

I. CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT PROPOSAL SUMMARY SHEET

One page only. This page will be shared electronically with Grant Panel Members & Fund Advisors.

Note: If Philanthropy Network's Common Grant Application is used, CCCF's **Summary Sheet MUST accompany application.**

To obtain an electronic version of this application, visit www.chescocf.org

Date: 09/30/2024

Contact Information

Organization Name: Stronghold Leadership
Address: 400 Chesterfield Parkway, Suite 100
Malvern, PA 19355
Phone: 717-649-8919
Website: strongholdleadership.org
Year Incorporated: 2022
FEIN: 88-2822245

ED/CEO Name: Brad Pellegrin

ED/CEO E-mail: pelligrinb@strongholdleadership.org

Board Chair Name: Brad Pellegrin

Board Chair Approval (check here): X

Primary Contact Name: Brad Pellegrin

Primary Contact E-mail: pelligrinb@strongholdleadership.org

Organization Information:

Field/s of Interest:

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

Mission: Stronghold Leadership's mission is to empower military veterans and transitioning service members by delivering premier certification education in Project Management, Change Management, and Process Improvement.

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

Stronghold Leadership is located in Malvern, PA, within Chester County. We conduct in-person and synchronous virtual training programs in Chester County while also providing opportunities to military-connected professionals nationwide.

Describe Population Served & Annual Number of People Served: Stronghold Leadership courses are designed for professionals with 3 - 5 years of experience leading projects and a high school diploma or bachelor's degree. Veterans and military service members are entitled to a discount with Stronghold Leadership. Our Veterans Education Fund serves 24 professionals annually, with twelve programs per year. In our first two years, we have served 60 Veterans, their families, and veteran advocates.

Annual Budget \$402,637

58 % of budget for program expenses

18 % of budget for administrative expenses

24 % of budget for fundraising expenses

100 % total

2 # of Full-Time Equivalent Paid Staff

5 # of Board Volunteers

1 # of Active Non-Board Volunteers

27 per week # of Volunteer Hours

Top 3-5 funding sources: Greencastle Associates Consulting (\$249,000)

Corporate training (\$104,530) Donations via golf event and various donors (\$23,840)

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

If Capacity Building Proposal, the focus is:

Mission, Vision & Strategy Governance & Leadership Partnerships & Collaborations

Fundraising, Development & Marketing Technology Other: _____

Grant Amount Requested from the Community Foundation: \$7,500

Stronghold Leadership Proposal for Chester County Community Foundation

History

Stronghold Leadership was created in 2019 by Greencastle Consulting CEO Joe Crandall to give back to the military and veteran community. Our service to the military community does not end once they are separated from active service. We provide those who serve our country with a unique opportunity to help them with their next career goals.

Stronghold Leadership became a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 2022 and has since helped nearly 100 service members develop their professional skill sets to confidently and successfully pursue their passions. Stronghold aims to serve more transitioning service members, veterans, and military supporters with expanded professional development services, networking events, and community service initiatives.

Stronghold Leadership is also registered as a Private Licensed School by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Board of Private Academic Schools. Our goal is to provide excellence in education for professional project leadership, change management, team-focused approaches, and information technology management.

What Sets Us Apart

Our team is composed of military veterans and civilian professionals.

Each member of our leadership team has served or is currently serving in the guard or reserve components—and each of them has a passion for helping others. Our professional civilian instructors hail from some of Pennsylvania's most prestigious universities, like Drexel and Temple. We are committed to our clients' success and understand just how challenging it can be to transition from active service to civilian life or how difficult it can be to change careers. Our team brings extensive experience working in both the military and civilian corporate environments. The military community feels right at home working with us. Our key partner, Greencastle Associates Consulting, is 100% veteran and has over 100 employees.

Specific Needs and Challenges We Address

Service members encounter a series of needs as they transition out of the military. These include securing employment and housing, addressing physical or mental health issues, and adjusting to civilian culture. The ease through which this transition is made has a profound impact on post-service well-being. Professional development has been seen as crucial for US military veterans transitioning to civilian careers. Alongside veterans, we support those currently serving in the National Guard and Reserve and those transitioning out of active duty.

Transition Challenges: According to the US Department of Veterans Affairs, about 200,000 service members transition to civilian life each year and many face challenges in finding suitable employment.

