Case for Support

Nonprofits inspire us through art, educate our children, feed our neighbors, shelter our homeless, employ our family members, steward our environment, make our society more just, attend to our mental health, and much more. They meet our most basic as well as our deeper needs, improving the quality of all of our lives.

And yet nonprofits are often under-resourced, directing as many dollars as possible to programs that benefit the community. Because of this, there is a chronic lack of funding in the nonprofit sector for professional and organizational development.

Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE) strengthens nonprofits to realize the potential of our community. Through its programs and services, it helps nonprofits be more efficient and effective, saving them time and money, so they can make the best use of philanthropic dollars and have the greatest possible community impact.

CNE invests in our nonprofit leaders, staff and volunteers. We educate, we network, we advocate, and we champion. CNE is a trusted ally for those on the front lines of community-building. We offer steadfast support, targeted resources, relevant trainings, and applicable tools. By providing programs which train people to become effective managers, strong leaders, and healthy collaborators, we help nonprofits deliver on their mission – which matters to our community and our quality of life. We anticipate and meet nonprofit needs so that they can continue to meet the needs of our society. We create and nurture a community of practice that strengthens nonprofits so they can do the important work that matters to us all.

We have a rich fabric of nonprofit organizations in this region that tackle the toughest community challenges, enrich our lives, and give us unique opportunities for civic engagement. Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE) exists to ensure that our nonprofits thrive.

"CNE has become THE central resource for training Building Goodness Foundation staff and networking with area nonprofits. What we invest in time and funding always returns in the form of new tools and skilled contacts. We could not be happier with our CNE partnership."

– Kelly Eplee, Executive Director, Building Goodness Foundation

“CNE is about connections: Connecting nonprofits to each other, connecting nonprofits and donors, and connecting all of us with resources we could not obtain on our own. CNE makes our community stronger and better through its work.”

– Karen Ratzlaff, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Blue Ridge Area Food Bank

“CNE has provided vital support to the advancement of our organization from philanthropy and board training to organizational structure and mission measurement. The Music Resource Center would not have achieved as much as it has without the multi-faceted resources of the CNE. We strongly recommend the CNE to all those involved with non-profits.”

– Pia Donovan, former Executive Director, Music Resource Center
History of the Organization

In 2006, CNE was founded to fill a gap in the market for high quality, cost-effective, and specialized tools, trainings and resources for nonprofits. It was launched with a content-rich website, a weekly newsletter, and a monthly “brown bag lunch” training series. In a few short months, CNE’s membership grew from 14 Charter Members to 56 members. Today, CNE supports more than 280 members. This represents a 400% growth in membership, which demonstrates the need for CNE’s programs and services, as well as its growing reputational capital.

In 2007, CNE’s first full year of operation, it doubled its trainings per month and educated more than 425 individuals. And in 2008 the weekly e-newsletter reached more than 1,000 individuals each week. By the fall of 2009, CNE’s programs had expanded, and its Board Academy and our pilot Leadership Circle were fully enrolled and teeming with interest and sponsors.

Each year since its launch, CNE has evolved its programs and services to best meet the needs of area nonprofits. It is imperative that CNE keeps pace and develops along with its members to continue to meet the ever-changing needs of the community it serves. CNE’s board of directors has been very strategic in mapping its growth and charting a clear strategic plan, under which the organization has always operated.

In 2013, CNE expanded its physical space to include an in-house training room and an enhanced library and resource center. CNE is now not only a virtual hub for nonprofit information, but also a physical one. This expansion increases CNE’s own efficiency, adds more value to membership, and enhances our ability to bring together nonprofit leaders, staff and volunteers to network, grow knowledge and skills, and engage in collaboration.

Today, CNE provides a wide range of programs and services for members and nonprofit organizations at all stages of development – from virtual resources to one-hour workshops to six-month emerging leader trainings to onsite board trainings to ongoing strategy consulting and facilitation, all to strengthen the business of nonprofits. We help nonprofits do good work better.

Mission, Vision & Values

Mission: To strengthen the nonprofit sector to realize the potential of our community. CNE’s mission is to empower nonprofits and the people behind them to do their best work and, in doing so, to enhance the quality of life for all in our community.

Vision: Strong Nonprofits. Strong Community. CNE envisions a thriving community where all of its citizens can reach their potential. CNE provides a community of practice and common language among nonprofit leaders, staff members and volunteers, which informs, educates and leverages the nonprofit sector. In turn our nonprofits enrich and build our community.

