



The Skillman Foundation, located in Detroit, MI, partners with people to transform the education system, nurturing the brilliance and power of Detroit youth. We believe in People Powered Education. We invest in Detroiters' power to design an exceptional education system, we support equitable education policy advocacy, and we connect the expertise of students and those closest to them with policy movers statewide. Across our 65-year history, The Skillman Foundation has granted approximately \$750 million and has served as a vocal advocate to strengthen K-12 public education, afterschool programming, youth and community leadership, and racial equity and justice. For more information, visit www.skillman.org

Reporting to the Vice President, Program & Strategy, the **Director, Policy & Systems** is responsible for ensuring that the Foundation maximizes opportunities to shift education policy at the city, county/region, and state level. Our aim is to accelerate the transformation of Detroit's education system (K-12 schools as well as afterschool and summer programs) by centering the voices of Detroit youth, families, and educators. This leader will oversee our Policy & Systems grantmaking portfolio and have a wide range of relationships and connections across the policy and education ecosystems.

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 excellence and 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 policy advocacy can advance issues of interest to the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.

PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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

- Lead the development of Policy & Systems strategies and grantmaking through a multimillion-dollar portfolio to strengthen Detroit's K-12 public schools (traditional and charter) and the city's system of afterschool and summer programs.
- 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 Vice President, 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 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 & Systems 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 as needed 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).
- Provide leadership, management, and coaching to partnership managers aligned to the Policy & Systems portfolio.
- Maintain high-quality interactions and clear and consistent communications.
- Understand team practices, processes, and deadlines and serve as a champion to foster organizational commitment.
- Model embracing leadership responsibility and accountability while empowering and distributing leadership and decision-making opportunities.
- Embrace a learning stance as a leader and encourage informed risk taking and developing shared plans for learning and forward action.
- Foster positive culture and champion the Foundation's values.

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

- Represent the Foundation at external convenings and events, 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 that are mutually beneficial for 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.
- Delegate 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, policymaking and/or government relations, and stakeholder analysis mapping, bringing an understanding of the different policy influencers and structures.
- Ability to communicate effectively with policymakers and leaders about issues and concerns around equitable education systems, root systemic causes.
- Understanding of policymaking and budget timelines as well as committee and hearing structures and actors where more youth, educator, and resident voices can be better engaged.

Strategy Development

- Design strategy by considering different perspectives, theories of change, constituent groups, varying environmental conditions, and constraints.
- Translate 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 seek out and cultivate relationships with potential new partners and collaborators in the Foundation's fields of interest.
- Strong interest in inclusivity, belonging and youth power.
- Champion of all, aware of biases and actively works to set aside.

Grantmaking experience preferred but not required.

- Help 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, 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.

HOW TO APPLY:

This is a full-time salaried position. The Skillman Foundation offers competitive salaries and excellent benefits that include medical, dental, vision, flexible spending accounts, a health savings account, a 401k (with a match), life insurance, and disability coverage. The salary range for this position is \$150k-\$180k.

If you are interested, please send a cover letter and resume to hr@skillman.org no later than **Wednesday, March 12, 2025**. No phone calls, please.

The Skillman Foundation is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer