



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Grantmakers for Education

Grantmakers for Education (“EdFunders”), the premier membership organization for supporters and funders of K-12 and postsecondary education, seeks a strategic and mission-driven leader to serve as its next Executive Director. Headquartered in Portland, Oregon, EdFunders is a fully remote organization proudly representing thousands of grantmakers who believe in the transformative nature of education and are bringing bold thinking to philanthropy in all education sectors. The organization serves as a resource to the grantmaking community and advocates on behalf of its members and communities.

For more than thirty years, EdFunders has led philanthropy in convening public and private education funders to effectively connect them with each other. Through its highly attended annual conference, EdFunders provides a space for members to collaborate, innovate, and advance the fields of education and philanthropy. The next Executive Director will join EdFunders during a time of great opportunity for the organization. The organization is focused on providing crucial services, information resources, and programming to help members with their grantmaking. EdFunders’ strong and demonstrated commitment to its members has made it a well-respected source of leadership in the educational and philanthropic communities. The Executive Director will continue efforts to strengthen philanthropy’s role in improving educational outcomes nationwide.

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall operations of EdFunders, which includes a \$3,000,000 annual budget and nine staff members. Key responsibilities for the new leader include working in partnership with the governance Board; modeling a collaborative leadership style that supports diversity and professional development; supporting a motivated professional team; sustainably and responsibly growing EdFunders’ membership; managing and deepening relationships with member organizations; developing financial policies that anticipate membership trends and increase available resources; and encouraging open and spirited dialogue about the future of education philanthropy and the organization’s relevant role in this space. The Executive Director must work in close concert with a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure EdFunders remains a force for connecting philanthropy and education professionals, advancing education as a public good, and achieving racial equity in our communities.

EdFunders has retained Isaacson Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the Executive Director. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

HISTORY

Founded in 1995, EdFunders was initially conceived to develop a collective vision of how philanthropy can advance educational efforts and outcomes on behalf of students and teachers. The organization was intentionally ambitious and active in community organizing and advocacy efforts. From its outset, EdFunders invited philanthropy leaders and heads of foundations to partner in their efforts. This was against a backdrop of sweeping changes in the nation's educational landscape, including the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Responding to philanthropic concerns about where public education was headed, EdFunders served as a critical connection point for grantmakers to navigate the rapid changes in the education sector. Eventually, the organization evolved from being specifically about the advancement of education and turned toward sharpening the approach to grantmaking in education, recognizing that philanthropic efforts could significantly transform the education sector, especially when wielded collectively. As a result of this expanded mission, EdFunders itself grew as an organization and welcomed participation from program officers and communications directors in addition to heads of foundations.

Over the years, EdFunders has weathered the ebbs and flows of a membership organization, including declines in membership and revenues, but its commitment to serving members is unwavering. In the last decade, as the needs of the educational and philanthropic communities grew, EdFunders pursued purposeful and intentional growth to increase the reach and voice of its membership. The organization made strategic decisions about where to allocate resources and how best to amplify the impact of its members. Today, EdFunders continues to bring together members to seek ways to collaborate and advance its shared vision of an equitable educational system that works for all learners from birth to career.

IMPACT

Since its founding, EdFunders has progressively expanded its reach, membership, and impact. True to its mission of serving as a space for collaboration among its members, EdFunders continues to create innovative and impactful programming for the grantmaking field.

Spanning nearly three-hundred member organizations, EdFunders serves its members through a variety of programming, trainings, and a signature annual conference attended by over seven hundred participants last year. EdFunders believes that members have the greatest impact when they share insights collectively and has organized six impact and learning groups for members to have a space to collaborate. These groups include Arts Education; Learning, Evaluation, and Data; Out-of-School Time; Postsecondary Access and Attainment; Equity and Grantmaking; and Workforce.

As a respected resource in education philanthropy, EdFunders produces and disseminates an average of four publications a year. The organization also hosts frequent online trainings and programs. Just last year, EdFunders held fifty-three online events that reached over four thousand virtual participants. During COVID-19, EdFunders' assortment of virtual events became a critical resource for

the grantmaking community. Finally, EdFunders debuted a new podcast on issues in education, equity, and philanthropy.

Vision and Strategic Objectives

The vision of EdFunders is for all learners to thrive in educational systems that are just and equitable. Supported by public and private funders equipped with the knowledge and connections to advance transformational outcomes, EdFunders advocates for grantmaking organizations and education professionals across the nation to fulfill the promise of education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world. After a robust and collaborative planning process, the following key, strategic objectives emerged to guide the direction of the organization's future:

1. Centering Equity. EdFunders believes education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality education that develops their potential, independence, and character. The organization commits to centering equity and anti-racism in its work, with this commitment guiding both our support for education philanthropy and our support of staff and members in their own development.
2. Deeper Learning. EdFunders will focus existing and new programming to serve as a deeper learning platform for building the skills, knowledge, and mindsets that support members investing in systems-level educational change.
3. Thought Leadership. EdFunders will expand its role as an education thought leader and partner in strengthening funders' commitment to education and to moving education philanthropy forward at this critical time.

