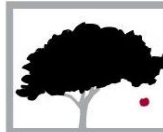


Impact Report

May 2011



NEVADA
PUBLIC
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

READY FOR LIFE®

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Introduction

As a statewide intermediary organization, Nevada Public Education Foundation:

- **Connects** schools, communities, government agencies, workplace partners, non-profits and youth organizations to improve outcomes for youth.
- **Convenes** local, regional and statewide organizations doing similar work to maximize resources and impact.
- **Measures and improves** programs and services.
- **Sustains** work by organizing public and private support and ensuring young people receive the education and resources they need to become productive, contributing members of society.

Our History

The Nevada Public Education Foundation (NPEF) was created in state statute in 1991 and, as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees and funded by grants and donations. In 2003, NPEF gained traction on the high school dropout issue in Nevada. When a statewide education needs assessment was conducted by NPEF in 2004 to determine where to focus efforts, it became clear that too many youth were leaving high school without graduating. In response, the NPEF Board of Trustees committed to focusing on helping youth become “ready for life” through successful transitions at each developmental stage during their educational careers in Nevada and beyond.

After more research and in collaboration with a steering committee of community leaders and stakeholders, NPEF launched Ready for Life™ in 2005, which quickly became a viable movement under NPEF’s visionary leadership. Established first in Southern Nevada, Ready for Life (RFL) expanded statewide in 2007, bolstered by funding allocated by the 2007 Nevada State Legislature. The funding was matched 100 percent by NPEF to build and expand Ready for Life, fund local RFL collaboratives, and develop an online statewide resource map of youth services and programs.

NPEF AT A GLANCE

Our Vision:

- All youth are educated and ready to learn.
- All youth are experienced and ready for careers.
- All youth are connected to adults, peers, and educational services.
- All youth are confident and ready for life.
- A connected, operational infrastructure supports youth success.

Our Mission:

To secure and sustain resources that will assist, support and promote excellence in public education programs in Nevada.

Our Role:

Champion quality education for Nevada’s youth.

NPEF keeps the key issues at the forefront, by connecting educators and service providers to current information, best practices and models for replication.

Be a catalyst for change.

NPEF focuses on results for educating youth, not specific types of services, and is able to leverage resources and partnerships and drive changes in services to create better results.

Facilitate collaboration.

NPEF works across disciplines and acts as the “glue” to convene and connect service providers around the key issues impacting youth.

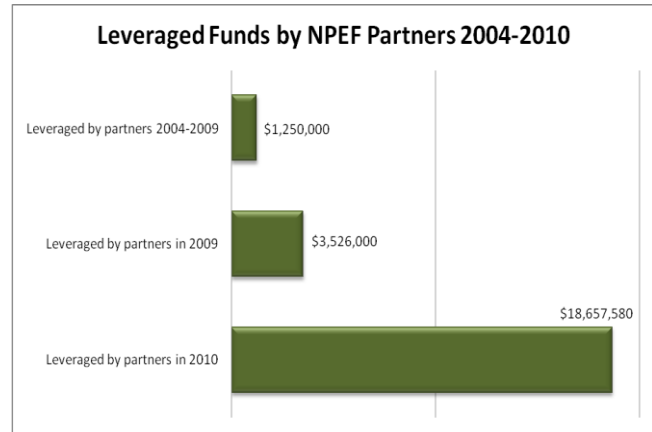
Promote shared accountability.

NPEF collects and measures the results of our work and investments in an effort to track progress, reflect on the direction of priorities and improve programs and services.

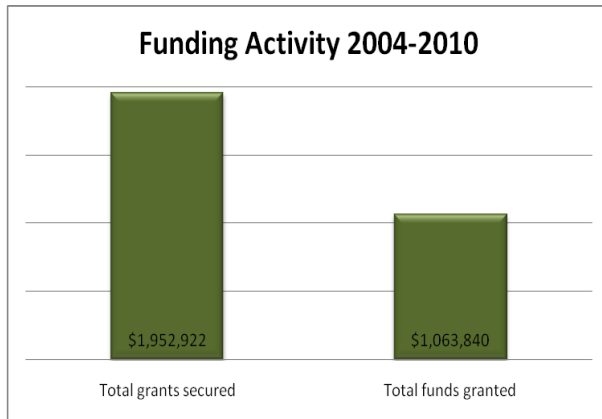
Our Initiatives

Ready for Life™

Ready for Life is a collaborative movement through which public and private organizations serving Nevada’s youth can partner to employ concrete strategies that will improve outcomes for youth and increase the likelihood that students are college and career ready. NPEF facilitates RFL efforts in Clark, Churchill, Esmeralda, Lyon, Nye, Storey and Washoe counties. With established RFL efforts, Clark, Churchill and Washoe counties have secured funding by leveraging the knowledge and planning of the larger effort. Between the years 2004-2010, **almost \$23.5 million was leveraged by RFL partners** to serve youth in our communities. In the past year alone, our partners across Nevada leveraged over \$18.65 million to support shared goals, as a result of the connections developed via Ready for Life.



Ready for Life brings together resources to address both academic and non-academic barriers to student success. Since its inception, the momentum surrounding RFL has resulted in a groundswell of support in a variety of sectors across the state for connecting youth to education, to the workforce and to society.



