



Director of Communications and Operations

Location: Remote/Home Office in Mississippi

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 care and education system works better for everyone: families, employers, early childhood professionals, and, most importantly, our children. MELA exists to build and leverage a powerful network of Mississippi professionals, advocates, and community members to achieve common goals. We work to clear a path for collaborative policy design, shared advocacy, and innovative programs to create an early care and education system that centers equity, affordability, and quality.

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 meeting readiness benchmarks as they enter school. MELA is committed to engaging with partners across education, healthcare, government, community groups, and families. MELA stands prepared to act to inform decisions that will impact Mississippi's children.

ABOUT THE POSITION

The Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA) seeks an energetic and experienced Communications and Operations Director to join their leadership team. This position is perfect for a creative and strategic professional with the skills to develop communications strategies and tactics that are research-based, outcomes-oriented and responsive to both audience values and organizational partner needs. As a skilled storyteller, the Communications Director will create messaging and materials to inform, educate, and inspire key audiences including but not limited to early care and education professionals, policymakers, and parents of young children. In collaboration with the MELA team, the Communications director should be able to craft targeted pitches for the press and potential funders, as well as explain MELA's progress to existing funders and Board of Directors.

In addition to communications, the Director will oversee the development and implementation of more sophisticated policies and procedures, both in the finances and general operations realms.

Responsibilities

Communications Strategy (35%)

- Create an integrated, strategic communications plan or approach for branding, websites, social media, email campaigns, mass media/press and organizational collateral that further MELA's mission, projects, and goals.
- Work in collaboration with MELA team members and partners to define and refine communication goals and establish shared messaging.
- Determine success metrics and provide ongoing analysis of the impact of MELA's communications tactics.
- Update MELA team and partners about metrics and communications goals.
- Develop communication strategies to maintain or increase trust, engagement, and awareness among MELA's existing target audiences, and explore strategies to reach new audiences as needed.
- Provide guidance and strategic communications support to MELA team and members of Forum for the Future.
- Act as primary liaison with media and marketing contractors on communications projects, including websites, videos, or multi-channel campaigns.
- Provide communications support for fundraising efforts, including targeted short-term campaigns and presentations for potential funders.

Communications Implementation (35%)

- Maintain and create content for MELA's website and Forum for the Future website.
- Create content for all social media platforms (currently MELA uses Facebook and Instagram)
- Create email campaigns and e-newsletters.
- Track engagement across platforms.
- Create press kits, talking points, flyers, reports, and promotional materials and collateral for events and initiatives.
- Maintain brand integrity across all platforms, channels, and products.
- Support team to ensure organizational partners are receiving timely, accurate, consistent communications.
- Facilitate communications between Forum for the Future coalition members and partners.
- Ensure all communications align with MELA's values and are accessible and inclusive of a diverse population.

Organizational Operations (20%)

- Contribute to the development of MELA's strategic goals and objectives as well as the overall management of the organization.
- Maintain continuous lines of communication, keeping the Executive Director informed of all critical issues.
- With support from the Executive Director, implement systems, such as reimbursement, travel policies, project checklists, and organizational insurance policies.
- Oversee and work with contracted accountants and other financial providers to ensure all activities including payroll, billing processes, monthly financial reconciliation and invoicing is correct and timely.

Other Duties (10%)

- Maintain membership database for Mississippi Forum for the Future.
- Assist in the design and execution of meetings, events, and conferences.
- Participate in team and Forum for the Future meetings.
- Works as a team player and close collaborator with other MELA members.
- Provide leadership towards MELA's efforts to becoming a more equitable and inclusive organization/community partner and implementation of our core values.
- Develop own professional development plan and attend trainings, meetings, and conferences.

Expectations:

Core Skills/Competencies:

- **Be an outstanding 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 think critically about the experiences of the range of people involved in our work—from families and educators to policymakers and system decision-makers—and have ideas for how to reach those stakeholders.
- **Be 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 working with multidisciplinary teams, often across multiple projects at once. You use communications to generate innovative solutions within a larger strategic vision.
- **Invest and influence others.** You bring out the best in your team, inspire your colleagues, and help foster an inclusive and collaborative team culture. You know how to build relationships with a variety of stakeholders and contacts and value the diverse perspectives they bring.
- **Be 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 communications that lift the voices and experiences of the communities in which we work.
- **Model cross-cultural agility.** Authentic self-reflection, self-awareness, and high emotional intelligence are central to who you are, and you utilize these skills to shape a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. You have an adept cultural understanding of yourself and use your understanding of yourself and others to build trusting relationships with direct reports, colleagues, and external contacts.
- **Embrace new technology.** You have the ability and desire to learn new systems, optimize how they are used and leverage them for effective data reporting. You have experience leading or directly supporting system development and implementation.
- **Love data.** You enjoy analyzing data to drive communications strategy and decision-making. You can present findings and recommendations in a clear, actionable way to a variety of audiences.
- **Ability to create and follow clear, realistic project plans and timelines.** This position requires strong project management and organizational skills, helping you manage multiple workstreams with attention to detail.

Preferred Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in journalism, communications, public policy/political science, business, marketing, or related field.
- Demonstrated skill in motivating diverse audiences to action through communication.
- Portfolio of graphic design and copywriting skills. Formal graphic design experience or training with adobe creative suite a plus.

- Experience with data visualization a plus
- Excellent judgment and creative problem-solving skills.
- Ability to make decisions in a changing environment and anticipate future needs.
- Proven ability to meet multiple deadlines and balance numerous projects while maintaining a perspective on long-term goals.
- Ability to thrive with minimal direct supervision/management.

Hours, Compensation and Benefits

Hours and Travel

- This is a fully remote position. At times our team meets together in person or hosts events. As such, if the Director lives outside of the Jackson, Mississippi metro area, then some overnight travel may be required.
- This position requires a virtual office in any Mississippi location (or an adjacent state) set by the Director. The Director is expected to work from the assigned office location during all scheduled work hours unless the Director is required to travel or the Executive Director has granted permission to work elsewhere.
- The Director 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 Director may set hours outside of this schedule with the approval of the Executive Director. Standard work hours (a regular schedule each week) are required.

Salary & Benefits

- This position offers a competitive salary in the \$70,000-\$78,000 range, great benefits, and 120 hours paid time off annually.
- The Director will be eligible for health insurance and retirement benefits. MELA invests in employees' retirement plans regardless of a match. Travel reimbursement for work-related travel is offered to all employees, but home-to-work travel is not reimbursed.
- MELA offers all employees office holidays (approximately 11 days per year) as well as 120 hours of paid time off for the first 4 years, and 160 hours after that. New employees are entitled to 20 days per year in accordance with the adopted paid time off policy.

To apply for this position, send a short email including your resume and why you are interested in the role to hireing@msearlylearning.org.