

RESPECT

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

State
Executive
Director
April 2025



Communities
In Schools®

Washington



Brettschneider
Executive Search



Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Overview of the Position 7

How Success Will Be Defined 9

Expectations and Qualifications 11

About CISWA 14

Procedure for Candidacy 19

Executive Summary

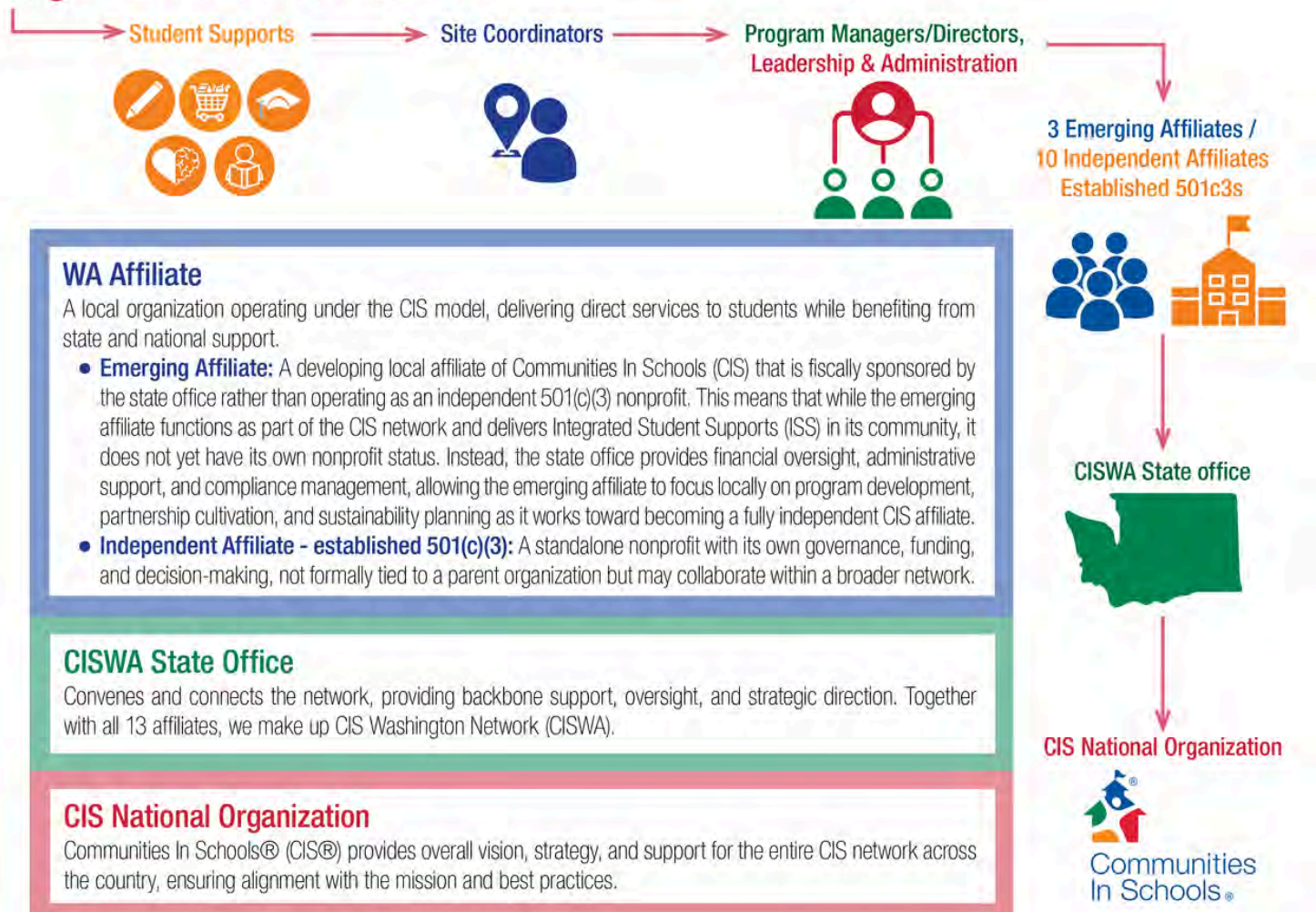
Communities In Schools of Washington (CISWA) is at a pivotal moment in its history as it launches the search for its State Executive Director. With a deep commitment to educational equity, CISWA has played a critical role in ensuring that students across Washington state—particularly those in under-resourced schools—have the support they need to thrive. CISWA is a dynamic and high-energy organization that

provides essential support to the CIS Washington Network of 13 local network affiliates across Washington State—10 independent 501(c)(3) organizations and three emerging organizations housed within the CISWA State Office.

As part of the national Communities In Schools network, CISWA ensures that Washington affiliates have the resources,

guidance, and capacity to deliver high-impact student programs that break down barriers to educational success. Working directly inside K-12 schools, CIS affiliates serve students who have historically been furthest from educational justice, surrounding them with a community of support to keep them engaged in school and on a path to success.

Organizational Structure





CISWA operates within a federated network model, where local affiliates maintain autonomy, adhere to national accreditation standards, and leverage the State Office and national network resources. The State Office and affiliates collaborate across Washington State to achieve collective impact towards the CIS mission. The State Office plays a crucial role in ensuring alignment with the Integrated Student Supports (ISS) model, which is the foundation of the CIS approach to supporting students and families.

