



## Position Description

### Research & Evaluation Specialist/Senior Specialist (Part Time)

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Forum for Youth Investment

**FULL TITLE:** Research & Evaluation Specialist/Senior Specialist

**SUPERVISOR:** Senior Director, Research & Evaluation

**PURPOSE:** The part-time Research and Evaluation (R&E) Specialist/Senior Specialist leads research, evaluation, and measurement projects to advance strategic priorities in partnership with external and internal stakeholders. Externally, this person facilitates the collection and use of data in support of research and evaluation projects for youth-serving organizations who are designing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining continuous quality improvement systems, and with system leaders working to strengthen policy and practice in youth-serving ecosystems. Internally, this person conducts applied research that aligns with the organizational research agenda to advance racial equity and improved outcomes for youth across sectors. Through their evaluation work and field building efforts, the R&E Specialist/Senior Specialist blends their evaluation expertise and knowledge of positive youth development principles with demonstrated excellence in project management to support the Forum and its clients in youth-serving systems to confidently leverage data and research evidence for decision making and impact.

*Note: This job description describes two levels of research positions: the Research & Evaluation Specialist and the Senior Research & Evaluation Specialist. The qualifications for each level of role are outlined in this position description.*

## Organization & Background

Founded in 1998, the **Forum for Youth Investment** is a national nonprofit, nonpartisan “action tank” with the mission of advancing equitable youth opportunities and outcomes through quality improvement capacity-building and policy action across systems and sectors. Our vision is that all young people reach their fullest potential – in education, work, and life.

The Forum is a thriving organization with a budget of \$11 million, a growing staff of nearly 50, and headquartered in Washington, DC. The Forum overall is funded by a mix of foundations, corporations, and a fee-for-service contract base. Please visit [www.forumfyi.org](http://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. Through the evidence-based Youth Program Quality Improvement (YPQI) approach, 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 training workshops, 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 Research and Evaluation Specialist/Senior Specialist is a critical leader in the Forum's work to leverage research, evaluation, and data to support internal and external stakeholders in strengthening youth-serving systems and ecosystems. Working across the Forum, this role is a good fit for someone who is skilled in research methods, has conducted research and evaluation in an applied setting, is laser-focused on research translation for field-building and organizational improvement efforts, and who thrives in a mission- and data-driven environment with high levels of autonomy.

*For the Specialist level*, candidates are expected to independently manage tasks in each of the following areas. *For the Senior Specialist level*, candidates are expected to manage projects in these areas, including the work of junior staff members.

### **Project Management:**

Manage contracts with youth-serving organizations (e.g., national organizations, state agencies; local community-based organizations, etc.) focused on designing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining quality improvement systems in youth-serving settings that are assets based, youth centered, and result in equitable opportunities and outcomes. Essential tasks include (1) evaluation management, including design, data collection, analysis and reporting, using best practices in applied research and data visualization to communicate results that are accurate, practitioner-friendly, and action-oriented; (2) project management, including regular communication with clients to ensure a responsive, productive partnership; (3) coordination and facilitation of practitioner-focused training and technical assistance to support evaluation efforts; and (4) regular communication with internal teams to ensure deliverables are on track.

### **Applied Research:**

Contribute to organizational research and learning agenda in support of strategic initiatives, including the generation of supporting evidence for the theoretical underpinnings of our services, as well as evidence syntheses to guide work in new strategic areas of focus. Solicit feedback from clients to facilitate ongoing internal continuous quality improvement efforts tied to our program quality initiatives and measurement frameworks. Engage in research projects with external partners, such as university partners, to further the field of positive youth development in alignment with our organizational mission.

### **Measure Development & Data Collection Systems:**

Support the design and modification of measurement tools (e.g., Program Quality Assessments, surveys) with attention to both program context and scientific validity. Oversee the day-to-day administration and

utilization of multiple online systems for data collection, monitoring, and reporting. Establish and manage both internal and external protocols for measure use and quality assurance. Facilitate coordination and communication across internal teams to ensure successful design and implementation of research processes, reports, and insights.

### **Field Building and Applied Learning:**

Effectively support the organization's actions to promote continuous quality improvement and positive youth development systems in youth-serving settings that are assets based, youth centered, and result in equitable opportunities and outcomes. Prepare and present research summaries, briefs, and other non-technical publications for practitioners, policymakers, funders, and other national audiences via conference presentation and written publications. Leverage evidence-based insights to support new opportunities for the Forum's work.

### **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

*For Specialist level:* Four or more years of professional experience, with two or more spent contributing to research and evaluation projects in applied settings in youth-serving systems or organizations.

Demonstrated ability to contribute to research projects and complete tasks independently.

*For Senior Specialist level:* Six or more years of professional experience, with three or more years spent managing data in support of research and evaluation projects in applied settings in youth-serving systems or organizations. Demonstrated ability to lead research and evaluation projects with a high degree of autonomy and provide support to junior staff in the management of day-to-day research and evaluation tasks.

In addition, the successful candidate will have:

- A bachelor's degree in the social sciences, education, or related fields is required (Masters preferred).

- Demonstrated expertise in managing and analyzing messy datasets and translating results into concrete and practical applications for non-research audiences.
- Applied experience structuring data capture and generating reports for external clients based on predefined, contractual performance metrics.
- Direct experience facilitating data use in programmatic contexts, including designing training content and/or developing supportive resources to promote evaluation capacity building.
- Proficiency with statistical analysis software, SPSS preferred.
- Proficiency with online survey design and data collection tools, such as Qualtrics.
- 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
- Demonstrated commitment to the Forum’s mission, vision, and values.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Able to navigate challenging situations.

Senior level candidates will also have:

- Experience generating reports using business intelligence software, like Tableau or Power BI.
- Authorship of written materials that summarize research evidence for a practitioner audience.
- Successful history identifying and responding to grant proposals for research and evaluation projects.
- A track record of designing and implementing research and evaluation projects in ways that reflect an understanding of the effects of place-, race-, policy-, and systems-based inequities on marginalized communities.

*This is not an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, skills, efforts, 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 5-10% time).

## Position & Compensation

The compensation 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 part-time role will be paid on an hourly basis with an expectation of typically 20 hours per week. The annualized rate for the roles are as follows: for the Specialist level is targeted between \$57,000 - \$69,000; and for the Senior Specialist level is targeted between \$65,000-\$80,000. For both levels, compensation is based upon knowledge, skills, experience, and geographic location, with a comprehensive benefits package. Please send resume and cover letter to: [jobs@forumfyi.org](mailto:jobs@forumfyi.org). Only materials with a cover letter will be reviewed. 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, gender identity, 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](mailto:jobs@forumfyi.org) if you require a reasonable accommodation to complete your application.*