Governance, Leadership, and Structure

EdFunders enjoys the support and leadership of an experienced, invested Board of Directors consisting of leaders and advisers within education philanthropy. The eleven-member board is drawn directly from the organization's membership and each member serves a three-year term. The Executive Director reports directly to the Board of Directors and is supervised by the Board Chairperson.

The Executive Director provides organizational, operational, and strategic leadership to a dedicated and talented team. The Executive Director is accountable for personnel and budget oversight to ensure the organization remains financially sustainable and relevant to its members. Direct reports to the Executive Director include the Managing Director, Chief Program Officer, and Director of Communications. These three direct reports are thought partners and provide critical support to the Executive Director. While the organization is headquartered in Portland, Oregon, all staff work remotely and are based in various locations around the country.

CURRENT CONTEXT

The current landscape of education philanthropy is rapidly changing and the need to ensure equitable learning environments for students is greater than ever. EdFunders plays a critical role as a central clearinghouse for grantmakers to re-imagine what education can and should look like in the future. An urgent and renewed focus on systemic inequities is a high priority for EdFunders' work.

Additionally, EdFunders recognizes the need to partner more deeply with its members and provide opportunities for collaboration and innovation as a group. Uniting members with a strong shared commitment will help amplify their voice and magnify the impact of their collective resources, at a time when many local and state governments are reducing resources available to educators.

This is an exciting opportunity for a philanthropic leader committed to transforming educational outcomes alongside the leading educational philanthropies in the country. The next Executive Director will invite staff and members into visionary conversations about the goals and direction of EdFunders and ensure it is on solid footing as a well-positioned membership organization. The Board eagerly anticipates working with the new Executive Director to explore additional avenues of impact and programming while developing a responsible plan for sustainable growth in membership.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES

The Executive Director reports directly to the Board of Directors and is responsible for the overall strategic direction and operation of the organization. The Executive Director will provide guidance to all staff and, along with the Board and leadership team, will work transparently and collaboratively to advance the goals of EdFunders. The Executive Director's duties include the following:

- a. Employ, direct, and mentor EdFunders staff.
- b. Serve as the primary external representative and spokesperson for EdFunders.
- c. Advise, update, and inform the governing board on organizational progress and challenges through appropriate reports, meetings, and recommendations.
- d. Serve as the primary liaison between members and the organization, with support from the leadership team.
- e. Advise and assist in preparing the budget, and administer the budgets authorized by the Board.
- f. Identify additional opportunities for organizational expansion through membership engagement, growth, and sponsorship.
- g. Develop and support a talented group of staff and enhance staff cohesion in a remote working environment.

- h. Advocate for member organizations while inviting and responding to member feedback.
- i. Collaborate on opportunities for members to engage deeply and broadly with EdFunders, including innovative programming and initiatives.
- j. Set and implement a strategic vision for the organization and its role in education philanthropy.
- k. Elevate and center issues of diversity and equity on the organization's agenda.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

EdFunders seeks a dynamic and visionary Executive Director experienced in expanding organizational capacity and overseeing successful business operations. The Executive Director serves as the chief external representative to the Board and membership and will steward the growth and development of EdFunders in alignment with its mission to advance strategic and equity-centered grantmaking in education. The Executive Director will continually position the organization and raise its profile as the premier membership association for and about efforts in education philanthropy. In addition, the Executive Director will provide leadership on the following opportunities and challenges:

Setting and implementing a long-term vision for EdFunders and its role in the education philanthropy space

The next Executive Director will work in partnership with the Board to provide visionary leadership and continue to transform EdFunders into a member-centered organization. The Executive Director will explore approaches to engage members deeply and broadly, advance an equity-focused lens in grant-making, and invite feedback from the EdFunders community about its place in philanthropy. These are necessarily collaborative conversations, and the next Executive Director will be a talented communicator, nimble decision-maker, and gracious consensus-builder.

Supporting, mentoring, and empowering a talented, motivated, and high performing staff

The next Executive Director must model a collaborative leadership style that supports diversity and professional development, and creates an environment where staff are empowered to achieve EdFunders' goals. In providing leadership to engage and inspire a high-performance team, the Executive Director will mentor staff and delegate effectively. This leader will help the organization to build its operational capacity and ensure that staff resources are deployed effectively. The Executive Director will be an advocate and representative for staff while ensuring that all team members are clear on EdFunders' strategic vision and mission.

Enhancing a positive and cohesive organizational culture

EdFunders is at a pivotal time and the next Executive Director will grow organizational relevance and sustainability by guiding the staff and membership to align programs, action plans, and resources

with strategic needs. This work is key to developing a shared and cohesive vision for EdFunders and implementing this vision together. The Executive Director must also be sensitive to the needs and circumstances of a largely remote workforce and will identify opportunities for regular connections and team building.

