

THE CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP EQUITY



GROUNDWORK FOR GROWTH

TWO YEARS OF STRATEGY,
CONNECTION, AND MOMENTUM
JULY 1, 2023- JUNE 30, 2025

KELLY WOODLAND, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FOLASSHADE DUNBAR, PRINCIPAL

CAPACITY BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE



**KELLY
WOODLAND**

Executive Director, Center for
Leadership Equity

I came to the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey three years ago to create the Center for Leadership Equity (CLE). Today, with the generous support of funders, CLE has become a trusted and necessary resource for more than 350 Black nonprofit leaders throughout Philadelphia.

CLE has fostered a dynamic and supportive community of nonprofit leaders who learn and grow together, build lasting relationships across sectors, and share a commitment for impact that elevates the field.

Essentially, we've built a capacity building infrastructure for nonprofit leaders.

Thus far, CLE's infrastructure has:

- Shaped the professional development and capacity-building landscape to be more responsive and less prescriptive
- Built and sustained a learning community of over 350 Black nonprofit leaders

- Cultivated a leadership pipeline by supporting more than 100 emerging leaders
- Prioritized wellness by offering overnight retreats and programming focused on rest and renewal
- Created greater access to funders for Black nonprofit leaders
- Given leaders a space to realize they're not alone and to build lasting, authentic relationships
- Shown the power of social capital that exists among leaders when given space to connect and collaborate

CLE is also an essential connector in times of crisis. Recently, when the federal administration threatened significant budget cuts to critical programs, a few local funders and nonprofit leaders began to meet. They turned to CLE to engage Black nonprofit leaders to ensure these perspectives were reflected in a sector-wide needs survey. The CLE activated our community of leaders, ensured Black nonprofit leaders were heard, and brought Black leaders to this group at a moment when fragmentation would have been counterproductive.

Another example of CLE's rapid response capacity occurred when a few nonprofit organizations faced financial instability and closure. CLE mobilized its capacity-building infrastructure to respond to the needs of affected nonprofit staff. Recognizing the urgency of the moment and the impact of organizational shutdowns, CLE quickly organized a comprehensive effort aimed at mitigating the disruption and safeguarding the professional futures of displaced nonprofit employees.

I lift up these examples because this is what a capacity building infrastructure looks like. It's not solely about delivering leadership enhancement programming, but building trusting relationships, cultivating a community of leaders, and honing a rapid-response capability when it matters most.

CLE meets a need too critical to go unmet.



REIMAGINING LEADERSHIP. ADVANCING EQUITY.

OUR VISION

The **Center for Leadership Equity** was officially launched in 2024 to boldly reimagine what meaningful capacity-building looks like for nonprofit leaders, with a focused commitment to advancing equity for Black leaders, Black-led, and Black-serving organizations. As a strategic bridge between philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, CLE strengthens leadership, fosters cross-sector collaboration, and drives the long-term change our communities need.

OUR ROLE

While **CLE centers the lived experiences and priorities of Black nonprofit leaders**, its programs are **built to strengthen the entire nonprofit sector**. Through skill-building, peer connection, and knowledge-sharing, CLE supports nonprofit professionals, funders, capacity builders, and civic partners committed to impact.

Grounded in the **principles of targeted universalism**, CLE designs strategies that support those most affected by structural barriers, creating benefits that extend across the broader nonprofit sector.

GROUNDING IN RESEARCH. DRIVEN BY COMMUNITY.

CLE's approach is informed by a deep commitment to data and lived experience. Two **pivotal research studies** laid the foundation:

- A study commissioned by PAALF and funded by United Way highlighted the persistent structural disparities between white- and Black-led nonprofit organizations in the region.
- In 2022, a follow-up report—again funded by United Way—amplified the voices of Black nonprofit leaders who issued a clear call to action:
 - Get to know Black leaders
 - Embrace trust-based philanthropy
 - Trust Black leadership

These findings underscored the urgent need for a **more equitable and accountable philanthropic environment**—one that values, invests in, and learns from Black-led organizations.