Success in this role will be defined by the leader's ability to ensure stability, credibility, clarity, and a compelling vision to internal and external CISWA stakeholders. Following a few short-term state executive director transitions, the organization is seeking a leader who will commit to the role for the

long term—providing steady, consistent leadership that strengthens internal alignment and reinforces external confidence. A committed, reliable leader will be especially valuable in building and sustaining strong relationships with CISWA stakeholders, including funders, partners, policymakers, staff, and affiliates. Key priorities include building a cohesive and impactful statewide network, raising awareness of the organization's work, advancing youth-centered advocacy, and securing sustainable funding. In the near term, the leader will focus on cultivating strong relationships across the network, clarifying the role of the State Office, strengthening strategic alignment, deepening the board-executive partnership, and fostering a positive internal culture that supports staff engagement and retention.

The next State Executive Director of CISWA will step into a dynamic organization that has experienced significant transition and growth. They will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the Network's shared agenda and adapting strategies to align with evolving economic and policy landscapes. This next chapter calls for a State Executive Director who can lead with vision, collaboration, and strategic execution, ensuring that CISWA continues to build a strong social impact network, advance advocacy efforts, and expand sustainable funding streams.

The State Executive Director of CISWA will serve as the statewide leader and chief advocate for the organization, responsible for deepening partnerships, securing funding, and supporting affiliates in delivering high-impact



programs to students across the state. This individual must be a bridge-builder, facilitator, bold strategist, and trusted partner to the board, staff, affiliates, donors, and policymakers.

With a unique network structure that requires collaboration and strategic support rather than direct oversight, the State Executive Director must be adept at leading through influence—bringing stakeholders together around a common vision for the future while ensuring affiliates have the resources, support, and autonomy needed to thrive. Key responsibilities include: strategic leadership and organizational management; advocacy,

partnerships and network support; and constituent engagement and public relations.

This is an exciting opportunity for a dynamic and mission-driven leader to support the future of CISWA and make a lasting impact on students, families, and communities across the state. The ideal candidate will be a seasoned nonprofit executive with a strong track record of strategic leadership, financial management, fundraising, advocacy, and network-building. They will be a trusted leader who fosters collaboration and transparency, working to ensure that every student in Washington—regardless of their circumstances

—has the opportunity to succeed.

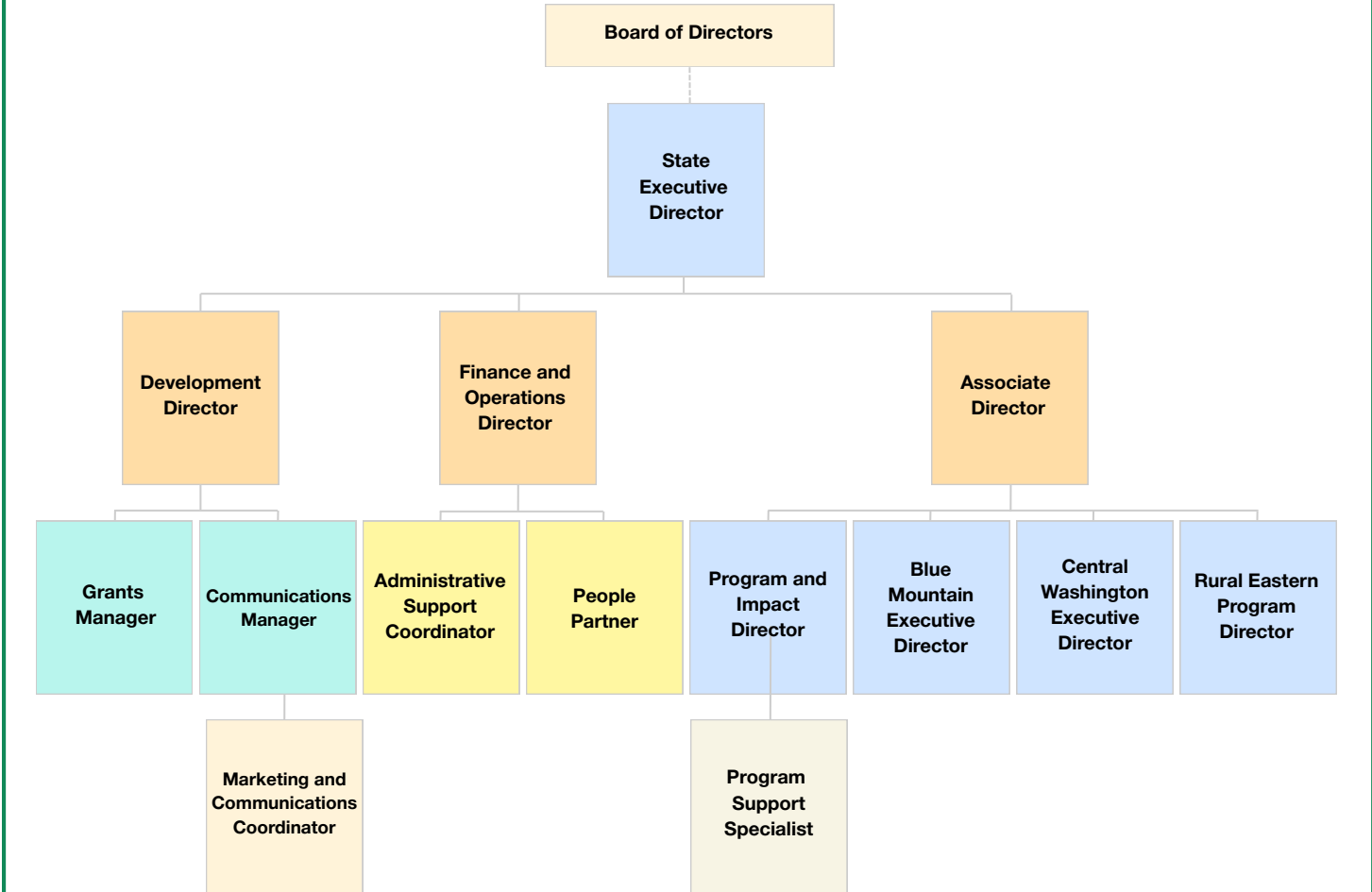
This full-time position is based at the Communities In Schools of Washington State office in Tacoma, with frequent travel throughout the state, including occasional evenings and weekends. While hybrid work is optional, the role requires being in person at least one day per week (currently Tuesdays), in alignment with the broader in-office team schedule.

