



***Founding Executive Director
Position Description***

Context

For the thousands of New Orleans children living in poverty, high-quality early childhood education (ECE) could be life-changing. A child who receives high-quality early education is more likely to arrive at 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, 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. The networks 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.

A group of ECE providers and stakeholders formed the New Orleans Early Education Network (NOEEN) to serve as the lead agency in Orleans Parish. For the first several years of NOEEN's existence, Agenda for Children has administered NOEEN, with oversight from the NOEEN Steering Committee and significant support from key 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.

Everyone involved in this effort recognizes that 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. As a result of this planning process, Agenda for Children and the NOEEN steering committee have recognized the need to transform NOEEN into a new 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 mission of NOEEN is to ensure an excellent start for every child in New Orleans by strengthening the early childhood education sector.

Opportunity

NOEEN will lead the way to ensure an excellent start for every child in New Orleans.

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. We believe that with coordinated, strategic action by this organization, we will capitalize on the existing strengths and expertise of leaders within the local ECE sector, and develop citywide approaches that meet the needs of young children within the unique context of New Orleans.

The Role

As reflected in the focus areas above, 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.

This is a remarkable opportunity for the right leader to meet a community-recognized need and play a critical role in making New Orleans a city in which every child can arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed in school. The 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 Recovery School District, the Orleans Parish School Board, and other city and state agencies.

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 and collaborate with them to execute on the identified strategic priorities and goals;
- 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 Founding Executive Director will passionately believe that every child, from birth to age 8, 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 sector. S/he will be skilled at 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 landscape in New Orleans;
- 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 ECE or other child-serving-serving organization that has demonstrated success in a high-poverty community; this includes ultimate accountability for planning and execution experience as well as making resource allocation decisions;
- experience in organizational development and public policy;
- experience building, leading, managing and inspiring a high-performing staff toward results;
- demonstrated fundraising success to create a sustainable nonprofit organization;
- experience working in the start-up phase of an organization; and
- experience building and collaborating with boards 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 the challenges and opportunities associated with staffing an organization;
- authenticity and humility.

Reporting Relationships

The Executive Director will report to an independent, volunteer Board of Directors. S/he will have the opportunity to build a small team within the first two years.

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 Friday, July 21, 2017 at 5:00 pm CST.

Please go to www.agendaforchildren/NOEEN-steering-committee for further information about the New Orleans Early Education Network.

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.