



Smart Start of Mecklenburg County – Job Description

Title of Position:	Chief Advancement Officer
Position Type:	Full Time; Exempt
Department:	Outreach
Reports To:	Chief Executive Officer
Direct Reports:	Philanthropy & Outreach Director; Communications Manager (TBD)

General Information

Organization Overview

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County (Smart Start or SSMC) is a Charlotte-based non-profit that funds local programs for children ages birth to five and their families. The organization is a catalyst for improving the lives of the 85,000+ young children in our community, with a focus on health, family, early education, and literacy. We mobilize resources and forge partnerships to support evidence-based policies, practices, and programs to ensure all children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed.

Smart Start has a budget of over \$35 million comprised of funding from the state of North Carolina, Mecklenburg County, and private donations and grants. SSMC funds approximately 25 programs annually serving over 25,000 young children and their families and administers Mecklenburg County’s MECK Pre-K program, which provides free Pre-K to children in the community. SSMC also operates programs and campaigns internally, including Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, Guiding Parents to Services, Ready4K, and The Basics Mecklenburg. The organization is also the leader in research, data, convening and collaborating on issues related to children 0-5 in the Greater Charlotte area.

Position Summary

The Chief Advancement Officer (CAO) will provide leadership, direction, and guidance for the overall fundraising functions within SSMC and serve as the leading expert related to charitable giving, while reinforcing the culture of philanthropy throughout the organization. The CAO is a strategic leader, coordinating all philanthropic and marketing initiatives while working closely with the CEO, Executive Team, and Board of Directors. The position will set the strategy and tone for fundraising, with emphasis on annual fundraising and communication plans to maximize organizational goals and strategies. The role will focus on relationship-based fundraising and maintaining strong connections to existing individual and corporate donors while seeking out and engaging new donors and supporters to expand SSMC’s private and unrestricted funding. The position will also oversee the Outreach Team to ensure brand continuity, improve marketing and messaging, engage in community relations and advocacy, and lead in developing a strategy for dramatically increasing non-public funds. In addition to fundraising activities, the CAO will also have responsibilities related to board management, staff leadership, and operational/administrative items.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Development & Fundraising – Strategic Management, Oversight, & Implementation

- Create a framework and systems for a greater emphasis on fundraising, including a focus on individuals and increased donor engagement, cultivation and stewardship.
- Ensure all elements of a successful development plan are in place, to include grants, events, appeals, database management, donor acknowledgment, etc.





- Actively pursue diversified funding streams, with specific focus on unrestricted and private funds.
- Develop strategies for a targeted prospect management plan, specifically current donors, foundations, businesses, and potential donors.
- Serve as primary staff involved in direct fundraising activities with donors, funders, grantors, etc.
- Create and manage the annual development budget and devise fundraising strategies to maximize efficiency and meet fundraising objectives.
- Initiate, cultivate, and ensure lasting relationships with donors guiding them through a cycle of continued support and enhance short- and long-term funding needs.
- Actively manage a significant major gifts portfolio including stewarding and soliciting for charitable contributions; oversee the expansion of the major giving program and portfolio management.
- Support the CEO's work with donors and supporters, managing engagement of prospects for major priorities and conferring on strategies.
- Manage fundraising staff, clearly define and clarify roles, and ensure their various goals and objectives are being met in conjunction with the organization's overall strategic goals.
- Coordinate involvement of CEO, CIO, Board & Committee members, and Executive team in necessary fundraising activities.
- Work closely with CIO, department heads, and program staff to make certain that fundraising requests match program needs and make recommendations on opportunities to engage donors to meet needs.
- Work with CEO to establish annual fundraising goals; advance strategic goals related to fundraising.
- Work closely with CEO to coordinate the fundraising efforts of the board, ensure consistent board giving, and support board/committee members in development activities.
- Work with Finance and Outreach team to ensure that all gifts and pledges are recorded properly and acknowledged appropriately.
- Provide direction and support of the planning and implementation of all SSMC-produced events.
- Strategize and provide guidance in the grant identification, writing, and reporting process; coordinate with CIO to identify and prioritize focus areas and manage funder relationships.
- Ensure fundraising elements are included in traditional and social media marketing initiatives.
- Monitor key fundraising trends and analyze data to maximize constituent engagement and make recommendations.

