

POSITION PROFILE

# Vice President, Program

## The Skillman Foundation

Detroit, Michigan



# ABOUT THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION

Founded in 1960, The Skillman Foundation (“The Foundation”) is a private foundation that nurtures the genius of Detroit children and youth. Across its history, the Foundation has granted out more than \$750 million and invests in people and organizations who support young Detroiters to be the designers of their future and who pursue transformational education systems change that centers youth power and racial equity/justice.

## MISSION

We partner with people to transform the education system, nurturing the brilliance and power of Detroit youth.

## VISION

Detroit youth are supported to design bold destinies.

## STRATEGY: PEOPLE POWERED EDUCATION

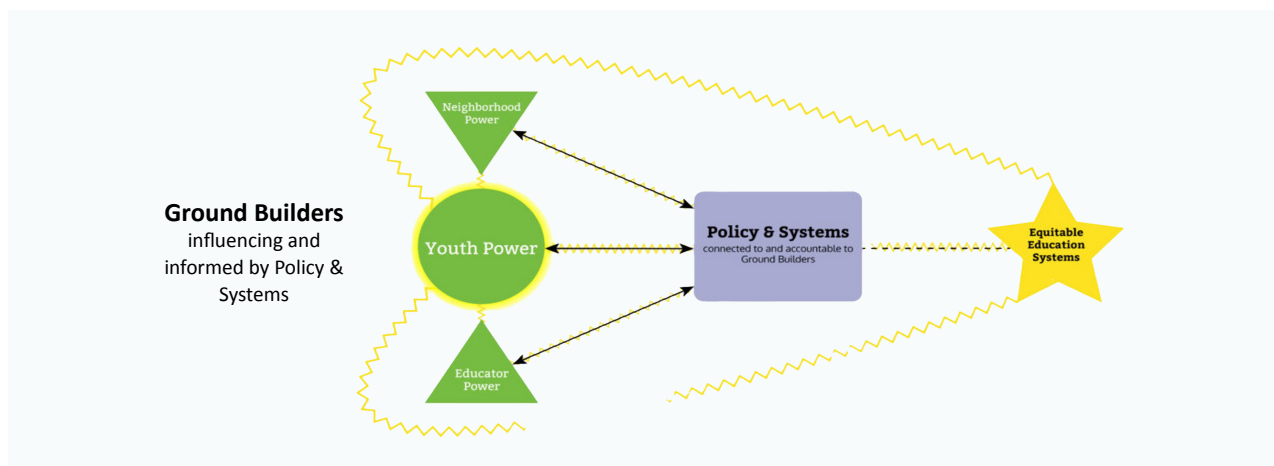
The Skillman Foundation believes that the people making decisions about education should have expertise in it. This means equipping those with firsthand experience to lead the reinvention of the education system, connecting people and policy.

The Skillman Foundation invests in Detroiters’ power and access to design an exceptional and equitable education system (**ground building** work), in lockstep with policymakers and others who are currently setting policies and practices (**policy & systems** work). The ultimate outcome it seeks to contribute to is an **equitable education system that opens pathways to opportunity, where all partner for student success.**

The Skillman Foundation is focused on four aims:

- Expand education organizing power.
- Advocate for education policymaking to center the insights and outcomes of Detroit youth.
- Build common ground for education system change.
- Be an accountable and racially equitable grantmaker.

### People Powered Education | Strategic Framework Graphic



## VALUES

The Foundation embodies the following core values which are central to its work:

- ▶ **Youth Driven**  
We are following the will of Detroit youth to dream and design new possibilities together.
- ▶ **Racial Equity & Justice Focused**  
We enact racial equity within our practices and pursue the understanding and advancement of racial justice to change the odds for Detroit youth. We define racial equity as a level playing field for Black, Brown, and all people of color within current systems and structures. We define racial justice as shifting power to those most negatively impacted by the way things currently are so that they may redesign systems and structures to benefit all.
- ▶ **Accountable to Each Other**  
We love that there is no place like Detroit. We will show up every day in partnership with each other, internally and externally, creating our shared future. We are connected.
- ▶ **Greater Than Grants**  
We extend all forms of capital – financial, reputational, and relational – thoughtfully, ethically, and equitably.
- ▶ **Listeners & Learners**  
We are guided by the brilliance of Detroit youth and community. We learn from our successes and our failures to continually improve ourselves, our organization, and our communities.

## COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY

The Skillman Foundation is a BIPOC organization, with two-thirds of its staff and board of directors being people of color and four out of five members of the executive leadership team being women of color.

In 2022, 54% of The Foundation’s grants went to BIPOC-led organizations, which is defined as an organization with a leader who is Black, Indigenous or a person of color (BIPOC) and with a board of directors where more than half are BIPOC. These grants accounted for 47% of the grant budget. The Foundation’s 2022 grantmaking marks a 20 percentage point increase in grants and 13 a percentage point increase in grant dollars to BIPOC-led organizations since we began analyzing this data in a 2019-2021 Racial Equity Audit. View the 2022 Racial Equity Audit by clicking [here](#).

The Skillman Foundation makes distributions of approximately \$19M annually on assets of \$550M. The Foundation has a staff of 22 and is governed by a 14-member Board of Trustees.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE  
SKILLMAN FOUNDATION BY  
VISITING ITS WEBSITE:

[www.skillman.org](http://www.skillman.org)

TO ACCESS THE 2022  
ANNUAL REPORT, PLEASE  
CLICK [HERE](#)

# WHAT'S NEXT

Under the leadership of its President & CEO, [Angelique Power](#), an incredible opportunity emerged for the Foundation to examine its history and to better understand the needs and opportunities of the Detroit youth and community. In 2022, The Foundation began an intensive and purposeful learning journey through internal examination and external listening conversations that informed a new path forward and strategic focus.

To support this collective vision The Skillman Foundation launched a [new organizational framework](#) that focuses on its investment in people and policy. It supports Detroit youth, educators, and community members to influence education policy and systems change (referred to as its [Ground Building](#) work). The organization also works to cultivate a policy ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of Detroiters (referred to as its [Policy & Systems](#) work.) These two pillars will guide the organization's grantmaking and changemaking efforts on behalf of Detroit youth.

Today, The Foundation is embarking on a new era that builds on its long history and meets the needs and opportunities of the current moment. The Skillman Foundation calls for transformation of the education system to center equity and excellence. The Foundation's commitment to new possibilities for Detroit Youth is reflected in its new strategic framework, which was co-designed with Detroit youth and their strongest champions.

The new strategic framework is community-informed and aims to forge a new destiny for youth by seeding four key contributions leveraging all of its capital against the following four outcomes:

1. Expand education organizing power.
2. Advocate for education policymaking to center the insights and outcomes of Detroit youth.
3. Amplify community-led education system changes.
4. Be an accountable and racially equitable grantmaker.



# THE OPPORTUNITY

Reporting to the President & CEO, the Vice President, Program (“VP, Program”) provides both strategic and operational leadership to all program areas. This is a new role designed to shape, guide and implement the Foundation’s grantmaking work while ensuring maximum impact, authentic engagement, operational efficiency and strong collaboration across teams.

As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the VP, Program will work to build and enhance cohesion across the organization, playing an important role in setting the tone and culture of the Foundation as it evolves.

Additionally, the VP, Program will serve as a key spokesperson and representative of the Foundation as it engages with community organizations, educational institutions, philanthropies, government and policy leaders, civic groups, businesses and the media.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VP, PROGRAM INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

### Grantmaking and Programmatic Leadership

- Collaborate with, guide, and advise program staff in the development and review of overall grantmaking portfolios and individual grants.
- Provide thought partnership to program staff on public policy matters and maintain up-to-date, in-depth knowledge of state, local, and national public policies and developments that relate to and affect the Foundation’s program areas.
- Ensure long-term vision and strategies are informed by, and have buy-in, across the Foundation’s diverse internal and external constituencies.
- Align grantmaking with overall evaluation and strategic framework.
- Work closely with the VP of Learning to articulate, monitor, evaluate, and continuously improve grantmaking goals and approaches.
- Represent the Foundation, along with program staff, in the community as delegated by the President & CEO.

