



**Chief Executive Officer**  
**CFLeads**  
Boston, MA

Helping community foundations advance their community leadership practice to build thriving communities.

## **THE SEARCH**

CFLeads, a national network of community foundations committed to community leadership, seeks a strategic, passionate, and equity-focused Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to further its mission and guide the organization to the next phase of evolution, impact, and growth. CFLeads works with hundreds of community foundations, large and small, urban and rural, committed to moving beyond grantmaking and serving as charitable banks to deepen their impact in their communities. CFLeads supports community foundations as they create positive change in their communities using the Community Leadership Framework and peer-to-peer learning and support. What was once a “coalition of the willing” is now a national movement of community foundations helping to build strong communities and advocate for better outcomes for all by insisting on racial equity, amplifying community voice, and influencing public policy and systems.

Today, CFLeads offers a wide range of peer learning opportunities designed to help community foundations grow their capacity for community leadership. By working with community foundations of all sizes from across the country, CFLeads is uniquely positioned to identify and lift the opportunities, challenges, and changes in practice associated with community leadership.

The organization has an annual operating budget of \$3.91 million. It will end FY2022 with \$5.3 million in a Strategic Acceleration Fund in unrestricted funding, due largely to a generous gift of \$5 million from MacKenzie Scott and her husband, Dan Jewett. Capitalizing on a 5-year strategic plan adopted by the board in May 2021, CFLeads seeks to continue to accelerate and scale its work.

CFLeads’ next leader will bring enthusiasm for the critical role that community foundations play in solving some of society’s most vexing challenges. They will also bring a proven commitment to civic leadership and a desire to support the field-building of community foundations. The CEO will serve as an inspirational leader, an influential communicator, an outstanding connector of people, a skilled fundraiser, and an effective strategic and organizational leader. They will also be a champion of racial equity and will work

to represent CFLeads externally and internally, overseeing continued success, impact, and growth of the organization as well as continuing to develop and support a talented team of professionals and board members.

This incoming leader will work to develop programs and network opportunities that deepen community foundation expertise in community leadership and support public policy and systems change efforts. They will help to codify and collect CFLeads' learnings for greater dissemination and shared learning and to generate national foundation support to ensure ongoing financial sustainability. The CEO will work to elevate CFLeads' public profile and communications strategy to increase organizational visibility.

CFLeads has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## **THE CURRENT MOMENT & IMPACT**

CFLeads has experienced significant and exponential growth since 2019 and as it enters its 15<sup>th</sup> year, has developed into a vital resource for community foundations seeking to deepen their community commitment and expand their impact. CFLeads remains fully committed to this work and is well positioned to expand the depth and breadth of its work and deepen its commitment and connection to the changing field of community foundations.

A new strategic plan was developed by the staff and board and approved at the May 2021 board meeting. This strategic plan is focused on amplifying CFLeads' impact in the field, and it includes a greater focus on field organizing, strengthening CFLeads' focus on public policy, becoming even more of a go-to resource for field knowledge, and continuing to marshal financial resources for the field.

Today, peer learning is at the core of what CFLeads offers to community foundations. To facilitate this, CFLeads offers a wide range of peer learning opportunities to help community foundations strengthen individual leaders, build organizational capacity, and address critical issues. These opportunities range from workshops and webinars to day-long symposia and multi-year learning networks. Peer learning networks, which have been refined over a decade, are iterative, experience-driven, team-based, and action-oriented.

Using the tools and frameworks from CFLeads, community foundations have shifted their board composition; invested in large reallocations of resources for community leadership activities; and have structured their organizations to ensure that staff teams are more cross-functional and have the expertise to help their foundations lead systemic change more effectively. This change comes at an important moment, as trust in many other institutions, from the government to religious organizations, is on the decline. Consequently, community foundations play a prominent and critical role in bridging divides and supporting a network of institutions focused on improving society, starting at the local level. They also play a unique role in the philanthropic ecosystem given that they are locally focused, permanent, and independent public charities with a mission to enhance community betterment and to develop vital civic infrastructure.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT CEO**

***Continue to develop peer learning and network opportunities for current and new community foundation audiences that deepen effectiveness around community leadership and create a business plan to take this work to scale***

For more than a decade, CFLeads has been working to propel community foundations forward through tailored peer learning opportunities. Given the ongoing success of CFLeads' programs in support of cohorts of CEOs, Vice Presidents, and CFOs to address community challenges, there is a significant opportunity for the Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) to expand beyond this level of leadership development and to share the best practices with community foundation staff at all levels of the organization. Additionally, CFLeads is incorporating a racial equity lens into all the existing programs.