Outreach Activities – Marketing, Community Engagement, & Advocacy

- Lead and supervise all agency fundraising and marketing activities by managing the Outreach Team.
- Guide SSMC's marketing and communication efforts in collaboration with internal team and external vendors.
- Raise the profile and maintain a strong reputation of SSMC through enhanced community partnerships.
- Grow and enhance SSMC's visibility with a focus on media, public relations, and speaking opportunities.
- Ensure consistent branding is used internally and externally, incorporating internal programs as needed.
- Oversee SSMC participation at related community activities by ensuring coverage and engagement.
- Serve as one of the public representatives of the organization, effectively communicating to the public.
- Represent agency in the community at designated groups and events; track agency participation in community engagement activities, especially as they relate to Community Systems Building.
- Actively participate in and coordinate advocacy efforts related to SSMC and early childhood issues.



Internal Operations – Staff Leadership, Strategy, and Administration

- Participate in the Executive Team with other senior staff members, providing cohesive leadership and management to all SSMC staff; actively participate in strategic initiatives that advance SSMC as a unit.
- Develop staff capacity through identifying training/professional development opportunities.
- Assist in the coordination, facilitation, and content of regular meetings with various levels of staff.
- Ensure a formal process is in place and updated regularly for employee information, including job descriptions, annual goals, performance evaluations, employee files, etc.
- Assist in developing/updating onboarding and orientation for new employees.
- As needed, provide oversight to the Culture Committee to ensure best practices implementation.
- Participate in budgeting activities to include overall agency and specific departments.
- Serve as internal liaison for external HR services; serve as primary internal contact for HR-related issues.
- Serve as internal liaison for external IT services; assist with managing IT strategy and equipment.
- Serve as internal liaison for the Ascend Nonprofit Solutions, as well as other facility and workspace related needs; assign/reassign workspace as needed for optimal usage.

Organizational Management – Board Relations, Policies and Procedures, & Compliance

- Serve as a key liaison for board of directors, providing necessary information and materials.
- Prepare for, attend, and provide necessary information for all board meetings; ensure all records are kept in accordance with state mandates.
- Create and/or update and deliver a board orientation process for new members.
- Establish and maintain ongoing relationships with board members; actively participate in recruitment and retention activities for board members.
- Work with board committees; oversee committee recruitment process; serve as staff liaison for Development Committee, and others as needed
- Routinely review and provide suggested updates for organization’s policies and procedures.
- Actively ensure compliance and with government regulations and funders, to include NCPC, Mecklenburg County, Charitable Solicitation License, Audit/Financials, nonprofit oversight groups.

Education, Experience, and Other Job Functions

Successful candidates for the Chief Advancement Officer role should have experience overseeing all aspects of fundraising, donor activities, ensuring fundraising goals are met and achieved, and providing the appropriate levels of staff oversight to ensure related efforts are delivered with excellence and consistent with SSMC’s mission. The CAO role requires deep experience leading philanthropic strategy; planning and executing campaigns; leading a high performing team; and building and stewarding relationships with high wealth individuals and sophisticated institutional funders.

Education and Experience Required for Position

- A Bachelor’s Degree is strongly preferred; a Master’s Degree of Business Administration or Public Administration, Education, Human Services, or related field is preferred; additional professional certification (CFRE) preferred.
- A minimum of 10 years of leadership experience to include setting a strategic vision and oversight of staff; nonprofit experience highly preferred.



- Ten years of experience in fundraising that includes individuals, corporations, and grants preferred.
- Five years of experience working with a nonprofit board preferred.
- A record of successful people, project, and budget management; will have the ability to deliver results by working with and through others both on the internal team and in the community.
- Compelling leadership and presence; a dynamic relationship builder who can represent SSMC to a broad range of internal and external stakeholders and audiences; a team builder with a contagious enthusiasm for the mission, goals, and programs
- Previous early childhood knowledge and experience preferred
- Previous public speaking and advocacy work preferred

Physical Demands

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to talk or hear. The employee frequently is required to stand; walk; use hands to finger, handle or feel; and reach with hands and arms. Specific vision abilities required job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception and ability to adjust focus.

Position Type/Expected Hours of Work

This is a full-time exempt position, with a high degree of flexibility, including remote work opportunities. Occasional evening and weekend work may be required as job duties demand.

Location & Travel

This position is based in Charlotte, NC with a minor amount of travel. Travel is primarily local during the business day, although some out-of-the-area and overnight travel may be expected.

Other Duties

Please note this job description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive listing of activities, duties or responsibilities that are required of the employee for this job. Duties, responsibilities and activities may change at any time with or without notice.

Smart Start of Mecklenburg County ensures that employment activities are conducted without discrimination against any person on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

Updated by CEO 10/1/2024