



Request for Proposals 9th Grade Success Champion

Proposals are due no later than 5PM on Feb 24, 2025 Mountain Time.

About Gary:

Gary Community Ventures is a philanthropic organization that combines the power of business, policy and philanthropy to increase opportunity for Colorado kids and families. We use our resources to make impact investments, fund policy and advocacy initiatives, provide philanthropic grants, and incubate new social change solutions through our venture Lab. In partnership with our community, we bring these tools together to break down systemic barriers and build breakthrough solutions that improve outcomes in the areas of School Readiness, Youth Success and Family Economic Mobility. We are a sunset organization with a charge to transform systems and build wealth in the community by 2035.

Summary of Request:

9th grade is the “make or break” year for high school students. If students succeed in passing their classes in 9th grade, their chances of high school graduation increase dramatically. Fortunately, there is ample evidence about how to set up 9th grade systems of support for students; and Colorado has many of the ingredients (legislation, state support, and strong technical assistance providers) needed to support school districts with implementing these systems. Our opportunity is to scale these systems. Gary is seeking organizations or individuals interested in serving as a 9th Grade Success Champion for Colorado with the goal of significantly expanding 9th grade success systems across the state.

Overview:

By 2035, we envision a Colorado where 9th grade success systems are ubiquitous, because we know the robust systems of support they create are transformational for kids and schools. In short, we believe these systems should go from “new to normal.” These systems should include:

- Data systems at the school and district that help track 9th grade on-track
- Ninth grade interdisciplinary teams using that data for prevention and intervention
- Transition, instructional support, and interventions to keep students on track

We believe that we have a number of assets in Colorado already, including:

- 1) CDE and the 9th Grade Success Grant - we have a statewide grant that puts dedicated dollars into these systems as well as dedicated state staff to support the grant
- 2) Statewide advocacy in Stand for Children - we have a successful advocacy leader who has helped protect and grow the grant program and educate legislators about this important work
- 3) Quality technical assistance leaders - we have technical assistance providers which do in-depth work to help schools shift their systems to research-based 9th grade practices and support students directly in Colorado.

What we don't have is an organization/individual that wakes up every day thinking solely about how to get 9th grade success systems to become ubiquitous in Colorado. We think that the champion (intermediary) should be focused on developing the infrastructure for 9th grade success systems, including:

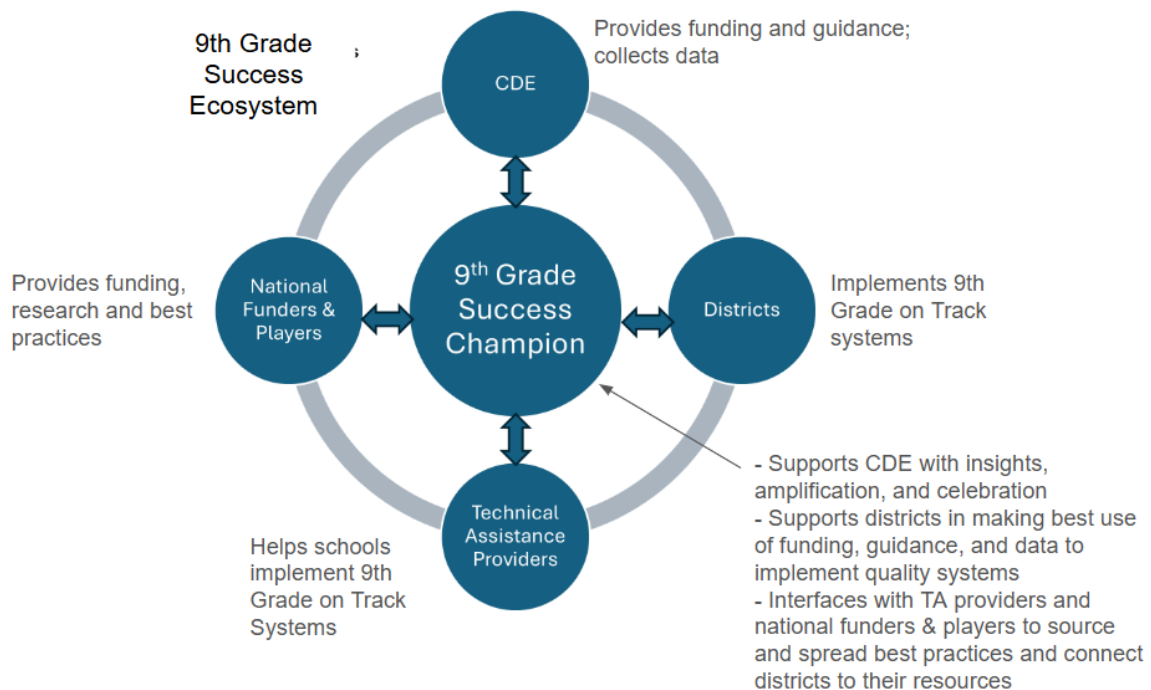
- **Championing the use of 9th grade On-Track and Student Success Systems:**
 - Using qualitative and quantitative data, continually identifying bright spots and gaps, in order to celebrate bright spots and marshal resources to address gaps
 - Celebrating and lifting up best practices with the goals of increasing awareness, building interpersonal connections between 9th grade success system leaders, and connecting them to resources.
 - Sharing information and opportunities to learn about research and best practices related to student success systems.
- **District Guidance:**
 - Supporting school districts in adopting quality 9th grade success policies, goals, and strategic plans.
 - Identifying, creating and driving schools and districts to quality resources, technical assistance providers, CDE, and national opportunities.
- **Networking and Training:**
 - Serve as a resource to facilitate networking, sharing of best practices, and highlighting of Colorado districts.
 - Serve as a resource for TA providers and districts in identifying matching support.

