The Lemelson Foundation uses the power of invention to improve lives.

Established by prolific US inventor Jerome Lemelson and his wife Dorothy in the early 1990s, and guided today by the Lemelson family, we believe invention can solve many of the biggest economic and social challenges of our time. That’s why we work to strengthen the ecosystems where inventions can take shape, grow, and flourish. For more than two decades we have inspired young people from diverse backgrounds to tackle the world’s most daunting problems, advanced the field of invention education with a goal of reaching all children, and equipped entrepreneurs with the skills they need to start successful invention-based businesses. A private philanthropy, The Lemelson Foundation has investment assets of around $370 million and an annual budget of approximately $18 million. All told, we have provided over $200 million in grants and other investments to hundreds of organizations around the world.

We aspire to strengthen the invention ecosystem and empower inventors to solve the biggest global challenges and opportunities of our time, whether it’s ensuring equal access to a healthy life, providing clean water and sanitation, developing clean energy alternatives, rethinking how the world grows, shares and consumes its food, or building a strong and stable economy. We approach our work using a three-part framework we call impact inventing:

- Inventions should have positive social impact;
- Inventions should be environmentally responsible—from the materials and processes used through final products that go to market; and
- Business models should become financially self-sustaining.

The Lemelson Foundation has created a culture of collaboration, continuous learning, and innovation. An entrepreneurial environment with huge flexibility and opportunities for impact has allowed the small team of 10 staff to create a large footprint and outsized presence for the Foundation. Commitment to diversity is one of The Lemelson Foundation’s core values as we work to foster an inclusive work environment. We cannot do our work without collaboration among people with diverse skill sets and backgrounds.

In the spirit of inquiry, learning and collaboration, all Foundation team members have the opportunity to periodically accompany Program Officers on site visits and engage directly with grantees and partners for ongoing exposure to the work of the Foundation.

Foundation Overview

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The Opportunity

In early 2017, the Lemelson Foundation adopted an updated five-year strategy to achieve the Foundation’s goals. To foster inventors and inventions that have positive social impact, are environmentally responsible, and can become self-sustaining, in support of strengthening the economy in the US and improving the lives of the poor in developing countries. A new role at the Foundation, the Senior Director of Strategy serves as the champion of the Foundation’s strategy and is responsible for: translating the strategy into action by fostering commitment to the strategy throughout the Foundation; connecting each person’s contributions to the broader strategy and goals; driving initiatives to execute the strategy; and, ensuring that decisions across the Foundation align with strategic goals. The Senior Director leads foundation colleagues in shaping and implementing the strategy, ensures that all activities align with the strategy, and inspires a shared commitment to increasing the strategy’s impact.

As a member of the senior management team, the Senior Director works closely with the Executive Director and Chief Financial and Administrative Officer to actively engage in the Foundation’s planning, with a focus on strategy and its implementation as well as external advisory and partner relationship management. The Senior Director serves as a bridge between various functions and positions within the Foundation to foster a culture of inquiry and learning that builds the capacity of staff and grantees.

A thought partner to the Executive Director and colleagues across the Foundation, the Senior Director supports work in all of our priority areas. In this capacity, the Senior Director leads the team to move beyond current practices to catalyze innovative and more effective approaches to how we implement the Foundation’s strategy. Additionally, the Senior Director also engages Foundation colleagues to develop the systems and processes needed to capture progress against strategy, and lead staff in an ongoing practice of program improvement and integration.

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Senior Director supervises four Program Officers and the Communications Officer. The Senior Director plays a leadership role in coordinating internal working groups and team projects related to the annual planning, and implementation and assessment of progress on programmatic priorities of the Foundation as they relate to strategy.