At CFLeads, the incubation of new programs is driven by field demand and field dialogue. In recent years, community foundations have been interested in coming together to amplify community voices and take collective action on critical policy issues. CFLeads will continue to organize peer groups to work on systemic change efforts and issues.

***Share effective community leadership practices and enhance the ability to document field impact and metrics to measure community impact***

To continue to organize the community foundation field for collective action and impact, it is critical that CFLeads capture lessons learned and share knowledge, innovations, tools, and data around community leadership. Developing more field-wide resources may include case studies, the cataloging of information, critical data collection, and the ability to electronically share innovative practices and tools.

Given that CFLeads is still a young organization, much of its cumulative institutional knowledge is in the hands of its staff. There is a significant opportunity for CFLeads to document community leadership challenges and successes, develop community leadership competencies and outcomes that increase resident engagement effectiveness, and define metrics for measuring impact. This assessment activity will be critical in case-making to funders, organizational partners, community foundation leadership, and other key constituents.

***Ensure ongoing fiscal sustainability and continue engagement with regional and national funders***

As CFLeads has its eye on growing its impact, the organization will need to solidify its financial model and sustainability plan. Historically, a large part of CFLeads' activity has been supported by national and prominent regional funders who support collaborative and joint initiatives. These philanthropic entities include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Borealis Philanthropy, California Wellness Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Inter-American Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Knight Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Lilly Endowment, MacArthur Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and MacKenzie Scott, who has recently invested in the work of CFLeads.

This CEO will invest heavily in ongoing relationship building with key funders given that these foundations comprise a large portion of the resources for the organization. Another revenue to CFLeads comes from

community foundation investments and program fees. In addition to nurturing existing relationships, there is a significant opportunity to develop new funder partnerships.

Fortunately, in recent years, as community foundations have stepped up to show what they can do around community leadership, national funders interested in nurturing the United States' democracy are paying attention. They see community foundations as part of the solution to the growing inequity, distrust, and disruptive information environment in society. They are looking to learn and join forces with inclusive, durable, on-the-ground organizations, rooted in community, that can help strengthen a frayed civic infrastructure and build towards a healthier democracy.

More specifically, foundation funding would support CFLeads' ongoing issue networks and impact areas, and there is a significant opportunity to build financial resources for the field and raise unrestricted operating capital to support community foundations striving to be more effective community leaders.

The next CEO will work with the staff and board to build out a sustainable business model and make an ongoing case to national funders about the unique value position of CFLeads.

***Elevate CFLeads' public profile, nurture partnerships, and grow CFLeads' communications capacity to highlight field effectiveness***

There is a need for more community leadership and engagement across the country, especially when American civil society is more vulnerable than ever before. Furthermore, there is an unprecedented opportunity to elevate awareness of CFLeads' work and the efforts of community foundations by creatively framing the organization's story and highlighting the successes of community leadership and impact.

Looking ahead, there are opportunities to continue to cultivate relationships with experts in the field and organizational thought partners to expand and deepen CFLeads' reach and impact. There is also a significant opportunity for CFLeads to collaborate with other Philanthropy Supporting Organizations (PSO) in support of improved community outcomes and participate in national community-building conversations and engage with democracy scholars, practitioners, and philanthropists on how to best support a healthy local civic infrastructure.

Consequently, this CEO will work in partnership with the staff team to strategize around an outreach and communications plan that prioritizes high-impact storytelling and partnership collaboration as well as its track record in CFLeads' work to support thriving communities.

