



KOSCIUSKO COUNTY  
**NONPROFIT  
LEADERSHIP  
SUMMIT**

Diving Deep into the Needs of Nonprofit Leadership of K-County

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Kosciusko Leadership Academy – Project Proud

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## **Executive Summary**

The Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Academy (KLA) project aims to address the challenges encountered by nonprofit leaders in Kosciusko County. Initially conceived as a community expo, the project evolved into a deeper exploration of the needs of nonprofit leaders through surveys and discussions with key stakeholders. This paper outlines the journey from planning an expo to developing the concept of a Nonprofit Summit based on identified needs.

The proposed solution is the creation of the "Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit," an annual event designed to meet the needs of nonprofit organizations in Kosciusko County. The summit will prioritize networking, collaboration, and workshops to provide learning opportunities and facilitate interaction among peers.

The project has secured a partnership with Ivy Tech Community College to host the inaugural summit in the Spring of 2025. A guideline/playbook has been developed to assist in establishing the event, ensuring its success and sustainability.

Long-term sustainability of the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit depends on financial stability, community support, effective management, and alignment with its mission. Winning the Northernor Award presents an opportunity to enhance the quality and impact of the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit.

In conclusion, the KLA project has evolved from planning a simple expo to conceptualizing a comprehensive Nonprofit Leadership Summit, driven by the identified needs of nonprofit leaders in Kosciusko County. With strategic planning, community support, and effective management, the summit will serve as a valuable platform for nonprofit organizations to connect, learn, and collaborate, making a lasting impact on the community.

## **Introduction**

This KLA project will delve into the persistent challenges faced by nonprofit organization leaders in Kosciusko County. Initially aimed as a community expo hosted by nonprofits, further research showed various other opportunities in Kosciusko County for nonprofit leaders to attend such an event. It became evident that nonprofit leaders need networking opportunities, enhancing community impact, and discovering innovative approaches to provide ongoing value to Kosciusko County. By researching the needs of nonprofit leaders and proposing solutions to address existing gaps, this paper aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the nonprofit leaders and their needs to better serve Kosciusko County through a Nonprofit Leadership Summit.

## **Research**

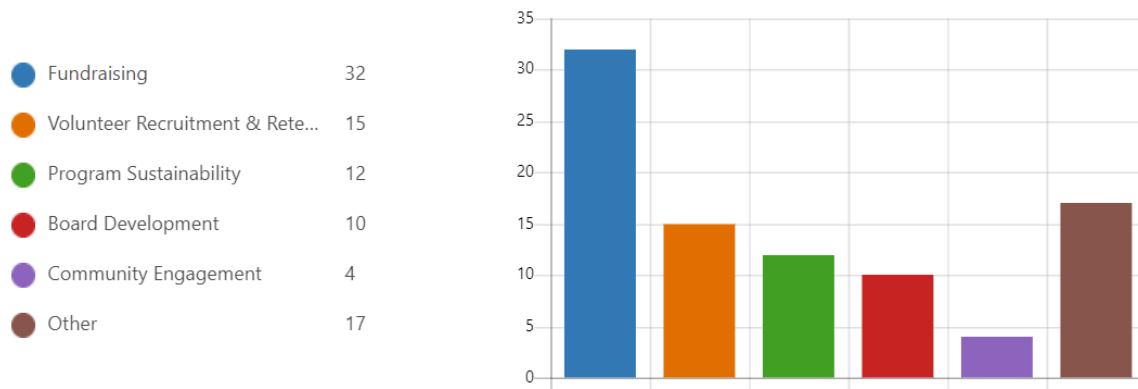
The group started planning a nonprofit expo to continue the work of a previous whitepaper project from 2008, Get on Board. This expo would invite all Kosciusko County nonprofits to have a table representing their services to community members while recruiting volunteers. The cadets had several meetings exploring this idea. A conversation with Dr. Steve Grill, the Program Director of Grace College's Master's in Nonprofit Management, encouraged and supported the idea of an expo. Ideas were considered to host the event at Grace College and potentially provide an educational piece for the nonprofit leaders. The idea of a nonprofit expo continued to form while meeting with Allyn Decker and discussing what the expo would look like being held at the local Farmer's Market to encourage and grow committee attendance.

