

Dear Hilton Humanitarian Prize Team,

I nominate Single Stop USA for the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize. Thank you for this opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of Single Stop to combat poverty and alleviate human suffering.

In 1985, our Founder, Michael Weinstein answered a request from a Philadelphia Methodist minister, whose congregants and neighbors were being victimized by predators selling insurance and supplements, to provide financial counsel. Michael had known many of the church members since childhood. Back then, he was teaching economics and often invited by local radio stations, to advise listeners on best practices for their personal finances. He fit the bill for what the minister and his community needed.

In 1989, Michael moved to New York City and replicated the model hatched in that Philadelphia church basement named Single Stop. Volunteers powered the initiative in half-a-dozen sites. In 2001, working as a chief program officer for the Robin Hood Foundation which he then led, Michael shepherded Single Stop's implementation throughout New York City, in community-based organizations, schools, libraries, community colleges and prisons. This time, the work was sustained with paid staff with a Robin Hood award.

As Single Stop incubated and refined its model in New York City, its theory of change built pathways out of poverty to sustained economic well-being by leveraging partnerships and technology to connect people to the full spectrum of cash and non-cash benefits and resources for which they are eligible.

Hunger and homelessness was and still is pervasive in New York City and cities across the US. Faced with food and housing insecurity, households struggle both to remain intact and with the complexity and time demanded for determining eligibility, and applying, for the government benefits that could help them avoid shelters, soup kitchens and foster care.

Using a one-stop-shop approach, Single Stop clients are screened for and connected to government benefits and local resources including *child care, tax credits, work, education, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)* and other *food benefits, health care, housing, immigration services, cash assistance, transportation, and utilities assistance*. Single Stop services include holistic case management, and connection to free tax preparation, financial counselling, and civil legal services.

By 2006, Single Stop served over 70,000 NYC households annually through 59 community-based organizations such as food pantries, shelters, healthcare centers and job-training sites. In partnership with the New York Public Library, Single Stop opened seven hubs that provided peer-to-peer services to connect veterans to benefits and resources.

Recognizing the growth potential, the Atlantic Philanthropies funded a McKinsey & Co. study to determine the viability of replication and expansion. As a result, Single Stop USA was established in 2007. The new organization absorbed existing New York sites and initiated a process of national expansion, launching new partnerships in California, New Jersey and New Mexico, and also expanding into Louisiana and Massachusetts.

With an opportunity to reach millions more people, Single Stop began focusing its national replication efforts on community colleges. In 2009, thanks to a grant from the White House Office of Social Innovation, Single Stop enhanced its operations at existing sites, and expanded into more states.

Since 2007, Single Stop has helped over 2 million households draw down \$6 billion in benefits. Through a groundbreaking combination of technology, training, technical assistance, programmatic support and evaluation assistance, Single Stop, in partnership with state community college systems and individual schools enhanced its theory of change—helping community colleges across the nation build the capacity to connect low-income and underrepresented students to resources they need to persist in school, graduate and improve their lifetime-earning potential.

The Community College Initiative

Education is the great equalizer, and the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. It provides pathways to the jobs, resources, and skills that individuals and families need to achieve and sustain economic well-being. People living in or close to poverty too often lack access to this gateway to a better life.

As many as 41 percent of the nation's 9 million full-time and part-time community college students are food insecure, and one in eight has experienced homelessness. More than 2 million U.S. community college students are parents of children under 18, and these individuals are often hard-pressed to persist in postsecondary education. The American Community College Association found that graduation rates for two-year institutions are only around 40 percent.

As part of its push to scale-up the one-stop model, Single Stop launched its Community College Initiative in 2009. The Initiative was created as a groundbreaking attempt to harness two of the country's most effective antipoverty tools—*coordinated access to America's frayed safety net and a post-secondary education*—to help millions more individuals and families build sustainable pathways out of poverty.

As an extension of Single Stop's tested, replicable and scalable model, the Community College Initiative is designed to provide *a foundation for cross-generational impacts*. Enabling access to preventive health care, financial asset-building, and cash benefits addresses short-term needs that often determine whether a low-income student stays in school or drops out, and increases the likelihood of college persistence, key determinant of long-term economic well-being for individuals and families.

The evidence shows that the impact of financial supports can be life-altering: A person from a family in the bottom 20 percent of earners has an 85 percent chance of earning significantly more, and a 62 percent chance of joining the middle class, if s/he graduates from college.

The Community College Initiative spurs generational change by supporting long-term institutional changes at college campuses for greater student success. Single Stop staff and site coordinators help colleges become effective at serving all students, achieve positive outcomes with populations the schools traditionally have difficulty bringing to completion. In an assessment of the Community College Initiative, the University of Wisconsin-Madison Hope Lab found that higher-level administrators had come to depend on the case management services component of the Single Stop model. Single Stop site coordinators assess each new student's case and determine the right level of engagement, intervention, and support needed to create a successful outcome.

To date, Single Stop has served 320,016 community college students. It currently works with 50 college partners in 13 states, and partners with statewide community college systems, in Virginia, Colorado and North Carolina.