***Continue to invest in internal capacity building around racial equity***

CFLeads has been making strides in advancing its efforts around racial equity internally and across the community foundation field and has partnered with the Groundwater Institute to do so. A core part of CFLeads' new strategic plan involves deepening its racial equity focus throughout all programming and in every strategic goal. Additionally, CFLeads has incorporated racial equity into all the board committee work to ensure the implementation of racial equity is an organization-wide effort.

CFLeads is also working to demonstrate its equity commitment through diversity in hiring, effective and equitable hiring practices, and the adoption of an [equity statement](#), approved by the board in 2021. The organization also strives to maintain racial diversity on the board and continues to recruit board members with a deep commitment to racial equity.

### ***Ensure operational optimization and support a high-performing staff team and board***

The CEO of CFLeads will be a successful leader with the skills to manage the organization internally. This includes recruiting, overseeing, developing, and retaining a high-performing team of staff and board.

This leader will be oriented toward continuous improvement of work processes and communication channels. They will engage the staff and board as active contributors to the organization's decision-making processes. Being successful in this regard will require a dedication to transparency in communication, clear articulation of organizational goals, and flexibility in determining the best organizational and staffing structure for emerging field needs.

In light of COVID-19, there have been adjustments to the organization's programming structure, facilitation, and content. Looking ahead, the CEO will work with staff to ensure that programming will continue in safe and welcoming spaces for in-person peer learning and via virtual sessions.

Since CFLeads staff and board live across the country, with a few residing in the Greater Boston area, it will also be critical for the CEO to actively engage in culture-building efforts and identify in-person gathering opportunities to ensure connectivity among staff, between staff and board, and across generations, as well as geographies.

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

While no one individual will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional and personal qualifications:

- A strong belief in the power of community foundations to serve as vital partners, problem solvers, and leaders in the local philanthropic landscape. Have experience working with a community foundation, or deep knowledge of the unique nature of a community foundation or a place-based organization.
- Experience leading an organization or sizeable program related to field building; movement building; civic engagement; racial, social, economic justice; and/or the public policy space. Regardless of the field, sector, or institution, this leader must be driven by community leadership, action, and systems change efforts to address the most critical challenges facing our communities today.
- Expertise in translating a vision and strategy into a practical plan for the next level of impact and growth, and an ability to be a thought leader while delivering on a plan with detail, precision, and excellence.

- Familiarity and ideally solid relationships with national and regional philanthropic funders, along with an appetite to cultivate and grow philanthropic support.
- Masterful listening, convening, and communication skills and outstanding presentation skills and experience or an appetite to represent an organization on a national stage.
- A collaborator at heart and a network-weaver who is motivated to create solutions together, harness the ideas, knowledge, and experience of a diverse and wide range of individuals and institutions to create the best results. Ideally has worked across sectors.
- Demonstrated commitment to the values of racial equity along with experience measurably advancing those values in an organizational context. Also recognizes that the voices of those most impacted by issues and decisions are needed to create healthy, thriving communities.
- Committed to organizational excellence and effectiveness and driven by a commitment to ongoing learning.
- Demonstrated ability to guide, support, recruit and leverage staff expertise and capacity, and expand staff infrastructure where necessary. Expertise in strategic delegation.
- An effective developer of organizational culture and organizational adaptation for staff and board. Ideally, has experience working in a hybrid or remote work environment.
- Experience with financial oversight, including budgeting, planning, and reporting, and a track record of measuring the impacts of change.
- An approach to leadership that engenders confidence and trust, is inclusive, transparent, accountable, inspiring, and dedicated to both strategy and daily operations.

CFLeads is a national organization, with staff who work out of the Boston office and virtually. This leader must be prepared to travel extensively to visit community foundations across the country, for hosting events and convenings, and for spending time in Boston where the offices are located. Compensation will be competitive and commensurate with experience, with an anticipated salary range of \$250k to \$300k.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY**

CFLeads has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications (including resumes and a 1 to 3-page long letter of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above should be directed in strict confidence to the search team at the link below. Applications will be reviewed as they are submitted.