Grant Programs

Over the past six years, NPEF secured nearly \$2 million in grants and donations from public and private sources, awarding more than half of that in grants and seed funding. NPEF partners with Nevada Community Foundation, Wells Fargo, USA Funds, and other private foundations to make grants that support education throughout Nevada, helping students become college and career ready. Since 2005, NPEF has granted out **over \$1 million through the grant programs, impacting more than 105,000 students.**

Advancing Knowledge and Innovation

NPEF translates the resources acquired from our participation in national networks to improve policy and practice in Nevada. In this role, NPEF has been able to contribute to policy that positively impacts multiple systems. For example, RFL partnerships played a key role in getting 2007 Senate Bill 312 introduced and signed into law, providing credit-deficient students with new alternatives to attain the credits necessary for high school graduation.

Issues Facing Our Youth

Education and Graduation

- Nevada ranks last among states for high school graduation rates.
 - In 2008, 34 of the 72 high schools were reported as “dropout factories” – a high school in which less than 60 percent of the students who start as freshmen make it to their senior year.
 - In 2009, Nevada decreased the number of these high schools from 34 to 28.
- In 2010, Nevada’s fourth and eighth graders placed no higher than 43rd in math or reading on any of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams.
- In 2010, only 26 percent of high school seniors and 11 percent of high school juniors took the SAT. Of that group, Nevada placed 35th nationally in critical reading, 39th in math and 40th in writing.
- Of the Nevada students who took the ACT in 2010, only 25 percent met all of the benchmark scores, meaning that 75 percent of those who took the ACT are likely to earn a “D” grade or lower in their college level classes of English Composition, Algebra, Social Sciences and Biology.

Employment

- About 63 percent of the 46.8 million job openings created by 2018 will require workers with at least some college education.
- Thirteen percent of Nevada teens are not attending school or working, compared to the national average of eight percent. This is the highest state percentage in the United States.
- Of Nevada’s young people age 18-24, 22 percent are not attending school, not working and have no degree beyond high school, compared to 16 percent nationwide. This state percentage has increased four percent in the past year.

Teen Parenting

- Twenty-seven percent of Nevada females are at risk for becoming teen mothers. In 2010, Nevada had the second highest teenage pregnancy rate in the country, with 90 teenage pregnancies per 1,000 or 7,900 births to teen parents.
- The average annual cost associated with a child born to a mother 17 or younger in Nevada is \$3,040. Included in this cost are: public health care, child welfare, incarceration, lost tax revenue, and decreased earnings and spending capacity. **In 2010, this equated to \$24 million.**

Disconnected Youth

In “*Connected by 25: Improving the Life Chances of the Country’s Most Vulnerable 14-24 Year Olds*,” Wald and Martinez at Stanford University explored the individual, societal and economic costs related to unsuccessful transitions from youth into adulthood. Their research makes the case that, if an individual has not successfully connected to the job market and does not have a strong connection to a social support network by age 25, negative consequences will likely emerge.

According to Wald and Martinez, “disconnected” youth typically fall into one or more of the categories:

1. Youth who do not complete or drop out of high school.
2. Youth deeply involved in the juvenile justice system.
3. Youth who are pregnant or parenting.
4. Youth who have experienced foster care placement.

As individuals that are “disconnected” grow older, they will most likely live a significant portion of their life in poverty, either unemployed or marginally employed. (D. Besharov, *America’s Disconnected Youth*, 1999).

Wald and Martinez at Stanford University advocate for a systematic and community-wide response to re-connecting these youth. “There needs to be a system that has responsibility for reaching out to those not making it, with adequate dedicated resources, in the same way that resources are provided for youth attending college.”

Issues Facing Our Youth

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING... ON THE IDEAL SCHOOL

“The school that I would love to go to is one where when I walk up to the school, I don’t see kids hanging out on the corner smoking or ditching. I want to walk into a classroom where we greet the teacher and the teacher is actually willing to help.”

“I want the school to be a strict environment but also a learning environment.”

“Teachers will tell you that whether you learn or not, they are still getting paid the same. I want teachers to be more like mentors. I want teachers to be there for you.”

“It starts with the teachers. I want a safer place, a drug-free place, a gang-free place. If I had gone to a school like that, I would have been more comfortable. And if the teachers had been more motivated, I would have achieved more. I know there are kids that have people at home pushing them, but a lot of us didn’t have that. You need somebody to do that for you.”

