students in foster homes.
- ▶ A partnership created between an organization and a church produced many volunteer mentors for kids aging out of the foster care system.

Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

The success of the 25 organizations has inspired other community organizations:

- ▶ In many organizations, innovation has emerged as a key strategy for expanding resources and developing a deeper reservoir of talent.
- ▶ Executive directors and development and volunteer engagement leaders are recognizing the value and impact of volunteer resources, and are willing to invest staff time and money to support and develop more effective partnerships with them.
- ▶ Corporations are joining the conversations and expanding their employee volunteer efforts.
- ▶ Directors of volunteer engagement are meeting regularly to share best practices in peer learning and to work toward their certification in volunteer administration.
- ▶ Clients are appreciating—and donors are noticing—significant mission growth and expansion.
- ▶ The work of the initiative will continue under the leadership of the foundation's local Center for Nonprofit Excellence, which will sustain the momentum. The foundation will then be able to step into a support role.
- ▶ The Leighty Foundation now will turn its attention to creating capacity building resources for national distribution to funders and organizations.



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