

Position Description

Director, Research & Evaluation

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

The Forum for Youth Investment

FULL TITLE: Director, Research & Evaluation

SUPERVISOR: Executive Vice President, Youth Program Quality

PURPOSE: The Director, Research & Evaluation leads the Forum's research, evaluation, and measurement work across the organization. This includes advancing youth program quality measures and evaluation frameworks, leveraging publicly available data for the Forum's Opportunity Index, and leading efforts to develop success metrics with internal and external stakeholders, aligned to the Forum's strategic plan. The Director leads an applied research, evaluation, and measurement team to design, conduct, and manage collaborative research and evaluation projects that support internal and external clients, stakeholders, and the youth development fields in leveraging positive youth development and continuous quality improvement approaches to strengthen policy and practice. The ideal candidate has experience building and leading successful teams, conducting applied research and evaluation projects, and advancing strategic alignment through data and metrics – all with a lens that centers racial equity and continuous improvement.

SALARY: The salary range, duties and responsibilities of this position meet the requirements of Section 13 (a) (1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act and therefore qualifies as an "exempt" position. The starting salary for this position is targeted between \$76,000 - \$126,000 based upon knowledge, skills, experience, and geographic location, with a comprehensive benefits package.

Organization & Background

Founded in 1998, the **Forum for Youth Investment** is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan “action tank” committed to changing the odds that all children and youth are ready for college, work, and life. The Forum connects leaders to ideas, services and networks that can help them make more intentional decisions that are good for young people, even in the face of limited resources. It helps leaders who are trying to improve & align policies, plan & partner for impact, and/or strengthen programs & adult practice across all the systems and settings where young people spend time.

The Forum is a thriving organization with a budget of \$11 million, a staff of 50, and headquarters in Washington, DC. The Forum overall is funded by a mix of foundations, corporations, and a fee-for-service contract base. For more information on the Forum, please visit www.forumfyi.org.

In 2008, the Forum created the **David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality** to strengthen programs and adult practice by building the capacity of public and private agencies to implement quality improvement and performance systems that simultaneously foster professional learning and whole-child development. The Weikart Center's research-based core products and services are currently used in over 4,500 out-of-school time settings nationally and form the basis for quality improvement systems in over 140 publicly and privately funded systems. The Weikart Center helps youth-serving systems build the safe, supportive, interactive, and engaging environments that are foundational to youth development. From data-driven tools to expert trainings, we equip leaders who serve young people with the positive youth development and SEL-informed resources they need to create a culture of continuous improvement for staff and for youth.

Position Responsibilities

The Director, Research and Evaluation is the organization's leader for research, evaluation, and measurement work that spans youth program quality, cross-systems consulting, policy alignment, and organizational strategy and improvement efforts. Working across the Forum, this role is a good fit for someone who has built and led strong research and evaluation teams, and has experience working with researchers, system leaders, and practitioners in translating research to practice and practice to research. The Director is a critical contributor to the youth program quality unit's leadership team, and a thought partner to leaders across the organization.

Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting

- Lead the Forum's research and evaluation team to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data, draft reports that integrate insights from research, and practice, and disseminate findings in ways that are useful to a range of audiences, including youth development practitioners, system leaders, and policy makers.
- Lead data collection, analysis, and reporting for a range of internal organizational metrics related to the Forum's strategic plan, including annual customer/stakeholder surveys, and periodic staff surveys and pulse checks.

- Ensure appropriate processes, protections, and legal agreements are in place for data collection, management, security, and sharing, including management and oversight of research and evaluation consulting contracts.
- Leverage statistical software (e.g. SPSS), data collection platforms (e.g. Qualtrics, the Forum's Scores Reporter system), and Microsoft Products (e.g. Excel, PowerPoint, Planner, etc) to advance research and evaluation projects, and support staff to do the same.

Measure Development & Validation

- Leads the Forum's efforts to develop and validate assessments and surveys that support continuous quality improvement in youth serving systems. These include the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (SEL PQA) and other program quality assessments; the Organizational Quality Assessment (OQA); and suite of surveys that support continuous improvement in youth serving systems.
- Design and lead research and evaluation projects that refine observational assessments and surveys that support strengthening youth programs and practices, and the relationship between quality practices and programs to youth outcomes.

Applied Research & Evaluation Projects & Research Synthesis

- Serve as principal investigator or co-principal investigator on major initiatives and lead the development and delivery of high-quality research and evaluation services that meet the needs of system leaders and community-based practitioners in youth serving fields.
- Lead statewide evaluations of 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, in partnership with state departments of education, and custom research and evaluation projects for OST intermediary organizations or cross-sector clients.
- Serve as the organizational subject matter expert for the Forum's Opportunity Index, a nationwide dataset and dashboard tool to support policy advocacy about the landscape of opportunity in America, overseeing the annual trend analysis in partnership with outside social scientists.
- Develop partnerships with other leading researchers and research organizations to strengthen the Forum's capacity to engage in research that inform our services and advance the youth development field.
- Strengthen existing business offerings and cultivate new opportunities that leverage data about program quality and youth development focused system reform, with a focus on translating research to practice and elevating practitioner and system leader insights through research and evaluation methods.