Effect of Dropping Out

- Nevada’s estimated 23,900 students that dropped out from the class of 2010 did so at great costs to themselves and to their communities. Cutting that number of dropouts in half for this single high school class could result in tremendous economic benefits to the state. Below are the contributions that these 11,950 “potential graduates” would likely make to Nevada’s economy:
 - Earn as much as \$107 million more in an average year compared to their likely earnings without a high school diploma,
 - Spend an additional \$78 million during an average year,
 - Invest an additional \$30 million during an average year,
 - Purchase homes totaling in value as much as \$299 million more than what they otherwise would have spent without a diploma,
 - Spend up to an additional \$13 million in vehicle purchases during an average year,
 - Support as many as 700 new jobs and increase the gross state product by as much as \$131 million through spending,
 - Grow state tax revenues by as much as \$7.8 million during an average year, and
 - Pursue postsecondary education (45 percent).
- Had those who dropped out from the high school classes of 2009 and 2010 instead completed their studies and graduated, this group of students would have contributed to a lifetime of earnings of \$11.6 billion. This figure represents the **lost economic potential of almost \$6 billion with each class of dropouts.**

How We Respond

Acting Locally

To improve Nevada's success at engaging and graduating "ready for life" students and re-engaging those who prematurely left school, NPEF builds collaboratives in communities across Nevada that link:

- Educators,
- Government agencies,
- Non-profits,
- Youth serving organizations,
- Workforce development,
- Policy makers, and
- Business leaders.

"The situation prior to the Ready for Life movement was that the workforce, education, juvenile justice, and social services systems were duplicating services and not coordinating. In addition funds were not being coordinated or fully utilized. Nevada Public Education Foundation has helped to sustain the work, helped coordinate the monies in the systems and everyone is at the table in a holistic way."

- Senator Steven Horsford
Nevada Senate Majority Leader

Leading Statewide

Recognizing that multiple systems play a role in the overall success of our youth, NPEF has taken the lead in promoting a statewide action agenda and establishing a network for problem solving and communication across partners to leverage resources, remove barriers, and share information. NPEF facilitates planning and progress toward shared goals to ensure coordination, collaboration and joint accountability among state and community leaders. This action agenda reflects a unified vision and rallying point for a network of nearly 1,500 stakeholders.

Thinking Systemically

As an intermediary organization, NPEF provides statewide reach, visibility, and access to Nevada's publicly-managed system of education. We serve as a local and statewide facilitator, convener and advocate for promising innovations, help stakeholders navigate bureaucracies, forge partnerships, advance policy reforms and support on-the-ground assistance to seed promising and proven solutions and help them thrive. We coordinate the evaluation needed to identify and support the scaling of innovative, promising ideas that have the potential to transform outcomes in Nevada.

NPEF has the credibility, based on a history of success at achieving results, to catalyze partnerships between the government and nonprofits, businesses and philanthropists. **The Ready for Life: Our Shared Youth Vision statewide collaboration has been highlighted by the United States Department of Labor as one of five best practices nationally.**

We Make an Impact By...

Connecting

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"I see the Statewide Council as being very valuable. As a council we represent a broad base of influence in many areas. We are an 'information bridge' between our individual areas of expertise and spheres of influence, and the education community.

[We are] self-empowered as responsible citizens who have the ear of those administrators who can make a difference."

– Frank Woodbeck,
Nevada Economic
Development
Commission

"[The RFL Statewide Council meeting] is one of the few meetings I go to where so many different groups are at the table. It's breaking down the silos that I see most useful."

NPEF connects organizations to one another, to information and to innovation to underscore which issues matter, what research is relevant, and how working together can make a difference.

Ready for Life Nevada: Our Shared Youth Vision

In 2009, NPEF united the Ready for Life movement with the federal Shared Youth Vision partnership overseen by the Nevada Department Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. In conjunction, NPEF was invited to serve on the Governor's Workforce Investment Board Youth Council, further solidifying an alliance among leaders in both public and private sectors of education, workforce and youth development to strengthen Nevada's capacity to connect youth to education or productive employment by age 25. In this capacity, NPEF plays an **important intermediary role between education and workforce systems** to maximize benefits for youth in American Reinvestment in Recovery Act-funded and other federal programs.

Through the unification of Ready for Life with Shared Youth Vision in 2010, NPEF convened the Ready for Life Nevada: Our Shared Youth Vision Statewide Council. This group was formed to systemically address the challenges that Nevada faces in helping our young people graduate from high school, gain appropriate post-secondary education or training, and transition to a productive adulthood. Through collaboration, the Statewide Council works to:

- Align economic development, workforce development and educational improvement efforts across Nevada;
- Remove barriers to youth success and agency collaboration;
- Convene stakeholders and serve as a clearinghouse for collaborative funding opportunities; and,
- Generate, leverage and distribute resources.

As an example of this collaboration, the Governor's Workforce Investment Board Youth Council Strategic Plan was written to align with Ready for Life goals.

NPEF frequently serves as the "go to" resource for expertise, knowledge, and best practice, regularly fielding requests for information and presentations from local school boards, municipalities, and the legislature. Assemblywoman Debbie Smith asked the Foundation to present to a committee of the Nevada State Legislature on the *Cities in Crisis 2009* report. Additionally, **the United States House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee on Higher Education asked NPEF to provide testimony and recommendations** for congressional action in reauthorizing the youth portion of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Connecting

The impact of NPEF is profound. Examples of NPEF connecting resources, building relationships, ensuring sustainability and convening stakeholders follow.

