

CASE STUDY

Energizing communities with Xcel Energy





[Xcel Energy](#) delivers clean, safe, reliable, and affordable energy to more than 3.7 million electric customers and 2.1 million natural gas customers in Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin. **Although providing energy is their priority, they know it is not their only responsibility.** Xcel Energy is dedicated to powering the communities where their employees and customers live and work through robust corporate giving opportunities. From their grant program, Energizing the Future, to employee engagement opportunities, the spirit of giving shines bright at Xcel Energy.

To take a closer look at Xcel Energy's corporate giving strategy, deep dive into their company-wide Day of Service, and explore how they leverage Bonterra Corporate Social Responsibility (formerly CyberGrants) to enable greater employee engagement, we sat down with Ashly Ligouri, corporate giving representative, Xcel Energy.

Energizing the future: A framework for grantmaking

The company's charitable arm, the Xcel Energy Foundation, donates millions of dollars each year to support needs unique to communities across its eight-state footprint. In 2022, the Foundation launched a grant program framework, Energizing the Future, which lays the groundwork for strong community impact, is aligned with business priorities and reinforces Xcel Energy's continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

The foundation strategically invests within three focus areas:

STEM career pathways:

With a focus on diverse STEM learners (women, girls, and students of color), Xcel Energy works to expand STEM education opportunities and connect emerging and existing talent to STEM careers through:

- K-12 project-based learning and investigative experiences.
- Post-secondary financial aid, mentorship, and support services.
- Diverse and inclusive learning environments for all.
- Training and upskilling services for STEM careers.

Environmental sustainability:

Minimize environmental impact among vulnerable populations, and protect air, water, and land through:

- Disaster preparedness initiatives.
- Environmental stewardship and conservationist education.
- Programs that restore, maintain, and improve natural habitats.
- Natural resource conservation with an emphasis on water conservation.

Community vitality:

Build community strength and vibrancy by advancing economic prosperity and fostering cultural expression and inclusion through:

- Case management and support services for underserved populations related to employment.
- Entrepreneurial endeavors that support local economies, with a focus on diverse business leaders.
- Efforts to amplify diverse artists and art forms.
- Free, reduced-price, and community outreach activities, with a focus on historically marginalized groups.

In 2022, through its focus area programming, the Xcel Energy Foundation contributed \$4.4 million to 426 nonprofits working to create strong, vibrant, and inclusive communities.

Beyond traditional grantmaking, the Xcel Energy Foundation is expanding its support for nonprofits to encompass capacity-building training for grantees in 2023. In collaboration with the [Colorado Nonprofit Association](#), [Minnesota Nonprofit Association](#), and the [North Dakota Nonprofit Association](#), Xcel Energy will host two free trainings centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and one training focused on grant writing so that its grantees can continue to reach out to funders and expand their resources. The capacity-building trainings will be available to Xcel Energy grantees and the extended nonprofit communities where they conduct service.

Embracing flexible employee giving

While Xcel Energy's grantmaking strategy is restricted to investment within the core focus areas, its workplace-giving programs encourage employees and retirees to support causes that align with their passions and interests. Whether they're already getting involved in community giving or just starting out, Xcel Energy offers a variety of ways to support its workforce—however they want to get involved!



“Our employee giving programs are all about meeting them where they are and minimizing the amount of restrictions to giving. For example, if they're already volunteering with local organizations, we encourage employees to use Volunteer Paid Time Off (VPTO). If they're already giving back to a food bank, request a match! By enabling flexible giving and amplifying causes our employees care about, we believe they'll be more inclined to give back and get involved in corporate giving.”

— Ashly Ligouri | Corporate Giving representative, Xcel Energy



At Xcel Energy, employees and retirees volunteer thousands of hours and donate millions of dollars annually to nonprofits and higher educational institutions to maintain communities that are desirable places to learn, work, and live. Here's a snapshot of their programming:

MATCHING GIFTS:

Through the company's matching gifts program, employees and retirees are able to double the impact of contributions made to nonprofits. The Xcel Energy Foundation provides a maximum of \$750 per participant per calendar year for donations to qualified nonprofits and \$2,000 for donations to qualified higher education institutions. Financial gifts are matched dollar-for-dollar and must be \$50 or greater to be eligible.

DOLLARS FOR DOING:

The dollars for doing program rewards volunteers by making a monetary contribution for each hour volunteered at qualifying 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. The Xcel Energy Foundation will match up to 100 hours of an employee's volunteer time each calendar year at a rate of \$10 per hour, up to \$1,000 annually.

VOLUNTEER PAID TIME OFF (VPTO):

The company provides employees with up to 40 hours of VPTO each calendar year as an extra incentive to give back to the communities where they live and work. Whether they're using the full week at a time or spreading it throughout the year, the hours are available for employees to use however they wish.