The salary range for this position is \$180k–\$220k.

For more details on how to apply or make a nomination, please see the end of this document.



Organizational Chart





Overview of the Position

CISWA seeks a State Executive Director who will lead with a bold vision to advance the organization's strategic goals and deepen its impact across Washington State. Its annual budget is \$5.5 million (from diverse revenue streams). The State Executive Director will provide strategic leadership, operational oversight, and advocacy, ensuring that CISWA continues to drive educational equity and student success. This role will be instrumental in furthering CISWA's five strategic priorities:

1. **Building a strong social impact network** by fostering collaboration among affiliates, partners, and stakeholders.
2. **Increasing awareness** of the CIS Washington Network to expand community engagement and support.
3. **Advancing policy** and advocacy efforts to drive systemic change in education and youth development.
4. **Ensuring sustainable affiliate growth** by securing funding, providing capacity-building resources, and strengthening program infrastructure.
5. **Serving as a statewide leader for educational equity**, representing CISWA in key local, state, and national conversations.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership & Organizational Management

- Provide visionary leadership to ensure CISWA's long-term success, aligning operations with mission-driven priorities and strategic growth objectives.
- Implement effective nonprofit management practices, including risk management, fiscal stewardship, and brand consistency to ensure sustainability.
- Serve as the primary liaison with the Board of Directors, guiding governance and strategic planning to strengthen CISWA's impact.



- Lead the State Office's Executive Team, fostering a high-performance, mission-driven culture that supports staff, affiliates, and statewide initiatives.
- Excel in organizational development, progress monitoring, and reporting, ensuring transparency and accountability in meeting strategic goals.
- Establish and track key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure organizational impact, drive continuous improvement, and inform decision-making.

Advocacy, Partnerships & Network Support

- Support the Associate Director in managing relationships with Washington's congressional delegation, state elected officials and relevant agencies, as well as education and youth development organizations, in collaboration with the contract lobbyist team.
- Support Network Executive Directors in engaging with advocacy and partnership efforts while fostering collaboration to sustain and expand programs in both existing and new school districts.

Constituent Engagement & Public Relations

- Advance critical partnerships with stakeholders, funders, and corporate and community organizations to expand CISWA's reach and financial sustainability.
- Serve as a statewide leader for educational equity, advocating for policies and initiatives that align with CISWA's mission and strategic objectives.

The State Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and is responsible for ensuring CISWA's continued growth, sustainability, and influence in the education sector. This role leads a team of 11 staff members, including three direct reports (excluding Emerging Affiliates). It is an exciting opportunity for a dynamic and mission-driven leader to shape the future of CISWA and make a lasting impact on students, families, and communities across Washington State.



How Success for the State Executive Director Will Be Defined

The next State Executive Director of CISWA will be stepping into a pivotal leadership role at a critical moment with the CIS Network and the Organization's growth. Success in this role will be measured by the ability to bring stability, trust, clarity, and vision to the network, while prioritizing four areas of action:

1. Build a strong social impact network.
2. Increase awareness of the work and impact of the CIS Washington Network.
3. Accelerate policy and advocacy, and increase the participation or inclusion of young people in this work.
4. Secure sustainable funding for all parts of the Network.

Near-Term Priorities (First 12-18 months)

The initial focus of the new State Executive Director will be on stability and relationship-building. Early success will be marked by:

- **Building trust and relationships across the network.** Listen, engage, and establish strong relationships with affiliate executive directors, State Office staff, board members, funders, and policymakers. A collaborative and transparent leadership approach will be key to fostering alignment and building trust.
- **Clarifying the role of the State Office.** Through stakeholder engagement, work to define the scope, responsibilities, and decision-making model of the State Office, ensuring clear expectations for how it supports affiliates while maintaining accountability for its own impact.
- **Strengthening and implementing the unified strategic vision.** Work in partnership with the board, staff, and affiliates to solidify CISWA's long-term strategy, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned around a clear roadmap for growth, policy influence, and sustainability.



- **Deepening the board-executive partnership.** Establish a strong working relationship with the board, ensuring governance best practices and collaborative decision-making.
- **Enhancing internal culture and staff retention.** Build a culture of trust, collaboration, and accountability among staff and affiliates to improve retention and morale.