### Ambassadorship and Convening

- Serve as a visible and approachable community catalyst and convener.
- Act as a public spokesperson and advocate for the grantmaking work of the Foundation and through collective local, regional, and national efforts.
- Cultivate and steward relationships with a broad range of constituents, including Trustees, grantees, community and civic leaders, youth, educational institutions, foundations, cross sector partners and beyond.
- Collaborate with the VP of Communications to create compelling materials and represent the foundation in various forums.
- Work to enhance the Foundation’s position within the local landscape, proactively seeking out opportunities to build awareness, engagement and impact.

## Strategic Leadership

- Serve as a member of the Foundation’s senior leadership team; advise on key policy and strategy issues related to the Foundation’s mission, funding priorities, and grantmaking programs.
- Support the President & CEO on day-to-day operational activities relating to mission, programs, and policy.
- Identify and evaluate new grantmaking opportunities to further the Foundation’s existing strategy goals.
- Oversee processes for communicating grantmaking program including grant recommendations, racial equity analysis of grants, and progress toward achieving goals to the Foundation’s Board of Trustees.
- Provide input and guidance to the VP, Communications in developing plans, content, and communiqués to advance the Foundation’s program areas, and in developing external communications to highlight issues of interest, spotlight the work of grantees, and disseminate the results of Foundation program projects.
- Develop a strong understanding of the needs of Detroit youth, educators, residents and policymakers and recommends program areas and grant policies accordingly.

## Team Management and Development

- Manage the Team’s individual and collective performance; Supervise Program Directors and their teams, providing coaching and mentoring to further their growth, and evaluate performance.
- Build effective relationships with Program Team while investing in a leadership development culture.
- Promote a productive, collaborative and inclusive team environment. Facilitate high levels of belonging and achievement within the team.
- Foster a culture of continuous learning and growth.
- Ensure accountability to results.
- Operationalize equitable practices across departments.

## Communications

- Craft clear, informative meeting materials for programmatic discussions across the organization and for a variety of constituencies.
- Actively engage with grant partners, Trustees, President’s Youth Council members, and others regarding the foundation’s grantmaking and program strategy.
- Work closely with the VP of Communications for media interactions, panels, and keynotes.

# CANDIDATE PROFILE

## A Strategic, Innovative and Analytical Thinker

The VP, Program is experienced at assessing a diverse and evolving policy landscape and identifying opportunities for increased impact and innovation while remaining agile and tolerant of ambiguity as the Foundation and community priorities evolve in real time. The ideal candidate must be able to translate ideas from different spaces, make connections between seemingly disparate ideas and leverage intersections and innovations for deeper impact. They will have experience drawing learnings from successful systems change and exhibit resourcefulness in setting priorities, navigating change management, and proposing new ways of achieving desired outcomes. The VP of Program is skilled in conceptualizing, evaluating, and implementing strategies, as well as managing projects and establishing and meeting clear benchmarks for progress. Experience in applying systems-thinking and/or emergent learning to practices and equity issues is a plus but not required.

## Building Relationships and Leading Through Influence

The VP, Program will move seamlessly between the worlds of philanthropy, policy making, community, youth and government, leveraging the perspectives and expertise of each for maximum impact. The ideal candidate employs a thoughtful, empathetic, and engaging approach that fosters an atmosphere of collaboration and partnership across the organization — proven success and demonstrated outcomes in this area are critical. A strong, yet intuitive communicator, this leader brings demonstrated experience leading through influence with the ability to connect and inspire across constituent groups. The ideal candidate is an active listener, seeking input from a wide array of perspectives to help inform the Foundation’s grantmaking priorities, and to deepen understanding of current issues, emerging trends, new opportunities, and best practices. They will be an inclusive people leader, demonstrating significant cultural competence and fluency in the ongoing work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. They will foster an environment of collaboration, support, and mutual respect internally and externally. A team player by nature, they will embrace the opportunity to support, collaborate with, and develop the work of others.