Continuing to plan an expo at the Farmer's Market, the cadets reached out to the coordinator of the market. Ultimately we weren't given a response from the Farmer's Market, and simultaneously were learning of an event at Zimmer Biomet that hosted all nonprofit

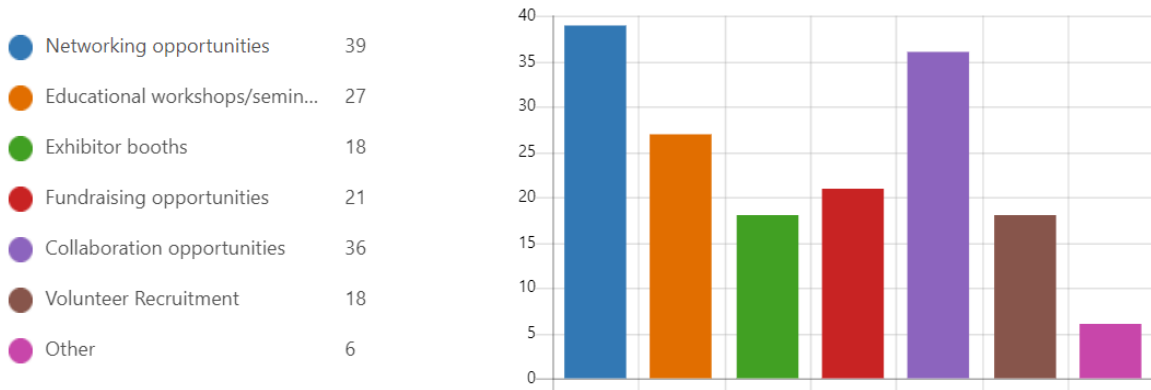
organizations for their employees. We found this was ill-attended. We were also learning from the Kosciusko County Community Foundation that community attendance is an issue with various events that have been happening around the area. The cadets began to pivot from hosting an event for the community to conducting research with nonprofit organization leaders.

Together with the Community Foundation, the group sent out the first survey to all nonprofit organization leaders. Various results of the first survey can be seen below. To summarize, nonprofit leaders were indicating the need for more networking opportunities, collaborating, and fundraising. There were a total of 54 individual responses in the first survey. Overall, the first survey communicated that there was a need for more internal development than external events. Educational sessions covering the previously mentioned topics would be found highly valued by a large majority of leaders. This is further supported by only one-third of nonprofits attending an expo of some sort in the last year.

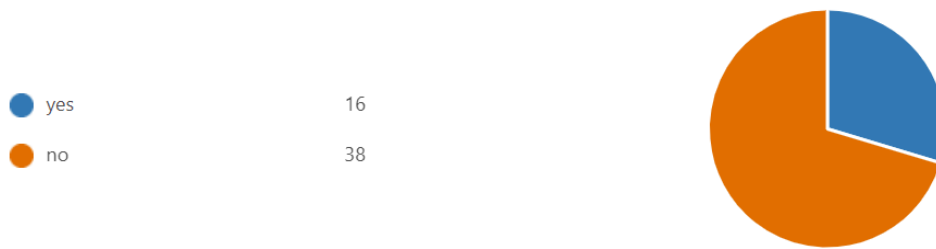
5. What do you consider the most significant challenges facing your organization currently?