Brand Promise: Nonprofits are efficient and effective, making better use of philanthropic dollars and limited resources to achieve the greatest community impact.
Core Values: Passion for Performance, Power of Collaboration, and Potential of Nonprofits

We Have a Passion for Performance
We provide education, consulting and resources to create strong leaders, effective managers and healthy collaborators. We are always learning, always teaching to ensure that nonprofits have the tools they need to be competent, operate with integrity and maximize their impact. We have a high standard for our own performance because our philosophy is to lead by example.

We succeed when nonprofits do good work better.

We Harness the Power of Collaboration
We invest our time, expertise and resources to promote collaboration, which empowers a more efficient and effective nonprofit sector, and we actively seek our own strategic partnerships to leverage this work. We are an honest broker, focused on supporting nonprofits whatever their mission to better steward their resources and increase their impact. We are pragmatic; we seek practical, achievable solutions that fit the organizations and coalitions with which we work.

We succeed when we help nonprofits clear obstacles to collaboration, and identify and address systemic challenges that impede their success.

We Believe in the Potential of Nonprofits
We believe in and advocate for a strong, independent nonprofit sector. Nonprofits are essential to the vitality of our community. We respect and nurture the sector so it can do the important and challenging work of creating a social safety net, promoting civic engagement, protecting the environment and enriching us through arts, education and culture.

We succeed when nonprofits are recognized for their economic impact, perceived as effective agents of change and engaged with community partners to solve real problems and enhance our lives.

Strategies and Program Path:
CNE strives to meet nonprofit organizations where they are and to offer many gateways into its programs. CNE’s program path, developed and designed with years of research, feedback and experience offers the following:

- **Knowledge Building:** Primarily 1-2 hours of lecture to enhance the knowledge about a specific topic.
- **Skill Development:** Full day or series classes, not organizationally specific, that offer the opportunity to practice a new skill, leave with a starting plan but no evolution of work product.
- **Leadership Transformation:** Identification of organization specific problem to solution, majority of the time is spent on independent study during and outside of class. Participant organizations leave with a tangible, immediately implementable work product and an ongoing relationship of support. The participation may be an individual or a group from the same organization.
- **Organizational Evolution:** Develops a solution to a specific organization challenge, which is realized. We work with one organization or coalition and create an ongoing relationship of support either from CNE or external consultants, and develop an agreement on deliverables.
- **System Impact:** Addresses leadership and governance across a local system, the community, rather than within one organization. Creates healthier ecosystem for nonprofits to thrive because nonprofits are perceived as effective agents of change, and are able to deliver results.
**Request for Support**

When CNE began, its tagline was, “Share what you know. Find what you need.” Our twice-monthly workshops were 1-2 hours long, we provided occasional, brief consulting at no cost to our members, we harnessed volunteers to teach and train, and we used our weekly e-newsletter to inform our members of sector trends. Through this strategy, we built an extremely successful nonprofit information hub and resource platform for the community.

Today our nonprofits are required to be even more sophisticated in the way they provide services, collect data, evaluate performance, communicate impact, raise funds and collaborate with each other. In short, they need CNE’s services to deepen along with their needs. CNE is at its best when it is able to think ahead of the curve, lead in emerging trends, customize tools, trainings, resources and provide consulting along a continuum from the very basic to very advanced. CNE strives to facilitate leadership transformation and organizational change, and ultimately, to have sector-wide impact, while continuing to support knowledge-building and skill development. To deepen our services in these critical ways requires ongoing investment in both human and working capital.

We are at the start of our new three-year strategic plan and this fall will mark our Tenth Anniversary, which we intend to celebrate by focusing on how best to prepare nonprofits for the work of the next 10 years. Many of our programs are established in the market and the demand often outweighs our capacity to deliver - these programs are increasingly more in-depth and consistent. We are also adding to our spectrum of work, focusing more on collaboration services as well as advocating for a strong and healthy nonprofit sector.