**Rebecca Swartz, Haley Burrowes, and Sokeng Cleary**

<https://www.imsearch.com/search-detail/8658>

*CFLeads is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran status, or genetic information. CFLeads is committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities in employment, its services, programs, and activities.*

## APPENDIX

### FOUNDING AND HISTORY

In 2005, the Monitor Institute published [On The Brink of New Promise: The Future of U.S. Community Foundations](#) with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Ford Foundation. *On the Brink* urged the community foundation field to make three critical shifts to stay relevant: from institution to community; from financial assets to long-term leadership; and from competitive independence to coordinated impact.

In 2007, CFLeads morphed from the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY), created in 1993, to build the capacity of community foundations to assume leadership roles on behalf of children. CCFY and CFLeads were under the umbrella of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation until CFLeads became a stand-alone, independent 501c3 in 2017.

Launched in 2011, [Executive Leadership Institute](#) (ELI) is a popular, year-long flagship program of CFLeads that helps small groups of community foundation leaders (CEOs and Vice Presidents) improve their community leadership practice. CFLeads is currently completing a pilot of ELI for CFOs and plans to pilot an ELI for CEOs and board chairs.

Community Leadership Networks were created by CCFY and later became [Issue Networks](#). CFLeads convenes several issue networks including the [Community Foundation Equity Network](#), a group of community foundations working to advance equity in their communities and helping to shape the equity lens for the community foundation field. Cohort 3 is concluding now.

The organization has continued to grow its budget and positions have been added to programming and communications.

In the Fall of 2020, CFLeads shared their findings from a year of research in a report entitled [Igniting the Future of Community Foundations](#) showing significant community leadership momentum among community foundations. Specifically, they documented that community foundations are [Going All In](#) by insisting on racial equity; amplifying community voice; and influencing policy and systems. Today, CFLeads is pursuing strategies to help community foundations build on this momentum.

More recently, CFLeads has been engaged in greater public policy activities to help the community foundation field work together on common concerns that impact all communities. For example, in September 2021, CFLeads coordinated a [letter](#) signed by 14 community foundation CEOs to Congress urging members to extend the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) expansions through 2025, to ensure the CTC is fully refundable and available to the lowest income families. The call for this joint letter was initiated by the community foundations that are part of the [Economic Mobility Action Network](#).



## CORE WORK

### Executive Leadership Institutes

The Executive Leadership Institutes (ELIs) are a series of professional development and networking programs aimed to convene a group of peers to support the collaboration of community foundations across the sector. The ELI is an exclusive one-year intensive learning opportunity tailored to leaders in the community foundation space who are eager to help their foundations more effectively address difficult challenges in their communities. Originally for CEOs, the success of the ELI programming has led to the expansion of the program to include VPs, and CFOs, with an ELI for board chairs and CEOs to be piloted. More information about the Executive Leadership Institutes can be found [here](#).

### Current issue networks and impact areas

#### Economic Mobility Action Network

Established as a pilot in 2020, the Economic Mobility Action Network is made up of six community foundations that meet regularly to further the economic mobility agenda for their communities.

To improve the economic circumstances of low-income families and address racial disparities in their communities, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, the Foundation for Louisiana, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, the Chicago Community Trust, the San Francisco Foundation, and the Southwest Initiative Foundation, have joined forces to understand the key elements of economic mobility, build their respective leadership capacities, and implement solutions and support that are appropriate for their communities. Additionally, their work supports the learning and action for the community foundation field more broadly.

The Economic Mobility Action Network is managed by CFLeads and is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with additional support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

#### Equity Network

Advancing equity and bridging gaps between disparities ranging from health, education, economic, security, neighborhood safety, and transportation access is of increasing interest to many community foundations. They are well positioned, through their local knowledge, relationships, public charity status, and philanthropic assets, to be key players in the work of advancing equity.

Born out of this interest in equity from the field, CFLeads created the Community Foundation Equity Network in 2017 and uses its proven peer learning model to allow community foundation teams to learn from one another to better understand and progress on the issue. Each cohort of this Equity Network comprises groups of six to ten community foundations including CEO leadership, board members, senior staff, and community partners. Each of these teams takes on a problem-solving approach to an equity-related challenge of their choosing and meets tri-annually.

