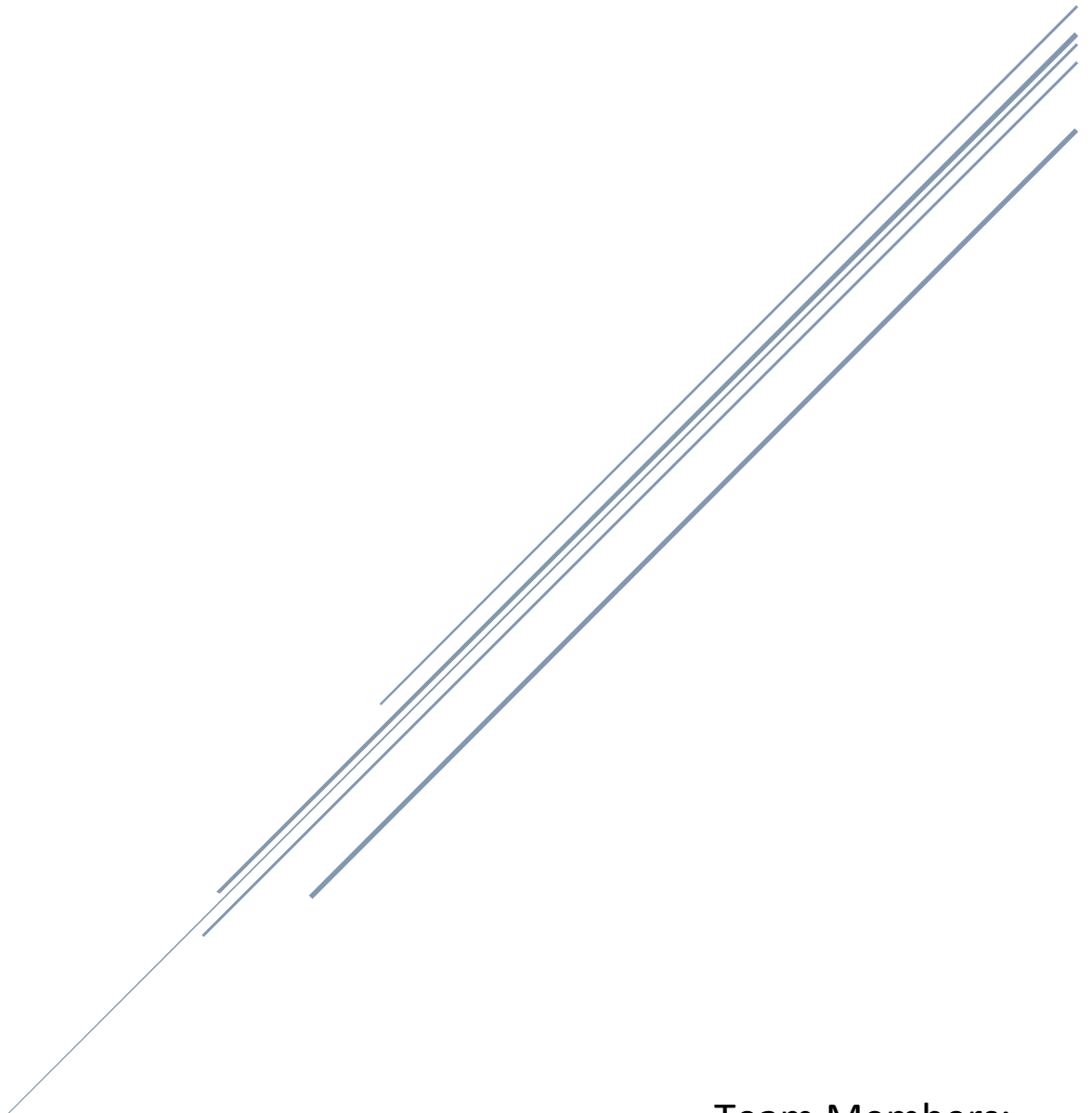


# WE LEAD KOSCIUSKO

To Inspire and Connect Future Leaders with Opportunities for  
Civic and Community Engagement



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## Executive Summary:

We Lead Kosciusko, in collaboration with the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP), is dedicated to cultivating a culture of active citizenship and leadership within Kosciusko County. Recognizing the vital role of engaged leaders in fostering social capital, enhancing civic participation, and driving sustainable development, we aim to address the pressing need for increased community engagement and leadership development.

The decline in volunteerism and civic participation poses a significant challenge to our community's cohesion and economic prosperity. To counter this trend, We Lead Kosciusko proposes a multifaceted approach centered around an annual call-out event. This event will serve as a platform for connecting local leaders and residents, promoting volunteerism, and providing leadership development opportunities.

Research highlights the positive impact of volunteerism on individual well-being and business performance. By embracing volunteerism, businesses can enhance employees' leadership abilities, boost morale, and improve productivity, leading to a more engaged workforce and a healthier community.

The annual call-out event will feature panel discussions, networking opportunities, and incentives such as catered dinner and door prizes to increase turnout. A targeted marketing strategy aims to engage community members aged 20-50, while plans for sustainability include annual recurrence of the event and future initiatives such as outreach efforts and mentorship programs.

We Lead Kosciusko is committed to long-term sustainability by establishing itself as a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity. This status will unlock opportunities for grant funding, corporate sponsorships, and community partnerships, ensuring the continuity and growth of our programs.

In conclusion, We Lead Kosciusko represents a transformative approach to community engagement and leadership development. By mobilizing local leaders and residents, fostering collaboration, and promoting civic participation, we aim to build a stronger, more resilient Kosciusko County for generations to come. Together, we can lead the way towards a brighter and more prosperous future, united in our commitment to collective well-being and sustainable growth.

## Introduction:

In Kosciusko County, a culture of active citizenship and leadership stands as the cornerstone of our collective vision for a thriving and resilient community. Through the collaborative efforts of We Lead Kosciusko and the Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP), we embark on a journey to address the pressing need for increased community engagement and leadership development. By mobilizing local leaders and residents alike, our aim is to harness the collective talents, energies, and passions of our community, thereby driving positive change and laying the groundwork for a brighter future for all who call Kosciusko County home.

## Problem Identified:

In the fabric of community dynamics, engaged civic leaders play a pivotal role, particularly in medium-sized communities. This paper delves into the vital significance of these leaders, highlighting their role in fostering social capital, enhancing civic participation, and driving sustainable development. Social capital, defined by Putnam (2000) as the networks and trust enabling cooperation, is crucial in medium-sized communities where interpersonal connections are central. Engaged leaders nurture these bonds, fostering a sense of belonging and collective efficacy.

Additionally, Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) emphasize the importance of civic participation for democracy and social cohesion. In medium-sized communities, active leadership encourages residents to engage in shaping their community's trajectory, fostering inclusive governance. Furthermore, sustainable development, as outlined by the Brundtland Commission (1987), necessitates holistic approaches encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Engaged leaders in medium-sized communities spearhead initiatives promoting environmental stewardship, equitable economic opportunities, and community development, ensuring long-term prosperity.

Like many communities, Kosciusko County risks being confronted by a decline in volunteerism and civic participation, presenting a formidable challenge to our social fabric and economic prosperity. This decline not only threatens to undermine the cohesion of our community but also compromises our ability to address pressing social issues and capitalize on opportunities for growth and development. Left unaddressed, this trend could erode the sense of collective responsibility and shared purpose that forms the bedrock of our identity as a vibrant and thriving community.

