



Job Description

Position:	Director of Workforce Innovation and Solutions
Reports to:	Chief Impact and Innovation Officer
Status:	Exempt
Salary:	\$80,000 - \$85,000 / Annually
Hours:	Onsite; Full-Time / Maximum of 40 hours per week
Hours of Operations:	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm with some evenings and weekends

Organizational Description

North Lawndale Employment Network (NLEN) is a workforce development agency located on Chicago's West Side. We are dedicated to advancing the economic outcomes of marginalized populations, including justice-impacted individuals, through innovative workforce development initiatives and social enterprises. Our mission is to empower residents to access meaningful, sustainable employment, driving long-term economic advancement in North Lawndale.

Our Mission

To improve the earning potential of the North Lawndale community through innovative employment initiatives that lead to economic advancement and an improved quality of life for residents.

Opportunity

NLEN is seeking a **Director of Workforce Innovation and Solutions** to lead our agency's next phase of growth and transformation. This is a **senior leadership role** that will require a candidate with significant leadership experience, capable of managing complex, large-scale initiatives, driving organizational change, and leading teams through transformation. The Director will leverage their knowledge of corporate ecosystems and workforce development to ensure our programs are not only responsive to current needs but actively preparing our clients for future opportunities.

We're looking for someone who embraces a performance-based culture, champions data-driven decision-making, and has a deep commitment to ensuring that all decisions and initiatives prioritize the needs of job-seeking clients. In alignment with our overarching goal of reducing unemployment in North Lawndale by 10% by 2027, this role will be pivotal in driving the strategy and execution of placing 328 clients annually into meaningful employment opportunities. This ambitious goal requires a strategic approach that balances innovation, scalability, and partnership development to achieve sustained impact.

Key Responsibilities

- **Innovative Leadership:** Lead the design, implementation, and evaluation of workforce development programs that anticipate future workforce needs. Ensure these programs incorporate data-driven insights, human-centered design, and emerging technologies.



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- **Client-Centered Strategy:** Ensure that all programs and services are continuously tailored to meet the unique needs of individuals facing high barriers to employment, with a focus on the job-seeker's long-term success.
- **Navigating Corporate Ecosystems:** Build and leverage partnerships within corporate and business ecosystems to create opportunities for clients, advocating for justice-impacted individuals and ensuring they have pathways into sustainable employment.
- **Performance-Based Accountability:** Lead the organization in achieving our goal of reducing unemployment in North Lawndale by 10% by 2027, requiring placing 328 clients annually into employment. Foster a culture of accountability and measurable impact across all programs.
- **Innovation and Research:** Lead efforts to research and implement best practices in workforce development. Leverage data and emerging trends to drive program improvements, ensuring NLEN stays competitive and adaptable in a rapidly changing workforce landscape.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Act as a key liaison with community partners, employers, and funders. Ensure all stakeholders are aligned and committed to NLEN's goals of workforce innovation, client empowerment, and long-term community impact.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Lead the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles across all programs. Ensure that NLEN's initiatives address systemic inequities and are responsive to the needs of marginalized groups, particularly justice-impacted individuals.
- **Team Leadership and Development:** Lead and mentor a team of 4 managers and their direct-service staff (15+ staff and growing). This is a senior leadership role that requires the ability to prepare, equip, and empower your team to thrive in their roles. Foster a culture of continuous learning, improvement, and accountability. Ensure the team has the resources and support needed to achieve high-quality outcomes and make a measurable impact.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Partner with internal teams to use data analytics for program design, decision-making, and continuous improvement. Ensure data informs everything from client outcomes to program sustainability.
- **Program Oversight:** Manage current and future workforce initiatives, ensuring they meet client needs and organizational goals. Oversee wraparound services like the Financial Opportunity Center, ensuring comprehensive and coordinated client support.
- **Grant and Financial Sustainability:** Collaborate with Development, Finance, and Data teams to ensure successful execution of the full grant cycle, from application to reporting, ensuring compliance, all performance metrics are tracked and financial sustainability.

Qualifications

Experience: 7-10 years of senior leadership experience in business strategy, corporate partnerships, organizational leadership, or related fields. A proven ability to lead large teams through transformation and to drive complex, high-impact initiatives. Candidates should have experience at the senior leadership level, managing organizational change, influencing strategy, and shaping outcomes in ways that align with long-term goals.

Preparing Others for Success: Significant experience in preparing individuals, teams, or communities to navigate and thrive in business and corporate ecosystems, equipping them with the tools, mindset, and skills needed to succeed.



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Strong Analytical and Data Skills: Experience using data to drive decision-making, measure impact, and make informed adjustments to program strategies.

Corporate Ecosystem Familiarity: Experience working within or alongside businesses and organizations to create inclusive systems, build strategic partnerships, and provide pathways into sustainable employment.

Equity and Inclusion: Deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, with experience leading initiatives that address systemic barriers for underserved populations.

Excellent Communication Skills: Strong interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to engage and collaborate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders, from clients to corporate partners to community leaders.

Education: A Bachelor's degree in social work or related field is required; a Master's degree in workforce development; business administration, public administration, organizational development, or a related field is preferred.

Program Management Experience: Proven success in managing large-scale programs and teams at a senior leadership level, including experience in high-quality service delivery, program sustainability, and driving organizational impact.

NLEN Core Values

Neighborhood-focused employment initiatives are fundamental.

Successful programs are neighborhood-focused and community-driven, so they meet the specific needs of individuals.

Quality of work matters.

People who work hard should not be poor. A full-time job must meet basic needs and offer conditions for engagement, advancement, and respect.

Economic mobility is essential to reducing poverty.

Family supporting wages and financial literacy are core to addressing economic insecurity, which disproportionately affects African American, Latino, and other families of color. Economic insecurity is not only impacting the poor; it has grown to threaten the middle class. Self-employment and entrepreneurship are critically important economic mobility strategies to generate income and boost household finances.

We must address the racial wealth gap and social inequality.

The United States' history of racially charged public policy has created the modern racial wealth divide not just through the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow, but through the more recent race-based discrimination in hiring, housing subsidies, tax subsidies, and veteran benefits as well as other implicitly and explicitly racist public policies.

Everyone deserves human dignity and empowerment.

To uphold this belief, we do all of our work in a manner that values human dignity and eliminates shame, humiliation, and stigma by building on the strengths that help our participants and community survive loss and trauma and rebalance the power dynamic between participants and authority figures.



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