

Year in Review – 2008

2008 was a very productive year for the Colorado Nonprofit Association. We continued to build core competencies in each of our functional areas (membership, public policy, advocacy and communications, educational programs, resource development, and organizational infrastructure) to better serve the sector. We also continued initiatives begun in previous years, like the training program for *Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Colorado*, public forums on issues of interest to the sector, the Leadership Luncheon Series, key reports to inform the public and the sector, and the Colorado Generosity Project.

Leadership for the Association shifted in 2008 with Charley Shimanski ending his four-year commitment and moving on to accept the position as CEO of the American Red Cross – Mile High Chapter. The board initiated a national search to find a replacement as Sharon Knight, vice president and COO for the Association stepped in to complete the last two months of 2008 and first few of 2009 as interim president and CEO.

Membership

In 2008, the Colorado Nonprofit Association increased its membership base from 1,169 members on January 1 to 1,301 members on December 31. The increase in membership can be attributed to the following factors:

- Strong, active Membership Task Force;
- Increased outreach to current members detailing benefits;
- Improved schedule for membership renewal notifications;
- Membership messaging at all Association events including trainings and Leadership Luncheons;
- Implementing a written “Invitation to Join” detailing to non-members who utilize our services (trainings, job board, etc.) how being a member could have saved them money on the product/service for which they paid full price;
- Employing a “Refer-a-friend” program that extends the membership of a current member when they refer a non-member organization that joins;
- Showcasing the strength of the organization – for example, offering free attendance at the Leadership Luncheon to potential members;
- Increased presence and accessibility around the state through the *Principles & Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Colorado* trainings and webinar events;
- Strengthened public profile due to public policy work during the election cycle and media attention surrounding the release of Colorado Generosity Project studies; and
- Improved relationships and greater cooperation between the Association and other capacity builders and nonprofit conveners across the state.

Two new membership benefits were implemented in 2007 and have been extremely well received by our members.

- Member Orientation – offering new and renewing members the opportunity to learn about all the benefits of membership either in person or via webinar. Live orientations (held quarterly) have registered an average of 20 organizations at each of the four events. Webinar orientations were introduced in the last quarter of 2008 and our regional members have welcomed the new addition.
- Member Roundtable – a quarterly meeting of nonprofit professionals to share ideas and solutions to the challenges they may encounter. Members who have attended consistently score the roundtable as “excellent.” Members enjoy the opportunity to network.

The business membership program ended with 115 members – up from 110 on January 1, but down from a high of 125 in October. A business member survey was conducted in 2008 via Survey Monkey and one message was clearly communicated from our business members: a desire for more opportunities to share with our nonprofit members their products and services. The following ways to highlight our business members were already put into place in 2008:

- Adding a Business Member feature in the bimonthly newsletter, *Nonprofit Colorado*;
- Monthly email to our nonprofit members that features the two or three of businesses who are Group Purchase Partners; and
- Messaging to our nonprofit members reminding them to utilize our Business Member Directory or online Business Member search when looking for a product or service.

The membership team is working with the Membership Task Force to consider additional offerings that will benefit our business members.

The student and individual membership programs traditionally experience higher attrition rates, and 2008 was no exception. This is somewhat to be expected; as students and individuals become employees of nonprofits, particularly of member nonprofits, they presumably leave their individual membership behind. While Association staff attended a number of student outreach events and has implemented various programs geared towards attracting students, the growth of new student members is a challenge due to the limits of the school terms – when students are available and receptive to educational opportunities such as those we provide. Membership staff feels strongly that it is important to maintain an outreach program to students and individuals as these are the emerging and future leaders of the sector, and will encourage the organizations that employ them to join or maintain their membership status with the Association.

Public Policy and Civic Engagement

The Colorado Nonprofit Association works on behalf of the entire Colorado nonprofit sector to promote a public policy and regulatory environment that supports the state's nonprofit organizations and their work. The Association endeavored to engage more of the sector in public policy issues in 2008. While it has been the strategy of the Association to identify and respond to public policy issues that have a substantial impact on Colorado's nonprofit sector, it was not always clear to constituents how the decisions regarding legislation to follow was determined. In 2008, we implemented the actions below to help nonprofits understand the scope and process of our public policy work and to increase transparency of operations.