Long-Term Success (3-5 years)

Beyond the first year, the State Executive Director will be expected to lead CISWA toward long-term sustainability and impact. Key measures of success will include:

- **Expanding CISWA's impact and influence.** Establish CISWA as a leading voice in educational equity, ensuring that policy, advocacy, and programmatic efforts result in measurable improvements for students in Washington.
- **Diversifying and growing funding streams.** The State Executive Director will need to develop and implement a long-term financial strategy that increases state, federal, and private funding to sustain and expand programs.
- **Increasing network-wide operational effectiveness.** Strengthen systems and processes to ensure that affiliates are equipped with the resources, training, and infrastructure needed to scale their impact.
- **Enhancing CISWA's public profile.** Raise statewide awareness of CISWA's work through strategic communications, thought leadership, and public engagement.

The ideal leader for this role will be visionary, strategic, and highly relational, with a deep understanding of nonprofit management, advocacy, and collaboration. Their ability to navigate complexity, inspire confidence, and drive meaningful change will define their success in leading CISWA into its next chapter.



Expectations and Qualifications

External Leadership & Advocacy Expectation

The State Executive Director of CISWA is not just an internal leader—they are a public advocate, fundraiser, and relationship-builder responsible for elevating CISWA's influence and visibility. This individual will:

- Represent CISWA at the national level, leveraging the Communities In Schools network and engaging with peer organizations and funders to strengthen CISWA's impact and visibility.
- Develop strategic partnerships with corporations, foundations, and philanthropic institutions to secure long-term funding and capacity-building support for CISWA and its affiliates.
- Ensure CISWA's voice is heard in key education and nonprofit leadership circles, reinforcing its position as a thought leader in student success, wraparound services, and educational equity.

Sustainable Affiliate Growth Expectations

The State Executive Director must be a strategic and experienced fundraiser who can:

- Lead and support fund development efforts in collaboration with the development team, including donor cultivation, grant writing, and institutional fundraising.
- Partner with the Board of Directors and development team to expand and diversify CISWA's funding base through major gifts, corporate partnerships, foundation support, and public funding sources.
- Secure sustainable funding to support the long-term financial health of the organization and its affiliates.
- Develop financial planning strategies that align with CISWA's strategic goals and ensure responsible stewardship of resources.
- Demonstrate a record of building long term donor relationships, soliciting major gifts, and securing philanthropic investments.
- Cultivate strategic partnerships with foundations, institutions, and other funders.
- Successfully secure and manage government grants and contracts.

Additional Required Qualifications

Mission Alignment & Expertise

- Deep understanding and passion for the mission of CISWA
- Experience with community-based direct services programs
- Demonstrated experience working in communities similar to those served by CISWA

Leadership & Strategic Vision

- Minimum of 5+ years Executive Director/CEO experience or comparable senior leadership role in a nonprofit organization leading a senior management team in a complex organization
- Strong experience developing and executing strategy and vision for an organization
- Proven track record of leading organizational change, managing transitions, and guiding transformation

Financial & Operational Management

- Proven fiscal accountability and experience managing budgets of at least \$2M
- Experience managing budgets with multiple funding sources (government, foundation, corporate, individual giving, etc.)
- Strong organizational skills and a strategic approach to leveraging and optimizing resources

Staff Leadership & Organizational Culture

- Experience supervising 3+ direct reports and leading teams of 10+ employees
- Proven track record of building a collaborative work environment where staff feel heard, motivated, and inspired to perform at their highest levels
- Strong ability to build and sustain an organizational culture of accountability
- Expertise in organizational development, progress monitoring, and reporting to enhance team performance and strategic alignment
- Ability to set and track KPIs to measure effectiveness, drive improvement, and inform decisions

Public Engagement & Advocacy

- Ability to serve as the public face of CISWA and effectively communicate its impact
- Outstanding communication skills, including public speaking, writing, and active listening
- Ability to engage with political leaders, elected officials, and key stakeholders to advance CISWA's policy and advocacy goals

Education

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent professional experience

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience in a statewide or multi-affiliate nonprofit network, matrixed organization or a structure similar to CISWA
- Background in education, youth services, wraparound services, or direct services
- Experience managing crisis situations or navigating organizational restructuring
- Strong ability to build coalitions and cross-sector partnerships
- Fluency in Spanish or working knowledge is a plus
- Demonstrated ability to work across differences in ability, race, class, and culture
- Experience working directly with or serving on a volunteer or governing board of directors
- Competency with computer software including Microsoft Office Suite and client relationship manager database

Demonstrated Skills

- Strong leadership qualities to motivate staff, network leaders and board members
- Approachable, collaborative, and consensus-builder
- Flexible and open-minded, with a willingness to learn
- Trustworthiness and integrity
- Comfortable making tough decisions while balancing organizational priorities

Tackling Challenges with Collaboration

Better Together Conference

The 2024 Better Together Conference was a milestone for CIS of Washington, uniting over 200 site coordinators, program managers, and partners for the first statewide gathering. Thanks to donor and sponsor support, the event fostered collaboration and learning through mainstage sessions and workshops on key topics like vicarious trauma, behavior management, and family engagement. With 81% of attendees working in schools and many joining their first CIS event, the conference reinforced the network's commitment to professional growth and student support. Plans for 2025 include a focus on restorative justice, trauma-informed care, and resource navigation.