OUR UNIQUE APPROACH. WHY IT MATTERS.

CLE places people at the center of capacity building—offering leadership development rooted in the real-world needs and priorities of nonprofit leaders. We believe that when leaders thrive, organizations grow stronger and communities flourish.

Our holistic, **relationship-driven model** equips leaders with the tools, support, and connections they need to lead effectively and sustainably. Built on the trusted foundation of the **Black Nonprofit Chief Executives of Philadelphia (BNCEP)** affinity group, CLE serves as a dynamic leadership platform offering:

Learning Academies · Executive Roundtables · Coaching & Mentorship · Quarterly Strategy Sessions · Community Wellness Experiences

CLE offers **consistent, responsive leadership programming** driven by the needs of its engaged community. This built-in demand eliminates the need for external marketing and ensures a steady cadence of high-impact offerings.

* CLE isn't just building programs—we're strengthening the foundation of civic life in Philadelphia by investing in those who lead it.

Our **theory of change** is simple:
Investing in nonprofit leaders is an investment in community impact.

* CLE cultivates a dynamic learning community of **350+ organizations**, fostering collaboration and shared growth.

Through this multifaceted approach, CLE has seen a surge in engagement in capacity building from leaders of all types seeking to access and exchange resources to navigate complex challenges and innovate for positive outcomes.

85%

+ participant engagement across all CLE programs



Demonstrating sustained demand and deep relevance of our program offerings & resources

20%

year-over-year increase in organizations engaged



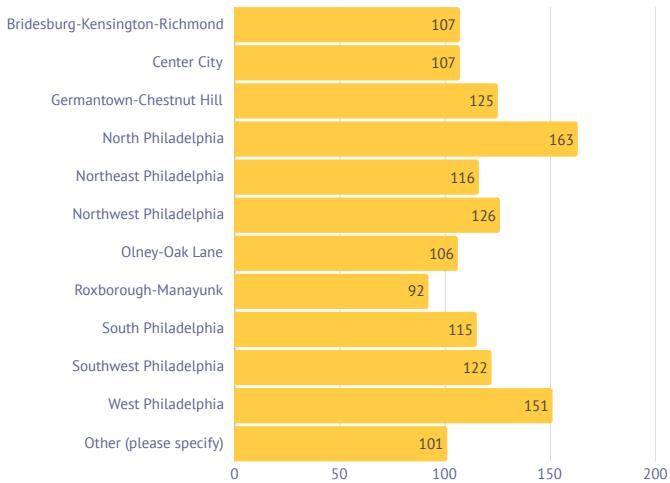
Signaling growing sector trust and the need for urgent targeted support

UPLIFTING LEADERS CITYWIDE. TACKLING WHAT MATTERS.



OUR REACH

CLE supports a dynamic network of nonprofit leaders serving communities across Philadelphia. The graph below highlights the geographic reach of participating organizations—underscoring our commitment to place-based and regionally grounded leadership enhancement.

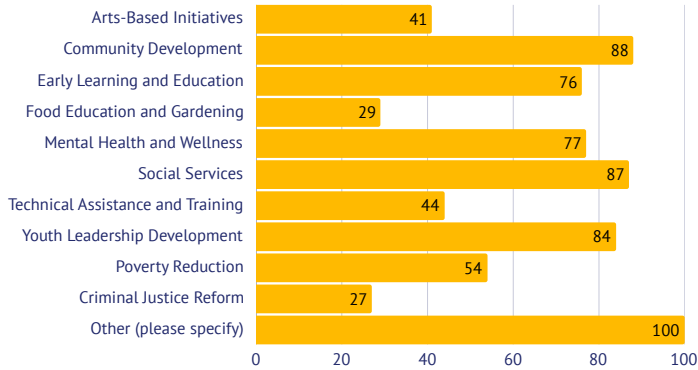


CLE Neighborhood Reach

Note: Some organizations serve multiple neighborhoods

SERVICE AREA SNAPSHOT

Hundreds of nonprofit leaders engaged with CLE represent a **wide spectrum of service areas critical to Philadelphia’s well-being**. The graph below shows the distribution of participating organizations by focus area, reflecting CLE’s intentional investment in leaders driving equity and innovation across every corner of civic life.



