



Position Description: Communications Director

Organization

Created by the SC General Assembly in 1999, South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness is the state's comprehensive early childhood education agency and a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. SC First Steps (SCFS) takes a holistic approach to accomplishing our mission of preparing all kids for success in school, work and life, offering services that improve children's health, strengthen families, expand access to quality child care, increase participation in four-year-old kindergarten (4K) programs and help transition rising kindergartners into school. Through a network of 46 affiliates, called "local partnerships," SCFS reaches children 0-5 and their families in every county of the state. With funding from the state, annually, SCFS provides over 2200 four-year-olds with access to Pre-K 4 across 64 school districts. SCFS is a public-private partnership with the ability to leverage state, federal and private funds to accomplish our state-wide mission. In addition to developing, funding and supporting programs and initiatives statewide, South Carolina First Steps also operates as a connector and convener serving as the Early Childhood Advisory Council for the state of South Carolina. In this capacity, the work of First Steps includes integrating government and private systems to ensure all children begin school ready to success. The diverse workforce that makes up the 50+ member team at SCFS includes salaried and hourly positions and is governed by a State Board of Trustees. Our office is in downtown Columbia, SC. As SCFS is a state-wide organization, some positions are remote, and some require travel.

Team: Administrative

The SC First Steps Administrative Team integrates core, cross-cutting functions including communications, strategy, evaluation, data management, human resources, fundraising, grants management and compliance across the organization, with local partnerships, 4K providers and with other agencies and systems. The Administrative Team is led by the Executive Director.

Position Description

Reporting to the Executive Director, the Communications Director oversees agency communications and public affairs efforts including development of digital and print communications, speaking engagements, and public and media relations. The Communications Director is responsible for creating and managing relationships with external audiences in support of South Carolina First Steps' mission. The Communications Director gathers and distributes to the public information, facts and stories about SC First Steps, our clients, programs and initiatives as well as about the value and impact of early childhood development more broadly. The Communications Director is a key storyteller and communicator for the organization charged with bringing the stories and impact of SC First Steps to life for the community through engagement across multiple channels, including print and digital materials, online communications, events, and personal interaction. The Communications Director will be responsible for working collaboratively with all areas of the SC First Steps team, including program staff, fundraising and grants management staff, and senior leadership.

Responsibilities

General

- Develop, implement, and evaluate an annual communications and community relations plan for SC First Steps that includes events, online communications, print materials, and earned media strategies.
- Provides strategic leadership and project management support to communications staff and contractors across the agency incorporating, as appropriate, other relevant functions (i.e. fundraising, strategic impact).
- Be a strong champion for SC First Steps, its mission, its stakeholders and its clients both externally and internally.
- Ensure that stakeholders are consistently included in the development and distribution of content, that content is responsive to the needs and interests of stakeholders and the public, and that stakeholders and the public perceive SC First Steps as inclusive, responsive and open with information.
- Ensure adherence to SC First Steps' strategic plan, legislative mandates, and funder expectations – both individually and also through team/project management– providing reports to the senior leadership team.

Communications

- Oversee the design and development or redesign and redevelopment of online and printed materials including, for example, the SC First Steps website and annual report.
- Lead the generation of online content, including website and social media, that engages a large audience with SC First Steps' mission and leads to measurable action.
- Coordinate website maintenance—ensure that new and consistent information (article links, stories, data, and events) is posted regularly.
- Track and measure the level of engagement with web and social media channels over time; use data to identify strategies for optimizing online reach and engagement.
- Manage the development and distribution of all print collateral including, but not limited to, newsletters, brochures, posters, post cards and mailers.
- Manage the collection and development of high-quality photographs, videos, and written stories of SC First Steps' clients, programs, local partnerships, childcare partners, and initiatives for use in communications materials, utilizing both internal resources and external purchased, in-kind and donated resources.
- Manage all media contacts and drive positive coverage of SC First Steps in print, television, radio, and other media.
- Develop audience-specific communications materials including communications targeted at the General Assembly, prospective and current clients, childcare providers, local partnerships, staff, trustees, donors (current and prospective), volunteers (current and prospective), the public at large, etc.
- Works closely with the Director of Strategy and Impact to ensure a communications focus on outcomes and impact.
- Build the overall communications capacity of the organization, its partnerships and childcare partners through the development of templates, training of staff and partners, integration of collaborative technologies, etc.