From [grantmaking](#) to [employee giving and volunteering](#), Xcel Energy and the Xcel Energy Foundation leverage Bonterra's CSR platform to manage grant requests, track dollars donated, capture volunteer hours, and so much more!

Transforming communities with Day of Service

Although Xcel Energy encourages giving and volunteering year-round, its biggest day of impact occurs during its company-wide Day of Service. For more than a decade, employees, retirees, family members, and customers across Xcel Energy's eight service states have volunteered alongside one another every September. From tree planting to meal bag decorating, there are projects for everyone!

The events occur over the course of multiple days to allow employees to use VPTO during working hours or participate on a Saturday or Sunday. Family, friends, and community members can join, too. Participants are given the opportunity to contribute virtually or in person depending on varying needs and comfort levels.

To spread awareness and encourage participation, the company relies on various channels of communication. Each year, Xcel Energy kicks off promotion with a company-wide email from its CEO sharing pictures of how he has given back and gotten involved with his family in previous years. This is followed by email communications from leaders at all levels of the company. Xcel Energy also runs television and radio commercials to ensure community members know how to sign up, show up, and participate. Beyond that, a lot of the community engagement comes from word of mouth. Employees often invite their friends, families, neighbors, and others to participate. And because Xcel Energy has enabled a Bonterra CSR Community Portal, anyone who signs up for the event is automatically recorded as a participant— even if they're not an employee or retiree— helping to track community and customer engagement.

Xcel Energy also incentivizes participation by positioning its Day of Service as a company benefit—which it is! Managers often utilize the Day of Service as a teambuilding opportunity and encourage their employees to come together and rally behind a meaningful cause. Xcel Energy's Day of Service is also an opportunity for employees to gain leadership experience and knowledge. Each service site is equipped with a Team Leader who is responsible for encouraging sign-ups ahead of the event, generating excitement, and offering day-of support to participants.

“Framing our volunteer and giving programs as a benefit is really important. In today's world, employees are drawn to purpose-driven companies and so making sure that we encourage our workforce to take advantage of VPTO opportunities the same way that they would vacation or sick days.”

— Ashly Ligouri | Corporate Giving representative, Xcel Energy

Amplifying participation with Bonterra

For the first time, Xcel Energy promoted, managed, and hosted the Day of Service through [Bonterra CSR's Volunteerism solution](#). As a Bonterra customer for nearly five years, the company had previously used the platform for grants management and employee giving. In 2022, they expanded their partnership to include volunteerism. Prior to using Bonterra Volunteerism, they leveraged two different portals to host events, manage registration, track participation, and manage other administrative tasks. The systems were unable to communicate with each other, which made it difficult to capture accurate data, configure reports, and measure impact. Additionally, the Xcel Energy team found that employees weren't using the tool because it was time-consuming and tedious to jump between systems. With Bonterra CSR's single-platform solution, Xcel Energy is able to manage volunteerism from event creation all the way through to impact reporting within one system.



“Some of the main benefits of Bonterra Volunteerism included the search and event sign-up functionality and the ability for our employees to find events based on personal preferences or needs. Within Volunteerism, you are able to narrow the volunteer search by cause area, location, whether it's family-friendly, and a variety of other factors. Volunteerism allows us to categorize volunteer events in several different ways so that it's easy and simple for our employees to find opportunities that work for them.”

— Ashly Ligouri | Corporate Giving representative,
Xcel Energy



To properly orient employees on the new volunteerism platform, the Xcel Energy team launched the tool last March ahead of National Volunteer Month and Earth Day in April. As a result, its employees had the opportunity to explore the product and familiarize themselves with the capabilities before the company's larger Day of Service later in September.

“When we launched the Volunteer Events Portal, it was really important that we oriented our employees and highlighted how much easier and simpler volunteer participation would be within the new system. That's also a big reason why we opted for a soft, smaller launch in March ahead of April's Volunteer Month and a full launch in September for Day of Service. This way, we were able to offer trainings throughout the year and test the waters and make system improvements with our April events before the big Day of Service.”

— Ashly Ligouri | Corporate Giving representative,
Xcel Energy

Through its company-wide spirit of giving, robust communications strategy, and partnership with Bonterra, Xcel Energy garnered the following results from Day of Service 2022:

- Engaged 3,000 volunteers across 8 states.
- Supported over 100 nonprofits.
- Planted over 500 trees and native plants.
- Cleaned and treated 5 acres of land.
- Picked up 200 bags of trash.
- Decorated 2,000 meal bags.
- Assembled 2,300 hygiene kits.
- Packed over 250 meals for families.



We applaud the Xcel Energy team for its community-driven approach to corporate giving, flexible employee giving programming, and willingness to embrace the power of CSR technology. We can't wait to see their employee engagement skyrocket as they continue to leverage Bonterra Volunteerism!

Wondering how your organization can maximize impact and drive employee engagement?

Start by scheduling your free [Bonterra Corporate Social Responsibility](#) demo today!