We think they should not:

- Provide in-depth technical assistance to schools - there are great providers in our ecosystem for this work already, and we do not need the entity to do this. This entity may work with the TA providers to source the gaps and bright spots, highlight their work, etc.
- Lead in statewide legislative advocacy - existing organizations provide this capacity.

While the entity that becomes the champion might already have these capacities as part of their work, funding that existing work would not be the goal of this particular engagement.

See how we imagine the 9th Grade Success Ecosystem here:



Request for Proposal

Description: We are seeking proposals from organizations or individuals interested in serving as a 9th Grade Success Champion for Colorado that could meet the goals of Year 1 and 2 outlined below.

Grant Award: We anticipate awarding grants of up to \$150,000 per year for two years (\$300,000 total) from Gary Community Ventures, with a third year contingent on successfully meeting milestones and securing additional funders. Application budgets should be commensurate with the scope of work proposed.

We anticipate execution over the approximately 24 months between May 1, 2025 and May 1, 2027 (with opportunity to extend as noted above).

Year 1 & 2 Goals of the Intermediary:

<u>Strand of Work</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Baseline data on number of districts with 9th grade success systems - Gap analysis of baseline to ideal state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing maintenance of data on the status of 9th grade success systems across the state
School district activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1-3 school districts (1 in the metro area) adopt 9th grade success as a policy and/or strategic goal - 1-3 districts commit to calculating and sharing their own on track rates - 3-5 new schools/districts successfully driven to state grant opportunities and/or TA providers - 3-5 schools/districts measurably adopting or expanding quality practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1-3 more school districts adopt 9th grade success as a policy and/or strategic goal - 1-3 more districts commit to calculating and sharing their own on track rates - 3-5 more schools/districts successfully driven to state grant opportunities and/or TA providers - 5-7 more schools/districts measurably adopting or expanding quality practices - Champion has a “playbook” for school district activation based on learnings
Network and field building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least one statewide learning/convening/celebrations in person - Regular virtual learning sessions for school leaders, teachers, and district supporters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least one statewide learning/convening/celebrations in person - Regular virtual learning sessions for school leaders, teachers, and district supporters
Impact Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinate with CDE to share statewide data trends in 9th grade on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor districts that are activated for impact, including progress from baseline - Continue to coordinate with CDE to share statewide data trends in 9th grade on track

Reporting, Story Telling, and Advocacy	-Periodic reports focused on 9th grade success highlights, data and/or calls to action with at least one annual "State of the State" on 9th grade success - Regular sharing of best practices, successes, stories of young people and educators to support and grow the work -Play support role in state advocacy	-Publishing annual "State of the State" on 9th Grade Success - Regular sharing of best practices, successes, stories of young people and educators to support and grow the work -Play support role in state advocacy
Fundraising	-N/A	- Securing external funding (beyond Gary) to support the work of the champion and to expand local efforts

In addition to the year 1 & year 2 expectations, we would expect frequent check-ins with Gary and CDE and quarterly more formal reports of progress.

Priority will be given to proposals that:

- Have a clear background in supporting 9th Grade Success work in some way in Colorado
- Have existing relationships and/or work with schools and/or districts in Colorado
- Have existing relationships and/or work with CDE
- Have existing relationships and/or work with TA providers
- Have existing infrastructure they can bring to complement the funded 9th grade success work (ie: data capacity, communications capacity, etc.)

RFP Application and Timeline:

To complete the application, please make a copy of the google doc [here](#). You may submit it by emailing it to Jill Hawley, Chief Impact Officer at Gary Community Ventures at jhawley@garycommunity.org and Cheri Wrench, Gary Consultant, at cheri.wrench@gmail.com.

Applications are due at 5:00 pm MT on Monday, Feb 24, 2025. Applications will be reviewed until April 4, 2025. Applicants may be asked for additional information during the review process, which could include interviews and/or site visits. All applicants will be notified of their candidacy by 5:00 pm MT April 4, 2025, with the award pending final Gary Board approval in late April, 2025.

Questions:

For questions regarding this RFP or application, please contact:

- Until Feb 1: Angie McPhaul Director of Youth Success at Gary Community Ventures at amcphaul@garycommunity.org AND Jill Hawley, Chief Impact Officer at Gary Community Ventures at jhawley@garycommunity.org
- After Feb 1: Cheri Wrench, Gary Consultant, at cheri.wrench@gmail.com, AND Jill Hawley, Chief Impact Officer at Gary Community Ventures at jhawley@garycommunity.org