- We updated and published a list of bills the Association followed throughout the legislative session.
- We developed and used a flowchart with specific processes and procedures to be followed for the Association to make decisions on and execute a particular course of action regarding legislation.
- The Public Policy Committee and Board of Directors discussed not only specific bills and initiatives, but also general categories of issues that the Association should follow, to enhance responsiveness should opportunities arise for immediate action.
- During the 2008 election, the Association successfully hired contract staff to assist with policy work. Continuing into 2009 this work could bring in interns and additional hired staff if funds and human resources strategies allow for it.
- We provided numerous opportunities for nonprofits to share their opinion and participate in decisions related to policy.
- Staff developed fact sheets and summaries to keep members abreast of legislative and election related issues.
- We held monthly Government Relations Forums and town halls on election issues in 2008. Nonprofits had opportunities to comment on the positions of the Association and help shape policy in person, and via email through surveys.

The Association continued to build and strengthen positive relationships with key lawmakers and elected officials with influence on policies that impact the sector. We made a point to share key data and findings of studies related to the sector so decision-makers were most ready to make informed decisions regarding nonprofits and their constituencies. We made great progress in developing relationships with the Governor, legislative leadership, the Secretary of State, and the Attorney General. This has helped the program in terms of opportunities to raise the profile of the Association including the presentation before the Committee on Job Growth and Economic Growth. Mark met with Congressional staff and began relationships with Colorado's delegation.

Advocacy & Communications

Colorado Generosity Project

The Colorado Generosity Project was designed as a comprehensive multi-year program to increase demonstration of accountability by the state's nonprofits, inform the public of the impact and importance of the sector, and ameliorate the serious and complex problem of low charitable giving in the state.

In 2008, the Association completed numerous aspects of the project: three reports, two press conference events, a great deal of training to help nonprofits develop the skills to raise funds and promote their organizations more effectively, the development of two filmed PSAs and a new web site.

The Association commissioned Johns Hopkins University's Center for Civil Society Studies and Corona Research to help complete *Return on Investment: The Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Sector in Colorado*. This two-part study presents the first-ever comprehensive picture of the scope and current trends in an important, but often overlooked, component of Colorado's economy and society – the nonprofit sector as a major economic force. It brings both the scale of Colorado's nonprofit sector and the economic effect of its activities into focus. It also shows that individuals, companies and government agencies who support Colorado's nonprofit sector can expect an exceptionally good return on their investment. Results were released at a very successful Leadership Luncheon, featuring the Governor, in February.

Work on the two most recent studies of the Colorado Generosity Project was completed during 2008. *Generous Colorado: Why Donors Give* and the 2008 edition of *The State of Giving* were released in conjunction with a successful media event and panel discussion. *Generous Colorado: Why Donors Give* is the first-ever statewide study of factors driving philanthropy in the state. The report offers insight into the influences motivating Coloradans to make charitable gifts, how they chose nonprofits to support, the ways they prefer to give, and what might make them give more. It is important to note that the 1,200 phone interviews, conducted by Corona Research, involved in this survey were performed in October 2008. The survey captures insights and reactions of Coloradans as they faced the news and implications of our national economic crisis. The report of findings was published and shared in broad media coverage in early December.

The 2008 edition of *The State of Giving: A Profile of Individual Giving* is the second in a series of statewide studies of philanthropic giving by individuals. This report was undertaken for factors parallel to last year's report, and also makes comparisons between data to determine areas of growth and decline in giving across Colorado.

Two televised PSAs and a new web site, GenerousColorado.org, were launched concurrently with the two recent studies. The PSAs were designed to encourage philanthropy, with a focus on helping those around us in this increasing time of need. The tag line, "Help us Make a Generous Colorado," led viewers to the web site for immediate action. GenerousColorado.org was developed to provide a user-friendly educational resource and an online portal for giving.

