



***Founding Executive Director
Position Description***

Opportunity

2018 begins an unprecedented year for New Orleans' youngest children. Leaders from City government, local and state education agencies, and key businesses are making highly visible commitments of funding, policy changes, and influence to ensure accessible, high quality education for all children in Orleans Parish. The City of New Orleans recently committed new public dollars to support early childhood services for low income families. The Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) established a cross-sector working group to ensure that early childhood education spaces in the public schools are a priority for the reunification of the local public K-12 schools. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has finalized an accountability system for early childhood programs and issued performance profiles to every publicly funded early childhood program and community network in the state. Key business leaders are leading the charge to connect the benefits of preschool education with growing a robust economy.

Building on this monumental progress and with a new Mayor set to make New Orleans' most vulnerable children and families an immediate priority for City investment, the Founding Director for the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) is positioned to be a critical change maker -- creating the resources to make New Orleans a city in which every child can arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed in school.

Context

For the thousands of New Orleans children living in poverty, high-quality early childhood education (ECE) can be life-changing. A child who receives high-quality early education is more likely to enter kindergarten prepared with the academic and social-emotional skills to succeed in school, and less likely to need special education services. Families and communities also thrive with high-quality ECE -- parents with ECE access for their children are more economically stable because reliable, high-quality ECE allows them to work. The local economy will not only benefit from higher labor force participation among today's parents, it will also have a stronger workforce for generations to come.

There is a tremendous and urgent need in New Orleans for an improved ECE system. Over 23,000 children ages 4 and under live in New Orleans, more than 42 percent of them in poverty. Even more young children--62 percent--live in households earning less than 185 percent of the

poverty level. But there are not nearly enough high-quality, affordable slots in Pre-K, child care, or Head Start programs to serve all these children. There are about 5,200 publicly funded or partially subsidized ECE seats in New Orleans, only enough to enroll about 23 percent of children under age 5.

In 2012, the Louisiana State Legislature passed Act 3, which aimed to create a comprehensive and integrated delivery system for ECE and improve kindergarten readiness. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) took a parish-based approach to Act 3 implementation, identifying lead agencies in each parish to build local ECE networks. This created a new opportunity to better coordinate ECE at a local level. Each local network have several key responsibilities:

- **Coordinate Observation** of ECE classrooms using the CLASS tool;
- **Unify Enrollment** in publicly funded ECE programs, across Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K programs;
- **Streamline Funding** for several ECE funding streams, by submitting a unified funding recommendation to the LDOE for the allocation of publicly funded Pre-K seats among all providers in the parish; and,
- **Communicate with ECE Providers** about state policies and initiatives, serving as a local connector between the state and a multitude of ECE providers.

In Orleans Parish, a group of ECE providers and stakeholders formed the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) to serve as the lead agency. Agenda for Children serves as the administrator for NOEEN activities, with oversight from the NOEEN Steering Committee and significant support from community partners. While the network has had notable successes in delivering on the above state-mandated responsibilities, there is still a long way to go to ensure excellence across the sector as a whole.

A more robust and comprehensive effort, beyond the mandates of state law, is needed to create a thriving, high-quality early childhood sector that would meet the needs of children and families in New Orleans. Towards this end, the steering committee hired a consulting firm, Bellwether Education Partners, to lead the group in a strategic planning process to identify the best way forward to achieve progress as a sector. One result was a decision to establish NOEEN as a new nonprofit intermediary organization with the capacity to bring together stakeholders across the ECE sector, identify opportunities for improvement, attract new supports and funds, and work aggressively towards a unifying vision for ECE excellence citywide.

The founding Executive Director will work closely with NOEEN's Board of Directors and the steering committee (the original ECE advisory board of local providers and stakeholders) to inform the organization's strategic decisions and get feedback and input from the field on key programs and initiatives. She/he will also collaborate with relevant staff at the Orleans Parish School Board, Louisiana Department of Education, Mayor's Office and other city and state agencies, and community partners.

The mission of NOEEN is to ensure an excellent start for every child in New Orleans by strengthening the early childhood education sector. The strategic plan identifies seven focus areas to address the changes needed in the sector and bring about NOEEN’s vision for ECE in New Orleans:

1. Strengthen the quality of the New Orleans ECE sector in order to meet community needs
2. Influence local and state-level discussions to advance our mission
3. Increase public and private ECE funding
4. Collect, analyze, and share unbiased data to increase transparency, help improve program quality, and inform sector priorities
5. Support parent choice through coordinated enrollment and parent information initiatives
6. Allocate publicly funded seats to high-quality providers to meet localized demand
7. Increase the ability of the ECE sector to attract, develop, and retain talent

Given the broad, complex, and systemic nature of the challenges facing ECE in New Orleans, NOEEN will not confine its role to one specific program area. Instead, it will act as a nimble, galvanizing intermediary, identifying and addressing strengths, weaknesses, and inefficiencies across the sector and coordinating citywide solutions. Additionally, NOEEN will work strategically, through partnerships and direct action, to catalyze improvements in program quality, policy, funding, community support, parent education, and sector talent.

