

◆ Community Impact Briefing

Grad Village Corporation

Helping Wilmington students **start, stay, finish,** and enter the workforce.

★ Presented To

City of Wilmington
Education, Youth & Family Services Committee

Jamila Bishop · Founder / Executive Director ·



Who we are

Grad Village Corporation is a **501(c)(3) nonprofit** created to help postsecondary students overcome the financial barriers that prevent them from starting, staying in, or completing their education.



We support students through verified need, community partnership, and direct payments to schools or approved vendors whenever possible.



Based In

Delaware nonprofit

Rooted locally, serving Wilmington students and families.



Approach

Student-centered

Community-driven design that puts each student's path first.



Reach

All pathways

College, trade school, certification, workforce training.



Discipline

Accountable




Verified need, direct payments, measurable impact.

19.4M

Post-secondary Students

Need Help Annually

We Address Gaps at Every Stage:

-  **Start Support**
Enrolling & beginning education
-  **Retention Support**
Preventing dropouts due to strain
-  **Completion Support**
Clearing unpaid balances for diplomas

The Challenge: Financial Gaps Prevent Students from Starting, Staying, and Graduating

Financial hardship forces students to withdraw due to tuition gaps, housing costs, books, and fees. 38% of all college dropouts in the U.S. cite financial pressure as the primary reason they left their program.

The "Diploma Lock": Many students complete all academic requirements but cannot receive their credentials due to an unpaid balance. This effectively erases their hard work. 6.6 million students currently owe an estimated \$15 billion in unpaid institutional balances.

Workforce Development Impact

When students are forced to drop out or are denied their diplomas, families lose stability, communities lose talent, and employers lose skilled workers. We fix this broken pipeline.



GENESIS MISSION LINK

We align with the mission of **advancing justice and stewardship** by ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent talented individuals from fulfilling their potential, thus restoring dignity and opportunity.

Why this matters to Wilmington

When Wilmington students are supported through education, the **city benefits**. More completed degrees and credentials mean stronger families, a stronger workforce, and more young people young people prepared to contribute to Wilmington's future.

Priority Zips

19801

19802

19805

Wilmington neighborhoods where the gap between acceptance and completion is widest.



Education Access

Removing barriers between students and their their next class.



Youth Development

Building skills, identity, and direction for young residents.



Family Stability

Easing pressure on households supporting a student.



Workforce Readiness

Skilled credential talent is entering the workforce.



Economic Mobility

Education completion is one of the clearest paths up.



Local Talent Pipeline

A workforce Wilmington employers can hire from.



High-Demand Careers

Reaching the fields the region is hiring in.



Completion, Not Access

Degrees and credentials across the finish line.

Not just education support. A workforce solution.

When students can't pay a remaining balance, access a transcript, or finish their final credits, they may lose access to **employment, promotions, licensing, graduate school**, or career advancement.

By helping students resolve those barriers, Grad Village supports **both individual success and Wilmington's broader workforce needs**.

01 Complete degrees, certificates, credentials
Turn near-finish into finished.

02 Move students into high-demand pathways
Aligned with regional employer needs.

03 Unlock diplomas and transcripts
The documents employers actually require.

04 Strengthen the education-to-workforce pipeline
Schools, employers, and the city together.

05 Build long-term economic mobility
One household, one career, one neighborhood.

College access & readiness



Grad Village helps students **start strong** by supporting verified education-related needs that can prevent a student from enrolling, preparing, or showing up ready for success.



Enrollment fees

The application and deposit costs that gate the first step.



Books & supplies

Materials students need on day one of class or training.



Dorm essentials

Basic items that make residential life possible.



Transportation

Bus passes, fuel, and rides that turn enrollment into attendance.



Technology needs

A working laptop or device is now a baseline requirement.



Other verified costs

Case-by-case needs documented and approved before support.

How support works



Student applies

A short application captures the student's situation and need.



Need verified

We confirm eligibility and the specific education-related barrier.



Documents submitted submitted

Acceptance, enrollment proof, proof, tuition bill, balance, or vendor cost.



Reviewed & approved

Decision made against our verified-need criteria.



Payment sent directly

Funds go straight to the school or approved approved vendor. ♦

★ **Important**

Students do not receive cash directly. Funds are paid directly to the school.

The Finish Line Fund

Helping students finish what they started.

Our umbrella program for students who are close to completing their education but blocked by financial barriers. It serves two groups of Wilmington students:

Group 01

Diploma Lock Students

Students who have **completed** their degree, certificate, or credential requirements but cannot access their diploma, transcript, or records because of an unpaid institutional balance.

Group 02

Last Mile Students

Students who are **near completion**, usually 20 credits or less remaining, but need final need final support with tuition, fees, books, transportation, or other verified education-related costs to finish.

Student & family workshops

As funding and capacity allow, Grad Village will offer workshops and programs designed for Wilmington students and **Wilmington students and the families supporting them.**

● College readiness

● Career exploration

● FAFSA Application Assistance

● Student success & retention

● Financial literacy

● Scholarship & grant search

● Trade school & certification prep

● Drug Prevention and Mental Health
Wellness

Delivered Through

Community partnership partnership

- Schools & districts
- Youth-serving organizations
- Libraries
- Community centers
- Workforce partners

Accountability & safeguards



Grad Village is designed to protect students, donors, and donors, and public partners by **verifying need** before support is provided and by sending **payments payments directly to schools or approved vendors** whenever possible.

★ Built for public partnership

✦ Nine safeguards

✓ Need verification

✓ Tuition & balance check

✓ Required documentation

✓ False information policy

✓ Donor transparency

✓ Proof of enrollment

✓ Direct payments only

✓ Story permission form

✓ Outcome tracking

Protect

Students

Dignified, document-supported applications.

Protect

Donors

Every dollar tied to a verified, documented need.

Protect

Public partners

Audit-ready records and outcome reporting.

Impact we'll track

Every metric below will be reported to partners, donors, and the City of Wilmington, tied to verified students, dollars, and credentials.

• Wilmington students served

• Students in 19801, 19802, 19805

• Tuition balances reduced

• Diplomas & transcripts unlocked

• Last Mile students supported

• \$ Dollars paid directly to schools

• Students who remain enrolled

★ Credentials completed

• Workshops held

• Families served

• Student stories & testimonials

✦ Reported to City annually

Every story shared with **written student permission.**

Partnership with **Wilmington**

The City can partner with Grad Village in ways that match its existing relationships with schools, youth-serving organizations, and workforce programs.

01

Identify eligible students

Help us reach the residents who most need this support.

02

Connect to schools & workforce

Introductions to schools, youth orgs, and workforce programs.

03

Outreach in priority zips

Amplify our reach in 19801, 19802, and 19805 19805 neighborhoods.

04

Sponsor a Finish Line pilot

A funded cohort of Wilmington students across the finish line.

05

Support workshops

Co-host in libraries, community centers, and schools.

06

Invite us to events

Include us in city-led youth, education, and family programming.

07

Connect to funders & employers

Help build the funder and employer ecosystem.

08

Build the pipeline together ✦

A stronger education-to-workforce pipeline pipeline for Wilmington.

✦ The Ask

Every student deserves the chance to finish what they started.

We are asking the **Education, Youth & Family Services Committee** to support Grad Village Village Corporation as a community-based education and workforce development partner — by partner — by helping us connect with Wilmington students, schools, youth-serving organizations, organizations, workforce programs, and funding partners.

With the City's support, we can help remove the financial barriers standing between students and their next chapter.

★ Thank you

For your time, your service, and your commitment to Wilmington's students and families.



Contact


Jamila Bishop

Founder / Executive Director
Grad Village Corporation

Email

 jb@gradvillage.org

Phone

 302-553-6852
6852

Website

 www.gradvillage.org



Learn More

Scan to visit Grad Village Corporation online.