The Association developed a total of 15 training guides and programs related to the Colorado Generosity Project and *Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Colorado* in the last year. Complementary articles and resource materials were developed and shared with the nonprofit sector in an effort to help them demonstrate best practices and gain success in 2008.

In addition to its efforts surrounding the Colorado Generosity Project, the Association continued and strengthened its ongoing advocacy and communications efforts, including publishing its regular publications (*Nonprofit Colorado*, the annual report, and various electronic communications), making many presentations of data to nonprofit and civic groups, and increasing outreach to the media.

Representatives from the Association made presentations to more than 20 organizations on the economic impact of the sector, best practices, advocacy, *The State of Giving*, and ethics. We wrote several articles for regional newspapers, magazines and online publications, primarily addressing best practices and response to the slackened economy.

Web Site

The Association has designed the web site to be a central location for critical information and resources to support the nonprofit sector. It is our goal to make information accessible and easy for nonprofits and individuals interested in the sector. In 2008 the Association's web site, www.ColoradoNonprofits.org, averaged 2,795 sessions (individual visits) a day. This number was up more than 14 percent over 2007. There was a site-wide total of 13,537 page views a day (up 20 percent).

- The Nonprofit Job Board remains the most popular feature on the site, with 3,474 jobs posted, and receiving 19,789 visits per week – up more than 35 percent over last year.
- There were 539 events listed on the Nonprofit Events Calendar in 2008, up by 109 over 2007.
- The Association posted 81 resumes and 136 internships on the web site.

The Help Desk, which receives inquiries via the web site, email and telephone, received 326 requests for assistance. While numerous offices get requests for guidance throughout the year, the Help Desk is the central resource portal for general inquiries.

The Association continued to add value to its web site in 2008 by adding a Donate Now button to give donors the option of contributing to the Association online. Donors may choose to contribute to a specific program of the Association or to the greatest need.

Partnerships

The Association understands that we can make a greater difference in Colorado by working in partnership with other nonprofits, capacity-builders, business and government. Some key partnerships in 2008 included:

- A collaboration to revise the common grant application. The revised application was released in 2008, and was followed by a series of training sessions around the state to help nonprofits understand best practices related to grant writing. The Association hosted five free sessions.
- B-CIVIC, a collaboration with business to identify methods to increase business engagement in support of the nonprofit sector.
- The Nonprofit Training Collaborative: a shared listing of trainings to enhance the nonprofit sector published jointly by the Association, Community Resource Center (CRC) and Metro Volunteers. The Collaborative continued to meet quarterly to coordinate our programs in order to provide needed programs while preventing duplication of efforts. The Colorado Nonprofit Training Guide, a comprehensive list of the trainings offered by the three organizations, is released quarterly via email to our combined constituent bases. All three organizations observed increased attendance in their education programs following these promotional efforts, and evaluation forms indicated that people were utilizing the Colorado Nonprofit Training Guide to direct them to these classes. The members of the Training Collaborative also began serious discussions as to how to increase cooperation and communication between Collaborative members, further eliminate duplication of trainings, and the need to increase identification and delineation of each member's training niches.

Salary Survey

The Association published its bi-annual *Colorado Nonprofit Salary and Benefits Survey* in the summer of 2008. The survey comprises a full scope of positions from across the sector, detailing finds regarding compensation by geography, size of organization, purpose type, and in the case of executive directors, race and gender.

Educational Programs

In 2008, we offered nearly 70 educational sessions. This number includes the 42 trainings in the Denver Metro region that fall within the general topic areas of public policy, human resources, fundraising, leadership, and marketing/communications, and 28 trainings we offered statewide related to the Colorado Generosity Project (including *Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Colorado* trainings). In an effort to provide additional training resources to nonprofits and our members statewide, we continued hosting training sessions in Grand Junction, Durango, Pueblo, and Loveland as well as other sites, related to the Colorado Generosity Project and the *Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence* guidebook. The number of Colorado Generosity Project trainings was up from the 12 we presented statewide in the prior year, due to the fact that those sessions did not begin until fourth quarter 2007. The Association also hosted six free trainings on the revised common grant application and several informational speaking engagements around the state.

