



SERVICE WITH PURPOSE

Nonprofit organizations are essential for thriving communities. They offer critical services and strengthen the social fabric of our region, focusing on causes and constituents that might otherwise lack for attention and resources. They provide jobs and stimulate the economy. Their staffs understand local needs better than anyone else. And they motivate donors and other partners to help meet those needs, offering pathways for residents to prosper.

Today, perhaps more than ever, nonprofits are asked to do more with less, while keeping a steady eye on essential matters like governance, resource development and managing constantly changing environments. As a result, the role of board leadership is more important than ever.

Starting in 2018, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation began to build on its decades-long support for nonprofits by creating new opportunities for nonprofit leaders to learn, connect and find inspiration from experts and from one another. Our view is that community engagement in service and leadership activities will increase if nonprofit boards are high functioning and welcoming to new members, and residents have the awareness, training and support they need to meaningfully participate in board service.

Building Skills and Networks

BTCF designed two new ways for board members to come together for learning and networking: a biennial, daylong Board Leadership Forum for the region's nonprofit board members and executive directors, and a series of Board Leadership Seminars, where board volunteers can roll up their sleeves in half-day intensive workshops with a presenter or consultant and work through specific topics of interest.

The first forum was held in October 2018, drawing 180 volunteer board leaders and 50 executive directors to workshops on governance, fundraising and change management by experts in the field. Attendees represented nonprofits of all sizes and missions, with about half from Berkshire County and close to equal representation from New York and Connecticut. Two seminars followed, one focused on a board's role in fundraising and the other on inclusive board service, attracting a total of 79 participants.

In response to changed circumstances from the pandemic, Berkshire Taconic partnered with the Essex County Community Foundation to co-host the Virtual Institute for Trustees in April and May 2021. Building on the success of the forum, the event featured 24 virtual workshops from leading nonprofit experts, providing attendees with the flexibility to participate in as many sessions as they wished from the comfort of home or office. The full boards of four local nonprofits registered together, and individual registrants numbered 66 for a total of 112 participants.

(More >)

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

What we asked. After our trainings and seminars, we asked participants to reflect on what they learned and how they will apply lessons to their daily work. To plan future trainings, we look at enrollment by budget and staff size, and engagement with recordings for virtual or hybrid events.

What we learned. A main finding across all offerings is that participants reported increased interest and motivation for serving as board members. Nearly all participants would recommend our events to peers. Participants reported better understanding of the topics presented, gaining knowledge and resources to apply to their roles, meeting valuable new contacts and feeling more effective and productive in their roles.

What's next. BTCF again joins forces with Essex County Community Foundations and other partners to offer the 2022 Institute for Trustees, with 25 workshops over five weeks on topics such as inclusive strategic planning and how funders are evolving in response to the pandemic.

BUILDING LEADERSHIP REGIONWIDE



421

Board Leaders Trained

193

Organizations Represented



Big Major Gifts: Executive Partnership

Division of Harvest Development Group
President; Marty Rotblatt, Board Development Specialist;
Kathanna Booth-Miller, Executive Director Hartford Youth
Scholar, Hartford Youth Scholar Past Board Chair.



Since 2018, BTCF has offered three conferences and three half-day seminars to help board leaders gain skills and networks for their critical work.