Director of Grants Management

Location: Chicago
About the Foundation

The MacArthur Foundation, led by President Julia Stasch, is one of the nation’s largest foundations with approximately $6.2 billion in assets and annual giving of approximately $250 million. Since its inception, the MacArthur Foundation has made grants totaling more than $5 billion in support of creative people, effective institutions, and influential networks building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world.

MacArthur is placing a few big bets that truly significant progress is possible on some of the world’s most pressing social challenges, including over-incarceration, global climate change, nuclear risk, and significantly increasing financial capital for the social sector. The Foundation is also known for its MacArthur Fellows Program, which awards grants to 20 to 30 Americans working in any field who exhibit “extraordinary originality and dedication in their creative pursuits and a marked capacity for self-direction.”

To learn more about the Foundation, please visit its website here.
Building Innovative Grants Management

The MacArthur Foundation has been examining its grantmaking strategies and systems in order to achieve even greater impact across all of its program areas. This has resulted in a number of changes to the Foundation’s operating environment. Establishing a centralized Grants Management function is one of the final components of this broader effort to create best-in-class, enterprise driven solutions that will allow the Foundation to pursue an ambitious grantmaking agenda in the coming years, and includes creating a new Director of Grants Management position. This is one of those rare opportunities to shape and influence the direction of a newly formed department at the core of one of the world’s most prominent philanthropic organizations.

The Director will pursue innovative approaches to effectively integrate the newly centralized grants management operation, ensuring the highest quality of grants administration across all of the Foundation’s domestic and global programs. Reporting to the Managing Director of Core Services and leading a team of around ten, the Director will oversee the Foundation’s grants processes and systems, and advise leadership and staff on all aspects of grants management, including regulatory compliance requirements.

With a sustained focus on the big picture and a drive for managing high performing teams, the Director will develop, communicate, and implement effective grants management strategies. The position is responsible for continuous process improvement, cost effective system maintenance and support, and the development and implementation of services, systems, policies, and management tools that advance the Foundation’s grantmaking and impact investments operations.
Leadership & Strategy

The Director will set the vision and culture for the newly formed Grants Management team, leading the effort to build collaborative partnerships and effective services with all Foundation programs and departments. As such, the Director will need to be a thoughtful listener and creative thinker to determine how best the Grants Management function can provide value-added and responsive client service. Additionally, the Director will formulate a clear plan to engage the team in a cohesive way in order to create ownership and active participation in this effort, including being an accessible mentor and coach to staff.

Working closely with senior leadership, the Director will contribute to strategic decision-making across numerous organizational areas, including operations, knowledge management, and institutional policies. By developing strong relationships and partnerships across the Foundation, the Director and the Grants Management team will build innovative, sustainable tools and services that benefit the entire organization.

The Director will oversee project management from inception to implementation to ensure timely completion within established budgets and timeframes, while carefully managing scope and prioritizing user requirements. This position is also responsible for short- and long-term planning, including developing annual project and budget plans, and monitoring costs throughout the fiscal year to ensure an appropriate allocation of funds and resources.

Grants Management & Compliance

The Director is responsible for the management of the grants lifecycle by leading the development and implementation of policies, processes, and systems on grants information and data management as well as due diligence requirements and database coding. This position will also partner with legal staff in identifying, developing, implementing, and communicating appropriate compliance policies and procedures, and in assessing potential risks.

In an effort to continuously improve system performance, the Director will build and maintain feedback mechanisms to ensure early detection of end-user problems, and proactively plan periodic training and communications to support grantmaking objectives. The Director will continually stay abreast of new developments in grants management technologies and best practices, and their applicability to the needs of the Foundation.

Information Management

The Director will help establish a more systemic approach to capturing, sharing, and applying knowledge. As a steward of the Foundation’s data, the Director will provide conceptual leadership in the evaluation and design of systems and processes involved in the collection, indexing, storage, and reporting of grants-based data. Monitoring operations, process performance, and assessing qualitative and quantitative measures are critical components of this work, and the Director will partner with Knowledge Management to track, address, and leverage findings for the benefit of the Foundation and the Programs teams.
The Ideal Candidate

The MacArthur Foundation seeks a Director of Grants Management who will be an innovative strategist with the intellectual dynamism and proven ability to apply knowledge and experience building systems and an operating environment to support an organization’s goals and objectives. The ideal candidate will be a senior leader who can operate with a strategic view of the organization, yet knows how to translate ideas into a concrete course of action and work with teams on a tactical basis. Candidates should also have a demonstrated track record designing and implementing initiatives that promote institutional consistency at the enterprise level.

The Director will be leading the Grants Management team through the process of becoming a newly centralized function. This is an exciting and important moment for the Director to be joining the organization, and it requires a candidate with deep expertise leading change management initiatives. Candidates must know from experience when to move forward and when to be patient while pursuing such initiatives. The ability to lead or influence teams across disciplines and functions is also essential, as is a highly flexible and adaptive work ethic.

The new Director will be an accomplished leader and manager who can deliver on both strategy and execution. Candidates must be committed to investing in people and cultivating a team culture that inspires confidence, trust, and respect. The Director will have a background promoting professional development opportunities, motivating staff, and be a natural collaborator who enjoys empowering teams across an organization.

Superb and proactive communication skills are essential to the success of this role, as is the ability to be a thoughtful listener. The successful candidate will know how to provide constructive and insightful views on issues, and incorporate a variety of considerations into the decision-making process, but also have the maturity to remain resolute when it comes to improving the utility of the grants management system and stretching colleagues to use it in new ways.
Minimum Qualifications

A minimum of ten years of relevant experience in process transformation and/or operational change management is required. Additional qualifications include:

- Strong systems orientation, with a track record of improving and enhancing existing technologies, developing new solutions, and maintaining an awareness of and willingness to use new and emerging platforms.

- Demonstrated ability to develop and implement complex projects, preferably within a philanthropic or large, research intensive institution.

- An understanding of grants processes and related financial and compliance issues, especially in a foundation environment, is preferred, but not required.

- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills, with experience presenting complex materials in an understandable manner to a variety of audiences.

- A Bachelors’ degree or equivalent experience in related field is required; an advanced degree is preferred.

To Be Considered

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

To be considered, please visit candidateportal.waldronhr.com to submit your resume and cover letter expressing your interest and fit for the role.

The search for a Director of Grants Management for the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is being assisted by a team from Waldron:

Jeff Waldron, Managing Director
Direct: 415.529.2150
Jeff@waldronhr.com

Mikkell Roeland, Search Director
Direct: 415.932-6270
Mikkell@waldronhr.com

Monica Sobolewski, Associate
Direct: 206.792.4194
Monica@waldronhr.com
Waldron is honored to work with The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in the search for a Director of Grants Management. We believe in and support the work of the MacArthur Foundation and we are doing our best to recruit a talented team leader 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.