



BEYOND THE GRANT: Connecting Duke Energy Employee Resource Groups with Charlotte Nonprofits

How a back-to-school campaign created opportunities for longer-term corporate and nonprofit engagement

Each year, **Shop for Good: Back-to-School**, powered by Duke Energy, mobilizes Charlotte neighbors to purchase essential school supplies directly from the Amazon Wishlists of local nonprofits serving students from pre-K through college.

In 2026, we saw an opportunity to build on the campaign's impact. Instead of allowing the partnership to end when the last backpack was purchased, we asked:

How could a seasonal giving campaign become the starting point for deeper, longer-term relationships between Duke Energy employees and local nonprofits?

The Opportunity

Nonprofits need more than financial support. They also benefit from volunteers, professional expertise, advocates, community connections and long-term champions for their missions.

At the same time, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) bring together employees around shared identities, experiences and interests.

Many are looking for meaningful ways to engage with organizations and causes that resonate with their members.

That created a natural opportunity to bring the two together.



The Approach

As part of this year's campaign, we hosted a Back-to-School Appreciation Breakfast honoring five participating nonprofits. Each organization was surprised with a \$2,000 mini-grant to help purchase the remaining school supplies needed for the students and families they serve.

But the grants were only one part of the investment.

Each nonprofit was intentionally matched with a Duke Energy Employee Resource Group whose focus aligned with the organization's mission or the community it serves. Representatives from the ERGs joined nonprofit leaders at the breakfast, creating space to learn about one another's work, build relationships and explore opportunities for future engagement.

The Impact

The immediate impact was tangible: **\$10,000 in mini-grants** helped five nonprofits close gaps in their back-to-school supply needs.

The longer-term opportunity, however, may be even more meaningful.

By connecting nonprofit leaders directly with Duke Energy employees who already share an affinity for their missions, the campaign opened the door to relationships that can extend beyond a single event or donation.

Those relationships could lead to employee volunteerism, skills-based support, mentorship, advocacy and other forms of engagement that strengthen nonprofits over time.

The Takeaway

Employee Resource Groups can be an often-overlooked bridge between companies and the communities they want to support.

When corporate partners intentionally connect ERGs with nonprofits that align with their members' interests and experiences, a sponsorship can become a relationship, a donation can become deeper engagement, and a seasonal campaign can create year-round possibilities.

We're grateful to Duke Energy for approaching this partnership with that level of intentionality—and excited to see where these five new connections lead.

Because sometimes the most valuable outcome of a partnership isn't just what you give. It's who you bring together.

Five Intentional Connections

- **The Allegro Foundation** + Disability Outreach and Inclusion (Do IT)
- **What's Next** + Latinos Energizing Diversity (LED)
- **Builders Bridge** + Together We Stand for Veterans (TWS)
- **The Academy of Goal Achievers** + Advocates for African Americans (A³)
- **Crittenton of NC** + Business Women's Network (BWN)