Skills Translation: Many transitioning veterans struggle to translate their military skills and experience into civilian job qualifications. Professional development programs often focus on helping veterans bridge this gap by providing skills assessments, resume writing assistance, and interview preparation. Stronghold Leadership's mission is to empower transitioning service members and veterans by delivering premier certification education in Project Management, Change Management, and Process Improvement.

Earning Gap: Our engaging and comprehensive training enhances career prospects and earnings potential as many veterans face a significant compensation gap when transitioning to civilian careers, with 60% earning less than they did while serving in the military. Our programs and courses increase earnings potential by an average of 30%. By equipping veterans with industry-recognized certifications, we bridge the compensation gap and reduce the risk of unemployment-related challenges, including suicide.

Employment Rates: The unemployment rate among veterans has generally been higher than the national average, although it has improved over recent years. As of the latest data, the overall veteran unemployment rate was around 3.8%, slightly higher than the national average for all adults. Unemployment Rates for both Veteran and Non-Veteran so far this year are: 4.3% Malvern and 3.9% Philadelphia, a higher rate than the national average.

Benefits of Professional Development: Studies have shown that veterans who participate in professional development programs tend to have higher employment rates and better career outcomes. These programs often include mentorship, networking opportunities, and certifications relevant to civilian industries.

Key Initiatives | Why Now

As a Pennsylvania registered, tax-deductible 501(c)(3) nonprofit veteran services organization based in Malvern, Pennsylvania, donor support helps us offer these valuable programs for free to veterans and military personnel, transforming their lives and enabling them to secure meaningful and gainful employment. In areas of our program where requirements are listed, we strictly adhere to standards for transparency, ethics, and in accordance with our licensure. Our applicants are required to hold (a) High School Diploma (GED or equivalent) plus 60 months of experience leading projects, or (b) Bachelor's degree (or higher) plus 36 months of experience leading projects. Ongoing education and employment are key components for success in adulthood.

As one of our Professional Project Leadership Program graduates explains: "When I entered the Stronghold PPLP (bootcamp), I knew very little terminology used in civilian business programs and change management compared to Army doctrinal methods. In a very short amount of time, I'm now conversant with our clients regarding predictive and agile program

management. From the beginning, Roger George from Stronghold sets you up for success and is there the entire way through the courses to assist with any technical or academic challenges. Stronghold selected only top instructors for delivery of the material during each class iteration.” - Keith Meckeon.

Transitioning from active military to civilian life is something our team deeply understands and has experienced firsthand. We know the needs are current and pressing every day.

Impact and Results

To date, Stronghold Leadership has helped 60 military veterans gain the skills they needed to advance in their careers. We provided over 6,000 hours of professional education, resulting in military veterans obtaining globally recognized certifications in project management, change management, and process improvement. These certifications help increase earnings by 30%, effectively bridging the post-service veteran compensation gap. This gap affects 60% of recently transitioned service members for nearly five years after separation, resulting in affected individuals earning less than they did while on active duty. Testimonials from graduates explain the impact our programs had on their lives. On average, we serve 24 veterans per year.

Structured and certified professional services training can cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and is recommended for those considering a career in project and IT management. In general, HR experts suggest spending between 1-5% of a company’s total investment in salaries on learning and professional development. A company that spends \$1,000,000 on salaries would spend between \$10,000 – \$50,000 annually on learning and development.

With a cost of \$2,818 per person, Stronghold’s ROI represents a tremendous savings.

Stronghold Leadership tracks: the number of students served and basic demographics; their reasons for joining Stronghold Leadership; number of courses/programs completed; confidence outcomes; and effect on their household, job satisfaction, work/life balance. Likert scale ratings and open-ended questions help provide insight on our impact.

Andrew Weir related: “My experience in Stronghold was nothing short of life-altering. It provided me with the invaluable opportunity to not only start a meaningful civilian career as I transitioned, but also to finally move back home and begin a new chapter. I learned an incredible amount across a wide body of knowledge with Stronghold Leadership. They really invest in the SkillBridge Program and focus on professional development. The people are remarkably kind and helpful. They’re experts in their field and more than willing to take the time to share that knowledge with you as you build valuable experience with client projects.”

Jacob Nieto, who graduated in 2023, explained: “Stronghold Leadership is an exceptional organization that prides itself on professionalism and successful transition of military members into the consulting industry. They have aided me in launching my Implementation Consulting career by way of thorough instruction and various certifications. The leadership

in this organization cares about the success of military members and will provide opportunities to grow as leaders and industry professionals. I would, and already have, urged many of my fellow servicemen and women to seek out any opportunity to work with this organization.”