Investing in Success

As CISWA wrapped up summer and prepared for the new school year, we reflected on a season of impactful training and professional development. Highlights included the Program Manager Retreat, which fostered collaboration and problem-solving, and Youth Mental Health First Aid training, equipping staff to support students' well-being. Special thanks to facilitators Nikki Ziegler and Erica Limón-Trefielo, and guest speaker Nick Wu from CIS Los Angeles. Looking ahead, CISWA is focusing on leadership development, HR training, and ongoing collaboration. We invite supporters to help sustain these efforts, ensuring students get the resources they need to thrive.

Partnering for Health Equity & Mental Well-Being

CISWA is proud to partner with Cambia Health Foundation (CHF) to support students and families across Washington. Over the next year, CHF will provide \$25,000 to promote health equity, expand mental health services, and address social drivers of health. CISWA site coordinators help students facing mental health challenges, financial hardship, and community support gaps through school-wide initiatives, targeted support, and one-on-one assistance. With CHF's support, CISWA will enhance training in health equity, Trauma-Informed Care, and Mental Health First Aid. This partnership strengthens our shared commitment to breaking down barriers and creating lasting change for Washington's youth.

Network Thrives at 2024 Student Support Institute

The 2024 Student Support Institute (SSI) was a key professional development event for CISWA, offering strategies to better support students. Hosted by CIS National, the three-day hybrid conference featured discussions, workshops, and networking on topics like attendance, career readiness, and family engagement. CISWA leaders emphasized tier-one supports, chronic absenteeism, and national partnerships. First-time attendee Addison Fairbank found it transformative for refining communication strategies. Insights from SSI are already shaping CISWA's professional development, staff training, and social-emotional learning efforts, reinforcing our mission to help students stay in school and reach their full potential.



About CISWA

For over 30 years the CIS Washington Network, comprised of the Communities In Schools of Washington's State Office (CISWA) and 15 community-based affiliates, has been striving for equity in educational opportunities. In adherence to CIS National guidelines, CISWA works to ensure that all affiliates have the tools and capacity to provide and sustain strong student programs and services in their local communities, supporting those students who have historically been furthest from educational justice. Every student, regardless of race, gender ability, zip code, or socioeconomic background, should have what they need to realize their full potential in school and beyond.

The CIS Washington Network works inside schools partnering with teachers and parents to help address the needs of students.

Affiliate offices average 22 staff members with an average budget of \$1.7 M. Working with schools and local service providers, the Network coordinates critical resources for students and families including food, housing, healthcare, counseling, and access to remote technology. At the same time, the Network supports students in their school attendance, behavior, academics, and social emotional learning. The CIS Washington Network serves over 100,000 students a year.

CISWA has a history of strong operations and successful outcomes. In addition to supporting state operations, CISWA is incubating three emerging affiliates and is the fiscal sponsor of these affiliates, supporting each of the Executive Directors and their program staff.

Mission

CISWA's mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

Vision

CISWA envisions a future rooted in educational equity in which every young person in Washington State has the resources and community support needed to thrive.

History of Communities in Schools

Communities In Schools (CIS) was founded in 1977 by Bill Milliken with the vision of helping students succeed by addressing the barriers outside the classroom that can hinder their academic performance. Over the years, CIS has grown to become the nation's leading organization

focused on integrating social services and education to support at-risk students. Communities In Schools of Washington State (CISWA) became part of this network in 1985, providing vital programs and services to students throughout the state. With a commitment to ensuring every student has the support they need to succeed, CISWA works with schools, community partners, and families to foster student achievement and stability.

The Unique Role & Purpose as the State Office

As the State Office, CISWA serves a unique role in the Communities In Schools of Washington (CISWA) Network. Our role is to hold the center of the network strategy and serve as a support structure and facilitate connections within the CISWA Network. This is done in a variety of ways, including:

- Mobilize resources in support of the Network's shared goals.
- Serve as Network connector, convener, community builder and knowledge broker.
- Advance policy that supports the Network's collective vision and mission.
- Raise awareness of the CIS® model and our collective impact.

