



DIRECTOR, GROUND BUILDING

Founded in 1960, The Skillman Foundation works to transform the education system, nurturing the brilliance and power of Detroit youth. In 2024, we launched [People Powered Education](#), a ten-year initiative that equips youth, educators, parents, and communities to collaborate with policy and systems leaders to advance excellent and equitable education in Detroit. For more information, please visit www.skillman.org.

Reporting to the Vice President of Program, the **Director of Ground Building** is responsible for ensuring that the Foundation maximizes opportunities to build youth, educator, and neighborhood power to shift policy and systems at the city, county/region, and state levels in service of more equitable education systems for Detroit students.

This leader will oversee our [Ground Building](#) grantmaking portfolio and will have a wide range of relationships and connections throughout the organizing ecosystem. They will bring expertise around organizing and power building to ensure the voices of those most impacted are lifted, amplified, and heard. The Ground Building director will work in partnership with the rest of the program team to accelerate the Foundation's impact and influence. This role requires a person who can work effectively across a wide range of activities, from highly strategic works to operational and tactical tasks, and from broad efforts to targeted priorities.

Principal Responsibilities

Oversee, cultivate, and manage the Ground Building portfolio strategy and grantmaking.

- Lead the development of strategies and grantmaking around a multimillion-dollar portfolio supporting the Foundation's Ground Building strategies to foster more equitable education systems. Make strategic thinking visible, identify key priorities/targets, and define markers of progress and success for the portfolio.
- Monitor strategy progress and learning agendas that inform both the Foundation and the field. Work in partnership with the Vice President of Learning & Impact to design and implement strategies.
- Provide leadership and coaching to a team of 1-2 partnership managers that support the Ground Building strategy.
- 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 priority setting and work in partnership with the Equitable Education Systems & Advocacy team and its grant/community partners.

- Share information and leverage the learnings and relationships of the Foundation's Equitable Education Systems & Advocacy team and its efforts to leverage information about potential policy shifts and accelerate priority setting for greater impact and influence.
- Build knowledge about youth power, educator power, and neighborhood power for the team, the Foundation, and the field. Stay abreast of local, regional, and national developments and trends.

- 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 Ground Building-focused partners in philanthropy.

Develop a team of leaders and foster a productive culture across the Foundation's program and strategy teams. Serve as a key member of the program leadership team and part of the organization's directors' cabinet of leaders that foster progress at the Foundation.

- Provide leadership, management, and coaching to a team of 1-2 partnership managers aligned to the Ground Building portfolio.
- Maintain high-quality interactions with clear and consistent communications.
- Understand team practices, processes, and deadlines and serve as a champion to hold and foster organizational commitment.
- Model leadership responsibility and accountability while empowering others, distributing leadership and decision-making opportunities.
- Embrace a learner stance as a leader and encourage informed risk-taking and the development of shared/co-designed plans for learning and action.
- Foster a positive culture around shared organization results 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, asking thoughtful questions, acting with respect, humility, and transparency while relentlessly championing youth power and racial equity.
- Work in partnership with colleagues across the Foundation to foster connections and relationships without creating burden to grant partners and stakeholders.
- Effectively communicate internally and externally about the Ground Building portfolio's priorities, learnings, and contributions to the Foundation's overall strategic framework.

Perform other duties as assigned.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Leadership

- A can-do, productive attitude. A self-starter who brings creative ideas and is 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.
- Able to advocate—and negotiate—priorities, across staff at the Foundation as well as with community partners.

Grantmaking

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

Strategy Development

- Designs strategy by considering different perspectives (including theories of change, constituent groups, varying environmental conditions, and constraints).
- Translates strategy into actionable plans and timelines. Drives effective allocation of resources.
- Exceptional strategic thinking skills, including the ability to identify what's possible as well as understand and assess risks.

Relationship Management

- Demonstrated ability to work effectively in a complex, team-based environment, focused 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.

Education and Professional Experience

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience.
- Minimum of ten (10) years of experience working in a leadership position with experience in grassroots efforts and community, education, or youth organizing. Nonprofit and/or philanthropy experience preferred.
- 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 salary offerings and excellent benefits that include medical, dental, vision, flexible spending accounts, 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 Friday, October 31, 2025. No phone calls, please.

The Skillman Foundation is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer