

CASE STUDY

Destination Imagination Colorado

Organization Background

Destination Imagination Colorado (also known as DI Colorado) is a volunteer-led nonprofit organization whose purpose is to inspire and equip students to become the next generation of innovators and leaders. Each year it offers seven new standards-based Challenges in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), Improv, Visual Arts, Service Learning and Early Learning. Each Challenge is open-ended and enables students to learn and experience the creative process from imagination to innovation while fostering their creativity, courage and curiosity. Academic tournaments take place throughout Colorado where teams have the opportunity to present their solutions to trained appraisers. Students have fun and gain confidence in their ability to solve any challenge. In working to solve their Challenges, teams learn 21st century skills (creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, citizenship and courage), step outside of their comfort zones to pursue ideas and make presentations, and build on their unique strengths.

Background

DI Colorado is wholly dependent on its volunteers. Its Executive Director, Kate Donelan, operates the entire organization on a shoestring budget with less than two staff members. She's responsible for organizing upward of 1,000 volunteers each year throughout Colorado.

Up until 2012, the organization did not require background checks for its volunteers. At the instruction of her Board of Directors, many of whom were concerned parents, Ms. Donelan reached out to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation and inquired about the fingerprint checks the state requires of school employees and volunteers. She found the process to be far too cumbersome and slow for DI Colorado's needs. "We had to figure out what worked best with our budget and team managers' budgets. We also had to learn what level of background check we needed and how much due diligence we should do," she said. "We're really, really small and have over 800 team managers to check. There are a lot of logistics, and we just don't have those kinds of resources." That's when she approached Sterling Volunteers.

Solution

DI Colorado began working with Sterling Volunteers later that same year (2012) and was able to launch its screening program quickly. Sterling Volunteers created a background screening program tailored to DI Colorado's needs while providing fast background check results online usually within 24 to 48 hours. The online platform removed the burden of handling personal information and paper in the office. "I don't have to keep any information in my office or in my head about our volunteers," says Ms. Donelan. "The platform takes the security issues off of my shoulders so I can focus on our work."

Results

The reaction to and results from its partnership with Sterling Volunteers has been overwhelmingly positive for DI Colorado. The organization is able to pass the fee for a background check on to volunteers, who are happy to pay it.



Key Highlight

When Kate Donelan and DI Colorado first broached the subject of having volunteers pay for their own background checks, several members of her Board of Directors were concerned about pushback from volunteers. This did not materialize. "People didn't even blink when we asked them to go through and pay for a screening," she says. "Parents understand why a background check is necessary and most of them are so used to doing them for sports leagues and other activities. If another organization they volunteered with previously also used Sterling Volunteers for their screening, then they could simply share their existing check, which is great."



We wish everyone would use Sterling Volunteers. They're easy to work with, the sales people were delightful and anytime we need customer support, they are able to help immediately.

- Kate Donelan, Executive Director, Destination Imagination Colorado