

Proposal Summary
Meeting Date: 8/25/2016

The Cara Program
Request # 115215

Project Title:	Workforce and Leadership Development
Duration:	12 months
Request Date:	7/29/2016
Request Amount:	\$60,000
Recommended Amount:	\$60,000
Program Area:	Human Services\Jobs program (not E)
Population Served:	Homeless
Type of Support:	General Operating (GOS)
Grantee Location:	Chicago, IL
Primary Contact:	Ms. Jessica Harris

Project Abstract

The proposal is to provide general operating support to The Cara Program (Cara) which prepares and inspires motivated individuals to break the cycles of homelessness and poverty, transform their lives, strengthen our communities, and forge paths to real and lasting success

Organizational Background

Annual Revenue Sources

Grants	26%	Government	11%	Earned Income	37%
Fees	0%	Private Support	25%	Other	1%

Finances

	Budget	Actual	Actual
	06/30/2017	06/30/2016	06/30/2016
Revenues	\$7,388,343	\$6,708,900	\$6,196,649
Expenses	7,383,371	6,429,585	6,776,088
Surplus (Deficit)	4,972	279,315	(579,439)
Net Assets		\$6,524,000	\$6,438,955

Cara was founded in 1991 by entrepreneur and philanthropist Tom Owens who was inspired by the good work of Mother Teresa and moved by the global challenges affronting the poor to empowering adults affected by homelessness and poverty to find quality employment. Cara has created significant impact over the past 25 years of service, including: more than 5,300 individuals placed into more than 8,000 quality jobs with leading Chicago companies since 1991; one-year job retention rates of 70% or better (most recently 78% - nearly 30 points higher than national norms); social enterprises earning income in

excess of \$2 million annually; and a social return on investment of 574% over 5 years (for every \$1 invested in operating costs, Cara returns \$5.74 to society over five years through reduced recidivism, reduced dependency on public supports and emergency healthcare, taxable contributions and social security investments made, economic self-sufficiency, stabilized homes, and revitalized communities). The organization operates two main program sites in the West Loop and Bronzeville. Its students come primarily from Englewood, Bronzeville, Austin and 16 other low income communities on the south, west and far north sides of Chicago. 27% do not have a high school degree; 37% have been convicted of a felony; 91% are black/African-American. On average, Cara students are 40 years old and 30% have permanent housing at admission.

General Operations

Life- & Career-Skills Training: “Students” (program participants, all working-age adults) participate in experiential training that focuses on critical life skills and in-demand career skills. Both training components help students address the root causes of their past predicaments, whether it was homelessness, poverty, lack of work experience, etc. Cara facilitates courses on topics such as conflict management, accountability, forgiveness, and love, which include group exercises, individual reflection, and homework.

Cara’s career development training prepares students with hard skills necessary for today’s job market, like computer literacy, resume writing, interviewing, and online job search. Students may also enroll in specialized trainings offered both in-house and off-site with corporate partners, including Standard Bank, ABM, and Hilton Hotels. These corporate-branded trainings not only offer quality learning opportunities for students, but they also give potential employers and current hiring partners an opportunity to see Cara’s talent pool before interviewing.

Transitional Employment: In 2005, Cara launched its social enterprise, Cleanslate, a neighborhood beautification business now generating over \$2 million in annual revenue and providing 200+ transitional jobs a year for individuals with the highest obstacles to employment (e.g. recent incarceration, felony convictions, and limited education). In 2013, Cara launched TCP Staffing, to connect students to temporary jobs in the private sector, which since won the Social Innovator Award at the 2015 Chicago Innovations Awards. Both enterprises provide access to meaningful transitional employment where students translate what they learn in the classroom to the rigors of the job.

Job Placement: Cara approaches job placement from two angles. First, it teaches students critical job search skills (e.g. how to navigate job postings or complete an online application). Cara students are empowered by these skills to direct their own job searches and identify independently career options now and in the future. Secondly, Cara maintains relationships with 100+ Chicagoland employment partners to secure employment opportunities that meet our students’ personal, financial, and professional needs. As a result, Cara students gain employment at companies like CTA, JPMorgan Chase, Sodexo, The Habitat Company, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Eataly, and many more in industries such as facilities management, food service and hospitality, healthcare, nonprofit, and transportation.

Retention & Advancement: Cara stays involved with employed students for at least the first year of their new job, deploying a strategy called "aggressive outreach." A team of personal and professional coaches works with employed students to create solutions as challenges arise (e.g. when students lose their child care provider, when they have conflicts at work, or when their budgets are stretched thin) and help them apply the critical life skills they learned at Cara. As a result of this rigorous post-employment

support, at least 70% of employed students remain on the job for at least one year (twenty points higher than the national norms).

Expected Outcome

Cara launched a strategic plan in July of 2012 to generate an even greater impact in Chicago. Over five years, it aims to help 5,000 Chicagoans find hope for a better future, create/secure 3,500 jobs, support employed students such that at least 70% retain permanent employment for at least one year, and empower employed students with career advancement services over the long term. The following table demonstrates its most recent outcomes and plans for the next year:

Enterprise Metrics:	FY16 Goals	FY16 Outcomes	FY2017 Goals
# On-boarded into program	850	787	811
# Engaged through week 2 of program	650	388	450
# Send-out eligible ¹	525	429	390
# Jobs Secured	780	938	800
% Remaining in their initial placement for one year	70%	78%	70%
Average wage/hour	\$11.00	\$11.34	\$12.00
% Students in permanent housing at one year of employment	75%	89%	70%

Prior Grants

Last Grant Date:	8/19/1999	Last Grant Amount:	\$5,000.00
Number of Prior Grants:	1	Total Amount Granted:	\$5,000

Recommendation

Esther and Clark view this proposed grant as a vehicle to support a highly regarded workforce development organization as well as a means to gain insights which will inform future CFI grantmaking. As part of this grant, Esther and Clark would meet quarterly with key Cara employees as part of “institute days” by which they would learn more about Cara’s efforts in job creation and job training as well as emerging employment sectors, each of which may be the focus on future grant activity.

We recommend this award for the general operations of Cara and for our education as we identify and develop future grantmaking priorities.

¹ Students who meet criteria on stability, team orientation, job preparedness, and presentation are deemed “send-out eligible.”