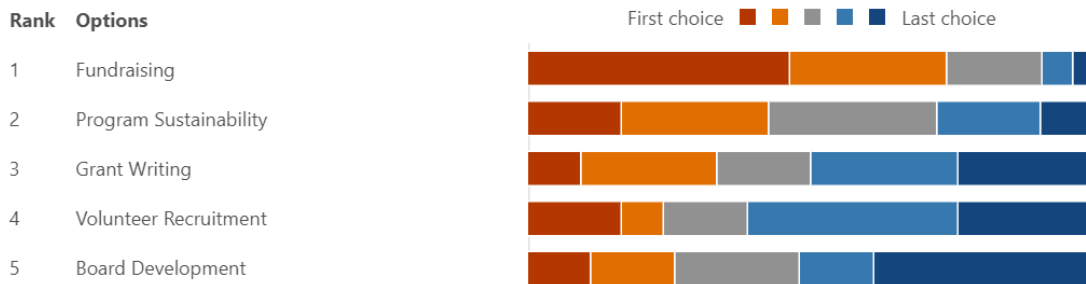
7. What factors would influence your decision to attend a nonprofit expo? ( Select all that apply)



10. In the past 12 months have you participated in any other similar nonprofit expo / community volunteer recruitment events?



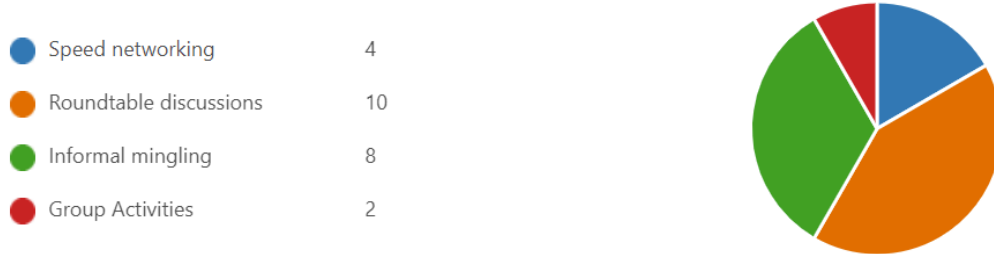
14. Please arrange the following five potential workshop topics from most interested (top) to least interested (bottom):



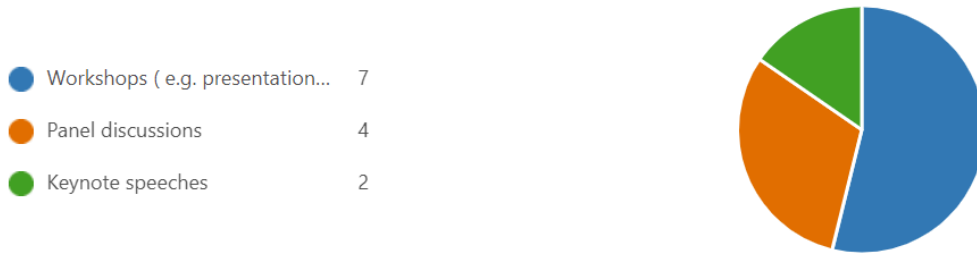
As we processed the first survey’s data, we found that there are opportunities already happening for collaboration and networking which is what was suggested to do from the results we received. Considering this, the group wanted to send a follow-up survey to know why current

offerings aren't meeting the needs of the leaders and what else could be valuable. Various data from the second survey can be seen below.

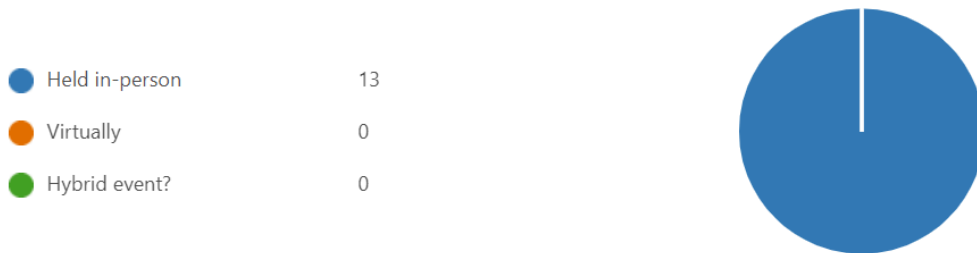
1. What networking formats would you prefer at the expo?