New in our recent board-approved strategy is CNE’s aim to reach more individuals to strengthen nonprofit performance. These new initiatives include developing an online platform to augment our governance and leadership trainings. This will allow board members to access needed training at the time that is convenient to them. We are also offering more onsite trainings, in which an entire organization can participate, thereby increasing the infiltration of best practice information. CNE is working to facilitate healthy collaboration, which will empower a more efficient and effective nonprofit sector. We will be fully launching CoLab this year, with a new collaboration blueprint, trainings that build the skill and will for collaboration, and strategic facilitation and consulting to new and existing coalitions. And last but not least, CNE will advocate for the health of nonprofits because they are essential to the vitality of our community. We will be convening nonprofits and stakeholders to establish sector benchmarks, to which we will hold ourselves accountable. We will be developing tools and resources for key nonprofit stakeholders that promote a deeper understanding of the sector, and what inputs we need to do our best work. And we will be facilitating conversations that explore opportunities to leverage our collective voice to embrace the challenges that nonprofits will inevitably face – from demographic shifts to new funding models to an increasing demand for cross-sector collaboration - in the next 10 years.

As the organization and our programs evolve, we have made the strategic decision to invest in human capital to deliver on the initiatives that will have deeper organizational impact, such as our consulting and advocacy initiatives. This year, CNE will hire for two positions - a part-time senior consultant who will be able to add to CNE’s ability to deliver high quality and cost-effective consulting that enables organizational evolution and leadership transformation. This consultant will also provide an additional earned revenue source for CNE to help cover the cost of the new position. CNE has just hired a part-time
communications coordinator as well who will focus on maintaining and adding to our rich and informative resources – such as our website, e-newsletter, and all community engagement materials.

In order to continue to put programs first, CNE has always been frugal with its resources and makes necessary tough decisions, as most nonprofits do. And this year is no different. Growth at the staff level, including the hire for a full-time Director of Philanthropy, has led to increased program reach and constituents served. As in past years, we approved a balanced budget for 2016. To continue to be the most relevant, targeted, accessible and cost-effective resource for those leading our nonprofit community, we need to grow our financial resources.

To power this strategic growth, CNE has built a sustainable funding model with a diverse portfolio of revenue. It strives never to allow its program pace to outstrip its funding capacity. Instead, we believe that steady, intentional growth will provide stability within the organization and allow for lasting sustainability and impact. We have always regarded earned revenue as an important piece of the funding pie, and we strive to build that percentage over time and with reasonable expectations.

**In 2016, CNE’s budget requires slightly more than $683,000 in total revenue.** The current funding model breaks out in the following percentages:

- 38% in earned income from programs, membership & strategic partnerships
- 26% in direct contributions from individuals
- 23% from Philanthropy Day related funding & sponsorships
- 7% in foundation grants
- 3% from corporations supporting programs
- 3% in pro bono expertise

With this funding, CNE will be able to offer the dynamic programs and services portfolio described above while scanning the nonprofit landscape for important trends and developments to guide future programs.

**Means of Support**

CNE has several ways philanthropic partners can invest in the important work and programs it provides to the nonprofit organizations in our community.

**Annual Operating Support**

- Founders Circle of Excellence: $25,000 +
  - Empowers efforts to create long-lasting community change
- Partners Circle of Excellence: $10,000 +
  - Empowers organizational change and transformation
- Pillars Circle of Excellence: $5,000 +
  - Empowers leadership development
- Leaders Circle of Excellence: $2,500 +
  - Empowers skill acquisition
- Investors Circle of Excellence: $1,000 +
  - Empowers knowledge acquisition
- Supporters of Excellence: $500 +
  - Enables daily operations to continue
**Board Academy Sponsorship & Scholarship Funds**

- Program-Level Sponsorship: $5,000 +
  - Powers the next generation of community leaders
- Class-Level Sponsorship: $2,500 +
  - Powers the current class of the Academy
- Individual-Level Scholarships: $1,000 +
  - Powers individuals, that would otherwise be unable, to enroll in the Academy

**Management Academy Sponsorship & Scholarship Funds**

- Program-Level Sponsorship: $5,000 +
  - Powers the next generation of community leaders
- Class-Level Sponsorship: $2,500 +
  - Powers the current class of the Academy
- Individual-Level Scholarships: $1,000 +
  - Powers individuals, that would otherwise be unable, to enroll in the Academy

**CNE’s Loyalty Circle**

Supporters who have invested in CNE’s programs and services for three years or more are our most valued philanthropic partners because they allow us to make long-term investments in our nonprofit community. We truly appreciate their **build capital** as we strive to scale our services to meet the evolving needs of our members and to have the greatest impact. **Loyalty Circle** members receive all of CNE’s news first, are special guests at CNE gatherings, and receive best practice resources and individualized attention from our board members, executive director and other key staff.