



Position Specification

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
Vice President, Program Strategy

Our Client

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation provides access to opportunities that help people achieve financial stability, upward mobility, and economic prosperity – regardless of race, gender, or geography.

The [grantmaking](#), [research](#), programs, and initiatives support the start and growth of new businesses, a more prepared workforce, and stronger communities. They work in [Kansas City](#) and the surrounding states of Missouri and Kansas. They champion organizations and communities that test innovative solutions and seek to change conditions. They work nationwide through programs, [research](#), and [policy](#). Their [grantmaking](#) to nonprofit organizations connects [students](#), educators, families, and [entrepreneurs](#) with practical solutions and resources to realize their ambitions. As a result, new businesses and a stronger supply of skilled individuals drive regional economic growth and set us all on a path to greater financial stability, upward mobility, and economic prosperity.

Vision

A society of economically empowered individuals contributing to the improvement of their communities.

Mission

The Kauffman Foundation seeks to prepare people for success in their jobs and careers, so that everyone has the opportunity to achieve economic stability, mobility, and prosperity. The work is grounded in the principles of [racial equity, diversity, and inclusion](#) and is consistent with the aspirations of the founder, [Ewing Marion Kauffman](#).

Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

The Kauffman Foundation focuses work on people whose opportunities have been limited. They begin with racial equity because they believe achieving racial equity benefits everyone:

- Better job and career pathways.
- A stronger and fairer economy.
- More resilient communities.
- A better quality of life for all.

Success in life should not be determined by race, gender, or geography. This transformation demonstrates that when we build supportive systems in place of broken ones, we all win. [Learn more about their commitment.](#)

The Role

The Vice President of Program Strategy (VPP) reports to the [President and CEO, DeAngela Burns-Wallace](#), and is a member of the Foundation's Leadership Team. This is an opportunity to join a mission-driven organization poised to build on its successes to date and drive continued transformational impact at scale.

Under the direction of the CEO and in collaboration with appropriate staff, the VPP determines the results, strategies, and performance indicators for the Foundation's programmatic grantmaking and initiatives. As a member of the Leadership team, they play a key role in supporting and contributing to Foundation-wide policy and process developments, organizational effectiveness, and an inclusive and equity-focused culture.

The VPP is expected to possess exceptional management and leadership skills and will serve as an inspiring and motivating leader who is ready to take the programmatic work and impact of the equity agenda to the next level. In this vein, they will help encourage more collaborative, proactive grantmaking across multiple Foundation program areas. The VPP will be responsible for leading change within the team, building a culture of shared accountability, strong communications, and transparency of decision-making, bringing leadership to their department and larger organizational goals.

Specific responsibilities include:

Programmatic Leadership and Grantmaking

The VPP provides guidance and input to all program areas and plays a leadership role to promote synergy across all the Foundation's grantmaking activities. They lead responsibility for grantmaking and project development across the Foundation and for avoiding siloed approaches, while also maintaining clear lines of responsibility among the program staff. They have responsibility for ensuring the quality, credibility, and potential impact of grantee work products and materials produced by the Foundation are as strong as possible. This work could include but would not be limited to:

- Development of a coordinated grantmaking program to advance EMKF's equity agenda.
- Approval of pathway grantmaking portfolios and individual grants.
- Overseeing the refinement of results, associated strategies and performance indicators connected to the Foundation's funding priorities and initiatives.
- Sustaining and growing highly effective grantmaking strategies that are grantee-centric, focused on individual and community outcomes, and equity-focused.
- Ensuring ongoing programmatic excellence.
- Refining grantmaking systems and protocols.
- Overseeing grantmaking portfolios and individual grants to advance results and achieve performance indicators.

Strategic Leadership

Sustain and grow highly effective strategies to achieve community impacts and advance EMKF's priorities and initiatives. Advise on key policy and strategy issues related to the Foundation's mission, funding priorities, and grant making programs. Support the President and CEO on day-to-day operational activities related to mission, program, and priorities. This work could include but would not be limited to:

- Serving as a strong external-facing ambassador of EMKF.
- Collaborating with the Research and Evaluation teams to refine the knowledge management/grants evaluation processes to monitor impact.
- Operationalizing data, information, and experiences to achieve strategic ends.
- Partnering within the Program department, across the institution, and with key stakeholders to advance the equity agenda, and achieve greater alignment across the Foundation and with the communities EMKF serves.
- Continuing to apply learning, evolve approaches, and adapt strategy to changing conditions and opportunities with an eye toward long-term goals.