Community Engagement

- Plan and execute events to engage people as supporters—volunteers, donors, partners—of SC First Steps.
- Ensure SC First Steps is well represented at events in the community. Speak on behalf of SC First Steps at community functions and coordinate the appearances of other SC First Steps team members, partners, supporters, and clients to speak on behalf of SC First Steps.
- Build partnerships and link the agency with allies including other nonprofits, state agencies, and funders.
- Support legislative efforts and provide support in government affairs.
- Build relationships with current and potential supporters and facilitate their engagement with volunteer, donation, and partnership opportunities.
- Coordinate internal resources to be responsive to supporters seeking to engage as volunteers, donors, or partners.
- Help ensure the integrations of systems for enrollment in programs (i.e. 4K).
- Oversee the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a contact database (including donors, funders, volunteers, stakeholders, legislators, media, etc.)
- Offer meaningful gestures of appreciation for supporters and coordinate appreciation activities of the staff and board.

Qualifications

- Minimum of a B.A. degree.
- At least 5 years of relevant professional experience.
- Ability to build the overall communications capacity of the organization, its partnerships and childcare partners, through the development of templates, training of staff and partners, integration of collaborative technologies, etc.
- Experience developing and implementing communications and/or public relations strategies.
- Experience managing projects.
- Experience with event planning.
- Excellent writing/editing and verbal communication skills, including public speaking skills.
- Excellent digital and computer skills, for example experience with database management, graphic design, communications software applications, social media, website maintenance, etc.
- A strong track record as an implementer who thrives on managing a variety of key initiatives concurrently.
- Relationship builder with the flexibility and finesse to “manage by influence.”
- High energy, maturity, and leadership skills with the ability to serve as a unifying force and to position communications discussions at both the strategic and tactical levels.
- Sincere commitment to work collaboratively with all constituent groups, including staff, board members, local affiliates (partnerships), childcare partners, volunteers, donors, and clients.
- Self-starter, able to work independently, and entrepreneurial; enjoys creating and implementing new initiatives.
- Must be trustworthy, hard-working, positive, a team-player, and dedicated to the mission of SC First Steps.

Preferred Qualifications

- A strong track record as an implementer who thrives on managing a variety of key initiatives concurrently.
- Relationship builder with the flexibility and finesse to “manage by influence.”
- High energy, maturity, and leadership skills with the ability to serve as a unifying force and to position communications discussions at both the strategic and tactical levels.
- Sincere commitment to work collaboratively with all constituent groups, including staff, board members, local affiliates (partnerships), childcare partners, volunteers, donors, and clients.
- Self-starter, able to work independently, and entrepreneurial; enjoys creating and implementing new initiatives.
- Must be trustworthy, hard-working, positive, a team-player, and dedicated to the mission of SC First Steps.

Other Requirements

- Must possess a valid driver’s license and vehicle to use in performance of job. Position requires some travel within South Carolina.
- Must be able to pass criminal background and child and adult maltreatment screens and a pre-employment drug screen.
- Ability to lift up to 25 pounds

Benefits:

This position is eligible for a variety of benefits from a comprehensive health and dental insurance program and generous annual and sick leave policies, to a solid and secure retirement system. The State of South Carolina offers a competitive benefits program for state employees.

SC First Steps is an equal opportunity employer.

SC First Steps is a drug-free workplace.

To apply, submit your cover letter and resume to Samantha Ingram at HR@scfirststeps.org.