The Network Commitment to Educational Equity

Children and youth deserve a caring community that

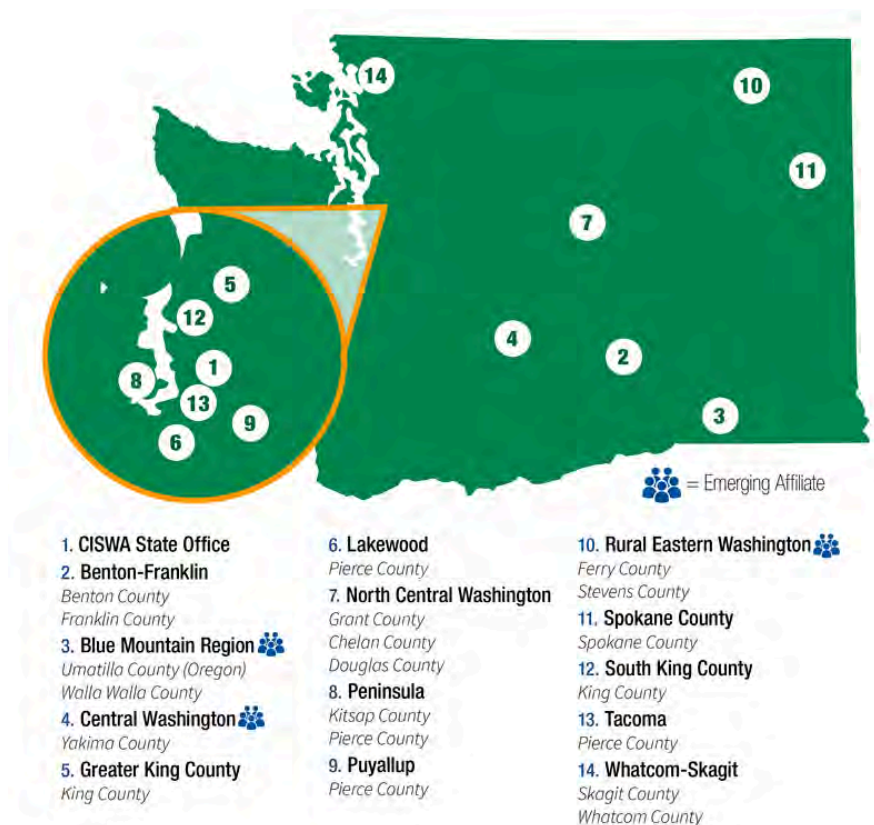
empowers them to achieve their goals in the classroom and beyond. To do so, racism and other inequalities in our educational system and society must be acknowledged and addressed. The CISWA network exists to build on student strengths and overcome systemic barriers through advocacy, partnership, and individual social-emotional supports.

State Office Values

- **EQUITY:** We believe the urgency of educational inequity requires us to be brave in closing the opportunity gap for young people, their families, and their communities.

- **YOUTH CENTERED:** We believe young people should have a voice in anything we do for them and on their behalf.
- **COLLABORATION:** We believe transformative impact is possible when we work together in deep collaboration.
- **INTEGRITY:** We believe we can take on difficult and complex issues when we show up with honesty, mutual respect, transparency, and accountability.
- **INNOVATION:** We believe that innovation is critical to solving root problems and responding to changes in our community.

CISWA Network Footprint



Our Impact

Across the state, site coordinators provide individualized support to 5,982 students during FY24.

Attendance:

- 77% met or made progress on their attendance goals

Behavior/Social-Emotional Goals:

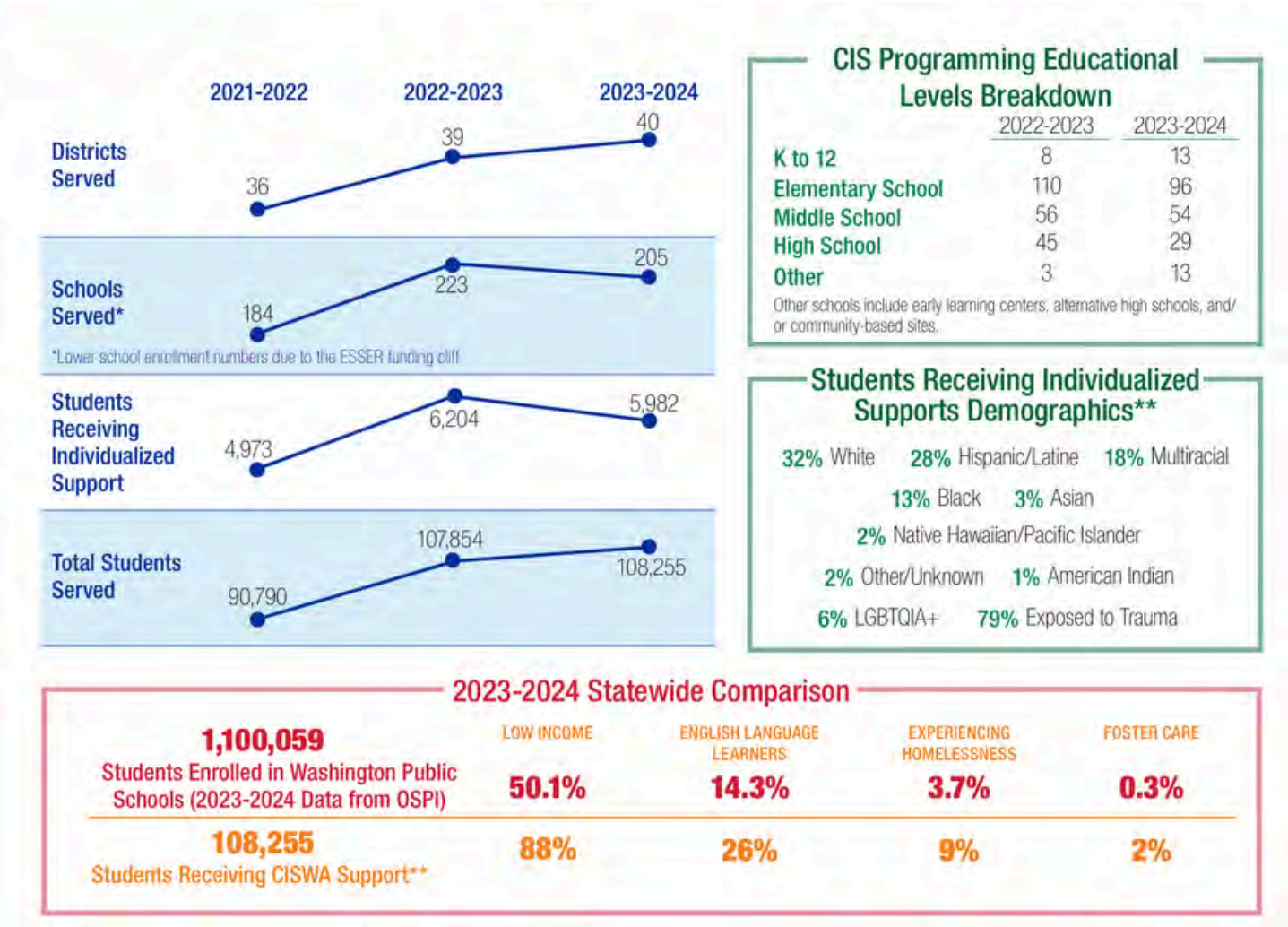
- 90% met or made progress on their behavior goals
- 93% met or made progress on their social-emotional goals

Coursework:

- 88% met or made progress on their coursework goals

Graduation:

- 86% of Seniors graduated, obtained their GED, or stayed in school
- 90% of K-11 grade students stayed in school or were promoted to the next grade

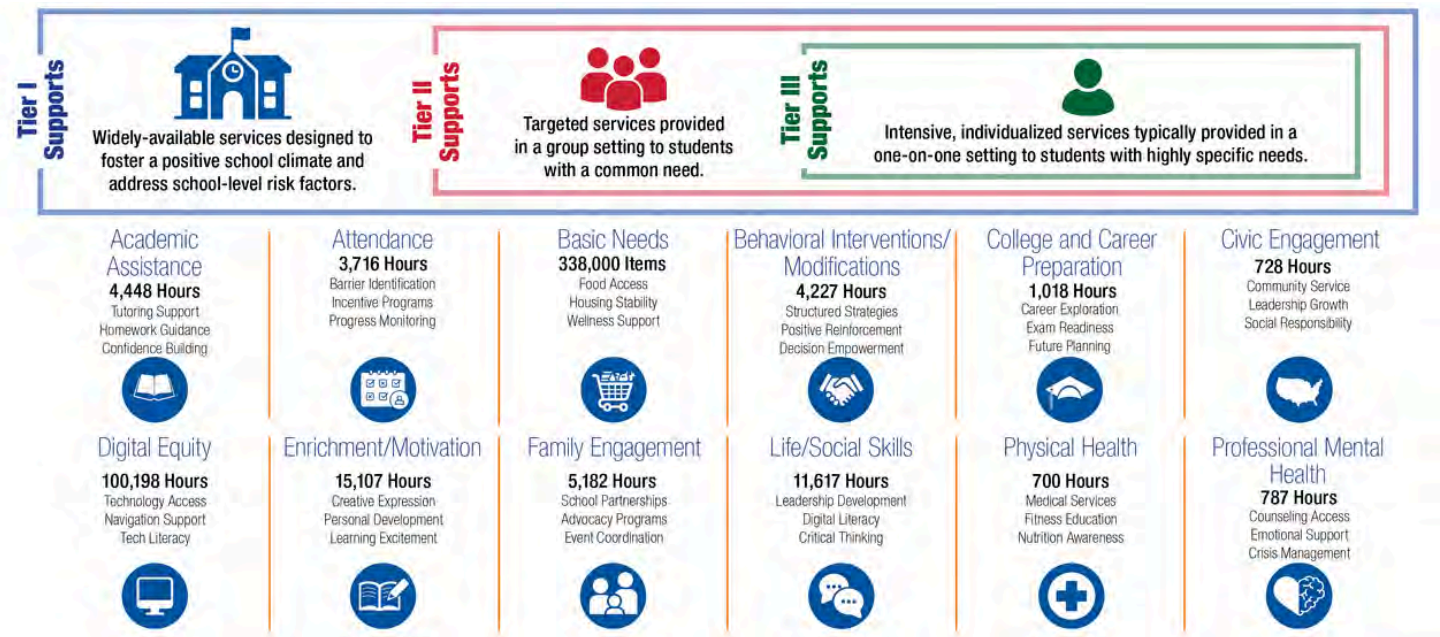


[Read the full 2023-2024 annual report.](#)

Support & Services

Integrated Student Supports

It's a simple idea. Surround students with a community of support. Provide them with access to people and resources they need when they need them. That's integrated student support (ISS) and it's how every student, regardless of race, gender, ability, zip code, or socioeconomic background has access to what they need to achieve their full potential in school and beyond. Simple and effective.



