



**THE 360 GROUP**  
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# College Spark Washington

## Executive Director

### Position Description & Candidate Profile

# Executive Director

## Location

Seattle, WA

## Reports to

Board of Directors

## Our Client

College Spark Washington (CSW) began supporting access to higher education in 1978 by managing student loan programs. In 2004, College Spark reorganized as an education grantmaker and since then has committed more than \$60 million to college readiness and degree completion programs throughout Washington State. College Spark Washington has assets of \$122 million, a staff of five and a board of 14.

College Spark Washington's goal is to help its partners increase the percentage of underserved students who graduate from high school ready to go to college and succeed there. As a funder, CSW invests in proven and promising solutions, and helps its partners improve their performance and share best practices from Washington state and the nation. College Spark Washington makes grants that help Washington's underserved students improve their academic achievement, prepare for college, graduate, and achieve their education goals. Grantees include public schools, community-based organizations, public and non-profit colleges and universities, and other organizations focused on college readiness and success.

In Washington State, too many students may be left behind from the modern economy if college completion rates do not improve. Over the next five years, Washington will add over 700,000 jobs with a majority that will require a degree, certificate, or credential. Jobs are available but there are too few qualified candidates to fill them. Improving college readiness and success among underserved students is a complex problem that requires complex and multi-faceted solutions. College Spark currently supports the following programs and initiatives:

- An **Outcomes Fund** which awards more than \$1 million each year, in grants of up to \$150,000. Each fall, we accept requests-for-proposals for Community Grants and then conduct a rigorous process of site visits and application

reviews to select grantees. College Spark has awarded more than 100 Community Grants totaling more than \$18 million.

- **Ready to Rise** is a new initiative investing nearly \$3.4 million over five years to help underserved students stay on track and graduate from college. The cohort-based program, which emphasizes peer support, will serve 1,000 students from three Washington communities as they attend colleges throughout the state.
- The **Guided Pathways Initiative** invests more than \$7 million over eight years to make system-level changes that will provide students with more clarity on how to navigate the path to a desired degree. Ten community and technical colleges have been selected to implement the program.
- The **College-Ready Math Initiative** invests \$12 million over seven years to help underserved students graduate from high school with strong math skills and avoid remediation in college. The initiative includes a variety of evidence-based strategies and programs designed to help students improve their scores on the 11th grade Smarter Balanced Assessment, which measures achievement on Common Core State Standards and which can ensure automatic placement into college-level classes.
- College Spark also supports **theWashBoard.org**, a free, web-based scholarship clearinghouse for Washington residents and students attending Washington colleges. More than 250,000 scholarship seekers have registered on theWashBoard.org. Last year, more than \$40 million in available scholarship awards were available.

The new Executive Director will succeed a long-term Executive Director who has built credibility and relationships that have positioned College Spark Washington as a leading thinker and funder in college access in Washington State. The new Executive Director will have a platform on which to build and make an enormous difference in students accessing college and being prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

Learn more about College Spark Washington at <http://collegespark.org>!

## Position Responsibilities

The Executive Director holds primary responsibility for overall leadership of College Spark Washington. Working in close partnership with the board, staff and external stakeholders, the Executive Director will advance the mission of College Spark Washington and its key strategic goals.

Specifically, the Executive Director will be responsible for:

### *External Leadership*

- Articulate and advance a vision for student success and education system change to support success while expanding and sharing the foundation's learnings and knowledge about what works in the fields of philanthropy and education
- Serve as the face of and ambassador for College Spark with ability to broaden organizational exposure and create greater awareness and transparency in order to elevate the organization's profile and impact
- Maintain and increase College Spark's local, regional and state influence by being a trusted community leader and go-to source for implementing evidence-based strategies that help underserved students become college-ready and earn their degrees
- Develop a strategy for advancing the foundation's mission by employing the tools of advocacy and policy to explore how College Spark's data can inform policy, not just practice
- Assess College Spark's current partnerships and expand its role as a connector, including with local, regional, state and national level education philanthropies, other education advocacy organizations and across systems and sectors, framing them – as necessary – to achieve greater leverage
- Build, cultivate and develop collaborative relationships with a variety of entities in all corners of the state with a focus on rural and other nonurban areas outside of King County
- Deepen College Spark's focus on reducing gaps in opportunity and degree completion with a focus on racial equity

### *Internal Leadership*

- Together with the board, articulate a clear vision for the future; inspire and lead the staff in implementing the foundation's strategic plan
- Engage trustees as thought-partners and key advisors, leveraging their expertise, diverse backgrounds, perspectives and experiences in service of the vision and strategies of the foundation
- Recruit new trustees and develop and maintain a strong and effective relationship with the board characterized by respect, trust, transparency, partnership and clear, open communication