Performance/Character Requirements

We are looking for colleagues eager to be on a career path that involves continuous learning and growth. Team members across all levels of the Forum engage with one another and foster the development of others to achieve a high level of competency in these characteristics and leadership qualities:

- **Manages Self** – You ask for feedback on impact of your behavior on others. You identify and follow through on actions in response to constructive feedback. You honestly assess your own strengths and know what weaknesses need support.
- **Leads Courageously** – You act courageously to make changes that will improve the organization. You consistently drive to successful outcomes and stay composed and positive in challenging situations.
- **Communicates Effectively** – You communicate (both in writing and verbally) clearly, succinctly, and in a timely manner. You provide information people need to know to do their jobs, make accurate decisions, and to feel part of a team. You are able to engage an audience and achieve the desired effect in a variety of formal presentation settings.
- **Builds High-Performing Teams/Develops Others** – You form and lead teams capable of getting results. You create a learning environment of creativity and engagement. You can effectively raise and resolve conflict with the team. You provide frequent and timely developmental feedback to others and construct compelling developmental plans. You take personal responsibility for mentoring high-potential employees.
- **Makes Quality Decisions** – You clearly state where you stand on issues, even if it is unpopular. You seek input from appropriate parties before making decisions, and still make timely decisions.
- **Demonstrates Strategic Agility** – You anticipate future consequences and trends accurately. You're able to align your goals to the overall organizational strategy. You can create breakthrough strategies and plans.
- **Demonstrates Business Acumen** – You understand and create opportunities to cultivate and support exceptional partnerships. You are able to make the case for decisions and initiatives. You adapt strategies and tactics to create a success defined by metrics.
- **Influences and Negotiates** – You influence others by building coalitions or alliances among diverse groups. You effectively adapt influence strategies depending upon the situation. You're skillful at removing barriers that get in the way of effective collaboration among groups.
- **Manages Vision and Purpose** – You inspire commitment to a compelling vision and shared values. You create a climate in which people want to do their best. You're able to champion change and lead the organization through a transition.
- **Thinks Strategically, Executes Skillfully** – You can see the forest through the trees and know how to craft strategic short and long-term programs that are aligned with organizational goals. At the same time, you can't wait to roll-up your sleeves and get the work done.
- **Is Goal Oriented** – We want someone who is a doer, with doggedness, a determination and commitment to reach a goal, and a strong bias toward action. You always find a way to make it happen.
- **Demonstrates Creativity** – While there are tried-and-true tactics in your toolbox, you explore new ways of thinking and continually strive to create best-in-class programs that move your organization and field forward.
- **Handles Ambiguity** – You can effectively cope with change and lead others through it.
- **Communicates Assertively** – As a senior-level communicator, you express opinions directly, confidently, and accurately. You can also be very persuasive and influence the way others think, feel, or behave.

- **Collaborates & Values Relationships** – You can quickly gain the respect and trust of your peers, colleagues, and leadership team. You understand the importance of listening, asking probing questions, and allowing others to be heard.
- **Takes Risk** – The entrepreneurial spirit shines through in your willingness to experiment with new approaches and act even though the outcome is uncertain.
- **Models Diplomacy** – You have worked in diverse settings and teams and understand the cultural sensitivities of doing business with partners and clients around the country. You are tactful in dealing with diverse people or situations.
- **Exhibits Professional Acumen** – You demonstrate confidence, experience, and poise under pressure.

Qualifications

A bachelor's degree and 8 or more years of experience conducting and leading applied research and evaluation projects, in partnership with youth serving agencies and/or community-based organizations is required. At least 5 years of management experience is required; senior leadership experience preferred. A Ph.D. degree in youth development, evaluation, social work, education, or related fields is preferred.

In addition, the successful candidate will have:

- Experience leveraging publicly available data for learning and insights for youth serving agencies and community-based organizations.
- Experience developing organizational metrics to support evaluation, learning, and strategic alignment.
- A demonstrated track record of using equitable research and evaluation practices, including experience with participatory research approaches and youth engagement in research processes.
- Knowledge of the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment, Youth Program Quality Intervention, social and emotional learning resources, and/or low-stakes quality improvement policies and systems.

This is not an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, skills, efforts, or requirements or working conditions associated with the job. While intended to be an accurate reflection of the current job, management reserves the right to revise the job or to require different tasks. This description does not constitute a contract of employment and The Forum may exercise its employment-at-will rights at any time

Working Environment

Flexibility is required to adapt to the dynamic work environment of a non-profit "action tank" that has national clients and exposure during a key inflection point in the organization's development. Ability to lead and advise on change management initiatives is essential. The Forum's Weikart Center team transitioned to be fully remote during the COVID-19 pandemic and is hiring staff to join our fully

remote team. Occasional travel is expected for in-person team meetings and client/partner meetings (estimated 10-20% time).

How to Apply

Please send resume and cover letter with salary requirements to: jobs@forumfyi.org. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. If your application is selected for an interview, you will be contacted directly. No telephone calls or inquiry emails, please.

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The Forum for Youth Investment is committed to creating a diverse work environment and is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer and drug-free workplace, and to comply with ADA regulations as applicable. All applicants are considered for all positions without regard to race, religion, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, national origin, ancestry, physical/mental disability, severe/morbid obesity, medical condition, military/veteran status, genetic information, marital status, ethnicity, alienage or any other protected classification, in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws. We encourage individuals of all backgrounds to apply. If you are a qualified candidate with a disability, please email us at jobs@forumfyi.org if you require a reasonable accommodation to complete your application.