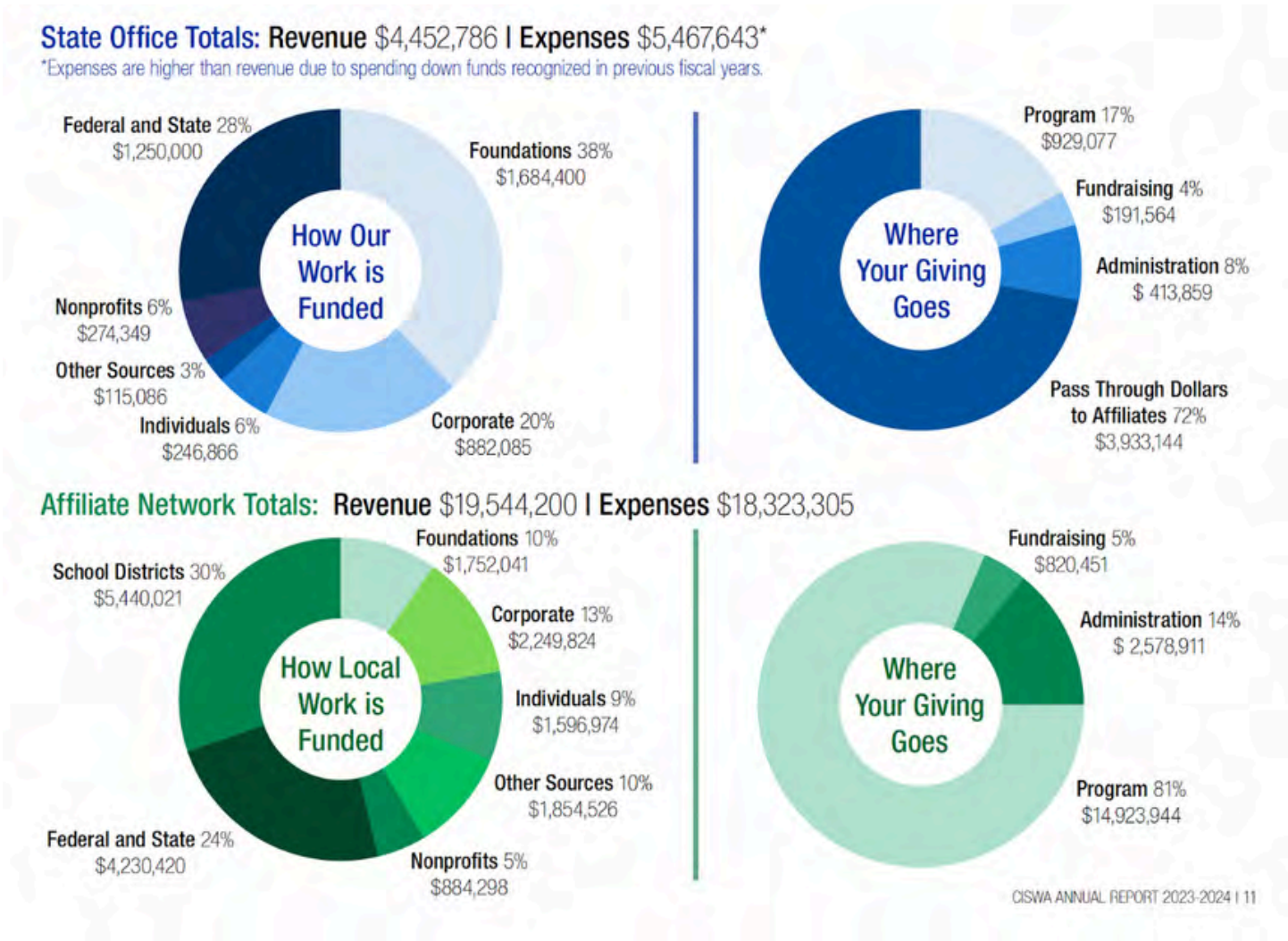
2025 Legislative Priorities

CISWA's 2025 legislative priorities recognize the need for a comprehensive approach to respond to the needs of students and their families to ensure no student goes without the support and resources they need to grow and thrive. Flexible funding to increase partnership opportunities between schools and community-based organizations is a crucial component of this work. Collectively, we must ensure that racism and other inequalities in our educational system and society are acknowledged and addressed and that the needs of students furthest from educational justice are centered in policy and budget proposals.

- Increase Funding for Youth Development and Student Support Programs (\$20M)
- Reducing Barriers to Student Success
- Achieving Digital Equity
- Invest in Workforce Development for Students and Support Staff



2023-2024 State & Affiliate Financials



Procedure for Candidacy



CISWA is looking for a visionary, strategic, and collaborative leader to guide the organization into its next chapter. The next State Executive Director must be a strong relationship-builder, a trusted partner to affiliates, and an advocate for educational equity. With the right leadership, CISWA has the opportunity to scale its impact, strengthen its network, and continue transforming students' lives across Washington State.



BrettSearch.com/CISWA

This is a career-defining opportunity for a leader who is passionate about youth success, educational equity, and nonprofit sustainability.

To submit your application, upload your CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile [here](#). Nominations and inquiries are invited to be submitted to CISWA@BrettSearch.com.

Equal Opportunity Employer: CISWA is an equal opportunity employer. The organization recruits, employs, trains, compensates and promotes regardless of age, creed, gender, religion, marital status, veteran's status, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. CISWA knows the organization is successful due to the hard work and dedication of its passionate employees. CISWA's dedication to promoting diversity, multiculturalism and inclusion is clearly reflected across the organization. Diversity is more than a commitment; it is the foundation of what CISWA does. CISWA strongly encourages women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and applicants from other marginalized communities to apply.

Additional Details

- **Location:** Communities In Schools of Washington State Office in Tacoma.
- **In-Office presence:** While hybrid work is optional, the role requires in-person attendance at least one day per week (currently Tuesdays), in alignment with the broader team's in-office schedule.
- **Travel:** position includes travel up to 15%.
- **Reports to:** CISWA Board of Directors.
- **Benefits:** Medical/Dental/Vision, paid vacation and holidays, sick time, 403b Retirement, cell phone and mileage reimbursement.
- **Position Status:** Exempt, Full Time, occasional evening/weekends required.
- **Compensation:** The salary range for this position is \$180k–\$220k.