PROJECT blueprint

A Blueprint for Diversity in Volunteer Leadership

Mission and History

The mission of Project Blueprint is to expand the diversity of Erie's nonprofit Boards by developing the ability, drive, and leadership capacity of ethnically diverse individuals who commit to serve on the Board of local nonprofit organizations. Started in 1993 by the United Way of Erie County, the program is now a partnership between the United Way, The Nonprofit Partnership, and a variety of community partners. Over the past 18 years, nearly 350 new leaders in Erie have developed their leadership skills and civic awareness through Project Blueprint.

How Project Blueprint Works

Recruitment for Project Blueprint launches in February and continues through April, as the program receives applications from and interviews ethnically diverse candidates who are interested in contributing to the community through service on nonprofit Boards. After a class is selected, participants come together for a half day conference in the spring during which they learn about the responsibilities of Board service and the larger civic, political, and funding environment in which nonprofit organizations exist. Participants review and reinforce this learning and explore options for service in Erie in follow-up discussion groups during the spring and summer months. Beginning in the fall and continuing during Project Blueprint alumni events, participants turn their attention to securing places on local Boards and using their new knowledge and skills to serve the community through their work with nonprofit organizations.

How to Apply

Please complete an application for Project Blueprint which is downloadable from the Nonprofit Partnership website at www.thenonprofitpartnership.org. Completed applications may be returned to The Nonprofit Partnership at 8425 Peach Street, Erie, PA 16509 or faxed to (814) 868-4034.

For more information, call (814)454-8800, e-mail tnp@thenonprofitpartnership.org,, or ask a community network partner.

United Way
United Way of Erie County

The Nonprofit Partnership

The Project Blueprint Program

To effectively prepare leaders from Erie's neighborhoods and businesses for service on nonprofit boards in Erie, The Nonprofit Partnership offers a free training program to members of each Project Blueprint class. The program consists of the following elements:

Boot Camp

The Project Blueprint training calendar kicks off with an intensive half-day group program led by leaders in the Erie nonprofit community that covers key elements of good governance:

- Mission, Planning, and Strategy
- The Art of Networking
- Legal and Fiduciary Responsibilities
- Quality Meetings = Engaged Boards
- Board Culture

This session offers an opportunity to meet and connect with other members of the Project Blueprint class and current board members from throughout the region who attend the session to learn about good governance. The Boot Camp establishes a foundation for board service.

Small Group Discussion Sessions

The Project Blueprint class members then organize several follow-up discussion groups which meet to reinforce issues from the Boot Camp and to cover other important ground that works best in interactive, discussion-oriented sessions:

- Financial oversight
- Fundraising responsibilities
- The Board-CEO relationship, and
- Board service in Erie – finding the board that's right for you.

Service Projects

Following the small-group sessions, Project Blueprint class members choose service projects that put their knowledge of boards, governance, and nonprofits into practice through participation in service teams based at local nonprofit organizations or teams that create resources that are useful for boards and which help them do their work.

Referral, Placement, and Graduation

In the fall of each year, Project Blueprint's attention turns to referring and placing class members on local nonprofit boards based on the mutual interests of class members and local organizations. Graduation at a Project Blueprint event celebrates the year's achievements and recognizes the class for their dedication to learning and to community service.