



W.K. Kellogg Foundation
PROGRAM OFFICER – EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a leading philanthropic institution helping communities create the conditions children need to thrive, is seeking nominations and applications for Program Officer for Early Childhood Education. In recent years, the foundation has sharpened its focus on improving conditions for vulnerable children, concentrating on three key factors of success and their intersections: education and learning; food, health and well-being; and family economic security. WKKF partners closely with stakeholders and policy makers to co-create a network of organizations working together to advance racial equity, leadership, and community engagement, while increasing access to quality education, healthy food, and economic stability for children and families in need.

The new Program Officer will identify and nurture opportunities for affecting positive change within educational systems and execute programming efforts that ensure that all young children have access to high quality and equitable education. S/he will screen and recommend grants for funding, prepare funding documents, conduct site visits, and manage and monitor the grant portfolio. The Program Officer will also maintain strong, authentic relationships with grant seekers and grantees and act as a spokesperson for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, effectively communicating the foundation's goal of partnering with communities to improve the well-being of children and their families.

The ideal candidate will have comprehensive knowledge of the learning experiences of all young children from birth through eight years who live and learn in underserved communities. S/he will understand the development and application of education policies and funding as they evolve at the national, state, and local level. The new Program Officer will bring an agile and innovative approach to implementing policies and best practices in service to children and families. These policies and best practices include but are not limited to: teacher preparation and professional development, equitable funding, child advocacy, culturally-relevant coursework, and flexible, results-driven assessments. The successful candidate will also be a holistic thinker who understands how to leverage relationships to drive the foundation's mission forward. S/he will understand how to motivate social change not only as a partner with disparate organizations but also as a connector whose portfolio engages all areas of educational advocacy.

The successful candidate will have a deep and comprehensive understanding of program execution and development. S/he will possess a strong team orientation, a high tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to adapt quickly to change, and success working effectively with persons from diverse cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds. The new Program Officer will be committed to the values and mission of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is being assisted in this search by Katherine Jacobs and Courtney Thomas of the national search firm [NPAG](#).



HISTORY AND MISSION

In 1930, breakfast cereal pioneer Will Keith Kellogg donated \$66 million in Kellogg Company stock and other investments “to help people help themselves,” launching the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The foundation began its work in Michigan, but by the 1940s had expanded its work internationally and was breaking ground in areas such as rural children’s health, “mainstreaming” children with disabilities, and the development of the healthcare profession. By its 50th anniversary, the foundation was among the world’s largest private philanthropic organizations. Its mission reflects the foundation’s core priorities of thriving children, working families, and equitable communities, and the dynamic connection between the three.

“The W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families, and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society.”

To advance this mission, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation created a framework supported by an innovative matrixed organizational design to prioritize investment decisions and maximize effectiveness toward achieving the desired ends and improvements for children and their families. This new framework supports disciplined choices toward targeted outcomes and stronger alignment across programs. It is a focused and networked approach to strategic programming that relies on close cross-foundation collaboration and agile teams to leverage human capital and knowledge resources to positively impact vulnerable children, families, and communities. Across bodies of work, the foundation implements an array of change-making tools – grantmaking, impact investing, contracting, networking, and convenings – to ensure progress. A commitment to racial equity, community engagement, and leadership development are woven into each endeavor as essential to the creation of a social context in which all children can thrive, particularly the most vulnerable.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Research shows that the first eight years are the most crucial developmental period of a child’s life. The cognitive, social, and emotional growth from birth to age 8 are the basis for self-awareness, communication and emotional skills, all foundational to a child’s future learning and healthy development. The foundation focuses its work on the earliest years— helping parents to be a child’s first and most important teachers and advocates. The foundation’s early childhood education efforts support children where they learn and grow, building strong connections between early childhood programs and the early elementary years to keep all children on a path to success.

Many communities – both rural and urban – in the United States do not have the infrastructure, funding, or tools to improve the quality of early childhood education that occurs in licensed and informal child care settings, preschool and pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten through third grade. Children are particularly at risk in the presence of great adversity. This is too often the case for children of color, many of whom live in families with low income. The Education and Learning team is committed to ensuring that racial equity is part of public policies and practices that impact quality early childhood education and that families are able to be engaged in schools with a shared responsibility for their children’s education.

The Education and Learning team prioritizes the following strategies to improve early childhood education nationwide:



- Removing barriers to ensure families have equitable early learning opportunities and resources that directly affect whole child development (social, emotional, cultural, mental, physical, health, and cognitive);
- Supporting private and public entities to align systems, policies, and practices focused on whole child development and culturally appropriate programs and practices rooted in racial equity and community engagement; and
- Ensuring equitable design and implementation of federal, state, tribal, and local policies to support a healthy start, school readiness, and third grade success.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FACING THE PROGRAM OFFICER

The new Program Officer for Early Childhood Education will join a team of individuals who are passionate about transforming the schooling experience for all young children, including and especially those who live and learn in underserved communities. Reporting to the Director for Education and Learning, the new Program Officer will have demonstrated expertise merging the priorities of school advocacy and improvement and racial equity.