- NPEF worked with RFL Southern Nevada and the workforceCONNECTIONS Youth Council to complete a business case that demonstrates the need for strategic investment in connecting youth to education and work by age 25.
- As a result of the group's collaborative partnerships, RFL Southern Nevada was presented with an opportunity through YouthBuild. This program is a federally funded youth and community development program, and addresses core issues facing low-income communities, including housing, education, employment, crime prevention, and leadership development. In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16-24 work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas, learn job skills and serve their communities by building affordable housing. Through a partnership with workforceCONNECTIONS, RFL partners assisted in the grant process, further strengthening the community's youth.
- NPEF created the statewide RFL Resource Map – an online, searchable, map-based database of over 1000 youth-related services and organizations – to connect people to resources in their neighborhoods.
- In 2010, NPEF connected Clark County School District (CCSD) with United Way of Southern Nevada in response to a high school partnerships grant opportunity presented by AT&T. This connection resulted in a \$100,000 grant to plan a family engagement project at five pilot high schools. Upon seeing results from the planning phase, UWSN funders implemented these efforts and plan to support the project for an additional four years.
- RFL Southern Nevada worked with the Clark County Continuum of Care to align priorities and reach disconnected youth. As a result of this relationship, the Continuum successfully received a \$3.1 million grant to provide housing and wraparound services to homeless youth ages 18-24 through St. Jude's Ranch for Children project.
- Through partnerships with CCSD, workforceCONNECTIONS and the Committee on Youth, NPEF worked to connect summer school and academic credit with employment and skills training while addressing location and transportation issues.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"People are looking more collaboratively now than ever before because they can't do it all on their own. A lot of people are trying to hang on in the nonprofit world, but you still have to step back and look at a bigger vision. That's what NPEF has allowed us to do. Without their support, I don't think we'd even be in the same room talking to each other."

"Because of NPEF's efforts, there seems to be a logical bridge now between workforce and education. As obvious as that seems, it wasn't identified before. The formal connections that have been developed at the state level have been huge."

"As Nevadans, we all share in the responsibility for providing our students with a quality education... Our future relies on making education a greater priority so that we can provide our students with the ability to compete in a global marketplace."

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"NPEF is the original convener... providing seed money and making things happen such as working with the school district to open their doors in the summer and creating job opportunities."

"Summer school hours are offered in higher need areas (in Clark County) and the days are longer now due to a dialogue NPEF and RFL had with the school district."

"From the view of a legislator, at the state level we've changed state law, regulations and policies based on the Foundation and Ready for Life."

- Senator Steven Horsford,
Nevada Senate Majority Leader

Convening

The level of involvement in community and state-level efforts of NPEF and its Board of Trustees is not typical of most foundations. This commitment is perceived as one of the Foundation's key strengths by stakeholders, who view it as evidence of a true partnership.

NPEF has supported local RFL planning efforts in Clark, Washoe and Churchill counties by convening and facilitating meetings since 2005. In 2010, Esmeralda, Nye, Lyon and Storey counties received RFL seed funds. This support has provided the framework to assist communities and districts to:

- Develop the necessary team structure and leadership,
- Gather data to pinpoint local issues and define priorities,
- Measure and analyze local trends,
- Shape a collaborative agenda, and
- Identify strategies for achieving shared goals.

NPEF held the first RFL community convening in November 2005, in collaboration with key partners. Approximately 200 individuals representing 100 organizations attended and began working together on behalf of disconnected youth. Three years later, with the support of a national effort spearheaded by America's Promise Alliance to increase graduation rates across the United States, NPEF hosted the statewide "Ready for Life Nevada Dropout Prevention Summit." The vision that emerged from this Summit was for all Nevada youth to be "ready for life" and supported by a community ethic that values education, links youth to workforce opportunities, and creates a safe learning environment for students.

The 2008 Summit set the stage for a statewide goal of achieving a **10 percent increase in Nevada's graduation rates by 2013** - with multiple stakeholders willing to be held publicly accountable for reaching the goal together. Overall, the event resulted in heightening the shared sense of urgency among participants regarding impacting Nevada's dropout rates. In 2010, NPEF hosted the second "Ready for Life Nevada Dropout Prevention Summit" to build on the existing momentum and collaboration around Nevada's dropout and college-readiness crisis toward the goal of building a community ethic that values education.

Convening

After two successful statewide Ready for Life Summits in 2008 and 2010 with widespread support from hundreds of Nevada's public and private organizations to make education a priority in the state, in 2011 NPEF created the Nevada Compact to implement the goals from these two Summits. The Nevada Compact reflects a commitment to ensure Nevada's youth have access to a quality primary and secondary education, post-secondary education or training, and thus are prepared for sustainable, rewarding careers.

The three goals outlined in the Compact are as follows:

- All students graduate from high school (including 10% increase by 2013).
- All students have access to and are prepared for success in college or post-secondary training.
- All students have access to pathways to sustainable jobs and careers.

Supported by a broad array of state leadership and organizations, the Compact's signers have a common commitment and goal to work together in reducing the dropout rate. This is an unprecedented declaration and collaboration among Nevada's key youth-serving institutions to ensure our children and youth are "ready for life." Washoe County is taking the Nevada Compact one step further by creating a Community Compact. This Community Compact will build on the common commitment in the Nevada Compact, providing concrete steps for different groups to support education. Other communities will soon follow in their footsteps.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"The Foundation has done more than any other educational group to heighten awareness of how bad the dropout problem is in Nevada. For a long time, the data was under-reported until the Foundation put a spotlight on the issue."