## Proposed Solution:

In 2023, Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program (HELP) Kosciusko brought together local leaders and community members at the first "We LEAD Kosciusko" for connection, learning, and next steps for serving your community. To help address the challenges posed by declining community engagement and leadership development, We Lead Kosciusko proposes a multifaceted approach centered around making the initial meeting into an annual call-out event. This event serves as a nexus for connecting local leaders and residents, facilitating knowledge sharing and promoting volunteerism and leadership opportunities. Through interactive sessions and presentations, attendees will gain invaluable insights into the myriad of avenues for civic engagement and leadership development available within Kosciusko

County. By fostering collaboration and empowerment, our aim is to create a sustainable framework for community development and resilience, thereby ensuring the continued prosperity of Kosciusko County for generations to come.

#### Research:

In addition to developing community leadership, which benefits the community as a whole, recent studies underscore the profound impact of volunteerism not only on individual well-being but also on the bottom lines of businesses. According to a survey of human resource executives (Hirsch 2019), a staggering 92% agreed that contributing business skills and expertise to nonprofits can effectively enhance employees' leadership abilities and broader professional skill sets. Moreover, a significant majority—70%—of HR executives believe that volunteering serves to bolster employee morale, contributing to a more engaged and productive workforce. Furthermore, research indicates that 35% of volunteers report feeling happier and healthier as a direct result of their service, thereby fostering a more vibrant and resilient community. Employers who embrace volunteerism by offering their employees time off to engage in community service experience a remarkable 50% reduction in turnover rates and a notable 13% increase in productivity, highlighting the tangible benefits of community engagement for businesses and organizations alike.

#### Event Overview and Next Steps:

The annual callout-out event will be held with a panel discussion with speakers for the following areas of interest: Public Service; Elected Office; Nonprofits; Service Clubs; Community Boards and Commissions; and Kosciusko Leadership Academy. After the panel, there will be time set for networking and visiting Organization's booths. Dinner will be catered for the attendees and a raffle will be held for door prizes, both of which will serve as additional incentives to increase turnout to the event. In addition to the incentives at the event, we will be focusing on developing multi-faceted marketing strategy aimed at targeting the key demographics for the event, which is community members from ages 20 – 50. Please see appendix A for a break down of budget for the event and marketing strategies. Anticipated attendance at the event is 75-100.

#### Sustainability

In addition to this year's call-out event, We Lead Kosciusko is committed to implementing this event as an annually to continue to reach new talent and future leaders. We also have considered the future goals of implementing new outreach efforts, mentorship programs, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at nurturing a new generation of leaders. Through the mini-grant provided by the Kosciusko Leadership Academy, we have begun the process of establishing ourselves as a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity; at the time of writing, we are incorporated with the state of Indiana, we have received an EIN from the IRS, and we are awaiting final confirmation from the IRS as to our 501(c)(3) status. This status will allow us the ability to leverage grant opportunities, corporate sponsorships, and community partnerships as we seek to ensure the long-term sustainability of our programs and activities. Through collective action and shared commitment, we aspire to unlock the full potential of our community and create a brighter future for all residents of Kosciusko County.

## Conclusion:

In conclusion, We Lead Kosciusko represents a transformative and forward-thinking approach to community engagement and leadership development. By mobilizing local leaders and residents, fostering collaboration, and promoting civic participation, we can build a stronger, more resilient Kosciusko County for generations to come. As we embark on this journey together, let us seize the opportunity to shape our shared future and create a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Together, we can lead the way towards a brighter and more prosperous Kosciusko County, united in our commitment to collective well-being and sustainable growth.

## Appendix A

### Budget

Revenue	
Sponsorships	\$800.00
Grants	\$2000.00
Total	\$2800.00
Expense	
Venue Rental & Set-Up	\$800.00
Catering	\$1000.00
Marketing, Promotion Printing	\$1000.00
Total	\$2800.00

### Marketing Break Down

Facebook Ads	\$100.00
Flyers	\$100.00
Chamber Advertisement	\$200.00
Radio Ad	\$100.00
Material for Event	\$500.00
Total	\$1000.00

## WORKS CITED

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Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster.

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