As noted, this is a new position at the Lemelson Foundation and prospective candidates should expect that the role will evolve as our vision for the position merges with the reality of what will best serve the team on a daily basis. The successful candidate is energized by the opportunity to help shape the position and comfortable with the ambiguity that will likely accompany this process.
Key Responsibilities

Team Leadership

• Provide staff with guidance and resources to ensure continued success and professional growth
• Cultivate team’s public speaking/presentation skills and facilitate opportunities for them to represent the Foundation’s mission, values, and strategies in diverse external forums
• Work closely with Program Officers to identify opportunities to link efforts across initiatives that span a range of issues and geographies
• Ensure both team members and Foundation leadership are moving in sync toward defined goals by continually clarifying and communicating the strategy
• Foster a culture of collaboration by engaging the team in participatory interactions that effectively navigate different points of view and generate new ideas and solutions
• Guide decision making to align with strategy, proactively lead the resolution of strategic questions identified by staff, and determine whether or how to course correct
• Model optimal team behaviors including, inquiry, learning, collaboration, and a passion for and commitment to the Foundation’s mission

Strategic Leadership

• Serve as thought partner to the Executive Director in development of strategic direction and to program staff in strategy implementation, pushing beyond current thinking to drive innovation
• Build a strong and trusting relationship with Executive Director, understanding her priorities and concerns, aligning on key issues to solve, and continuously communicating and seeking input on strategy development and implementation
• Assist leadership in cross-cutting analysis and identification of needs for activities, evidence, and stories
• Cultivate promising strategic ideas from staff, engaging input and support from the Executive Director
• Represent the Foundation externally and serve as a stand in for Executive Director as needed
• Manage exploratory strategic initiatives and projects that cut across foundation programs
• Partner with executive director to research and analyze trends to inform Foundation strategy and operations (e.g., reaching low income populations, environmental responsibility)

Operational Leadership

• Lead development of systems to execute, evaluate, and report on the Foundation’s impact against strategy and work with staff to develop outcome metrics to demonstrate impact
• Guide the design and manage methods for staff to reflect and report on individual grants and initiatives to systematically track progress against strategy
• Manage structure and process to generate the Annual Progress Update
• Partner with CFAO on budgeting and human resource needs to ensure adequate resources are available to execute strategic goals
**Relationship Management**

- Cultivate relationships between Advisory Committee (AC) and program officers to optimize and deepen staff engagement with AC members
- Facilitate group discussions and interactions among staff, and between staff and Advisory Committee members to generate new ideas, perspectives, and solutions
- Advise staff on strategies for most effectively and efficiently managing relationships with the Executive Director, Board Members, Advisory Committee members, grantees, and external partners
- Ensure the Executive Director is engaged, informed, and has adequate opportunities for input on strategy development, execution, and related systems changes to ensure leadership buy-in and support

**Knowledge Management**

- Work with relevant staff to develop tools (SharePoint, etc.) and processes for entire team to share and capture knowledge; create culture of inquiry, learning, and collaboration not only about topics of shared interest, but also about how to increase impact as a Program Officer (e.g., lessons learned, best practices, etc.)
- Assist team members in identifying activities, evidence, and stories in support of their strategic priorities

**Facilitate Advisory and Governance Processes**

- Support Executive Director with board management by preparing materials and facilitating selection of discussion topics
- In partnership with the Executive Director, facilitate Advisory Committee (AC) selection process, coordinate outreach and information sharing with the AC, and facilitate opportunities for program officers to leverage content expertise of AC members
- Manage development of programmatic priorities and activities for inclusion in the Annual Plan
The Senior Director of Strategy is enthusiastic and passionate about The Lemelson Foundation’s mission and motivated by the opportunity to play a leading role supporting the next generation of impact inventors and the strengthening of the invention entrepreneurship ecosystem in both the US and developing countries. Every Foundation employee should feel a deep personal connection to our work and embrace our commitment to positive social change, economic growth, and environmental responsibility. The ideal employee has the motivation to be a key contributor and leader within the organization bringing a positive influence to our culture of inquiry, learning, and collaboration.

Ideal Candidate

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The Lemelson Foundation is proud of its reputation for having an impact on its areas of focus that exceed its size and resources; our ideal candidate is excited by the opportunity to manage an ambitious organization toward its strategic goals and enjoys mobilizing diverse resources to elevate organizational impact.

The successful candidate is a talented people leader whose sense of accomplishment and professional pride derives from helping others achieve their goals, be they subordinates or superiors. S/he is adept at situationally balancing both leading and supporting.