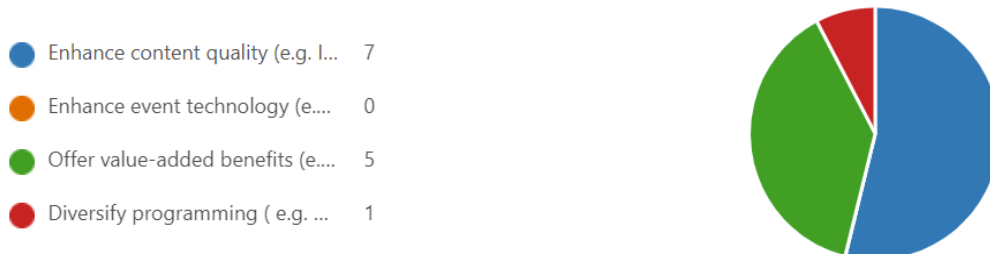
4. What types of educational content would you most prefer to see at the nonprofit expo?



5. Would you prefer the expo to be:



6. How could we enhance existing events and increase participation?



As depicted above, it is found that roundtable discussions are highly sought after by nonprofit leaders. Secondly, they value time to informally mingle and network. The leaders prefer hands-on workshops held in person over other modalities. The leaders also responded that the best way for participation to grow at currently offered gatherings is to increase the value and quality of content.

Based on this data, the research does suggest the need for more conversational roundtables offered while covering quality content, potentially over fundraising and grant-writing. Overall, the cadets were able to adapt their plans based on the feedback received from the first and second survey, and ultimately provide a more valuable and relevant service to the nonprofit community in Kosciusko County. The focus on internal development and education proved to be a more effective way to support and empower nonprofit organizations in the area.

### **Solution**

In doing our deep dive into Kosciusko County nonprofits, we spoke with several key organizations, conducted surveys, and determined that an annual event held to meet the needs of nonprofit organizations should focus on networking, collaboration, and workshops to provide learning opportunities and ample time for interacting with peers. Per our survey results, 87% of the respondents would be interested in attending a learning workshop. Our proposed solution is the creation of an annual “*Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit*”, where participants will deep dive into the issues nonprofits face each year. The design below will be used to showcase the event.





Currently, there are ample community events where nonprofits can engage with the public or recruit volunteers. The annual summit intends to create a unique experience for attendees. The summit's primary focus will be on networking and collaboration among peers. By incorporating these key components and focusing on maximizing interaction and participant engagement, the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit can offer a valuable platform for nonprofit leaders to connect, learn, and collaborate effectively.

We have utilized our findings to create a playbook that can be used to assist in establishing the event. A late success in our efforts was in identifying and confirming a partnership with Ivy Tech Community College, who will become the owner of the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit. Members of this committee will continue to consult with Ivy Tech over the next year, to hold the inaugural Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit in the Spring of 2025.

### **Sustainability**

The sustainability of the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit depends on several factors, including financial stability, community support, effective management, and its ability to achieve its mission/purpose. Long-term planning is essential for any event's continued success. Thus, partnering with Ivy Tech for the expo, our group helped create a strategic plan that outlines their goals, objectives, and strategies for growth over the long term. This plan includes measures for evaluating the expo's impact, identifying areas for improvement, and adapting to changing circumstances.

The purpose of the summit should be clearly stated. This ensures that the event remains focused and serves its intended purpose, which can help attract support from donors, sponsors, and attendees. For example, if the focus of the summit is education and engagement, Ivy Tech

can raise awareness and encourage sustainable behavior among attendees by providing educational materials on relative practices and initiatives and communicating on what will be at the expo: workshops or roundtable discussions.

