



## **CFLeads Executive Leadership Institute for Community Foundation CEOs**

**Application Due Date: May 15, 2018**

### **The Promise of Community Foundations**

Strong communities depend on good jobs and a healthy citizenry to thrive. A strong community also requires engaged residents as well as public and private institutions – including community foundations - that work together effectively to address the community's challenges.

Helping communities attain their ideals is at the core of America's community foundations. At their best, community foundations build thriving communities by working with people of all backgrounds on their common concerns. They pursue cross-sector solutions to tough issues and they marshal the needed resources to address them. They improve education systems, clean up the environment, strengthen the arts, create safe play spaces, foster job growth, improve public health, and advance equity.

Community foundations are perfectly positioned to address these issues. Their independence, permanence, public charity status, and local relationships give them the clout and ability to reach far beyond their walls to strengthen their communities.

### **The Need for Effective Leaders**

Leading such an organization is extraordinarily challenging for even the most facile manager or most sophisticated visionary. Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) at community foundations need inspiration, information, creativity, and passion. They need good data, tried-and-true tools, and savvy advice. Today's community foundation leaders must be able to draw upon the full breadth of tools at their disposal to have the most impact in their community, recognizing that grants alone will not build vibrant, healthy places to live. They and their organizations must be able to partner with a broad array of people throughout the community - donors, public officials, corporate leaders, nonprofit managers, researchers, private foundations, small community group leaders as well as the media – and leverage the resources from allies across sectors. Their ultimate objective – the overall well-being of the community - is immense and not easily defined or measured but it is what makes their institutions so uniquely valuable. Creating a community vision and articulating the most appropriate issues to address now –

opportunity, equity, education, the arts, environment, to name a few – requires more than vision. It requires a culture, relationships, resources and skills to exercise community leadership.

### **The Executive Leadership Institute**

To help community foundation CEOs strengthen their foundation's ability to solve community problems, CFLeads has developed an executive education program. The Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) is a year-long learning opportunity focusing exclusively on community leadership for community foundation CEOs. It reflects a growing recognition in the field that the practice of community leadership is critical and requires specific skills and strategies -- beyond grantmaking. ELI also incorporates a peer learning approach, which helps participants quickly identify and adopt effective practices that are relevant to their work.

### **What Past Participants Say about ELI**

The Executive Leadership Institute includes individuals from large, medium-sized and small communities from across the country who sit at the helm of community foundations of all different sizes and asset mixes. Despite this diversity, participants frequently remark on their *common* struggles and aspirations. They had this to say about their experience in ELI:

*Thanks to all for the rich experience and ideas. My head is still bursting with all the possibilities!*

Juanita T. James, President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

*It is truly the best professional development experience I've had in 35 years of leadership!*

Kathi Horton, Former President, Community Foundation of Greater Flint

*Fabulous and unique opportunity to learn from community foundations of all sizes. Thank you!*

Fred Blackwell, CEO, The San Francisco Foundation

*It was super valuable having a cohort to talk through big strategic conundrums.*

Tony Mestres, President & CEO, Seattle Foundation

*ELI has pushed my thinking, and my practice, in ways I could never have done alone. Learning directly from peers in the field has been invaluable.*

Clotilde Dedecker, President/CEO, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

*After 40 years in nonprofit management, I thought I'd learned everything I needed to know. But, ELI is really something special. The candor and honesty here has been refreshing, challenging and incredibly valuable.*

James Williamson, Former President, Community Foundation of Greater New Britain

## **Program Description**

ELI for CEOs is an exclusive one-year intensive learning opportunity tailored specifically for community foundation CEOs who are eager to help their foundations more effectively address difficult challenges in their communities. It is designed for CEOs all along their community leadership journey. Through three, small group, face-to-face meetings it is designed to help community foundation CEOs build organizations that have the culture, staff skills, external relationships and resources to strengthen their communities. With a focus on challenging CEOs in positive ways in a supportive peer environment, ELI is designed to stimulate new thinking and create CEO-to-CEO relationships that will last beyond the one-year program timeframe to provide ongoing support and networking opportunities.

## **Objectives for Participants**

- Create a better understanding of the key elements of community leadership for community foundations;
- Advance specific community leadership practices at participating CEOs' foundations;
- Build peer connections and seed potential collaboration through peer learning and collaborative problem solving; and
- Make progress on a self-identified community leadership challenge.

