

INIE Candidate Questionnaire - Spring 2020

The Institute for Nonprofit Innovation and Excellence (INIE) is a non-profit management support organization. The mission of INIE is to strengthen the capacity and impact of the nonprofit sector through education, collaboration and advocacy. We are comprised of over 180 members with a reach of over 2,400 registered nonprofit organizations.

Collaboration with all sectors is vital to having a vibrant community and a thriving nonprofit ecosystem that is prepared to serve the needs of all residents in the Tallahassee and surrounding area.

Please complete and submit this questionnaire to provide YOUR VOICE regarding the nonprofit sector. We ask that this questionnaire be SUBMITTED by FEBRUARY 21st. We will release candidates' responses, including "no response", to our members and the public on Friday, February 28th.

We commend you for your desire to serve our community and look forward to hearing YOUR VOICE. Thank you.

Email address *

rcolson120@gmail.com

Candidate Name *

Robin Colson

Name of desired commission seat and/or position.

*

Commissioner-at-Large, Group 1

1. Please describe how you have been personally involved in, supported, or been affected by the nonprofit sector. *

I have worked primarily in the non-profit sector for the majority of my career. I currently work for a legislative agency (the Florida Virtual Campus) and, as a small business owner, I have provided professional services to various state agencies. I have also worked for Big Bend Hospice.

2. There are over 2,400 nonprofit organizations registered in Tallahassee and they have an economic impact of \$3.1 Billion in Revenue. How do you plan to ensure that the nonprofit sector has a voice in the decisions being made in the commission? *

I am not familiar with how the public sector currently lends it voice, so I would need to learn about that before I can speak to it knowledgeably. I would think it is a process of continually reaching out (in a systematic, scheduled way) to the non profit community, learning if there are representatives who speak for many of them, how, when, etc. and also educating myself as to the issues that are most pressing for them. Having worked for various non-profit and public agencies, I believe they should be active participants in determining policy and planning issues for Leon County.

3. How would you use the nonprofit sector to advance the vitality of our community? *

There are many opportunities for non-profits to contribute to our community. In addition to the many populations that already benefit from non-profit services, a new opportunity that comes immediately to mind is the large number of retirement and assisted living communities being built in Tallahassee. The growing elderly population should create many opportunities to showcase the transportation, personal support, meal, physical and mental healthcare, leisure, lifelong education, etc., services provided by our non-profits. I would promote a marketing campaign to showcase such services to the 55+ populations in Tallahassee.

4. What suggestions do you have to improve the financial deficit that exists among nonprofits to serve the needs of our community? *

I believe the non-profit sector provides a critical social support network for many, many people and is part of the backbone of Leon County's economy. I also believe that my position is a minority position compared to many voters in the state of Florida, and, unfortunately, even in Leon County. Instead of continuing to ask for increased funding for non-profits, I believe we need to change the dialog to talking about the reduced infrastructure and lack of quality public and non-profit services that happen due to the lack of non-profit funding. Perhaps by focusing on the deficits that are created for Floridians due to low funding of non-profits, we might be more successful in gaining funding. Of course, foundation and federal funding sources are potentials, too, and I would want to explore if/how that type of funding is currently being sought.

5. 1 in 10 jobs in Tallahassee are in the nonprofit sector. If our community is concerned about retaining and attracting talent, how would you encourage government leaders to assist in growing the workforce in the social sector? *

I think providing incentives such as tuition assistance and loan forgiveness in exchange for work commitments are helpful. Also, I imagine shared services (i.e., sharing services such as HR, IT, professional development, etc. across multiple non-profits) has also been tried but, if not, it could be a cost savings that could be translated into employee compensation. Another idea is to create career tracks for non-profit employees so they can see either a pathway into leadership within non-profit organizations or transitions into other companies and organizations would help to recruit talent. Finally, providing training and development to non-profits so they can learn to create a desirable workplace culture, becoming a 'great place to work' and making employees feel valued and part of something bigger and more important than themselves can be very attractive to millennials, who often tend to look for employers who exemplify their values.

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