

Proposal Summary

Meeting Date: 3/1/2017

CodeNow Inc. Request # 115337

Project Title:	CodeNow 2.0
Duration:	12 months
Request Date:	1/18/2017
Request Amount:	\$50,000
Recommended Amount:	\$50,000
Program Area:	Education/ Secondary/Entrepreneurship
Population Served:	Underserved Youth
Type of Support:	General Operating (GOS)
Grantee Location:	Chicago, IL
Primary Contact:	Neal Sales-Griffin

Project Abstract

CodeNow is creating a scalable program model to empower thousands of underrepresented teenagers (aged 13-19) to begin career paths in technology and entrepreneurship. Students will learn how to solve problems with software and the entrepreneurial skills necessary to start their own technology ventures.

Organizational Background

Since 2011, CodeNow has transformed underrepresented youth into coders and entrepreneurs by teaching them to solve meaningful problems in their communities with software. The organization's "CodeNow in a Box" program has delivered technical skills to students through hands-on project-based learning. In five years, CodeNow has taught nearly 2,000 students in New York, San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Palo Alto, Seattle, Washington D.C., Miami, and Salt Lake City and delivered over 50,000 hours of training. Despite this success, it became apparent that more work was needed to help students truly understand both their underlying passions and how technology can create software and apps that solve real problems. CodeNow's new CEO and Board of Directors, have worked together to create an enhanced curriculum that incorporates design thinking, opportunity recognition and product management alongside coding.

Through a year-long program featuring in-person workshops, online tutorials, hackathons, and a summer app competition, students have the opportunity to build useful software that solves problems for themselves and in their communities.

CodeNow attracted a great deal of initial interest and financial support. Staff turn overs and the likely unrealistic expectation that the founder would be able to single handedly raise increasing donations to provide free programming, led to the founder stepping down and a new Board. Neal Sales-Griffen started multiple software related businesses while attending Northwestern. In 2011 he co-founded The Starter League – one of the first coding boot camps. Neal was recruited in early 2016 to re-envision CodeNow.

Annual Revenue Sources

Grants	99%	Government	0%	Earned Income	0%
Fees	0%	Private Support	1%	Other	0%

Finances

	Budget	Actual	Actual
	2017	2016	2015
Revenues	\$750,000	\$341,665	\$423,000
Expenses	682755	625587	662,901
Surplus (Deficit)	67245	(283922)	(239,871)
Net Assets		\$215,584	\$694,034

Program Description

There are many programs in the nonprofit sector introducing young people to coding. CodeNow is evolving its curriculum and programs to provide a distinguished experience and outcome for students. Rather than simply teaching students how to code, students will understand the why behind the code they write. CodeNow will instigate a paradigm shift in the learn to code movement by incorporating design thinking, product management, and entrepreneurship throughout the program experience.

Phase 1: Two, 2 day weekend workshops hosted at tech companies. Students get introduced to entrepreneurship, computer science, design, and product management. Students learn how the ideas that seeded successful businesses, such as Uber and Airbnb, are discovered and how to identify problems to solve, conduct problem interviews, map the competitive landscape, and brainstorm, sketch, and prototype their solutions. They then learn the development and design skills needed to build their product. This way, the motivation the students have for learning to code is founded in an entrepreneurial need to solve a specific problem. (30 hours of hands-on training.)

Phase 2: Online courses further develop skills in coding, design, and product management. Completion of program content is facilitated and monitored by CodeNow HQ as students go into greater depth on the topics they learned during phase one and taking these concepts and applying them to problems they identify in the world around them. They learn Lean Business principles to better understand how to develop their solution into a business. They also further their programming abilities through a series of online web development courses. They exit this phase with the ability to identify a problem as well as an opportunity, map the different parts of this opportunity into a business, and prototype an initial product that they can put in the hands of a real user. (40 - 60 hours of remote training.)

This phase is supported by a robust instructional and tracking platform that was developed for Starter League. Volunteers from local Tech companies receive training in the CodeNow curriculum and examples of best practice. The platform provides students' access to program content, tracks their progress and skill development, informs volunteers and CodeNow where additional instructional help may be needed and provides students with supplemental information.

Phase 3: Students participate in a volunteer-led "hackathon" that functions similarly to a startup weekend. They'll work on their ability to pitch problems and lead and work on teams with a diverse set of people and will have to validate who they're building their product for and map out the sustainability of their solution as a business. At the end of the weekend, the groups will present their progress and plans to move forward with the idea. Weekend hackathons. Students apply what they learned in phases 1 and 2 to make their own apps. CodeNow plans and manages the hackathons on a quarterly basis in each major operating metropolitan area. (10 - 20 hours of in-person deliberate practice.)

Phase 4 is the culmination of CodeNow's offering. It is an 8 week summer competition among CodeNow students across all operating sites to identify a meaningful problem to solve, conduct problem and solution interviews, prototype their solution, map out the business model and viability of their solution as a product using the lean startup principles taught to them throughout the program, and attempt to get paying users or adoption of their product in the community they are serving. CodeNow will support all students and teams who participate in the competition with mentorship, educational resources, and coaching. Participants may also earn internships, prizes, and college scholarships. (50 - 100 hours of remote practice)

CodeNow will continue to apply for and attain significant grants from its corporate and foundation partners, but also pursue additional validation and sustainability through a paid program model to assist in its program and operational costs. Based upon his experience and success with Starter League, Neal believes the market will support a \$1,000 program fee that would be supported by need based scholarships. This would take some of the pressure off annual fundraising and show commitment by the student and families.

Expected Outcome

CodeNow students will gain exposure to some of Chicago's leading technology firms, engage volunteers from these companies and directly learn from their experiences. Local technology companies will have the opportunity to host CodeNow workshops and students through workshops and hackathons. After completing the CodeNow's program, students will have projects to showcase as part of their professional portfolio, acquired skills that will help them obtain internships in the tech industry, and developed the confidence to see themselves as creators of technology.

Program Budget

The projected 2017 budget is \$683,000. Personnel expense for 5 F/T staff represents 70%; program expense 19 % and administrative expense 11%. Fundraising efforts last year raised \$342,000. Committed support for 2017 to date is \$125,000 with 18 additional foundation/corporate applications submitted.

Prior Grants

This would be the Foundation's first grant to CodeNow.

Recommendation

We have been introduced to Neal Sales-Griffin by Esther and a number of the younger members of the local Entrepreneurial community. He is well known, well regarded in the community and likely to have an increasing impact. There is good potential for the CodeNow program to work collaboratively with other community based programs. Providing this initial funding at the requested amount supports an emerging star as he develops both the program and the revenue model as well as our goal of connecting to emerging, community based programs.