In September, the manager of education position transitioned from Sarah Walter, who left the Association to move to Australia, to Natasha Lamoreux who previously served as Program Assistant and Membership Coordinator.

Events

Colorado Nonprofit Week Awards Luncheon

More than 950 people attended the 2008 Colorado Nonprofit Week Awards Luncheon. The March 7 event featured guest speakers Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien and Senate President Peter Groff. Jackie Norris received the first Steve Graham Award for Building Nonprofit Capacity. The other awardees included two recipients of the William Funk Award for Building Stronger Communities, Rich Rainaldi and Dr. Vincent Harding; Legislator of the Year Representative Bernie Buescher (Grand Junction); and Public Service Lifetime Achievement Award recipient R. James Nicholson. Compared with the 2007 Awards Luncheon, there were fewer table purchasers for the 2008 event (13 less) but 6 more sponsors and 35 percent more individual attendees.

Leadership Luncheons

Overall, average Leadership Luncheon attendance in 2008 increased by 41 percent over the 2007 average, from 216 to 304. The increase was in large part due to the popularity of the February 2008 Leadership Luncheon, which featured Governor Bill Ritter and the unveiling of the Association's economic impact study. The 2008 Luncheon lineup included:

- The release of *Return on Investment: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Sector in Colorado*, featuring Governor Bill Ritter and a panel of experts in February. More than 500 attendees participated.
- A report on the state of health care and health care reform in Colorado, featuring Bill Lindsay in May. The four major health care foundations sponsored and helped to shape the event.
- Robert Egger presenting on the V3 Campaign (Voice, Value and Vote) to energize nonprofits to play a stronger role in using their voice to shape public policy.
- Michael Seltzer presenting A-Z Survival Guide in Times of Crisis, in an effort to get nonprofits thinking about the most effective strategies to address the downturned economy in Colorado. More than 336 attendees listened to ideas and engaged in discussions about the topic. The Luncheon also served as the official launch of the two PSAs created in support of the Colorado Generosity Project.

Fall Conference

The 16th Annual Fall Conference was the largest and most successful ever. Held for the first time at the Colorado Convention Center, the conference hosted more than 800 attendees, included over 60 exhibitors, and featured 36 breakout sessions including two brand-new tracks.

The keynote luncheon focused on the upcoming election and the impact that current political issues and initiatives could have on nonprofits. The program featured Speaker of the House Andrew Romanoff, Greg Dobbs, host of "Colorado State of Mind," and political consultants Eric Sondermann and Katy Atkinson. The morning's opening session featured Gabriel Guillaume, executive director of the Community Resource Center, Kristy Judd, executive director of Metro Volunteers, and David Miller, president and CEO of The Denver Foundation.

Resources and Infrastructure

The Colorado Nonprofit Association determined to build a financial plan and organizational infrastructure to ensure its ability to support program excellence and impact. The Association worked with a committee to outline a plan to shift the percentages of revenue streams to the organization in 2007. These efforts continued in 2008, with the projected changes "right-sizing" the percentage of grant and sponsorship funding to the organization. By mid-year, the Association was on track to bring in approximately 33 percent in revenues from earned income (program fees, royalties, commissions, and interest), grants and sponsorships, and membership fees. With changes in the economy during the year, the numbers shifted somewhat. The Association ended the year with 28.1 percent from membership, 30 percent from earned income, and 41.9 percent from grants and sponsorships.

The Association chose to look closely and make adaptations to the board and staff committee structures to ensure we were being most effective and using resources wisely. We reduced the number of board-directed committees to four, including the Finance and Audit Committee, Public Policy Committee, Executive Committee and Governance and Nominating Committee.

The Association, like many nonprofit organizations, looks carefully at compensation for its own employees. We completed an audit, using our newly published salary survey, to determine ranges and compensation for the organization's staff.

We were able to effectively utilize volunteers for a number of key projects throughout the year. Substantial advancement was made on Colorado Generosity Project activities because of a large pool of strong highly skilled professionals donating service to the Association. Volunteers also played a meaningful role in our advisory committees.