CO.STARTERS Core Program

*Grant Proposal Template*

**BACKGROUND**

*[Provide a little background on your organization. Include information such as:*

*History: How did your organization get started? How long has it been in existence? If it’s been around for a while, how has it changed over the years? Who was important to getting it going and sustaining it?*

*Mission & Vision: Why does your organization exist? What do you hope to accomplish? What does the future look if you are successful?*

*Programs: If you have program/projects other than your plan to launch CO.STARTERS programs, include a description of them.*

*Accomplishments: If you’ve been around for a while, give some information on previous successes and accomplishments. What have you already succeeded in doing? Here, you want to show that you are a solid organization capable of creating real change in your community that has already experienced some success.]*

**NEED**

*[Provide a description of your community. Include information such as demographics, the state of the local economy, and why you believe entrepreneurship is important for growth.]*

In order for our local economy and our community to thrive, entrepreneurs need to be equipped with tools to help them succeed. [Studies show that half of all new ventures fail within the first five years](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Small-Business-2018.pdf), and entrepreneurs are among those at the highest risk of burnout. Reasons given include: no market need, lack of resources, not the right team, pricing/cost issues, poor product offering, lack of a strong business model, poor marketing, poor timing, or losing focus. Many of these issues could be addressed prior to a business ever launching, helping ensure that those that do move forward are viable.

Moreover, small business not only fills needs in the community, it also provides jobs. [In fact, according to the SBA](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/Frequently-Asked-Questions-Small-Business-2018.pdf), 66% of all new jobs are created by small business. While it may be natural to want to focus on recruiting big business to our area that would provide large numbers of jobs, we’ve seen that when that business leaves, it creates a deficit of jobs. Small businesses create jobs in a slower, but more stable way that is less susceptible to major disruption. More businesses will also grow the local tax base, allowing for greater funding for public investment in the community.

When new businesses succeed, it creates community pride and generates excitement about what’s possible. Though hard to measure—but easy to see—people are inspired when new businesses launch and more local options exist for dining, shopping, and entertainment.

*[Share why all of these things are relevant to your community.]*

**PLAN**

For our community to thrive, we need to ensure that entrepreneurs and their businesses get all the support they need. To this end, [*ORGANIZATION NAME*] plans to work with [CO.STARTERS](http://costarters.co/) to bring their community support model and programs to our community.

CO.STARTERS exists to help individuals and communities thrive through entrepreneurship. What began as a transformation story on a local Main Street has grown from a program, to a company, to a global community and network with a growing list of offerings. We’re excited to offer their proven models in our community to better support our entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Although we plan to use a variety of tools offered by CO.STARTERS, the CO.STARTERS Core program will be key to our entrepreneur support strategy. This three-month, cohort-based program equips entrepreneurs of all kinds with the insights, relationships, and tools needed to turn ideas into action. Participants typically possess a local market focus, which makes this program ideal for our community. CO.STARTERS Core aims to help people who are stuck—whether they have a new idea for a venture or are an existing business looking to become

more sustainable, launch a new product or service, or scale. A couple key elements set this program apart from others we considered:

**Collaborative Cohort**

Groups of 10–16 entrepreneurs meet together for ten sessions, gathering one evening a week for three hours, led by a CO.STARTERS-trained facilitator. This group provides entrepreneurs with a safe place to share, experiment, fail, and learn together. In each three-hour session, they will investigate some aspect of their ventures using discussions, speakers, and collaborative activities to deepen learning. The [CO.STARTERS Canvas](https://costarters.co/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/COSTARTERS-Canvas-download.pdf) (a simplified, more intuitive version of the [Business Model Canvas](https://www.strategyzer.com/)) helps them examine ideas and put them to the test. They’ll also go more in-depth through the activities, worksheets, and prompts with the group. Perhaps most importantly, they find the accountability needed through this supportive group of peers to accomplish their goals.

**Accessibility**

CO.STARTERS tools are made to be simple. By making concepts and language easy to understand, they help entrepreneurs focus on practical next steps to move more quickly toward their goals. The programs are not only about learning; they are about doing. To keep entrepreneurs from being overwhelmed, they are designed to walk with them for a period of time, giving them concrete activities to help them move forward. Doing everything all at once can be overwhelming, so each session introduces a couple new ideas and explains why they are important for success. This approach makes the program highly accessible and applicable to any entrepreneur who is stuck.

**Facilitated, Not Taught**

CO.STARTERS facilitators are experienced business owners from the community who guide participants through the program by asking the right questions, drawing on the knowledge in the room, and using available resources and connections in the community to point entrepreneurs in the right direction. Facilitators are certified through an intensive community support training process, conducted by qualified CO.STARTERS trainers. To prepare for this training, we will identify people in our community who have experience starting or running a business, are well connected, enjoy working with groups, have a passion for helping others succeed, and are community-minded. This allows us to broaden our bench of support for the entrepreneurs in our community.

**Proven Methods, Local Context**

CO.STARTERS recognizes that every community is unique and has created paths to help with local contextualization while still drawing on what they know works based on their learnings from hundreds of communities. Their turnkey solutions are built to enable quick and easy adoption with consistent results. Each program comes with all the supports needed to roll out, from marketing materials to session-by-session emails, as well as ways to adapt them to work best for our community. They take the guesswork out so we can focus our energy on more strategic matters.

We believe providing CO.STARTERS programming will increase the quality of our local entrepreneurs by teaching basic business skills and helping them develop solid business models. Participants will leave the program with a deeper understanding of how to create a sustainable business model, the ability to articulate how their businesses work, knowing next steps needed to move forward, and a community of peers, mentors, business services, and other supports.

In [*REGION/COMMUNITY*], we plan to run [*NUMBER*] of cohorts of approximately [*NUMBER*] people in [YEAR].