"Targeting specific evidence based practices, demonstrating success, and replicating that success is the way we're headed as a state and as a community. That is what NPEF has allowed us to do."
-Mike Pomi, Children's Cabinet, Inc.

"NPEF has created a norm for collaboration that was not the norm before."

Measuring and Improving

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

“With Ready for Life, NPEF established a structure to support one of our most fragile populations. This has an economic, an educational and a moral impact.”

“NPEF continues to be a convener... an unbiased reporter of the findings, and a focal point for accessing funds and directing it to those organizations and initiatives that can implement and truly make a difference.”

“My long-term goal is to join the Air Force after I get my high school diploma and to become a homicide detective. My short-term goal is to graduate high school and go to college. That should be right around the corner.”

NPEF gathers and reports local, state, and national data to help partners and policy makers generate responsive solutions and illuminate potential pathways for the RFL movement. To this end, NPEF has compiled baseline data and conducted needs assessments to advance local RFL efforts. This has included partnering with the Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce to survey approximately 1,500 employers about desired characteristics sought from youth entering the workforce. NPEF has also worked with local school districts in Nevada’s larger counties to establish locations for students to earn summer academic credits as well as receive job training, and has helped to identify solutions that enable credit deficient eighth graders to make up the credits in order to successfully transition to high school and remain on course to graduate.

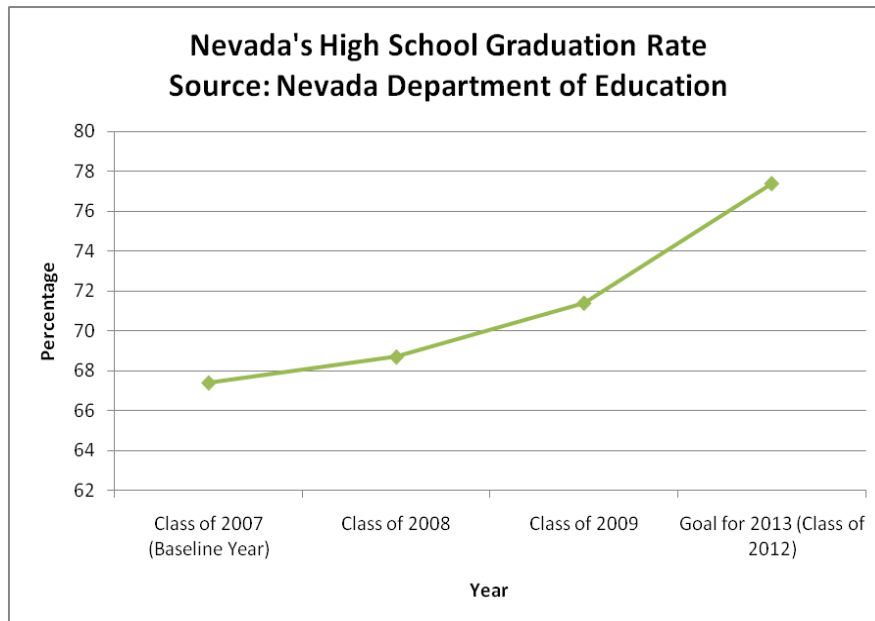
Thanks to significant RFL efforts that were marshaled by NPEF, Nevada’s 2007 Legislature passed SB312, increasing the age for compulsory school attendance and addressing dropout issues for eighth grade and beyond. SB312 also required the Nevada Department of Education and local school districts to track and report on problem indicators influencing graduation rates. In addition, new options were established to allow students to earn credit and demonstrate competency to obtain their diploma. The impact of these policy changes cannot be understated: in one Clark County school alone (Desert Rose), **360 students have been re-engaged, translating to over \$115 million dollars in future economic contributions.**

The RFL Statewide Council completed the statewide evaluation plan in October 2010. Using this plan, NPEF will be reporting and compiling indicators to measure results in education, workforce development, child welfare, juvenile justice, housing and the economy, early childhood, maternal and child health, and behavioral health. Due to this evaluation plan, NPEF is able to recognize the following developments in our state:

- In the past six years, the graduation rate has risen while the dropout rate has fallen. This is likely due to increased attendance rates, decreased transiency rates and improvements in student test scores over this same period of time. However, over this same period of time the number of credit deficient ninth graders has risen.

Measuring and Improving

- Standardized tests indicate overall improvements in reading and math from the 2004-2005 school year through the 2009-2010 school year. Standardized test results show:
 - An upward trend in reading for many primary and secondary students in Nevada.
 - A strong upward trend in mathematics for those in primary school, while tests indicate no significant change in scores for the same subject in secondary school.
 - That scores have remained stable in science tests for those in kindergarten through eighth grades; historical data is not available for those in high school.
 - That writing has not made such advancements – writing scores for those in primary school have remained stable over the past six years while the same scores have trended downward for those in secondary school.
- In 2010, Washoe County achieved an impressive seven percent increase in high school graduation rates.



Note: 2010 data unavailable as of report date.

Due to NPEF, there has been:

- An increase in collaboration between public government and private entities that have the same goal of helping at risk youth.
- A process established for collaborating that truly honors everyone's unique contribution to the effort.
- An effort to identify areas where more collaboration is needed and where other supports for the effort could be garnered.

