



## **Manager of Policy & Advocacy**

Location: Remote/Home Office in Mississippi or neighboring state

### **ABOUT MELA**

The Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA) envisions a future where all children in Mississippi have equitable access to high quality early education opportunities, and where the early childhood system works better for everyone: families, employers, early childhood professionals, and, most importantly, our children. MELA exists to build and leverage a powerful coalition of Mississippi professionals, advocates, and community members to achieve common goals. This coalition is called Forum for the Future. Together, we work to clear a path for collaborative policy design, shared advocacy, and innovative programs to create an early childhood system that is state-of-the-art.

Through Forum for the Future, MELA brings leaders and community influencers together to share knowledge, develop action plans, and advocate for Mississippi's children. We believe the most impactful change can happen when decision-makers engage with communities, understand the complexities that affect children's lives, and work together to create solutions. No single group of people, programs, or collection of programs working in isolation can tackle the barriers that prevent children from thriving during their critical early years, so MELA works with partners across education, healthcare, and child wellbeing issue areas to advance a co-created common agenda for children.

### **The Role**

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Manager of Policy and Advocacy will play a pivotal role in the Forum for the Future coalition's work over the next 5 years. The coalition is made up of over 118 members and is working toward a state-of-the-art Mississippi early childhood system by 2030. The Manager will help conduct research related to the coalition's common agenda priorities, support the coordination of collaborative research or co-creative solution design projects, and transform coalition recommendations from those projects into tangible policy proposals. They will also ensure that our work is rooted in the experiences of children, families, and early care and education providers in Mississippi, and will support and engage Mississippians in grassroots advocacy efforts in support of young children.

### **Policy & Research (50%)**

- Assist in the research of partner organizations related/aligned to the Forum For the Future's priorities for a state-of-the-art early childhood system;
- Collaborate with internal and external partners to draft (legislative, regulatory, or implementation) policy recommendations, briefs, position statements, and guides based on original and partner research;
- Support Forum for the Future working groups and policy planning meetings
  - Collect pre-readings and create presentations with necessary data or other state's innovative ideas to help prepare meeting attendees to co-create solutions or develop original policy recommendations;
  - Coordinate transparent communication about working group progress;
- Coordinate and Track progress toward shared policy and advocacy priorities;
- Regularly collect grassroots/qualitative data from the early childhood field to identify potential policy issues and needs;
- During the session, and throughout the year, monitor and analyze legislative and regulatory developments impacting aligned policy priorities and outcomes and frequently inform MELA team and Forum For the Future Coalition about developments;

- Collect data and draft copy for advocacy materials such as policy briefs, fact sheets, and action alerts to support campaigns.

### **Grassroots Community Advocacy Efforts (30%)**

- Support the planning and execution of annual Capitol Day and other advocacy events;
- Support the recruitment of members, and assist with facilitation of workshops for the MS Early Childhood Advocacy Council to engage in state advocacy to advance the coalition's policy goals;
- Act as a Mississippi representative to the Southern Early Childhood Education Justice Network, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and other national or regional Early childhood policy or advocacy coalitions;
- Collaborate with MELA team to assist with workshops, trainings, and information session related to policy implementation, advocacy skills, etc;
- Regularly attend Early Childhood-related Agency meetings and inform MELA ED and partners of issues, ideas, and changes

### **Other Responsibilities (20%)**

- Participate in team and coalition meetings;
- Support the execution of coalition meetings;
- Work as a team player and close collaborator with other MELA members;
- Implement MELA's core values and enhance MELA's efforts to become a more equitable and inclusive organization/community partner;
- Develop own professional development plan and attend trainings, meetings, and conferences aligned to plan;
- Provide updates and data for grant reports and annual reports;
- Other related duties as assigned by ED.

### **Core Skills/Competencies:**

#### **You're a great fit for this role if you...**

- **Love data and doing research.** You enjoy analyzing data, looking for patterns, and finding the support for your ideas. You seek out input and new ideas all the time. You are always looking for innovations or new solutions to policy challenges, which is why you love reading white papers from other organizations, and listening to presentations from partners or sister states.
- **Are an effective writer and communicator.** You are an excellent writer with a clear and compelling voice, a knack for finding simplicity in complexity, and good instincts for using stories to amplify ideas. You have skills in data visualization, or are willing to learn. You can present your findings and recommendations in a clear, actionable way to a variety of audiences.
- **Are a strong strategic thinker.** You are a natural problem-solver who can efficiently assess the big picture, analyze the root causes, and define new ways forward. You are intellectually curious and thrive on new information and ideas, and enjoy listening to partners to gain insight and develop grassroots solutions and policy ideas. You are able to develop innovative solutions within a larger strategic vision.
- **Are dedicated to equity.** You think about and are attuned to the perspectives and concerns of your audiences. You are dedicated to creating and promoting equity-centered recommendations and find ways to lift the voices and experiences of the communities in which we work to the forefront of conversations.
- **Are a curious connector.** You are able to see patterns and connections in policy or programs when sometimes other people are not. Then, you work to connect the dots—whether that is drafting a joint policy recommendation that impacts two issues at once or finding data that ties the two issues together so others can see the pattern. You also realize that great ideas can come from anywhere. Even though we work in early childhood education, you constantly look to other states or issue areas or sectors and wonder “How did THEY solve that issue? Could it work for us?”
- **Can create and follow clear, realistic project plans and timelines.** This position requires solid time management and organizational skills, helping you manage multiple workstreams with attention to detail.

- **Believe that outcomes are more important than actions.** . Our work is not about what steps someone took to get somewhere, but rather what changed as a result of those actions. That is why you set measurable goals, track progress, and course correct when necessary.

### ***Preferred Qualifications and Experience***

- Experience conducting both quantitative and qualitative research as well as a comfort with various research methodologies;
- First-hand knowledge, or extensive curiosity about early childhood education, health, and/or development issues and solutions;
- A degree in public policy, political science, public health, public affairs, educational policy, social science, educational leadership, or related field;
- Solid understanding of the legislative, regulatory, and budget processes in Mississippi;
- Some experience and a moderate level of comfort presenting information to groups and a willingness to learn co-creative and human-centered design facilitation skills and strategies.

### ***Work Expectations***

The Manager is expected to work 40 hours per week every week, Monday through Friday, with the exception of holidays. Office hours are typically 8-5, but the Manager may set hours outside of this schedule with the approval of the Executive Director. Standard work hours (a regular schedule each week) are required.

This is a remote position. This position requires a virtual office in any Mississippi city (or a neighboring state—Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, or Arkansas) determined by the Manager. The Manager is expected to work from the assigned office location during all scheduled work hours unless they are required to travel or the Executive Director has granted permission to work elsewhere.

This position requires some statewide travel (25%) and during the legislative session will be expected to spend a significant portion of time in Jackson. As such, a valid driver's license is necessary and proximity to the state capitol is preferred.

### ***Salary***

Starting salary for this position will range from \$46,000-\$52,000 commensurate with candidate experience and credentials. NOTE: New hires can expect to be brought on at the lower or middle of the salary range.

### ***Benefits***

The Manager will be eligible for health insurance and retirement benefits. Travel reimbursement for work-related travel is offered to all employees, but home-to-work travel is not reimbursed.

### ***Paid Time Off***

MELA offers all employees office holidays (approximately 11 days per year) as well as paid time off based on the number of years an employee has worked for MELA. New employees are entitled to 120 hours per year in accordance with the adopted paid time off policy.

**To begin the application process for this position, send a short email including your resume, the contact information for 2 professional references to [biz@msearlylearning.org](mailto:biz@msearlylearning.org)**