To date, there have been three cohorts of the Equity Network. Over the past three years, Borealis Philanthropy and the Surdna Foundation have served as funders. PolicyLink and the Public Equity Group have worked as content partners.

### Gun Violence Prevention Network

Community-driven approaches have shown a sustained reduction in gun violence in cities and regions across the country through programs ranging from street outreach, workforce development, and community engagement. A well-designed, multi-sector, collaborative strategy is imperative for success, and community foundations can play an essential role in addressing violence and its root causes.

The Gun Violence Prevention Network is a year-long issue network made up of community foundation teams that work together to build a knowledge base in effective gun violence prevention and advance the practices in their communities. Reginald (Reggie) Moore, Director of Violence Prevention Policy and Engagement for the Medical College of Wisconsin's Comprehensive Injury Center is the content partner and leader of the network. The Network also relies on prevention experts and speakers who can provide information on research and best practices to connect teams with resources and advice. The Gun Violence Prevention Network is funded by the California Wellness Foundation.

### Transnational Communities

[Connecting Communities Across the Americas](#) (CCA) works to connect community foundations and other organizations to discuss challenges facing transnational communities and to advance the shared understanding of the needs of those communities.

To address and support challenges facing transnational communities, CCA has offered several opportunities for community foundations and similar organizations to gather in El Paso, Mexico City, Chicago, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Cuernavaca/Malinalco. Since 2017, over 80 organizations have participated, including 45 community foundations from seven different countries.

As part of the CCAA work, 16 community foundations have benefitted from 11 CCAA grants to map transnational communities in their regions and those reports have been published in both English and in Spanish to promote wider access. Connecting Communities Across the Americas is funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Inter-American Foundation.

## **ORGANIZATION, FINANCE, & GOVERNANCE**

Currently, CFLeads has an office and some staff members in Boston with additional staff around the country who work virtually. The organization has experienced significant growth and has 9 full-time staff members. As the organization has grown, so has its impact, working with hundreds of community foundations across the country.

The current organizational budget reflects the ambition of CFLeads' new strategic plan. CFLeads has a 2022 operational budget of \$3.91 million and has seen a 12% increase from the 2021 budget. The budget has increased 67% from \$2.1 million in 2021 to \$3.51 million in 2022. CFLeads will also end 2022 with \$5.3

million in a Strategic Acceleration Fund, made primarily of unrestricted dollars, due in large part to \$5 million from MacKenzie Scott and her husband Dan Jewett.

Reporting to the CEO is the Chief of Staff, the Vice President of Learning and Impact – Capacity Building, the Vice President of Learning and Impact – Issues, the Senior Director of Finance and Administration, and the Director of Communications. Other staff includes two program coordinators and one communications associate. Given that CFLeads' [staff](#) are geographically dispersed across the country, this CEO must be comfortable with and experienced in managing across geographies.

CFLeads has an 11-member [Board of Directors](#), comprised of CEOs of community foundations from across the United States. Each of these members has a long-standing track record of place-based community leadership within their region. They bring a commitment to working towards greater racial equity in their communities and organizations. Each board member may serve for up to three three-year terms. The Chair of CFLeads, Pedro Ramos, is the CEO of the Philadelphia Foundation. The full board meets 4 to 5 times a year and board committees include governance, finance, development and communications, and program.

## LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

[Deborah Ellwood](#), president, and CEO of CFLeads departed in June of 2022 to take the helm at the Maine Community Foundation after 12 years in the role. Under her careful stewardship, CFLeads has grown from a fledgling “coalition for the willing” into the country’s pre-eminent organization for community foundations to improve their effectiveness and increase their impact. Ellwood has been an ardent advocate for the important role that community foundations play in their communities, and she has brought CFLeads to an important level of influence in philanthropic spheres and beyond. Today, she leaves CFLeads with significant strengths and the organization is well equipped to continue to build on its mission, and expand its influence, collective action, and impact.

[Sterling Speirn](#), the former CEO of the Peninsula Community Foundation and W.K. Kellogg Foundation and former Senior Advisor to CFLeads, will serve as Interim CEO until the conclusion of this search.