Sustaining

NPEF’s focus on sustaining positive change related to youth success throughout Nevada is manifested directly through its grant programs and capacity building efforts.

Grant Programs

The Wells Fargo Grant a Wish for Your School program provides “mini-grants” for innovative classroom-based projects in the areas of financial literacy, math, technology and careers. Since 2006, over 66,000 students have been impacted by grants ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 for curriculum, equipment, classroom materials, books and technology.

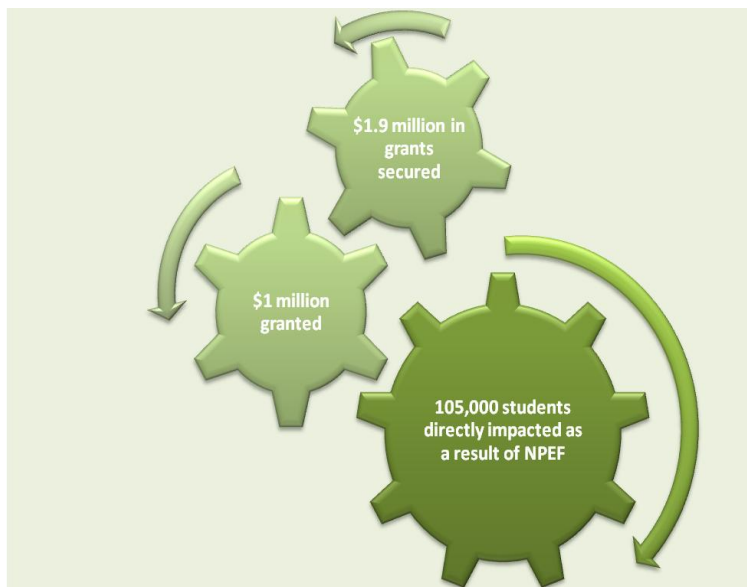
The Wells Fargo Rural Career Development grants have encouraged and motivated students in Pershing, Elko and Lyon counties to incorporate post-secondary education and career options into their future plans. Since 2005, this program has reached over 4,400 students.

The Nevada ACCESS (Academics + Careers + College and/or Training equals Student Success) grants provide resources to improve access to opportunities for young people to pursue higher education and career training. This program has been funded by a partnership involving USA Funds, Alcoa Foundation, Nell J. Redfield Foundation and NV Energy. Since 2005, nearly 35,000 students have been involved with the Nevada ACCESS funded programs. Grant awards have ranged from \$1,500 to \$20,000 for Career Days, College Exploration, Science and Technology Expositions, computer labs, symposiums and Future Scholars Programs.

The Nevada Community Foundation made a five year, \$500,000 commitment in 2010 to fund programs that are aligned with Ready for Life. This commitment to funding systemically will change the way that grants are awarded. By working with RFL Southern Nevada, the Foundation shifted from a structure of funding many grants in various areas, to now investing in the youth population while maintaining the donor’s intent. For example, a donor may have the intent to grant in the field of veterinary medicine. Now, the grant dollars will continue to go to that

field, but will create jobs for youth within that scope. Nevada Community Foundation’s shift in funding will be an example to other funders to make investments in systems rather than programs.

In total, these grant programs have **directly impacted almost 105,000 students since 2005**. The cumulative impact of the funding is immeasurable, since the resources (curriculum, tools, equipment) and intangible benefits (such as expanded educator skills and expertise) exist long after the grant has been expended, continuing to benefit new groups of students and teachers for years to come.

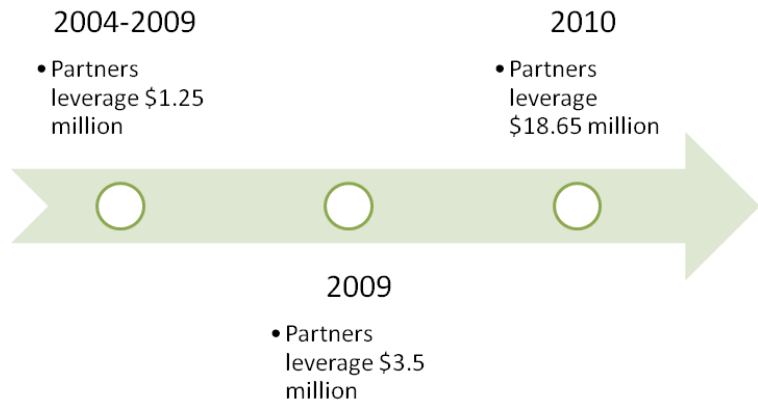


Sustaining

Capacity Building

To build capacity at the community level to ensure sustainability, NPEF provides technical assistance, seed funding, and consulting support to improve cross-system linkages so that services are more accessible and effective for youth and their families. Consider these examples:

