Title: Director, Mission Sustainability Initiative

Reports to: Chief Program Officer

Organization Context: For nearly 50 years, Forefront’s mission has been to build a more vibrant and equitable social impact sector. It is one of the only regional associations in the US whose Membership includes Grantmakers, Operating Nonprofits, and their Advisors. Through active Membership engagement, Forefront provides opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, convening, education, policy engagement, leadership development, and solidarity among Members. We also provide access to our best-in-class Knowledge Center: the largest philanthropic collection in the Midwest offering unique services and resources to the social impact sector of Illinois.

MSI Summary: The Mission Sustainability Initiative (MSI) is a program of Forefront. It encourages and supports strategic organizational partnerships and long-term collaborations between nonprofit organizations inside Illinois. By supporting sensible collaborations, restructurings, and partnerships, the Initiative has an important and positive impact on the capacity, effectiveness, and financial health of the Illinois nonprofit sector. MSI provides vital support to a diverse set of nonprofit organizations as they navigate a very challenging operating environment. It brings together educational, technical, and financial resources that help nonprofits to make and implement decisions about their structure and operations that will increase their effectiveness and efficiency in addressing their missions. Specifically, it supports thoughtful decisions about strategic restructuring – back-office collaborations, long-term program partnerships, mergers, and asset-preserving dissolution. It endeavors to encourage innovation and best practices in the nonprofit sector.

Position Summary: The MSI Director is a member of the Forefront staff working in collaboration with the program, finance and administration, and external affairs teams. The Director is the lead person for all MSI grantmaking inquiries and curates thought leadership and educational content for the Illinois social impact sector. The Director staffs the MSI Funders Committee as well as the MSI Advisory Committee, which both provide oversight to the program structure and strategy. The MSI Director is a confidential resource for organizations inquiring about the program. The Director also maintains relationships in the community to inform referrals for potential MSI grantees.
Essential Job Duties

Program Development and Execution:
• Manage the MSI grants program:
  • Provide appropriate assistance to potential and current grantees as part of the due diligence process
  • Cultivate and develop a pipeline of potential grants
  • Evaluate and recommend grants to the Funders Committee
  • Manage and report on the Initiative’s portfolio including collecting/reviewing semi-annual reports from individual grantees
• Manage the MSI technical assistance program and related resources:
  • Field calls from interested nonprofit leaders, provide information and advice, and direct them to information that will help them advance their decision processes about strategic restructuring, while maintaining confidentiality.
  • Maintain the referral system for pro bono assistance.
  • Maintain a database of, and knowledge about, paid consultants specializing in nonprofit strategic restructuring. Cultivate and vet experienced consultants to expand the database of qualified MSI consultants.
  • Update and provide content to the Forefront website based on the Initiative’s emerging local experience, as well as sharing learning that is available from other cities and literature; as appropriate, develop case studies for public dissemination to enhance thought leadership in the field.
  • Maintain knowledge of the resources available to Illinois nonprofits related to strategic restructuring and other nonprofit management challenges; expand the resource base of informational materials, stay current on the issues impacting the MSI.
• In partnership with MSI Advisory Committee and broader Forefront Programs team, propose, develop, and implement field-building activities to promote MSI as a resource for the nonprofit community, including:
  • Webinars, meetings, and other informational experiences for the public related to long-term organizational partnerships and collaborations.
  • Educational/training sessions on restructuring practices and processes for technical assistance providers and nonprofit leaders,
  • Speaking engagements with nonprofit leaders and boards, regional and national umbrella groups, etc.
• Serve as primary staff liaison and support to MSI Funders and MSI Advisory Committees:
  • Support and develop volunteer committee leadership; cultivate and share knowledge with committee members, including disseminating materials and delivering presentations on topics impacting the sector as appropriate
  • Manage scheduling, agenda development, and communications related to quarterly committee meetings
  • Develop performance metrics for the overall Initiative in partnership with the Funders and Advisory Committees; produce an annual report on the Initiative’s overall performance based on those metrics

Engagement and Stewardship
• Build ongoing relationships with grantees, funders, umbrella organizations, technical
assistance providers, government officials, and other stakeholders to promote mergers, alliances, and closures as tools for increasing impact and improving outcomes for nonprofits in Illinois; participate in select fundraising activities as appropriate.

- Serve as primary point of contact for Mission Sustainability Initiative outreach and related activities. Partner with broader Program, Policy, External Affairs, and Administration, teams to strategically maximize relationships, fundraising, and engagement opportunities; cultivate appropriate opportunities for Forefront Members to demonstrate leadership through engagement with Forefront- and Collective-sponsored programs.

Internal
- Work collaboratively with External Affairs teams to prepare reports for Forefront funders and promote the work of the MSI regularly to Forefront’s constituents.
- Make effective use of Forefront systems to manage constituent records in Salesforce to ensure accuracy and support organizational reporting on activities and accomplishments.

Other
- Demonstrate leadership in accordance with Forefront’s mission, vision, and values.

Position Qualifications
- Minimum of five to seven years of relevant work experience in and thorough knowledge of nonprofit organizations in Illinois
- Demonstrated understanding of nonprofit structure and management, specifically:
  - Experience with change management, mergers, acquisitions, and strategic partnerships
  - Management, organization structures, board development and dynamics, and fundraising experience as a fundraiser or grantmaker is ideal
  - Base level of financial acumen/knowledge of nonprofit business models
- Strong facilitation, project management, writing, and presentation skills
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences; experience supporting or communicating with organizations from varying content areas (e.g., human services, education, arts)
- Demonstrated commitment to racial equity principles and anti-racist practices
- Experience working discreetly where confidentiality is required
- Ability to work both independently and as part of a collaborative, cross-departmental team
- Demonstrated ability to manage complex projects, prioritize, maintain deadlines, and ensure quality of work

Location: Must be based in Illinois. This role may be fully remote if candidate is located outside Chicago.

Special Conditions: Position is fully remote until public health conditions allow for safe return to in-office work. Periodic evening work; regular in-person engagements when public health conditions allow.

Position Classification: Full-Time, Exempt

Salary Range: $80,000 - $85,000

Benefits: 403(b) with employer match; generous paid time off policy; paid parental leave; professional development assistance; employer contributions to dental, health, and vision insurance; employer provided disability and life insurance; flexible spending account.