The new Program Officer for Early Childhood Education can expect to engage in the following challenges and opportunities:

- ***Provide leadership and oversight for the implementation of program efforts that is aligned and integrated with the unified mission and vision of the foundation.*** The new Program Officer will develop a strong network of key stakeholders, policymakers, community leaders, and grantees that support the foundation's mission and inform and advance its work across the nation. S/he will expand and deepen the foundation's work in early childhood education, shaping the work and supporting education systems to enhance the well-being of children and families nationwide.
- ***Collaborate with and support prospective and existing grantees in developing funding strategies, requests, and plans with a focus on changemaking relevant to systems, policy, and advocacy.*** The Program Officer will provide high-level technical assistance to grantees including conducting site visits and consulting on model development, partnership negotiations, leadership capacity building, and coaching. S/he will identify and recommend grantmaking opportunities that leverage WKKF investments for maximum impact in creating systemic change, and s/he will maintain strong, authentic relationships with grant seekers and grantees, ensuring mutual understanding of WKKF program direction, goals, and expectations.
- ***Create learning communities and collaborative networks amongst grantees and partners, develop and manage learning and evaluation components for grants, and cultivate a wide breadth and depth of knowledge about trends, practices, and issues relevant to early childhood education.*** The Program Officer will work closely with WKKF's Learning and Impact team to incorporate assessment components into program efforts to measure progress and impact. S/he will document and circulate lessons learned from grant investments, networking meetings, and other foundation-related activities. S/he will work collaboratively to identify and prioritize the highest value knowledge and learning from the foundation's grant investments and networking meetings.



- ***Build public and policy goodwill and awareness of issues affecting vulnerable children and families.*** The Program Officer will contribute ideas on how the foundation's highest value knowledge and learning could be packaged and disseminated to benefit nonprofit executives, business leaders, government officials, community leaders, parents, and other external stakeholders of the foundation. S/he will serve as a credible, articulate representative and spokesperson for the foundation and will communicate the program's strategic direction and funding interests to various audiences, internal and external to the foundation.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

While no one person will embody all of the qualities enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- Significant work experience (eight plus years) in fields relevant to the responsibilities outlined above, and a deep and comprehensive understanding of the nexus of educational advocacy and racial equity; an advanced degree in a relevant field is preferred;
- Demonstrated experience cultivating relationships internally to drive forward a mission externally;
- Well-established networks and contacts, and deep experience leveraging those contacts towards strategic grantmaking;
- An entrepreneurial spirit and the ability to translate concept to action; a demonstrated orientation to be innovative and agile;
- Current knowledge of social justice and early education issues, trends, movements, and policy development nationally to stimulate appropriate programming directions and capitalize on emerging grantmaking opportunities;
- Demonstrated flexible, multidisciplinary thinking required to address the social determinants of quality early childhood education and the drive to shape and inform the work based on the immediate issues and opportunities found in communities; understanding of the broad social and economic forces that affect communities and families and shape programming efforts; holistic and multi-dimensional approach to leadership development, organizational change, and community transformation;
- Sophisticated understanding of educational and economic disparities and the related policy landscapes; ability to navigate successfully the different legal, social, and political forces at play through the federal, state, and local governance systems;
- Expertise in understanding philanthropy's role in policy development to sustain program success and the current trends, movements, and best practices in developing policy to advance and magnify philanthropic investment and capitalize on emerging opportunities;
- Capacity to develop and implement impactful programs and effectively communicate conceptual program frameworks to grant-seekers and trustees; deep and comprehensive understanding of program design and development, systems, networking, and community change;



- Demonstrated success in forging and stewarding partnerships with the private sector, government agencies, foundations, policymakers, and stakeholders in early childhood education in support of children and families;
- The knowledge and sensitivity to effectively work with and support vulnerable communities including appreciation for historical context, discernment of relationship nuances and power dynamics, and understanding of social, racial, and ethnic realities;
- Demonstrated ability to develop and implement programs that have impact; ability to think globally while working locally, representing WKKF to a variety of stakeholders and intermediaries in a credible and influential way and with a selfless manner focusing on values and the greater good;
- Successful experience working as part of a multidisciplinary team and working effectively with persons from diverse cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds; willingness to set aside a personal agenda in favor of organizational and/or community goals and objectives;
- Strong relationship building and communication skills; the ability to have authentic dialogue around sensitive issues including funding priorities, WKKF expectations, and community concerns; highly developed emotional intelligence and active listening skills, and the ability to use interpersonal and political skills in collaborative, diplomatic ways;
- Excellent writing, editing, analytical, and oral communication skills including the ability to collect, review, synthesize, and present information and findings;
- Ability to multitask and meet deadlines within designated timeframes, as well as demonstrated resourcefulness in setting priorities; strong organizational skills and exceptional attention to detail with the ability to work both independently, take initiative, and contribute ideas for enhancing performance;
- An optimistic outlook and the humor, integrity, and patience necessary to work within a transformative environment; and
- Ability and willingness to travel.

APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

The search is being led by Katherine Jacobs and Courtney Thomas of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group. Due to the pace of this search, candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Applications including a cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, your resume (in Word format), salary history, and where you learned of the position should be sent to:

WKKF-POECE@nonprofitprofessionals.com. In order to expedite the internal sorting and reviewing process, please type your name (Last, First) as the only contents in the subject line of your e-mail.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and proudly values diversity. Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.