## **Core Activities**

- Three two-day in-person meetings where participants assess their organization's community leadership practice, exchange stories about their organization's successes and challenges, and debate and explore the appropriate role of community foundations in building vibrant, welcoming places to live. Meetings are conducted in a confidential environment that encourages candid discussion.
- Individual work by CEOs between meetings on a challenge particular to their organization.
- Homework assignments and/or readings prior to each meeting. (These assignments/readings should take approximately 2 hours to complete prior to each meeting.)
- Optional site visits from community foundation staff in the cities where the meetings are held.

## **Institute Make-up / Eligibility**

Up to 15 community foundation CEOs will be selected to participate.

Selection to participate is competitive. Applicants interested in aggressively pushing their practice, open to questioning their own assumptions, and eager to learn from their peers are strongly encouraged to apply.

## **Cost**

The fee is \$6,800 with a 5% discount for 2017 or 2018 investors in CFLeads. Participants are also expected to pay for their own travel and accommodations. The fee may be paid in two installments over the course of the program.

## **Timing of Application Process**

Applications are due **May 15**, and should be submitted to Caroline Merenda, Director of Operations and Program Services, at [cmerenda@cfleads.org](mailto:cmerenda@cfleads.org).

Decisions will be announced in June 2018.

## **Timing of Meetings**

The following have been tentatively identified as meeting dates:

- Meeting #1: Week of November 12, 2018
- Meeting #2: Week of February 4, 2019
- Meeting #3: Summer 2019 (Exact date TBD)

Please note that each meeting lasts 2 days and meals are included. Meetings will begin by 9:00 a.m. on Day 1 and conclude by 3:00 p.m. on Day 2.

## **Application Materials**

The following information is requested to ensure the creation of a diverse cohort. Please provide in a Word document.

### About You

- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Address
- Phone
- Email
- Years with current organization
- Prior community foundation experience (list positions)
- Your bio (no more than 1 page)
- Race/ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Will you require an accommodation due to a disability?

## About Your Community Foundation

- Geographic area being served
- Staff size
- Asset size
- Percentage of assets that are discretionary (restricted to broad community betterment)

Please answer the following questions in FOUR PAGES OR FEWER. (Please note this information will remain confidential.) Bulleted or numbered responses are encouraged.

(Please note this information will remain confidential except to the CFLeads Resource Team.)

1. Why are you interested in participating in ELI? What do you hope to learn? What do you hope to contribute?
2. How would you define/describe community leadership?
3. Does your community foundation engage in community leadership activities? If so, describe up to 2 different areas of work. Describe internal actions the CEO (you or your predecessor) took to help ensure the success of the work (i.e. particular ways you engaged your board or aligned internal resources around a project or staffing decisions you've made).
4. Why are you interested in strengthening your foundation's community leadership practice?
5. Describe any specific internal challenges (such as board composition, organizational culture, staff capacity, budget constraints, etc.) you've faced or anticipate facing as you do more community leadership. Indicate any steps you may have already taken or plan to take to address these challenges. Note: Internal challenges or barriers identified are in no way considered a negative in reviewing your application.
6. What do you hope to accomplish in your role as a community foundation CEO?
7. What are your community foundation's 2 most significant community accomplishments? Can you point to specific improvements in the quality of life of people in your community? What was the role of the CEO in this work?
8. Have you worked on an issue involving the public sector, public policy, or public resources? Briefly describe the issue and your role as CEO.

**By applying, you are agreeing to all of the commitments and expectations set forth below:**

Commitment to Full Participation

1. Attend all in-person meetings. Substitutes are not permitted.
2. Prepare in advance by completing reading and other assignments.
3. Arrive on time for all in-person meetings and stay through the program end time.
4. Be willing to serve as resources to each other inside and outside of network meetings.
5. Commit to participating in evaluation by CFLeads staff and/or outside evaluators.

Expectations of Environment

1. Engage in respectful peer interaction and commit to creating a trusting environment.
2. Come prepared to share, listen, learn and be willing to push yourself.
3. Report candidly on progress, mid-course corrections and challenges.
4. Have fun.

**Submission of Applications**

Applications (submitted as a Word document) must be received via email. Please send all applications to Caroline Merenda at [cmerenda@cfleads.org](mailto:cmerenda@cfleads.org).

Please direct questions to:

Caroline Merenda  
Director of Operations and Program Services  
[cmerenda@cfleads.org](mailto:cmerenda@cfleads.org)  
(800) 292-6149 ext. 610