Promoting racial and social equity within the organization and for its members

EdFunders has centered equity as critical to its mission and future. Throughout the organization's growth, EdFunders has viewed equitable educational outcomes as an important and necessary form of justice. Today, it strives to be a model and leader in addressing deep and historical inequities, as well as supporting its members in grappling with these important and timely questions. The incoming Executive Director must be a champion of anti-racism both within and on behalf of the organization. EdFunders has an inclusive, transparent, and participatory staff culture—staff report feeling safe and supported and the incoming Executive Director must be committed to maintaining and bolstering that culture.

Identifying new opportunities to engage membership in addition to the extraordinarily successful annual conference

Every fall, EdFunders hosts its renowned annual conference for grantmakers and members to connect, learn, innovate, and inspire each other. This is an eagerly anticipated event that brings together hundreds of diverse member organizations and generates a waiting list of prospective attendees. While the conference is a hallmark of EdFunders' programming, it is essential for the organization to identify additional methods of engaging and collaborating with members and sponsors. The next Executive Director will have the opportunity to further develop programming and initiatives to engage members, including both in-person and online options. The incoming Executive Director will continually explore ways to connect with members, respond to their needs, and build relationships that advance EdFunders' mission deeply and more broadly.

Ensuring and maintaining the organization's financial and operational growth and stability

EdFunders receives one third of its financial support through membership dues, another third through sponsorships at the conference, and the final third through internal fundraising and grant writing. The next Executive Director must maintain the organization's sound financial footing and identify opportunities to raise additional revenues and allocate resources. The Executive Director will lead the process to develop financial policies that anticipate membership trends and preferences with an eye toward diversifying and increasing sources of support. The challenge lies in developing strategies to increase membership sustainably, including examining options and models for memberships, and to identify alternative sources of revenue. The next Executive Director should be an experienced and energetic fundraiser who is able to tell compelling stories that secure support for EdFunders and its mission.

Partner with the EdFunders' Board to steward the organization's growth and expand the Board's membership and diversity

EdFunders' Board of Directors is deeply committed to the organization's growth plans, and provides

critical advice, expertise, governance, strategy, and fundraising. The Board is composed of philanthropy and non-profit leaders from the ranks of membership. The incoming Executive Director will continue to build upon the group's strong foundation while also working to grow and diversify the Board. As EdFunders develops and expands its philanthropic vision, the Board should be ready to provide additional wisdom, guidance, and fundraising capacity. A close working relationship between the Board and the next Executive Director is essential.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

While no candidate will possess all of the desired experiences, the ideal candidate will bring many of the following professional experiences and personal characteristics:

- A deep personal interest in and commitment to the EdFunders' mission of advancing equitable and effective grantmaking in education; current or past affiliation with EdFunders desirable.
- Master's degree or equivalent in educational leadership, nonprofit management, or similar relevant field.
- 10 years of management experience in positions of increasing authority and responsibility – at least three to five years at a senior management level preferred; supervisory experience required.
- Experience reporting to and collaborating with an involved Board of Directors or governing body.
- Significant experience with fundraising and partnership cultivation; a record of identifying innovative and creative methods of raising revenue and allocating resources efficiently.
- Proven record of persuasive, inspirational, and ethical leadership with an open and inclusive management style; the vision and ability to manage the current reality while leading EdFunders toward its aspirational future.
- A passionate and compelling servant-leader with outstanding communication and presentation skills, as well as the interpersonal ability to be an effective spokesperson.
- An aptitude for engaging a wide range of diverse stakeholders and a demonstrated record of building bridges and coalitions.
- A high ability to leverage relationships and connections to advance a shared mission.
- A clear understanding of the issues affecting education philanthropy, especially through an equity and justice lens.
- Experience with team building and support in a remote workplace.
- Knowledge and comfort with technology's role in maintaining and expanding programming and providing opportunities to engage.
- A commitment to philanthropy and a belief in the impact of shared collective resources to transform educational outcomes.
- Experience with organizational finances, grants, contracts, and legal administration; strong business management skills and ability to define and meet measurable metrics.
- A record of building and supporting a positive work environment and a high-functioning team, including the mentoring and hiring of staff, and the ability to delegate effectively.
- Energetic, diplomatic, forward looking, opportunistic, resilient, collaborative, transparent, flexible, nimble, and creative.

More information on EdFunders can be found here: <https://www.edfunders.org/>



TO APPLY

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/grantmakers-education/executive-director>.

Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Karen Avery, Partner
Shalini Uppu, Senior Associate

Grantmakers for Education is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented applicants. Our organization acknowledges that not everyone experiences the same barriers to success in the workplace, and we are committed to supporting the advancement of people of color in the workplace.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are key values for Grantmakers for Education. These values allow our board, staff, and members to be their best selves and experience the richness of our collective strength. It is through this strength that we increase our individual and organizational capacity to achieve our vision for an inclusive society, by supporting an equitable education system. Successful candidates will commit to an equitable and inclusive workplace, including but not limited to: racial equity, accessibility for individuals with disabilities, use of gender inclusive language and cultural sensitivity.