As champion of the Lemelson Foundation’s strategy, the Senior Director is responsible for ensuring all the parts align and the strategy is the framework through which priorities and processes are shaped and goals are achieved. The Senior Director possesses sound consultative and advisory skills combined with excellent group facilitation skills, including the ability to read an audience, discern group dynamics, change directions when needed, and encourage ideas and solutions from others. A person who leads through influence and is a natural collaborator will excel in this role as will an individual who approaches his/her work with clear-eyed objectivity and a calm demeanor.

This role requires an individual who leads with a strategic mindset and brings a proven ability to identify and translate strategic opportunities into tangible action and outcomes. A clear vision for the most effective processes and systems to support the Foundation’s strategy and programmatic functions, combined with systems thinking that recognizes connections and understands how different sectors and issues come together, is crucial. The ideal candidate has an entrepreneurial approach and readily identifies opportunities for innovation, growth, and change.

The Senior Director is a passionate, lifelong learner who has the intellectual agility to become knowledgeable across a very broad range of priority issues and quickly sees connections, opportunities, and intersections with a demonstrated curiosity and comfort in reaching beyond current areas of expertise. The ideal candidate is proactive and forward looking, follows trends, anticipates changes, and potential impacts to the Foundation. Strong listening and synthesizing skills are essential, along with the ability and desire to capture, distill, and share what is important, why it matters, and how it relates to our overall strategy. The successful candidate organizes, prioritizes, and balances work across all levels from strategy to daily execution, delegates as needed, and meets deadlines within a fast-paced environment with multiple and competing demands. With excellent oral and written communication, the Senior Director mounts persuasive arguments, actively negotiates, and effectively presents new and complex ideas to audiences of varying backgrounds.

The successful candidate is a confident, mature, and seasoned leader who routinely demonstrates sound judgment and a high degree of discretion and tact. The preferred candidate is humble with the self-awareness and comfort to set ego aside and focus on the mission and team. With strong interpersonal skills and an approachable style, the Senior Director is a collaborative team player who is able to influence broadly and successfully within an organization. An upbeat bridge-builder, the successful candidate fosters a positive, professional atmosphere and connects across issues and functions actively developing trusting relationships up, down, and across an organization. Considered credible and reliable, the Senior Director effectively cultivates relationships with diverse partners including educators, technologists, engineers, entrepreneurs, governments, nonprofits, and for-profits, among others. Cultural sensitivity and cultural competence are essential to success.
Qualifications

A minimum of ten years of experience in progressively responsible hands-on leadership roles developing and building a cohesive team of professionals working across a range of issues and geographies is required. Experience working on a small team or in a small organization is critical. A demonstrated track record of management and team leadership, strategic planning and implementation, and impact measurement is also essential. This position will draw upon significant direct experience in organizational learning including the use of technology-enabled systems to capture and document strategy execution and impact.

Familiarity with the fields of invention, education, entrepreneurship, and/or global development is preferred. However, a generalist who exhibits deep intellectual curiosity and a willingness to develop expertise without being “the expert” who is also adept at working across a diverse array of issues would be well suited for the position.

Candidates will be considered from diverse backgrounds that might include nonprofit (foundation, NGO, social enterprise), public (donor agencies), or private sectors (strategy consulting). Local experience working with emerging/developing economies is an asset. A Bachelor’s degree is required with a relevant advanced degree strongly preferred.

The position is based in Portland, OR, and will include domestic and international travel, including developing countries.
To Be Considered

The Lemelson Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. A carefully crafted cover letter that articulates your interest in the position and fit for the role addressed to Sarah Meyer, accompanied by a current resume, should be submitted for consideration through Waldron’s candidate portal.

The following team from Waldron is assisting The Lemelson Foundation in their search:

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*Search Director*  
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Waldron is honored to work with The Lemelson Foundation in the search for a Senior Director of Strategy. The Lemelson Foundation does amazing work, and we are doing our best to recruit a talented team member who will accelerate this mission. As the consulting partner strategic leaders choose to help attract, engage, and inspire effective leaders, Waldron provides a unique combination of executive search, leadership development, and career transition services across sectors and industries. Our passion is helping people and organizations realize their full potential and increase their impact.