

Elizabeth O'Connell Associate Director of Donor Relations



Elizabeth O'Connell is an associate director of donor relations officer at Western Resource Advocates (WRA). She works closely with individual donors, engaging them in WRA's mission and enabling them to support its efforts to fight climate change.

Individual donors play an essential role in WRA's work to decrease carbon emissions, connect and protect critical landscapes, and ensure healthy rivers. O'Connell builds strong relationships with and improves the giving experience for major donors, so they can plug into the organization's work and help WRA drive results where decisions are made. She uses her knowledge about WRA's programs to match supporters with the right opportunities to give and connects them with WRA's expert staff to ensure they are up to speed on the most important solutions the organization is spearheading. In

this role, she enjoys helping donors see that they are a key part of WRA's on-the-ground efforts to address the climate crisis.

O'Connell joined WRA in 2018, first supporting the Development team in a donor relations role. She focused on growing the organization's Annual Fund program, supporting direct mail outreach, improving the donor database, and building a more robust donor experience. While reinvigorating the Annual Fund program, she improved communication with donors by sending prompt acknowledgement of gifts and multiple appeals throughout the year, launching thank you videos, and pursuing creative giving opportunities like Colorado Gives Day. Her efforts significantly increased revenue from individual donors, growing the Annual Fund program by 60% between 2018 to 2021.

O'Connell first learned about WRA through Colorado Gives Day and became a multi-year donor. She was drawn to the organization's approach to getting work done, the expertise of the staff, and how it operates above the political fray. She was also inspired by WRA's work to protect the West and make it a better, healthier place to live for everyone.

Prior to joining WRA, O'Connell spent five years as the publisher of *Elevation Outdoors Magazine*, an adventure lifestyle publication, giving her deep experience in sales and business management and exposing her to various Western conservation issues. It was this experience that led her to want to put her relationship building, event planning, and fundraising skills to use for an organization that was making an impact. Through roles with Habitat for Humanity and AmeriCorps, she has focused her career on helping others.

O'Connell has a Bachelor of Arts in History from University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Va. She holds a certificate in fundraising management from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and a mid-level fundraising certification from the Veritas Group.

O'Connell channels her passion for giving back outside the office. She serves on the Board of Directors for Garden to Table, an organization in Boulder, Colo., that supports gardens and related curriculum for local elementary school students, where she advises on fundraising.

Originally from Virginia, O'Connell lives in Boulder with her husband, two young daughters, and pet dog. They spend their free time doing arts and crafts and getting outside to burn that toddler energy.

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