Single Stop was among the first organizations to aid community college students in this way. Its strategic advantage is in leveraging existing systems that can enable the institutionalization of the Single Stop model. Single Stop takes charge of training and managing coordinators (college employees) on each campus and builds upon the existing infrastructure and student success programs and local to increase effectiveness, efficiency and collaboration.

While benefits access, tax preparation, financial counseling, and legal services are a standard component of Single Stop's model across all sites, the model recognizes that each college and city is unique, and so services are customized based on the local area where Single Stop operates. An asset mapping and gap analysis of both the services available at the college and in the community are conducted before the doors open. This process helps Single Stop to leverage local resources, avoid duplication of efforts and provide viable referrals for students close to their home.

Tax Preparation Services

Single Stop's free tax preparation services at partner community colleges helps students file their taxes and ensure that they maximize their refunds by claiming all credits for which they are eligible, including the Earned Income Tax Credit and the American Opportunity Tax Credit. Since completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) requires filing a tax return, tax preparation facilitates the receipt of other forms of federal financial support for students as well.

Single Stop runs the fifth largest VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program), program in the country, offering free tax return preparation to individuals below the \$56,000 income threshold, persons with disabilities and limited English-speaking taxpayers. In 2020, The Intuit Financial Freedom Foundation awarded Single Stop with the Tax Time Allies ACE Award. During the pandemic, the Single Stop team developed a first-time, fully virtual, IRS approved end-end tax prep service

Technology

The core of Single Stop's technology infrastructure is a web-based platform that simplifies and streamlines savings-assistance and benefits enrollment processes. Single Stop's technology suite includes a benefits screener, case management tool, local resource finder, and a data analytics platform. The HIPAA compliant technology is available in six languages – English, Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Russian, and Arabic – and is compatible with adaptive equipment for hearing- and visually- impaired individuals. It has also received certification for adherence to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards, indicating that it has been audited by an independent third party and conforms to the requirements of the latest privacy, security, and quality assurance process standards set by the international technology community.

Single Stop technology asks a series of simple questions that determines what existing programs one could be eligible for, and acts as a central hub for connecting clients with the resources they need. Services that clients are connected to are recorded, and that data populates reports through Tableau, a best-in-class visualization software.

With its recently launched 3.0 version of Single Stop Technology (SST 3.0), the mobile-friendly application improves on user experience and design and adds even more robust data analytics features. The screener (now available as a self-screener) replicates the conversational tone of case managers and

offers greater detail in screening for benefits such as health insurance and tax credits. The data flows into the case management tool, which provide case managers with a more detailed view of each client, as well as more efficient ways to create cases, attach case files, and track outcomes. Organizations access real-time data to streamline the identification of trends and make programmatic improvements.

Evaluation

In Rand's 2016 study of first-time college students at four community college systems, use of Single Stop was associated with an increase in college persistence of at least three percentage points. Single Stop users attempted more credits than comparable students who did not use Single Stop. Use of Single Stop's tax assistance services was associated with positive outcomes in terms of persistence and credits earned. Findings were particularly positive for Single Stop users who were adult learners (age 25 and older), independent students, and nonwhite students. Single Stop use was associated with improved postsecondary outcomes at all but one of the institutions in the study.

The US Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse (WWC reviewed research on Single Stop's impact at colleges to determine if the model is effective in bolstering student success. WWC rated Single Stop's intervention as potentially positive—the second-highest designation they offer. This places Single Stop among the top postsecondary interventions reviewed and indicates that future research is likely to find significant positive impacts on student success metrics such as GPA, semester-to-semester persistence, and graduation rates. Single Stop is the only non-academic intervention to be included in the Clearinghouse.

Metis Associates evaluated Single Stop at Community College of Philadelphia, following students from 2014 through 2017. The study found that First-Time-In-College (FTIC) students who utilized Single Stop services were 9.6 percentage points more likely to stay enrolled or have graduated by 2017 than their peers who did not. Non-FTIC students had persistence rates that were 8.2 percentage points higher than their peers. FTIC students had degree-bearing credit pass rates that were 5.6 percentage points higher from 2014 to 2017. Non-FTIC students had degree-bearing credit pass rates that were 6.2 percentage points higher than their peers. GPAs for both groups were also higher than their peers who did not utilize Single Stop. Graduation rates for FTIC students who utilized Single Stop services were 6 percentage points higher by the end of 2017. For the non-FTIC students, graduation rates were 6.5 percentage points higher than their peers by the end of 2017.

A Member of The Fedcap Group

In 2017, Single Stop joined The Fedcap Group to improve and sustain efficiency in operations as well as leverage the talent and vision of leaders in companies throughout the United States—and today Canada and the UK as well. The 22 organizations that make up The Fedcap Group are individual 501 c3 entities that share infrastructure support—IT, HR, finance, facilities management, communications, and fundraising. Equally important, members share a common mission of improving the economic wellbeing of people with barriers and continuously innovate and collaborate on integrated service delivery design. The Fedcap Group offers members an economy of scale and expertise without compromising their network of donors, stakeholders and individual brand.

Thank you for your consideration of Single Stop for the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

Sincerely,

David Saltzman

Member of the Board of Single Stop