With careful consideration, Ivy Tech can diversify the future revenue streams for the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit. Relying on a single source of funding can make the summit vulnerable to financial instability. Ivy Tech can diversify their revenue streams by seeking support from various sources, such as registration fees, sponsorships, grants, donations, and merchandise sales.

Implementing different revenue streams along with a cost management strategy, the controlling of expenses will aid Ivy Tech for the long-term sustainability of the summit. Cost management would be the organizers carefully budgeting for all aspects of the summit, including food, marketing, staffing, and speaker travel expenses. {Insert budget example/reference}

Building strong relationships with the local community and relevant stakeholders is crucial for community engagement and the success of the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit. Engaging volunteers, partnering with local businesses and organizations, and soliciting feedback from attendees can help foster a sense of ownership and support for the event.

Regularly assessing the summit's performance and seeking opportunities for improvement is essential for its sustainability. Ivy Tech will gather feedback from participants, analyze data on attendance and revenue, and adjust their strategies accordingly to ensure the annual event remains relevant and effective.

By carefully managing finances, fostering community support, staying true to its mission, measuring and evaluating the expo's effectiveness, and adapting to changing circumstances, Ivy

Tech and the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit will be sustainable and continue to make a positive impact year after year.

### **The Northernor Award**

Winning the Northernor Award presents an opportunity for our project to allocate the received funds to Ivy Tech and hosting the first annual Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit. Allocating the prize money to cover specific areas like food, enhanced hands-on experiences, marketing, travel coverage for speakers, and providing value-added materials can significantly enhance the overall quality and impact of the event.

A portion of the prize money will be used to enhance the quality and variety of food options provided during the summit. The money would allow Ivy Tech to offer special dietary options to accommodate attendees with specific needs or preferences.

From the survey results, the feedback confirmed an enhanced hands-on experience in breakout sessions would be appreciated; investing in interactive elements or hands-on activities for breakout sessions would provide attendees with a more engaging and memorable experience. This would include live demonstrations, interactive workshops, or guided discussions led by experts in their respective fields. Enhancing the educational value of these sessions can enrich the overall event experience for participants.

While it's theoretically possible for an event to be successful without extensive marketing, the likelihood of success significantly diminishes without proper promotion. The prize money would allow our group and Ivy Tech to promote the event more effectively and reach a wider audience. Ways marketing could be enhanced are investing in targeted digital advertising, social media campaigns, or creating visually appealing promotional materials, such as flyers, posters, or videos. Marketing plays a crucial role in attracting attendees, generating

excitement, and building awareness about the event.

Ivy Tech could use a portion of the funds to offer travel stipends or reimbursements to cover the travel expenses of keynote speakers or presenters who may be traveling from afar to participate in the event. By providing financial assistance for travel, Ivy Tech can attract high-quality speakers and ensure a diverse lineup of perspectives and expertise.

Allocating funds to develop and distribute value-added materials to attendees, such as informational packets, resource guides, or exclusive access to online content related to the event's theme or topics. These materials can serve as valuable resources for attendees to deepen their understanding of key concepts and continue their learning beyond the event itself.

By strategically allocating the award money to cover these areas, the overall experience and impact of the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Summit will attract experts of the field and attendees, and ensure that participants derive maximum value from their participation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership Academy (KLA) project has undergone a significant evolution from planning a community expo to developing a comprehensive Nonprofit Leadership Summit based on the identified needs of nonprofit leaders in Kosciusko County. By conducting surveys, engaging with community leaders in the industry, and adapting our approach based on feedback, the project team has successfully conceptualized an annual event that prioritizes networking, collaboration, and workshops to meet the needs of nonprofit organizations. The partnership secured with Ivy Tech Community College to host the annual summit in the Spring of 2025, along with the development of a guideline/playbook for event establishment, ensures the event's success and sustainability. Through strategic planning, community support, and effective management, the Kosciusko County Nonprofit Leadership

Summit is poised to provide a valuable and anticipated annual for nonprofit leaders to connect, learn, and collaborate, ultimately making a lasting impact on the community.

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