- Teen mothers in Washoe County are now granted an excused absence to obtain medical care for a sick child, **eliminating their need to choose between parenting and securing the credits needed to graduate** and become prepared for meaningful employment.
- The Ready for Life movement in Washoe County helped provide students with the option to obtain **dual credit** (high school and college). This program was recently expanded to ninth and tenth grades. The partnership also created more technology prep credits, and made it possible for female inmates to attend adult high school.
- Churchill County successfully applied for a stimulus grant through Nevadaworks for a **summer work program** for 40 youth. This led to the clean-up of more than 130,000 pounds of trash in the Nevada desert, and tremendous positive recognition.
- RFL Southern Nevada held three Regional Funders Forums, bringing together public and private grant making organizations to leverage opportunities and maximize impact.
- NPEF provided the resources for members of the RFL Statewide Council, Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation and NPEF staff to attend a best practices seminar in San Antonio. As a result of this, these members returned from the trip with an idea of a youth reengagement center. The Washoe County School District wrote a successful application, and received a **\$15 million grant** to reengage youth who left school without a diploma.
- Clark County Juvenile Justice, a RFL partner, applied for and was awarded \$147,580 from workforceCONNECTIONS to provide youth with training and education prior to beginning their work on trail maintenance for the area's forests.
- Washoe County RFL conducted a survey among employers and learned that although employers are not hiring, they are interested in providing opportunities for youth to job shadow and/or intern at the company. Additionally, the group continually expands the list of potential employer partners to increase opportunities available to youth.



Regional Highlights

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"NPEF has raised awareness in the community in general. Their efforts to coordinate within the community have a really big impact."

"They're a great partner. In terms of leadership and the role of connector and convener, they're huge. They've been the consistent voice. It's been great working with them on that. We certainly wouldn't have been able to get to where we are now without their help."

"We're not fighting for the same dollars since we are coordinating our efforts on grant applications for workforce investment dollars to directly impact disconnected youth and adults."

The Ready for Life movements that NPEF has seeded in Clark, Churchill, Esmeralda, Lyon, Nye, Storey and Washoe counties have developed into coordinated movements for youth education, access to the workforce and changes to policies and systems. A description of efforts follows.

Clark County Highlights

In 2004, NPEF researched Ready for Life's priority population in Clark County and held focus groups with those youth to assess their challenges and reasons for disconnecting from school. When NPEF presented its findings to over 100 organizations in attendance at the first RFL community convening in 2005, participants formed a collaborative committee structure to develop and expand programs to meet the youth needs. These were subsequently prioritized in the 2006 strategic plan for RFL Southern Nevada and funded in part by NPEF through a competitive grant process in 2007.

The RFL strategic plan was adopted as the organizing framework for the Committee on Youth, created by the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition in 2007. This merging of approaches has resulted in heightened visibility and increased ownership and support from elected officials. As a result of NPEF's investment and leadership, RFL Southern Nevada:

- Connected Project 5000 Kids with the Clark County School District (CCSD). Launched in spring 2010, Project 5000 Kids is a workforceCONNECTIONS initiative to increase the graduation rates in Southern Nevada by providing meaningful work experiences in a professional environment and motivate youth to stay in school. Additional partners included Nye County School District, private and charter schools. One year after the project launch, Project 5000 Kids held its first annual Job Shadow Day for 3,127 high school students. These students visited 90 businesses for a behind-the-scenes look at career opportunities available to them if they stay in school.
- Secured the assistance of a CCSD counselor to develop small group sessions to assist youth participating in summer programs funded by workforceCONNECTIONS in evaluating their transcripts and setting their own academic goals.
- Aligned education and workforce development goals, which resulted in a shared focus on creating summer employment and academic experiences for more than 1,500 youth.
- Completed the business case, which articulates the economic benefits of achieving the group's goals and objectives.

Clark County Highlights

- Worked with CCSD to help place credit deficient students in summer school, and ensured that students not only have educational experiences but also work experience. As part of this effort, a reduced rate of \$50 for the work experience credit was negotiated with the school district, allowing 211 students to earn it in summer 2010. Additional partners included the Clark County Summer Business Institute, Nevada Partners Inc., Lied Discovery Children's Museum, Help of Southern Nevada, Latin Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas, and the Police Athletic Association of Southern Nevada.
- Developed a new, strategic investment process in partnership with the Nevada Community Foundation. In addition, RFL Southern Nevada drafted the request for proposals for providers to request funds from this process that support youth job experience, mentoring and education, and began partnerships with grantees.
- Assisted Sunrise Children's Foundation and Desert Rose High School (DRHS) in developing a day care center on the campus of DRHS. To be opened in 2011, this day care center will serve students attending the Desert Rose/ Jeffrey Campuses and serves as a tool to keep students returning to school engaged in education.
- Recognized a need to connect corporations and foundations in Southern Nevada with governmental agencies. As a result of this need, RFL Southern Nevada has convened three Funders Forums between 2009 and 2010 to connect funders in the area. This forum addressed cross-systems funding, provided opportunities for brainstorming on fiscal strategies, and funding priorities in general. With this effort, the group developed four technical assistance workshops in partnership with Clark County and Nevada Gives to provide information, support and networking opportunities to corporations and private foundations giving philanthropic dollars in Southern Nevada.
- Partnered with UNLV to conduct a statewide and regional Investment Mapping Project to map the philanthropic and government investments in community development, health and human services.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"They help us stop reinventing the wheel by connecting the resources."