Many local ECE educators and providers, including charter schools, community-based centers, and Head Start/Early Head Start providers, have already begun working together to improve the city’s ECE system. NOEEN’s coordinated, strategic leadership and action will capitalize on the existing strengths and expertise of leaders within the local ECE and K-12 education sectors, and develop citywide approaches that meet the needs of young children within the unique context of New Orleans.

Executive Director’s Role and Reporting Relationships

The founding Executive Director of the New Orleans Early Education Network will be responsible for executing on a set of aligned strategies to dramatically improve children’s access to high-quality ECE programs in New Orleans. The Executive Director will report to an independent, volunteer Board of Directors and will have the opportunity to build a small team of staff within the first two years.

Key Responsibilities

Landscape analysis and assessment of ECE programs and services for families

- In partnership with the OPSB, the RSD, Head Start/Early Head Start grantees, Independent and School-Based Providers, assess the greatest obstacles and opportunities to providing enough high quality ECE seats for families;

- Collect program accountability data and ensure that the citizens of New Orleans understand the early childhood sector, its challenges and opportunities;
- Provide a regular report on program quality, supply and service gaps throughout the city.

Gather and lead a high impact group of individuals to launch NOEEN

- Recruit, hire, train, and retain a hardworking team aligned to the priorities identified above;
- Support the current, 4 person Board of Directors collaborate with them to execute on the identified strategic priorities and goals;
- Work with the board to expand the number of board members to represent a cross-section of the community;
- Collaborate with the Board of Directors to secure additional funding aligned to the strategic plan; and
- Manage the day-to-day start-up activities of the organization.

Expand supply of and access to high quality early childhood education (ECE) programs

- Lead efforts to expand the number of quality ECE programs;
- Lead efforts to create talent pipelines;
- Capitalize program expansion by accessing all available public funding streams and by attracting local and national philanthropic funding; and
- Advocate for the policies necessary for quality ECE programs at needed scale, including policies related to funding streams, accountability, and coordination.

Manage delivery of Lead Agency core functions under Act 3

- Ensure coordination of CLASS observations, program enrollment, and funding for publicly funded ECE programs in the network.

Desired Profile

The ideal Executive Director will passionately believe that every child, regardless of background, has potential and therefore deserves an excellent start to achieve success in school and in life. This person will have proven leadership skills that promote excellence in the ECE and allied sectors such as K-12 and human services. S/he will prioritize building relationships and connections with providers and stakeholders in the ECE community as well as with the business, civic, and philanthropic communities. S/he will also possess the confidence to be a strong advocate for young children and ECE.

Required Qualifications

*Additionally, the successful candidate will have the following **knowledge and skills**:*

- knowledge of, and existing relationships within, the political, philanthropic, and early childhood education and K-12 landscape in a city or local community;
- the ability to identify and build authentic relationships with stakeholders who are critical to achieving the organization's mission;

- the ability to develop effective strategies and execute them successfully;
- the ability to coordinate, prioritize, and manage a variety of diverse and challenging tasks and systems while maintaining a high level of attention to detail; and
- exceptional communication skills.

*Next, the successful candidate will have the following **professional experience**:*

- at least 10 years of professional experience as a leader in early childhood or K-12 education including ultimate accountability for planning and execution experience as well as making resource allocation decisions;
- demonstrated success working in a high-poverty community;
- organizational development and public policy;
- building, leading, managing and inspiring a high-performing staff toward results;
- demonstrated fundraising success to create a sustainable nonprofit organization;
- working in the start-up phase of an organization; and
- building and collaborating with a board of directors.

*Finally, the successful candidate must possess the following **personal attributes**:*

- demonstrated commitment to the mission of the organization, including a deep commitment to improving outcomes for young children in New Orleans;
- a self-driven, entrepreneurial work ethic and a productive and engaged leadership style;
- an interest in challenges and opportunities associated with staffing a new organization; and
- authenticity and humility.

Location

New Orleans, Louisiana

Compensation

The Executive Director will earn a competitive salary, commensurate with experience.

Deadline

Please submit a letter summarizing your qualifications for the position along with your resume to noeensearch@agendaforchildren.org no later than 5:00 pm Central standard time on Friday, April 6, 2018.

Please go to www.agendaforchildren/NOEEN-steering-committee for further information about the New Orleans Early Education Network and to find articles about the commitment of nonprofit, government and business leaders to early childhood education.

NOEEN and Agenda for Children are Equal Opportunity Employers and consider all applicants on the basis of merit without regard to race, gender, color, religion, national origin, age, marital status or disability.