Service Area Distribution

Note: Some organizations address multiple service areas

PROGRAMS



7 LEARNING ACADEMIES

Instructional Time

1428

Executive training hours delivered

Participant Satisfaction

98%

Rate training as aligned and transformational



"I will use this information to help build my confidence as I lean and lead with my talents/gifts established in the early workshops. I will also apply the holistic approach to how I can lead not just from the head but the heart as well." —**Cataylst Academy Participant**



LEADERSHIP EDGE

45 slots filled annually

Satisfaction Rate

100 %

Participants report increased confidence and support

Retention Rate

90%

Reinforcing the power of trust-building, support and peer connection



"Joining The Leadership Edge executive coaching program was hands down the best decision I've made this year. With my coach's guidance, I set bold goals and took the necessary steps—often uncomfortable ones—to reach them. I am truly grateful" —**Executive Coachee**



CLE Learning Academies deliver high-impact, executive-level workshops designed to strengthen nonprofit leaders' core capacities—from **fiscal management and strategic planning to AI integration, governance, and equity-centered leadership**. Shaped by the priorities of the BNCEP, these sessions provide practical tools to lead with clarity, sustainability, and purpose.



Leadership Edge Initiative provides responsive, relationship-centered leadership development through **one-on-one executive coaching, real-time support**, and **peer mentorship circles**. Designed to help nonprofit leaders navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and grow within a supportive community, this initiative creates a trusted space for the personal guidance leaders need to lead with confidence and resilience.

PROGRAMS



**8 CEO
ROUNDTABLES**

Leaders
Engaged

145

Leadership Insights

99%

Participants report roundtables informed real-time leadership and organizational decision-making



CEO Roundtables bring real-time perspectives to urgent policy and organizational challenges, offering nonprofit executives a trusted space to exchange insights, tackle shared issues, and co-create solutions. These convenings address topics ranging from **board engagement** and **crisis communication** to unpacking **policy/execute orders** and **fiscal sponsorship, mergers & acquisitions**—advancing innovation and strategic leadership across the sector.



**GET TO KNOW
US EVENTS**

Public–Private–Philanthropic Collaboration in Action

3 Events | 350 Leaders | Countless Connections Forged



Get to Know Us events are CLE's signature gatherings that connect public, private, and philanthropic partners with our member organizations. More than networking, these curated **forums build trust, foster dialogue, and spark collaboration**—often leading to new partnerships, funding opportunities, and cross-sector initiatives that advance shared goals.



"This community and the relationships I've built here have been a game-changer for me. Thanks to these connections, I was able to secure \$250K in funding for my programs—an opportunity that wouldn't have been possible without the incredible work you all are doing to prioritize relationships and partnerships within our group." **—BNCEP Member & GTKU Attendee**

NOURISHING LEADERSHIP. CREATING SPACE TO THRIVE.



2

Annual Wellness Retreats



2

Collective Care Gatherings



5

Social Connectivity Events

WELLNESS INITIATIVES

CLE's Wellness Initiatives **promote restoration, vitality, and collective care** through experiences that center the holistic well-being of Black nonprofit leaders. From the multi-day **Annual Wellness Retreat to Healing and Thriving Together** and **Kuja Pamoja**—gatherings rooted in cultural connection and healing—these offerings create intentional spaces for reflection, storytelling, movement, and solidarity. Together, they address the stress, burnout, and structural inequities that impact leadership and sustainability.

Throughout the year, CLE also hosts **Social Connectivity** events—including community strolls, happy hours, and holiday socials—to combat isolation and strengthen the social bonds that sustain both leadership and community.



"Just after attending the retreat and submitting the survey, I saw my rheumatologist—my blood pressure was down 10 points, and she immediately noticed how at ease I looked. I told her about the retreat and how profoundly healing it was. Thank you for crafting such a nurturing and restorative space." —**BNCEP Member & Wellness Retreat Attendee**

EQUIPPING LEADERS. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES.

