Background

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. Every single day, our communities face new and growing challenges as long-standing issues become more complex, and inequities worsen.

That’s why community foundations matter. With missions explicitly focused on tackling pressing local issues and seizing important opportunities, they are in a unique position to rally the people and organizations needed to make a lasting impact.

Now more than ever, residents in communities across the country need their community foundations to use every resource available to create equitable outcomes and help build just and inclusive communities where all residents participate and prosper. They need community foundations to lead change — change that builds strong, resilient communities where all people can thrive.

The Need for Effective Leaders

To drive positive change, community foundations need to mobilize all of the resources in their community, including resident voices, data about community challenges, and financial support. And they need to create relationships across every facet of the community, from the interconnected groups that serve the area to the policymakers who shape the daily lives of residents.

For years, community foundations have been working for the greater good of their communities. But to create real, measurable and equitable change, community foundations must build their capacity to rally community resources and build strong relationships. The CFLeads Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) reflects a growing recognition in the field that the practice of community leadership requires specific skills and strategies.

Today, vice presidents at community foundations 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. 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. Effectively engaging in community leadership requires a thoughtful strategy and deliberate action. It also requires a culture, relationships, resources and skills within the foundation to exercise community leadership.
Executive Leadership Institute

To help strengthen their skills to lead change, CFLeads offers an executive education program specifically for community foundation vice presidents called the Executive Leadership Institute (ELI).

This year-long learning opportunity focuses exclusively on the numerous challenges vice presidents face daily at community foundations. It reflects the recognition in the field that the practice of community leadership is critical and requires specific skills and strategies beyond grantmaking.

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.

In 2020, ELI for VPs will be going virtual. Through our interactions with community foundations in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen the critical role they are playing in communities across the country. While we are not able to gather in person, the ability to learn from our peers is so important as we all work to navigate a crisis for which there is no playbook.

This one-of-a-kind learning opportunity will provide community foundation vice presidents with the opportunity to focus exclusively on their community leadership role, thinking beyond the immediate relief needs of COVID-19 and creating the space to be thoughtful about the recovery and rebuilding response.

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING

“Thıs has been the mosr on-target, impactful professional development experience of my career. CFLeads contınues to challeıge me and my founダンıon to step up our game for bigger community impact.”

Chris Barge
Vice President of Strategic Initiatives
The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County
I came to every meeting eager to hear about the progress of my peers and grateful to share the steps in my journey.

Isaiah Oliver  
President & CEO  
Community Foundation of Greater Flint  
Participated in former role as VP, Community Impact

This was an invaluable professional development experience. It cultivated in me a greater appreciation of what it means to be a leader within our organization.

Molly Sanchez  
Director of Grants and Community Engagement  
Innovia Foundation
Program Overview

ELI is an exclusive one-year intensive learning opportunity tailored specifically for community foundation vice presidents — from all departments — who are eager to help their foundations more effectively address difficult challenges in their communities.

Through three, two-day small group virtual meetings with facilitated peer advising, and an additional two 1-1.5 hour discussions interspersed between the core gatherings, this program is designed to help community foundation vice presidents address a number of challenges including:

- Identifying the internal practices that are important to advancing a community leadership agenda;
- Integrating and aligning departments to more effectively advance the foundation’s mission;
- Making the most of the tools that make the most community impact;
- Making and measuring results; and
- Communicating impact both internally and externally.

### Program Objectives

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<td>Create a better understanding of the key elements of community leadership for community foundations;</td>
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<td>Advance specific community leadership practices at participating VPs’ foundations;</td>
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<td>Build peer connections and seed potential collaboration through peer learning and collaborative problem solving;</td>
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<td>Make progress on a self-identified community leadership challenge.</td>
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### Core Activities

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<td>Three virtual meetings, held over two days each, 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.</td>
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<td>Meetings are conducted in a confidential environment that encourages candid discussion.</td>
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<td>Individual work by VPs between meetings on a challenge particular to their organization.</td>
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<td>Homework assignments and/or readings prior to each meeting. These assignments/readings should take approximately two hours to complete prior to each meeting.</td>
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Eligibility & Cost

Up to 15 community foundation VPs will be selected to participate, and VPs from all departments in the foundation are welcome to apply. More than one VP from each foundation may apply.

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

Half the price of a traditional ELI, the fee to participate in this year’s virtual Executive Leadership Institute is $3,250, with a 5% discount for 2019 or 2020 investors in CFLeads.

Participants will need a strong internet connection and the ability to use video and audio to participate fully in these meetings.

WHAT THEY’RE SAYING

“For someone new to the field of philanthropy, ELI was a superb way to meet new colleagues and learn about valuable tools and lessons learned.”

Judith Bell
Vice President of Programs
San Francisco Foundation

Ready to apply? Visit cfleads.org to get started.