**IMPACT**

CO.STARTERS has [a proven track record](https://issuu.com/costarters/docs/costarters_2019_impact?fr=sOTQ1NTk1ODE0NA) in the communities in which it works. In fact, out of the thousands supported,

* 92% said CO.STARTERS Core helped them decide what to do next with their venture.
* 98% would recommend CO.STARTERS Core to someone looking to start or grow a venture.
* 87% said they feel connected & supported by their local community in launching a venture.

While we acknowledge that long-term change is difficult to measure during the short period covered by the grant, we believe several metrics will help us determine success. We expect:

* At least [*X*] people will be led through the business development process between [DATE RANGE]. This will be tracked through enrollment and program completion rates by following up with facilitators.
* 50% of program graduates will be in business within a year of completing CO.STARTERS. This will be tracked through follow-up surveys with program graduates.
* 90% of program graduates will report being confident about what to do next with their ventures. This will be tracked through pre and post program surveys with participants.
* 85% of program graduates will report being confident in how to make their ventures work. This will be tracked through pre and post program surveys with participants.
* 90% of program graduates will report feeling connected and supported by the local community in launching their ventures. This will be tracked through pre and post program surveys with participants.
* 90% of program graduates will report giving back to the community in some way. This will be tracked through post program surveys with participants.

We will also work to track more longitudinal information like businesses launched and jobs created that may take additional time to see results.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

*[Explain what happens to the project post this particular funding. What does this project look like over the long-term? How will you find the additional resources you need?]*

Also, to ensure participant buy-in, participants will be charged *[X]* to be in the CO.STARTERS Core program. In addition to helping with personal commitment, program fees will help underwrite some of the program cost. This decision to charge participants comes from CO.STARTERS recommendation that they see better programmatic results where participants have some “skin in the game.”

**THE BUDGET**

**Income**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Amount** | **Notes** |
| *[Source]* | *[Amount]* |  |
| *[Source]* | *[Amount]* |  |
| *[Source]* | *[Amount]* |  |
| **TOTAL** | **[*Enter Total*]** | *[Note: This number should match the total below.]* |

**Expenses**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Amount** | **Notes** |
| *Membership & Certification* |  |  |
| CO.STARTERS Licensing + Membership Fee | $3,000 | Annual fee |
| Community Training | $5,000 | Facilitator and community certification |
| Additional Training Expenses | $2,500 | Travel, accommodations, meals, etc. |
| *CO.STARTERS Core Cohorts (3)* |  |  |
| Facilitator Stipend | $6,000 | $2,000 per cohort x 3 |
| Cohort Kits | $8,250 | $2,750 per kit for 10 participants x 3 cohorts |
| Marketing & Promotion | $600 | $200 per cohort x 3 cohorts |
| Food/Snacks | $450 | $150 per cohort x 3 cohorts |
| *CO.STARTERS Bootcamp (3)* |  |  |
| Facilitator Stipend | $2,000 | $500 per bootcamp x 3 |
| Bootcamp Kits | $3,000 | $1,000 per bootcamp x 3 |
| Marketing & Promotion | $300 | $100 per bootcamp x3 |
| Food/Snacks | [X] | 2 lunches per bootcamp x 3 |
| *Other* |  |  |
| Program Oversight + Administration | *[X]* | [*Enter salary of person/people overseeing program*] |
| Meeting Space | *[X]* | In-kind |
| **TOTAL** | **[*Enter Total*]** |  |

*\*Note: Pricing is subject to change. Please consult your membership agreement for correct pricing.*

**THE TEAM & PARTNERS**

To ensure the success of this program, we are assembling a local team to oversee the execution and implementation of CO.STARTERS.

[*ORGANIZATION*] will be the host for this program. [*ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION, INCLUDING MISSION*].

[*NAME*] will be primarily responsible for identifying and recruiting others to implement CO.STARTERS locally. [*BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATIONS*].

Other members of the team include [*NAME #1*], [*NAME #2*]… [*NAME #1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATIONS*]. [*NAME #2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BACKGROUND AND QUALIFICATIONS*]…

We will also identify and recruit potential facilitators to attend the CO.STARTERS Community Training. Several local leaders we’ve identified include:

* [*BUSINESS OWNER #1*], [*BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS/BUSINESS OWNER*]
* [*BUSINESS OWNER #2*], [*BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS/BUSINESS OWNER*]
* [*BUSINESS OWNER #3*], [*BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS/BUSINESS OWNER*]
* Etc.

We recognize that for this program to be a true success, we must have strong partners.

One of our primary partners will be the CO.STARTERS team itself. Drawing on their work with communities worldwide, CO.STARTERS is committed to creating the best support for local starters and ensuring every idea has a place to go. Because they work with numerous organizations and startups across the globe, they provide not only a great platform for supporting our community, but also a space for exchanging ideas and learning from other locations how to be even better at our work.

Another important partner will be [*ORGANIZATION*]. [*ORGANIZATION*] will help will the rollout of CO.STARTERS by [*DESCRIPTION OF ROLE AND WHY THEY ARE IMPORTANT*].

[*List other partners and roles. If you are stuck, think of organizations that will help you recruit participants (like local schools/colleges, arts organizations, chambers of commerce, etc.), partners who may be providing free space to meet, or those offering matching funds or in-kind donations*.]

**CONCLUSION**

We are incredibly excited to bring CO.STARTERS programming to our community. With your support, we’ll be able to help many of our community’s entrepreneurs get what they need to succeed. In turn, our community and economy will continue to grow and become a place of which we can all be proud.

Because we know [FUNDER] cares deeply about [MISSION], we believe that this initiative is the perfect opportunity to work together to ensure our community thrives through entrepreneurship.