CHARTING OUR COURSE

As CLE looks ahead, we remain deeply committed to building a strong, sustainable pipeline of nonprofit leadership that is rooted in equity, resilience, and community impact. Our future programming will deepen our investment in executive and emerging leaders by expanding access to high-quality professional development, coaching, and strategic support. By equipping leaders with the tools to steward organizations effectively—especially amid complex social, economic, and political shifts—we aim to ensure the long-term viability of Philadelphia's nonprofit ecosystem.

BOLD LEADERSHIP AHEAD

Building on a trusted and growing infrastructure, CLE is excited to expand its leadership development platform with two major initiatives: the

CEO Bootcamp and an **Annual Leadership Conference**.

Rooted in CLE's responsive, leader-informed model, the **CEO Bootcamp** will deliver a structured, immersive experience for executive leaders—providing practical tools in governance, fundraising, operations, and crisis management, alongside meaningful mentorship and peer learning.

The **Annual Leadership Conference** will serve as a cornerstone convening, showcasing the insights, innovations, and momentum generated through CLE's capacity-building efforts. Designed to foster cross-sector collaboration, highlight promising practices, and elevate equity-centered strategies, the conference will further solidify CLE's role as a key hub in Philadelphia's nonprofit ecosystem.



Building on this momentum, CLE will expand opportunities for cross-sector partnership—bringing together nonprofit, public, and philanthropic leaders to align strategies, build trust, and drive innovation. These relationships are essential to tackling complex challenges with shared strength and creativity.

Through **new convenings, joint initiatives, and policy-focused forums**, we aim to bridge silos and accelerate solutions grounded in the lived experiences and leadership of the communities we serve. Together, these initiatives reflect CLE's continued commitment to building a stronger, more connected, and more equitable nonprofit sector.

OUR VALUE TO THE NONPROFIT ECOSYSTEM

CLE is Essential Infrastructure for Equity and Leadership

CLE is not a project—it's a vital backbone for advancing racial equity and strengthening nonprofit leadership because long-standing disparities require coordinated, community-rooted solutions that endure beyond any single initiative.

CLE Supports Black Leaders Closest to the people and the issues

CLE centers culturally grounded, results-driven leaders who are deeply connected to the communities they serve.

CLE Cultivates a Strong and Sustainable Leadership Pipeline

With over 100 emerging leaders developed, CLE is closing the racial leadership gap and securing the sector's future.

CLE Shifts Power by Building Trust-Based Relationships

CLE fosters authentic connections between leaders and funders, transforming power dynamics from transactional to relational.

CLE Prioritizes Wellness and Rapid Response

By investing in leader well-being and mobilizing in moments of urgency, CLE ensures long-term impact and timely action. CLE has carefully cultivated a thriving community of leaders and can leverage its convening influence in moments when timing, trust, and community voice are critical.

CHAMPIONS BEHIND THE MOVEMENT

Funders

Barra Foundation
Claniel Foundation
Comcast NBC Universal
Hamilton Family Charitable Trust
Patricia Kind Foundation
Philadelphia Health Partnership
Scattergood Foundation
United Way Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey
William Penn Foundation

Partners in Capacity + Impact

AbleWorld Network
Bridgespan Group
CCS Funding
Continuum Executive Coaching
DiverseForce
Equal Measure
George Talks
Health Management Associates
Marshall Media
Nonprofit Finance Fund
Project Evident
ReAwaken
Rouse Consulting Group
Spring Point Partners
The Community Curator
The ECO Foundation
The ESP Effect
The Fathering Circle
The Hughes Group
The Ladipo Group



STAY CONNECTED



CONTACT:

Kelly Woodland

Executive Director

Email/

kwoodland@unitedforimpact.org

Website/

www.unitedforimpact.org

Address/

1800 John F Kennedy
Boulevard, #1200 Philadelphia,
PA 19103