



Blue Ridge Institute 2017 Information Packet

What is the Blue Ridge Institute?

The Blue Ridge Institute is the oldest continuing institute of its kind in the country, first organized nearly 90 years ago by a small group of leaders in Richmond, Virginia who envisioned a learning experience that would not only help to build leadership and professional skills, but would also provide the opportunity for private and public agency heads to learn from each other. The Blue Ridge Institute, through its learning programs, leadership development, and fellowship, became one of the premier leadership development forces in the south. Today, the Blue Ridge Institute is a reflection of its roots in the history of our country, shaped both by its heritage as well as its members and the evolution of community service and leadership perspectives.

The signature program of the Blue Ridge Institute is its annual Institute. Since 1927, “Blue Ridgers” return each year to the Institute to renew themselves through fellowship, stimulating programs, and reflection. The Institute offers a week of world-class speakers, presentations and professional development workshops along with networking and renewal for leaders in a relaxed and very casual setting. The unique setting and program allows participants the opportunity to forge much deeper connections with one another than a traditional conference. The diversity of perspectives and fields represented at the Institute provides a richer learning experience than many conferences.

The essence of the Blue Ridge Institute is its unique blending of professional and personal growth that occurs within this annual gathering of individuals who are engaged and committed to improving their communities. In annual surveys, Blue Ridgers tell us year after year that the fellowship with others is one of the most valuable parts of Blue Ridge. Many members return year after year, reporting that they leave rejuvenated and refreshed, filled with new ideas, new resources and new tools to address challenges in their organizations and their communities. Local gatherings, along with social media and a regular newsletter, as well as local gatherings, Blue Ridgers stay connected with one another throughout the year.

While it is not a requirement to attend annually, many Blue Ridgers block the last week of July in their calendar’s years ahead of time to ensure they will not miss this important and valuable week. The Institute is especially meaningful when members can build on the learning and relationships each year.

What’s the ROI (Return on Investment)?

Participation in the annual Institute, coupled with strong ongoing relationships with fellow Blue Ridgers provides unparalleled value. Seasoned professionals and emerging leaders in traditional community service fields join colleagues equally committed to community change who may be social entrepreneurs and innovators, educators, consultants, volunteers or public servants. All respondents to a recent post-Institute survey rated the conference as either Good (22%) or Excellent (78%).

Financial Cost/ROI:

- Registration is \$350 for 6 half-days of programming worth \$1500 per day = \$9,000.
- Lodging and meals at a state park in Tennessee averages about \$100/day, keeping the entire cost not including travel at under \$1,000 for a full week of learning, leading and renewal.
- Typical national-level conferences charge \$600 - \$1,000 for two to three days of programming and take place at expensive hotels.
- Scholarships are available, especially for first time attendees.

Organizational ROI:

- High-quality keynote presentations every day on relevant, current topics (recent speakers have been Diana Aviv, Dan Palotta, Robert Lupton and Pierce Pettis).
- True renewal/recharging for executive leaders (staff report their leaders return energized and enthusiastic from their week at the Institute).
- Access to recorded programs and materials which can be shared with the organization.
- Toolkits and strategies which can be implemented at the organization or in the community.
- Exposure for the organization among consultants, educators, sponsors, speakers, and peers.
- Initially designed for CEO's and public service Directors, the Blue Ridge institute also provides a tremendous development opportunity for aspiring CEOs.

Personal/Professional ROI:

- Deep, ongoing connections with peers and other leaders. Participants at other conferences around the country report that one of the most important benefits is the networking, and yet, the connections made at most conferences are "surface"; the Blue Ridge Institute provides opportunity to connect at a much stronger level with others.
- Intimate atmosphere allows for real-time interaction with world-class thought leaders – not just keynotes.
- Opportunity to "problem-solve" with peers; many leaders have come to the Institute with an organizational or personal/professional challenge and left with multiple ideas for resolving the issue.
- Peer learning and coaching with life-long colleagues.
- Integration of music, activities and laughter improves learning.
- CEUs are available.
- Expanded network of peers from around the country; Blue Ridgers report that when they have a professional challenge during the year, their first contact is almost always a Blue Ridge colleague or group of colleagues.
- Technical training as well as leadership development.
- Opportunities to get out of one's comfort zone, whether by hiking down to the Falls, taking on the tree-top ropes course challenge, or getting on stage at the talent show.
- Engagement and leadership opportunities within the Blue Ridge Institute.

Value-Add: in addition to speakers, program content, and connections, the Blue Ridge experience includes:

- Entertainment.
- Recreational activities.
- Family-friendly environment; rather than leave their family behind for yet another work trip, many Blue Ridgers bring their spouse or partner and children, some bring friends and

grandchildren too. Guests are welcomed in almost all activities throughout the week, and fully integrated into the Blue Ridge experience.

- Youth Leadership Academy: For children age 4 to 17, the Blue Ridge Institute Youth Leadership Academy provides safe, fun and educational activities. The children experience their own leadership development while having fun and making new friends or re-connecting with old friends. A new opportunity is offered in 2017 for four of the older teens to serve as junior counselors. The 2017 youth program will be led by students and faculty at the University of Tennessee School of Social Work.

The 2017 Blue Ridge Institute

The Blue Ridge Institute will take place July 30 – August 4, 2017, at [Fall Creek Falls State Park](#) in Tennessee. The Institute is deliberately held at a remote location with limited connectivity to the outside world.

This year, with an overall conference theme of *All About the Pitch*, Kevin Harrington will be our opening Keynote speaker. Mr. Harrington is a hugely successful entrepreneur, an Original Shark on Shark Tank, an industry pioneer, and a recognized business leader frequently quoted by high ranking publications such as Forbes, the Wall Street Journal, and the New York Times. Mr. Harrington is also a globally recognized Key Influencer with reach of over 100 million people through his multi-media presence and industry dominance. Other 2017 speakers include nonprofit guru Vu Le, renowned speed painter Tim Decker, and entrepreneur, author and TedX speaker Denise Barreto.

In addition, the 2017 Institute will offer, at no charge, a “kinder, more constructive Pitch Tank for nonprofits.” Three nonprofits will be chosen to pitch to Kevin Harrington and the entire Blue Ridge Institute! It’s a great opportunity to perfect your pitch and learn from an industry leader!

Activities include a talent show, a family movie night, BBQ, 5K run, hiking, golfing, paddle boat races, volleyball, tennis and softball tournaments ... the list goes on. Those who prefer to relax with a walk or to sit and solve the world’s problems with trusted colleagues and new friends will find ample opportunity for that as well: many Blue Ridgers spend the evenings and late nights together, taking through common challenges and concerns.

Just because someone is a community leader does not necessarily equip them to be a good Blue Ridger. Applications for participation are carefully reviewed; a nomination from a current member is an asset in the application process. Applications will be accepted through June 2017.

For more information, visit the BRI website at www.BlueRidgeLeaders.org.