



## CASE STUDY

# ACE Mentor Program of America

### Organization Background

The ACE Mentor Program of America, Inc. (ACE) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to engage, excite and enlighten high school students to pursue careers in architecture, engineering, and construction through mentoring, and to support their continued advancement in the industry. ACE not only engages sponsors and volunteer mentors to expose students to real-world opportunities in the aforementioned fields, it also seeks to connect students with long-term mentors, university and college programs, and scholarship opportunities. ACE now reaches more than 8,000 students annually and has awarded over \$14 million in scholarships to promising participants.

### Background

Established in 1995, ACE is different from other volunteer organizations because it is industry-led, meaning that many of its volunteers are sourced from the top national and regional companies in the construction industry. These organizations use the program as a way of developing future talent. While its national organization is headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, ACE has 66 affiliates representing states and major metro areas throughout the country. In total, the organization works with more than 3,500 volunteer mentors each school year.

ACE has had a long-standing volunteer screening policy and had partnered with a large well-known background screening company for years. Interim Executive Director Diana Eidenshink became very frustrated with the lack of clarity in the services ACE was receiving. "We had no idea where our volunteers were in the screening process," she says. "I would call the company and email and ask for explanations of our bill. They either had no idea or they just would never get back to me. It was terrible."

### Solution

Ms. Eidenshink and ACE prepared an RFP to seek a new provider. Sterling Volunteers and its support staff worked closely with ACE to customize a screening solution that met the organization's unique needs. Volunteer mentors are screened at the local affiliate level using the Sterling Volunteers online platform, and then the results are sent to the national office for approval and record keeping. "Now we can see where everyone is in the process and if they've already done a background check," says Ms. Eidenshink. "It actually saves us time."

### Results

Since switching in July 2015, ACE has processed more than 3,200 background checks using Sterling Volunteers. It has experienced almost no resistance from local high schools, which have been very satisfied by the background checks provided, though some also require additional fingerprinting per local laws. The Sterling Volunteers support staff has also been in regular contact with ACE and its many users to answer questions.

Currently, ACE is in the process of building a new database for managing its thousands of volunteer mentors and students and plans to integrate the Sterling Volunteers screening directly into the database via API.

### Key Highlight

ACE found that only Sterling Volunteers had a clear understanding of how the nonprofit world works and the challenges organizations face. "We were extremely impressed with Sterling Volunteers because they gave us actual numbers and were the most forthcoming with information about nonprofit organizations," says ACE Interim Executive Director Diana Eidenshink. "Other companies just didn't have the answers for a nonprofit organization like ours. We went with Sterling Volunteers because they really understand nonprofit operations."



*"We are thrilled with Sterling Volunteers. They are so easy to use, and we can see exactly where our mentors are in the [screening] process. It just works."*

**- Diane Eidenshink, Interim Executive Director, ACE Mentor Program of America**