People Leadership

Lead, inspire, and manage a highly talented, motivated, and dedicated team. The VPP leads a team, partners closely with other leadership team members, and oversees a grant-making budget of approximately \$120M. Management responsibilities include hiring, training, motivating, and retaining staff members, evaluating their performance, and ensuring effective collaboration and appropriate opportunities for professional growth and autonomy. This work could include but would not be limited to:

- Growing a strong team with a commitment to collaboration.
- Developing and refining a range of leadership roles and approaches as civic leader, advocate, convenor, and grant maker.
- Attracting, developing, coaching, and retaining high-performance team members, empowering them to elevate their level of responsibility, span of control, and performance.
- Working with staff to develop systems to ensure consistent, high-quality project management.
- Providing leadership in the development of inter-team communication and cohesiveness, sustaining culture and supporting staff during organizational growth.

Candidate Profile

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Setting Strategy

- The ability to create and articulate an inspiring vision for the organization's programs. Can set the direction and make tough decisions.
- The inclination to seek and analyze data from a variety of sources to support decisions and to align others with the organization's overall strategy.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the philanthropic industry.
- The ability to effectively balance the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of how much change the organization is capable of handling, to create realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and successful.

Executing for Results

- The ability to set clear and challenging goals while committing the organization to improved performance; tenacious and accountable in driving results.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; the ability to adapt nimbly and lead others through complex situations.
- A risk-taker who seeks data and input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended circumstances from decisions; someone who takes smart risks.
- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity and forethought in their approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always taking into account what is best for the organization.

Leading Teams

- The track record of leading successful change management and operating as an effective transformative leader.
- The ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others.
- The ability to persevere in the face of challenges, and exhibit a steadfast resolve and relentless commitment to higher standards, which commands respect from followers.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and self-improvement.

Relationships and Influence

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively. Is energized by the partnership with others.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership in others through compelling influence, powerful charisma, passion in their beliefs, and active drive.
- Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
- Creates a sense of purpose/meaning for the team that generates followership beyond their own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organization as a whole.
- A team player. Operates with a collaboration first mindset. Seeks ways to partner with others to make the whole stronger.

Qualifications

The VPP will be thoroughly committed to EMKF's strategy and mission. All candidates should have demonstrated leadership, coaching, and relationship management experience and demonstrated strong success managing funder relationships. The person should be creative, mission-driven, and capable of working collaboratively with various constituent groups. The VPP must be a strategic, energetic, and forward-thinking leader with a proven record of impact, influence, and applying lessons learned. The person should have proven management experience and a collegial and inclusive style in the following areas:

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- **Program Leadership and Management:** This individual will have taken a hands-on approach in leading a variety of initiatives. The ideal candidate will have a track record of effectively leading a performance-based and outcome-based program and staff. She or he will have developed and operationalized strategies that have taken a program or organization to the next stage of growth.
- **Team Building and Development:** The successful candidate will have recruited, managed, and developed a strong team of staff, program/project managers, and development professionals. This individual will serve as a “player/coach” to motivate and mentor their team.
- **Exceptional Communication and Influencing Skills:** As a voice/advocate for EMKF the VPP will have strong written and verbal communication skills. They will be a persuasive, credible, and polished communicator with excellent interpersonal and multidisciplinary project skills. This individual must work collaboratively with internal, as well as external, partners and other organizations, providing exposure for program impact in a variety of professional journals and other media outlets.

Preferred Qualifications include:

- At least 10 years of experience in philanthropy, including managing larger grantmaking portfolios.
- BA or combination of education and experience. Advanced degree in a relevant field, preferred.
- At least 10 years of experience in a leadership position, preferably in the philanthropic or nonprofit sector.
- Strong demonstrated communications skills, both oral and written.
- Experience in strategic planning and execution.
- Deep knowledge and commitment to advancing racial equity and greater economic inclusion.
- Experience developing and implementing strategies connected to policy and systems change.
- Management experience within complex organizations.
- Experience building effective teams and engaging in collaborative strategy development and decision-making.
- Demonstrated commitment to quality programs and excellence in organizational and project management with the ability to achieve strategic objectives and manage a budget.
- Ability to work effectively in collaboration with diverse groups of people.
- Integrity, positive attitude, mission-driven, and self-directed with demonstrated passion for EMKF's mission and commitment to working collaboratively with a management team of senior professionals.
- Solid judgment and discernment and apparent leadership skills.
- Ability to handle a variety of constituencies, manage multiple tasks simultaneously, and thrive in a complex environment with multiple priorities.
- Impeccable integrity.
- Strong work ethic.

Contact

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