

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

Date March 29, 2024

Contact Information

Organization Name: **Collective Success Network**
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Year Incorporated: 2017
FEIN: 23-7046393

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Board Chair Approval (check here):
Primary Contact Name: Adrienne Tymiak
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Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

Arts, Culture & Humanities Environment/Animal Welfare Education
 Health Human Services Religion

Mission:

To support and empower first-generation and/or low-income (FGLI) college students in the Philadelphia area to achieve their potential by providing mentoring, professional development, networking and leadership opportunities.

Geographic Area Served (If not all of Chester County, specify primary Chester County regions served):

First-generation and/or low-income (FGLI) college students residing in the greater-Philadelphia area, including Chester County.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served:

Approximately 300 FGLI college students per year (43% Asian; 27% African American/Black; 17% Hispanic/Latinx; 13% Caucasian/White; 65% Female; 30% Male; 5%LGBTQ+) from over 20 area colleges including Temple, Drexel, Villanova University, West Chester University, Immaculata College and Delaware County Community College.

Annual Budget \$ 140,000

85 % of budget for program expenses
15 % of budget for administrative expenses
0 % of budget for fundraising expenses
100 % total

1 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff
15 # of Board Volunteers
12 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers
>2000 # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources:

RSM Foundation: \$30,000 (2022); \$15,000 (2023)

Patricia Kind Family Foundation: \$25,000/y (2022, 2023, 2024)

Radian Foundation: \$25,000 (2022)

Women's Way: \$10,000/y (2023, 2024)

Is this grant proposal for: Capacity Building or General Operating ?

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$ 5,000

Proposal Summary: This request for an operational grant of \$5000 from the Chester County Community Foundation to allow CSN to provide a \$500 stipend to 10 local first-generation and/or low-income (FGLI) college students who complete the CSN Student Leadership Development Training and Certificate Program.

II. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL NARRATIVE.

1. Nonprofit's history, goals, key achievements & distinctiveness

Collective Success Network (CSN) is a volunteer-driven non-profit organization with the mission to support and empower first-generation and/or low-income (FGLI) college students in the Philadelphia area to achieve their potential by providing mentoring, professional development, networking and leadership opportunities. Most CSN students identify as both first-generation to college and low-income, are between the ages of 18 and 21 and go to college in the greater Philadelphia area.

We envision a society where all students have the opportunity and support to realize their potential, recognize their roles as future leaders and learn to advocate for themselves and others. In addition to those coming from families living in poverty, the FGLI demographic is comprised primarily of people of color, women and immigrants who are systemically marginalized.

Research shows that FGLI college students in professional careers can outperform their peers by bringing their strengths to the workplace, but that this diverse and valuable talent pool is generally underutilized. FGLI talent is 5 times more likely to drop out of college as compared to continuing generation peers and is more likely to end up under-employed or to be in a position without role models to help them navigate their careers. CSN was founded in 2017 by two FGLI college graduates who understood this first-hand and wanted to pay it forward by eradicating the roadblocks FGLI students face transitioning from college to careers. The founders began by organizing student-led CSN campus chapters at Temple University, Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania. With input directly from the student leaders, they created a FGLI-specific mentoring program and offered networking and social events to connect students with professionals who could help with their career planning. All CSN program and events were offered for free and began with in-person gatherings to maximize the potential for FGLI students to build their networks with peers and professionals, and to gain confidence in a supportive environment.

The pandemic shed light on additional needs of FGLI college students and inspired us to adapt. In spring 2020, CSN pivoted to develop meaningful on-line programming. Despite the exhaustion of remote learning, students enthusiastically attended CSN innovative evening programs. Based on these successes and student feedback, we now offer a combination of virtual, hybrid and in-person events. Some highlights include:

- An extensive curriculum is offered virtually in the evenings or on weekends to any Philadelphia-area FGLI college student:
 - **Mentorship** support for the full academic year with a general and a career-specific track for ~30 students/y.
 - **STEM career exploration** for ~12 FGLI students/y to build peer and professional networks, polish resumes and investigate career options.
 - **Student Leadership Development** program trains ~25 students/y with professional skill development.
 - **Advocacy, Belonging and Careers** program helps ~ 25 students/y find their voices to advocate for themselves and others
 - **Next Degree** program guides ~20 students/y regarding options and the process of pursuing higher degrees.

- CSN supports campus-based student-led chapters at Temple, Drexel, UPenn and Villanova with funds, programming, social events and professional advisors
- The virtual, intercollegiate Consortium Chapter was established to reach over 20 area schools and provide additional leadership roles and virtual programs
- Keynote addresses and professional panels held at in-person events such as the CSN year-end celebration, are made available via zoom.
- Hybrid strategic retreats are held with the CSN Advisory Board and FGLI student leaders to update our logic model and plan for the upcoming academic calendar of programs and events.
- CSN works with local non-profits and businesses to provide job search assistance and access to summer internships that are looking specifically for FGLI talent

What makes CSN unique today is that we focus on developing FGLI strengths, professional skills and career readiness rather than on degree attainment. CSN works with FGLI students to design and deliver programs that are customized and complement other available resources. Student feedback helps CSN continuously improve and adapt our curriculum. As a result, CSN programs are innovative and allow FGLI students to share their learnings and build relationships with professionals and peers from across different colleges, creating an expansive, diverse, and long-term community support system. With our current budget, CSN empowers 300 students annually from over 20 local colleges including Temple, Drexel, Villanova, University of Pennsylvania, Immaculata College, West Chester University, Delaware County Community College, Cheyney University, Community College of Philadelphia, Penn State Abington, Arcadia, among others.

CSN strives to level the playing field for the large, diverse and underserved population of FGLI students who attend Philadelphia area colleges and Universities by providing (1) on-line programming customized for FGLI student needs and (2) post-pandemic opportunities for students and professionals to network in-person. CSN staff and professional volunteers work with FGLI student leaders to offer a wide range of programs at no cost to FGLI college students (listed above) in addition to one-off webinars and events (financial education, stakeholder management, professional panels, networking). CSN students also have the opportunity to practice professional skills as leaders of either the four on-campus chapters or the virtual Consortium Chapter. Since inception, CSN is proud to have empowered over 1000 area FGLI students and that our alumni include graduates in STEM fields, a Rhodes Scholar, entrepreneurs and recent hires at Citi, Bristol-Myers Squibb, IBM, McKinsey, Merck, Penn Medicine, RSM and Vanguard, among others.

2. Funding request

A main strategic goal for CSN is to increase our impact on local FGLI students. The Student Leadership Development Training and Certificate (Leadership) Program is the most popular CSN on-line program that is offered once a year in the springtime. It is always over-subscribed with over 50 applicants for each class of 25 students. We make a point of ensuring diversity in the cohort selected for a program, with students coming from at least 6 different area colleges. Students approaching graduation are preferentially accepted and students who are not selected in a given year are encouraged to reapply the following year. As a result, the program is in high demand and our students hope to have this experience and training before they graduate college. Testimonials from the Leadership program confirm that it has a significant impact on student's confidence and career trajectory. Unfortunately, CSN is unable to include all applicants with our current budget. This proposal is a request for \$5000 to help CSN offer the Leadership program for a second time in our academic year in

the fall of 2024. A grant of \$5000 would secure funding for \$500 stipends earned by ten students who complete the Leadership program.

The Leadership program meets virtually over the course of seven weeks, to accommodate our student's demanding work and study schedules, and it supports a holistic approach to leadership, including promoting the skills of collaboration, emotional intelligence, empathy, mental and physical health, creativity, and peer support. We begin with an orientation session that includes group introductions and a keynote inspirational lecture. Topics for the following sessions include: assessing your inner strength through StrengthFinders2.0; developing public speaking and team building skills through Improvisation; using Design Thinking to expand problem solving skills; and increasing mindfulness and mental health, among others. Students produce and share a mini-Ted-Talk on a topic of their choosing as a capstone project for the final session. Participants who complete the entire program are eligible to receive a \$500 stipend to compensate them for the time invested outside of their work and study schedules.

As with all of our programs, the Leadership program is designed to be highly interactive, with space for students to share and discuss what they are learning in real time and to network with students across different colleges, creating an expansive, diverse, and long-term network and support system. Through our partnership with L&DPhilly, an organization for Learning and Development professionals, we source local professional volunteers as session facilitators who are able to provide culturally relevant information, training and guidance.

CSN formally evaluates all of our programs at multiple stages. The following are open-ended questions that are part of the application for the Leadership Program:

- Why are you interested in being part of CSN's student leadership development and training program?
- What are the top three things you hope to get out of participating in the program?
- What are some of your goals and aspirations after college?

Then after individual each session, students fill out an evaluation which includes questions such as:

- What did you like most about this session?
- What suggestions do you have for improving the session?
- Please list three things you learned about leadership during the session that were new to you.
- Was there anything about the session you thought was particularly important for FGLI students? If so, what?

Finally, at the end of the program we ask students to respond to questions such as:

- Thinking back across your participation in the entire program, what are three new things you learned about leadership?
- In what ways did you feel this program was particularly useful for FGLI students? Please explain.
- Would you recommend this program to other FGLI students?

The first time we ran the Leadership Program, we also required students to participate in a focus group at the end as part of receiving their stipend. Each year, feedback has been very positive. Quotes from student evaluations underscore the ways in which this program challenges low-self-esteem and stereotype threat, helps students become more comfortable with public speaking, work independently and in teams, give and receive constructive feedback, navigate "crucial conversations," and consider a wider range of career and life choices. Given the timeline for students to graduate college and settle into a career, CSN aims to track program alumni for 5 – 10 years to verify their outcomes in comparison to peers.