### *Internal Management*

- Hire, mentor and oversee staff, providing opportunities for leadership and professional development
- Nurture a workplace culture that exemplifies the mission and vision of the foundation and attracts and retains a diverse team
- Oversee the development and monitoring of the annual operating budget, financial reporting, compliance with federal tax regulations and grant management, including appropriate reporting to the board, staff and other stakeholders
- Provide leadership and oversight in program development, delivery and evaluation against CSW's goals and objectives
- Maintain a working knowledge of significant developments, trends and participants in the field, with an eye for and orientation to innovation and opportunities to create new pathways toward the foundation's goals
- Strengthen College Spark's statewide focus with an increased commitment to rural and other nonurban areas outside of King County, maintaining an awareness of and sensitivity to the complexity and diversity of Washington state; identify opportunities to fill gaps in areas of unmet need

### **Profile of the Successful Candidate**

College Spark Washington seeks a strategic leader who is deeply committed to access for opportunity for underserved young people and can connect that commitment to developing a stronger workforce throughout Washington State. The new Executive Director will be an innovative thinker and influencer on college access issues and will have the ability to think about changing complex systems, funding learning and creating pathways to large-scale success. The successful candidate will be skilled in utilizing evidence and expertise in decision-making; developing innovative ideas and solutions; employing extraordinary organizational skills; modeling clear and direct communication; fostering collaboration and teamwork; and, can further a culture that embodies these values. The new Executive Director will also foster the foundation's national role and reputation in education philanthropy, as appropriate, to complement and strengthen local, regional and state level work.

More specifically, College Spark Washington seeks a professional who has:

- Demonstrated track record of executive level experience and leadership in an externally facing role in education, philanthropy, social justice or a related mission-aligned organization

- Deep understanding of state-level education policy and funding, and a sophisticated understanding and experience achieving impact using philanthropic tools to affect change through influencing the field, policy/advocacy, and/or innovative grantmaking
- The ability to effectively build and maintain strong relationships with diverse groups of stakeholders including but not limited to communities of color, immigrant and refugee communities, Native communities, and rural and urban communities
- A willingness to listen, learn, elevate, and integrate community voice into strategy
- A deep personal and professional commitment to equity and social justice and a sophisticated and authentic understanding of structural inequality and systemic racism, with an analysis of how that impacts education equity today
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills, including the ability to communicate clearly and compellingly about complex topics with a range of different audiences and partners
- A proven track record and significant experience in effectively engaging a board of trustees, ensuring its structure, membership and actions, allowing members to stay focused on mission while they fulfill and excel in their governance roles
- Experience building and leading a high-functioning staff team, including management expertise to hire and oversee a CFO or similar role, along with grants managers, communications and operations staff
- Demonstrated systems-level thinking and experience building cross-sector/cross-systems partnerships to influence opinions, leverage resources and build support for new ways of working together to achieve greater impact
- Proficiency in financial management, including how to manage private foundation finances and investments
- Strong relationship building and convening skills and an authentic interest in listening to and learning from others – especially key leaders in higher education
- The ability to model integrity, be vulnerable, authentic, willing to change course and own mistakes

In addition, the successful candidate will likely have:

- Ten or more years of experience and a demonstrated track record of serving in senior leadership
- Experience working in K-16 education, or collaborating in the education space, or philanthropy and has a deep knowledge of the education landscape

- Existing relationships with key stakeholders in K-16 education in Washington state (including education organizations, foundations and other philanthropic organizations, community-based nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and others)

## Start Timeframe

We seek to have someone in place toward the beginning of 2020.

## Compensation

This position offers a competitive salary and includes a comprehensive benefits package. We actively welcome all candidates from a wide range of backgrounds who have the skills to fulfill this role – regardless of compensation history.

## To Apply

All applications are held in strict confidence. Please submit your credentials and a letter of interest through our private applicant portal to The 360 Group at:

<https://the360group.us/portal/>

Applications should be directed to the attention of Vincent Robinson, Founder and Managing Partner. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Earlier applicants may receive priority consideration. To be considered, The 360 Group encourages all interested candidates to submit their applications promptly, via the confidential applicant portal linked above.

*At The 360 Group, we know that a richly diverse mix of professionals makes organizations more effective. Using that principle as our “North Star,” we make diversity a hallmark of our firm, and all of our search engagements.*

**Learn more about The 360 Group at [the360group.us](https://the360group.us).**