

Nonprofit Leadership Profile

Chicanos Por La Causa

One in a Series Prepared by The Phoenix Philanthropy Group

By Laurel Kimball, Founding Principal

Presidents and Executive Directors of nonprofit organizations often see the need for enhanced leadership in their communities and state and they want to participate in and help influence statewide discussion of key social and economic issues. However, many are uncertain where to begin and how to get involved. This series of leadership profiles provides concrete tools and examples that will help nonprofit executives demonstrate leadership on behalf of their organizations – and their communities.

*This profile features **Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC)**, a 48-year-old regional community development corporation. **David Adame**, its incoming President and CEO, describes how CPLC's leadership has created an innovative economic development model. The income generated by CPLC's community development projects enable CPLC to provide essential community services and encourage self-sufficiency.*

What is the mission of CPLC?

Since 1969, Chicanos Por La Causa has been changing lives by developing self-sufficiency and instilling empowerment in those we serve. Our focus areas are economic development, education, housing/real estate, and healthcare/social services. CPLC provides a better life by offering business and employment opportunities; ensuring that everyone has the solid foundation of an education; providing hope through a pathway of recovery, restoration, and resiliency; and ensuring that a safe, secure, affordable home is available to every individual we serve. Today, we have 48 programs and services, 685 employees, and 60 offices, making CPLC the third-largest Hispanic nonprofit in the nation and the largest nonprofit organization in Arizona. Our service area includes urban and rural communities in Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico.

What is one way that your organization has demonstrated to decision makers and business leaders that a nonprofit can operate in innovative and financially sustainable ways?

Affordable quality housing has always been one of the four pillars of CPLC's comprehensive service system. CPLC has established an extensive for-profit housing system that generates revenue and helps support our nonprofit programs.

For example, CPLC established Tiempo, Inc. as a for-profit subsidiary. Through the construction, renovation, and management of buildings, job creation, and expansion of economic development ventures, CPLC's Tiempo has become an economic engine.

Profits from these economic activities enable CPLC to promote a senior housing agenda that offers advocacy and case management services. CPLC also offers a self-help housing program that provides opportunities for rural Arizona families to cash in on “sweat equity” by providing their own labor. CPLC’s affordable housing programs have assisted families all over the state to achieve their dream of home ownership.

Such successful experiences, as well as our reputation for diligent management, led CPLC to become the lead applicant for a national consortium of high-capacity, nonprofit affordable housing developers. We were awarded over \$137 million in federal funding to revitalize 15 urban and rural markets in eight states (AZ, CA, TX, CO, NM, IL, PA, and MD) and the District of Columbia—markets that were negatively impacted by foreclosed and abandoned properties.

Using these funds, CPLC acquired single family properties in approved census tracts in Maricopa and Santa Cruz counties, which were in turn, rehabilitated and resold to low income owner occupants.

What lessons has CPLC learned from its leadership activities that might help other nonprofit organizations demonstrate leadership?

Pay attention to the marketplace. Focus on execution. Learn to synthesize externally and internally.

Challenge your employees to be entrepreneurial, a lesson we learned from another organization. Recently a group of Arizona Diamondback employees volunteered to revitalize the CPLC Community Center which provides a safe learning environment for at-risk youth and their families living primarily in west Phoenix. The percentage of families in this zip code whose incomes fall below poverty level is 41%, compared to 11.5% county-wide.

I was inspired by the Diamondback employees’ ability to create excitement and recruit other partners and donations. They quickly surpassed their original goal in donations and volunteers. The overall project included a \$250,000 renovation effort with the support of community and corporate volunteers who donated more than 150 hours.

This shows me how employees within an organization can organize for themselves and independently generate excitement, gather personal donations, leverage other partners and relationships to support community causes, and create lasting impact in the community.

What is a key leadership characteristic that has made your organization succeed?

We have had the discipline to stay focused on our core business. As we have adapted to the marketplace, we have always stayed linked to our core mission.

As CPLC’s leader, my biggest challenge is to achieve the vision of an economically and politically empowered community. To meet this challenge, we need to be focused on our core businesses. There is increasing demand for our services, and the discipline of staying focused is a challenge. With limited resources, our organization needs to be focused on execution. Keeping our eye on the marketplace allows us to develop innovative approaches that in turn allow us to grow and add social ventures. This will ultimately enable us to reach our goal of stronger, healthier communities.

As you look at the nonprofit sector's role, what is the key leadership characteristic that will drive positive social change and economic impact in Arizona?

Nonprofits have to position themselves as the true economic drivers for the state. To do that, nonprofits have to demonstrate and document their impact. They have to show that they have better outcomes at lower costs than other sectors.

*For more information about **Chicanos por la Causa**, visit www.cplc.org or call (602) 257-0700.*

*Laurel Kimball is Founding Principal of **The Phoenix Philanthropy Group**, a dynamic, client-focused, mission-driven consulting firm serving nonprofit organizations in the Southwest United States, nationally, and internationally. Learn more at phoenixphilanthropy.com or by calling toll-free 1.877.524.8774.*