## A Skilled Communicator, Ambassador and Convener

The VP Program will be a highly effective communicator, consistently demonstrating the ability to distill, synthesize and translate complex information clearly and concisely in both written and verbal formats for a range of audiences. They will be highly skilled in public speaking, representing the Foundation compellingly in a variety of contexts. This person is a natural convener of people and organizations, who derives satisfaction from fostering meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships in their communities as well as regional and national leaders across the nonprofit, private, public, and private sectors. Their combined experience, maturity level, and flexibility will enable them to easily interact with a broad set of stakeholders, including the Board of Directors, executive management, and staff across the organization.

## Leadership Acumen

The VP, Program brings success building and leading high-performing teams with the utmost degree of professionalism while guiding team members' growth and development. Adept at facilitating decision-making, the ideal candidate solicits input from varied sources, facilitates robust dialogue, successfully navigates divergent opinions and is skilled at making decisions/bringing the dialogue to closure. This leader will model and employ best-in-class management practices with the goal of enhancing impact and team performance, and instilling a culture of trust, accountability and work/life harmony across the organization.

## A Champion of the Mission

Fully embracing the new strategic framework of The Skillman Foundation, the VP, Program must have an unwavering commitment to transforming the education system while nurturing the brilliance and power of Detroit youth. A sincere interest in culture-building, staff optimization and relationship development is key to ensuring the Foundation achieves its vision. An appreciation for the strength, resilience, vitality and richness of Detroit and the region are imperative. This leader will have a strong work ethic, high level of emotional intelligence, and evidence of a commitment to lifelong learning and professional growth and a personal style characterized by humility, self-awareness, accessibility and commitment to racial equity and justice. Additionally, this leader will be an individual of unquestioned integrity, ethics, and values – someone who can be trusted without reservation.

**While this leader may come with experience in a variety of fields or sectors, grantmaking experience is required. An understanding of education policy and/or education systems is helpful but not required.**

**Executive level management experience supervising and developing a team is required – with demonstrated ability to navigate varying performance needs and deliver strong results for the mission.**



## ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- Master's degree preferred but not required with 10 years or more of relevant experience, including leading complex strategies and development.
- A true leader of leaders, experience managing teams in every direction is a must.
- Excellent analytical, verbal and written communication skills along with a high level of diplomacy, discretion and problem-solving ability.
- Stellar project management and organizational skills, and the ability to manage multiple priorities in a complex environment.
- Ability to implement policies based on organizational integrity and common sense.
- Candidates with a background in philanthropic program portfolios or other strategic investments and a track record leading impactful initiatives are encouraged.



# LOCATION, COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

This is a full-time, hybrid work environment. The successful candidate must be based in the Detroit region. A relocation package will be provided if the successful candidate lives outside of Michigan.

The annual salary for this role will be based on a range of \$199,900 – \$252,000 and will be commensurate with the successful candidate’s skills and experience. The Skillman Foundation also offers a generous benefits package and a hybrid work schedule of three days in the office and two remote workdays per week – subject to change as necessary. As a senior leader of the organization, the flexibility to adapt schedules to meet business needs onsite throughout the week and in community after work hours is necessary.

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*The Skillman Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer and shall continue to adhere to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity to ensure that all applicants and employees are considered for hire, promotion, and position status without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, weight, height or handicap.*

## CONTACT

Koya Partners has been exclusively retained for this engagement, which is being led by Anne McCarthy & Tiara Muse. Express interest in this role by [filling out our Talent Profile](#) or emailing the search team directly at [skillmanfoundationVPPProgram@koyapartners.com](mailto:skillmanfoundationVPPProgram@koyapartners.com). All inquiries and discussions are strictly confidential.

Koya Partners | Diversified Search Group is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email [nonprofitsearchops@divsearch.com](mailto:nonprofitsearchops@divsearch.com). If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

## ABOUT KOYA PARTNERS | DIVERSIFIED SEARCH GROUP

Koya Partners, a Diversified Search Group company, is the nation’s premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

Diversified Search Group is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of “America’s Best Executive Recruiting Firms” and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

*Learn more about Koya Partners | Diversified Search Group via the [firm’s website](#).*