"Support for teenage mothers getting excused absences for their children being sick was brought up 3-4 years ago, and nothing happened in a positive direction. When RFL brought it up, it happened in one day."

"NPEF's largest contribution is removing barriers to education... Summer school hours are offered longer, and are offered in higher-need areas."

"I was in the juvenile system before, and having been through that, I would rather be a probation officer for some of the juveniles. I've seen it, and I've been through it, so I can relate to it. I can help steer [people] in the right way instead of going back to the same path."

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

"NPEF was the founding convener of the discussion around youth. I really appreciate how mature their organization was to help Southern Nevada to create their own identity and say 'go forth.'"

"The positive effects of Churchill County's Truancy Program are translating into changed lives. In one family alone, the futures of all three children are looking bright. As a result of his involvement in the 'Culture Club' designed to engage and support Native American Youth, the oldest son who was at risk of dropping out got re-engaged in high school and was accepted into Haskell College in Kansas. His sister is following in his footsteps, and the youngest just won the sixth grade spelling bee. All three are benefitting from the support and encouragement of their father, who has also been receiving support from RFL-related activities. These kids are all on track to become first-generation college graduates, supported by a community ethic that values education."

Churchill County Highlights

In January 2007, NPEF awarded a \$19,820 planning grant to Churchill Community Coalition to seed Ready for Life. As a result of this planning grant, Churchill County RFL has:

- Established a truancy court to impact graduation rates.
- Worked with the school district and juvenile probation to hire liaisons to work with Native American students, English as Second Language Students and offer creative support systems for middle school and high school youth and their families.
- Improved the online distance education program so that students not only earn credits, but experience enhancements – such as increasing the number of courses and the number of staff – to the existing program. Prior to this, many students were forced to choose between contributing to their family economically, and completing their high school diploma.
- Developed and implemented workable strategies to overcome barriers to high school graduation, enabling the school to **cut truancy rates in half in one year.**

New Collaboratives Seeded in Rural Nevada

In 2010, NPEF awarded two \$25,000 planning grants. One went to Lyon and Storey counties to seed a joint-county Ready for Life grant. The other went to Nye and Esmeralda counties to seed the NyE (Nye and Esmeralda) Communities Coalition.

In order to support students who are struggling to overcome barriers to graduation, Lyon and Storey counties will work to create a system in which the community and schools work together to identify at-risk students prior to high school matriculation. The group will also develop a structure to ensure that each student has an annually updated graduation plan in place.

The NyE Communities Coalition is a membership organization, driven by the partnering organizations in the community. With educational attainment as the primary goal, the group recognizes two needs: one, a need to ensure that the growing population of homeless youth remains engaged as they obtain their high school diploma; and two, a need to remove barriers affecting credit deficient youth. To meet these needs, the Coalition will develop a strategic plan to address the identified priorities.

Washoe County Highlights

In late 2006, NPEF began working with the Education Collaborative of Washoe County (now the Education Alliance) and the Youth Services Development Group convened by the Washoe County Manager to determine the best approach for establishing a Ready for Life collaborative in Washoe County. In June 2007, NPEF awarded the Youth Services Development Group a \$60,000 planning grant to establish a Ready for Life community collaborative, with Washoe County Juvenile Services serving as the fiscal agent. The Washoe County Commission, Washoe County School District Board, and the City Councils for Reno and Sparks voted to support the Washoe County Ready for Life (RFL) work, and each appointed a formally elected liaison. Since then, the Washoe County RFL:

- Positioned Reno to become one of 12 cities selected nationally to receive a technical assistance grant from the National League of Cities to build collaborative capacity to serve disconnected youth.
- Developed a partnership between Sierra Nevada Job Corps and Washoe County School District to allow Job Corps students to earn an adult diploma.
- Worked with Northern Nevada Hispanic Services to create a partnership between Washoe County RFL, Hispanic Services and Washoe County School District to help Hispanic parents understand the educational system.
- Partnered with Washoe County School District to address barriers that the school district had placed on itself to determine how to remove them and help students. Schools now work with students to strategically plan enrollment in school and simplify the intake process at entry into the school system.
- Collaborated with a group of community donors and Washoe County School District to successfully secure funding needed to bring Bill Strickland into the area to conduct a feasibility study for the development of the Sierra Tahoe Arts and Technology Center. This center will provide world class training and education that result in livable wage employment for young adults.
- Recognized the need for more information sharing about disconnected youth between agencies. As a result of this, Washoe County School District and Juvenile Services collaborated to track academically at-risk students in order to provide additional services and supports.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

“I believe that there has been an increased effort to collaborate between public government as well as private and nonprofit entities that have the same goal of helping our at risk youth. A process has been established for doing that, and I believe the process truly honors everyone’s unique contribution to this effort. Also, we have identified areas where more collaboration needs to happen, and where other stakeholders or supports for this effort could be garnered.”

“I dropped out at a young age and my thing is to get out of high school, go to college, pursue my culinary career and provide for my family.”

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NPEF has made a tangible difference in the futures of Nevada's youth and communities by convening, connecting, sustaining and measuring impact. We are committed to helping our young people make successful connections to family, school and community so that they are ready for learning, ready for careers, and ready for life.

