



DIRECTOR, POLICY & SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION

Founded in 1960, The Skillman Foundation is a private foundation that nurtures the genius of Detroit children and youth. We invest in people and organizations who support young Detroiters to be the designers of their future and who pursue transformational systems change that centers youth power and racial equity/justice.

OVERALL FUNCTION

Reporting to the Vice President, Program & Strategy, the **Director, Policy & Systems** is responsible for ensuring that the Foundation maximizes opportunities to shift policy and systems at the city, county/region, and state level. Our aim is to accelerate the transformation of Detroit's education systems by centering the voices of Detroit youth and educators. This leader will oversee our policy and systems change grantmaking portfolio and have a wide range of relationships and connections across the policy and education system landscapes. This leader will provide expertise to the Foundation and our partners on government relations and decision-making processes, staying abreast of patterns and shifts around opportunities to advocate for equity in our state's education system, including increased investment for schools and students with the greatest needs. The position also requires keen understanding of how advocacy and policy can advance issues of interest to philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Oversee, cultivate, and manage the Policy & Systems portfolio strategy and grantmaking

- Lead the development of strategies and grantmaking around a multimillion-dollar portfolio supporting the Foundation's policy and systems change strategies to foster stronger education systems—namely Detroit's K-12 public schools (traditional and charter) and the city's system of afterschool and summer program providers. Make thinking visible, identify key priorities/targets, and define markers of progress and success for the portfolio.
- Monitor strategy progress and learning agendas that inform the Foundation and the field. Work in partnership with the VP, Learning & Impact to design and implement.
- Provide leadership and coaching to a team of 1-2 Partnership Managers that support the education policy and systems change strategies.
- Cultivate and steward trusted relationships with grant partners by acting transparently, demonstrating respect, and embodying a commitment to partnership and co-designing with external partners.

Inform the Foundation's understanding and priorities in policy setting and work in partnership with the Ground Building grantmaking team and its grant/community partners.

- Share information and leverage the learnings and relationships of the Foundation's Ground Building team—which is focused on Detroit youth, educator, and resident power—carrying these voices into the policy and systems change work.
- Stay abreast of the broad range of education policy issues, employing external advisors and supports as needed. Monitor how grant partners are engaging, or seeking to engage, in public policy and identify opportunities to support this (i.e. via webinars, research, polling, etc).

- Oversee / conduct research and analysis to be leveraged by the team, the Foundation, and our partners. Leverage opportunities to shape narrative and return learning to the field (policy briefs, articles, blogs, op-eds, talking points, and other synthesis material).
- Partner with other policy-focused partners in philanthropy including the Council of Michigan Foundations' Public Policy Committee.

Develop a team of leaders and foster a productive culture across the Foundation's program and strategy team. Serve as a key member of the Program Leadership team and part of the organization's Director's cabinet of leaders that can foster productive change and progress at the Foundation.

- Provide leadership, management and coaching to a team of partnership managers aligned to the policy and advocacy systems portfolio.
- Maintain high-quality interactions and clear and consistent communications.
- Understand team practices, processes, and deadlines and serve as a champion to hold to foster organizational commitment.
- Model embracing leadership responsibility and accountability while empowering and distributing leadership and decision-making opportunities.
- Embrace a learner stance as a leader and encourage informed risk taking and developing shared co-designed plans for learning and forward action.
- Foster positive culture around a shared organization results and champion the Foundation's values.

Build trusted relationships and connections across a wide range of partners.

- Develop a stakeholder map and foster relationship building with key policy and systems leaders, cultivate an understanding of where there is alignment of opportunities and priorities.
- Represent the Foundation at external convenings and events, asking thoughtful questions, acting with respect, humility and transparency, and relentlessly championing youth power and racial equity.
- Work in partnership with colleagues at the Foundation to foster connections and relationships without creating burden to grant partners and stakeholders.
- Effectively communicate internally and externally about the portfolio's priorities, learnings, and contributions to the overall strategic framework of the Foundation.

REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, & ABILITIES INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

Leadership and Communication

- A can-do, productive attitude. A self-starter who will come to the table with creative ideas and be open to collaborative brainstorming.
- Delegates effectively, ensuring that resources are mapped to priority deliverables while guiding and coaching Partnership Managers as they develop individual grant opportunities.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills (written and verbal) including the ability to listen effectively and respond appropriately and tactfully.
- Strong communication skills with the ability to negotiate internally and upwards around priorities individually, for the team and for the organization.

Policy & Government Relations

- Experience in relationship-building and policy making and/or government relations stakeholder analysis mapping, bringing an understanding of the different policy influencers and structures.
- Ability to communicate effectively with policy makers and leaders about issues and concerns around equitable education systems, root systemic causes.
- Understanding of policy making and budget defining timelines as well as committee and hearing structures and actors where more youth, educator, and resident voices can be better engaged.

Strategy Development

- Designs strategy by taking into account different perspectives, theories of change, constituent groups, varying environmental conditions, and constraints.
- Translates strategy into actionable plans and timelines, and drives effective allocation of resources
- Exceptional strategic thinking skills including the ability to identify what's possible as well as understand and assess risks with the portfolio and/or Foundation.

Relationship Management

- Demonstrated ability to work effectively in a complex, team-based environment, focusing on collaboration and inclusion.
- Ability to build and maintain relationships with a wide range of stakeholders including youth, residents, nonprofit professionals, and civic leaders; Ability to work collaboratively with people from different backgrounds and cultures.
- Proactively seeks out and cultivates relationships with potential new partners and collaborators in the Foundation's fields of interest.

Equity Focused

- A strong interest in racial equity and youth power are a must.
- Champion of all. Aware of biases, how they interfere with thinking, and is able to set aside. Cognizant of who is being invited to the table making sure all are included.
- Intentionally inclusive. Able to identify who isn't at the table and identify strategies to get them to the table.

Grantmaking experience preferred but not required.

- Helps the program team learn to exercise appropriate application and independent judgement of grantmaking and assesses whether the team applies this competency consistently across various types of grants (e.g., consulting, programming, general operating, technical assistance, research & evaluation, etc.).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE & EDUCATION

- Bachelor's degree required or equivalent experience.
- Minimum of ten (10) years of relevant experience in government and/or policy organizations, system-level leadership organizations, philanthropy, or nonprofit settings.
- Minimum of three (3) years of direct management experience.
- Grantmaking or philanthropic experience preferred but not required.

RELATIONSHIPS

- Reports to and is accountable to the Vice President, Program & Strategy.
- Key member of the Program Leadership team, in partnership with other directors. Works closely with VP, Learning & Impact and VP, Communications.
- Manages 1-2 Partnership Managers and/or external consultants.
- Accountable to the President & CEO on specific projects/initiatives as needed.
- Works with employees at all levels throughout the organization.

HOW TO APPLY

This position is a full-time salaried position. The Skillman Foundation offers competitive salary offerings and excellent benefits that include medical, dental, vision, flexible spending accounts, 401k (with a match), life insurance, and disability coverage. For more information or if you are interested, please reach out to www.nppn.co. No phone calls please.

The Skillman Foundation is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer