



Position: Executive Director

About Youth Speaks:

Mission and Vision

Through the intersection of arts education and youth development practices, civic and cultural participation, and high quality artistic presentation, Youth Speaks creates healthy and vibrant spaces that challenge young people to find, develop, publicly present, and actively apply their voices as creators of change.

Youth Speaks exists to shift the perceptions of young people by combating illiteracy, isolation, alienation, and silence, creating a global movement of brave new voices bringing the noise from the margins to the core.

History

Founded in 1996 in San Francisco by James Kass, Youth Speaks has long championed a local, national, and increasingly global movement of young people picking up pens and stepping proudly onto stages, declaring themselves present through their own unique stories.

Program and Results

One of the world's leading presenters of Spoken Word performance, education, and youth development programs, Youth Speaks has helped develop and lead a national field of organizations while producing youth poetry slams, festivals, and reading series, alongside a comprehensive slate of arts-in-education programs during the school day, in the after-school hours and on weekends. In addition, Youth Speaks creates internationally-recognized theater and digital programming, publishes in multiple platforms, trains educators and emerging organizational leaders, and has helped launch a national network (Brave New Voices) of over 100 programs who believe in the power of young people.

The force behind the Brave New Voices Festival and several high-profile media partnerships, Youth Speaks has a number of programs designed to make the voices of 21st Century America active and visible. Youth Speaks had helped establish programs across the country, helping to raise and distribute money, give models for program design, and continuing to convene the field twice a year. Each organization within the Brave New Voices Network operates independently, raising their own money and adopting program models to their local communities.

Current initiatives of Youth Speaks include [The Bigger Picture](#), [The Off Page Project](#), [The Raise Up Project](#), [Life is Living](#), The XQ Institute partnership, and [The BNV Network Initiative](#).

Youth Speaks is generously funded in part by the Ford Foundation, The Nathan Cummings Foundation,

The Surdna Foundation, The Andrew R. Mellon Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Fund, The James Irvine Foundation, The MacArthur Foundation, the California Endowment, Bloomberg Philanthropies, San Francisco Grants For the Arts, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Clorox Company Foundation, San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, Oakland Department of Children and Youth, The National Endowment for the Arts, The National Endowment for the Humanities, San Francisco Foundation, Silver Giving Foundation, The Stuart Foundation, W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, William And Flora Hewlett Foundation, among many other institutions and individuals who believe in the power of the word when it is in the hands of young people.

Youth Speaks serves approximately a wide population of 13-24 year-olds nationally, 81% of which are eligible for free or reduced school lunch programs, and breaks down to 34% African-American, 22% Latino, and 23% Asian-American, with the remainder Pacific Islander or White/non-Hispanic.

The Opportunity:

This is an opportunity for the right individual to provide leadership, expand the vision, and amplify the impact of Youth Speaks, a path-breaking, nationally regarded spoken word and youth development organization with an annual budget exceeding \$5 million and a staff of 30. During the 20-year tenure of Youth Speaks' founder, James Kass, more than 100 programs have been launched nationally, which have impacted hundreds of thousands of young people across the country. This is an opportunity for a progressive, passionate, youth advocate to develop programming and advance the cause of creating safe spaces for young people to have a voice, engage with their communities, and make an impact.

Youth Speaks has a high public profile, and is governed by a committed, engaged Board of Directors who have been key in guiding the organization through its growth in supporting James Kass. The Board has served to provide a highly stable, well-stewarded foundation for the future, and has been highly supportive and integral to the financial growth and stability of the organization. The future Executive Director will have the unique opportunity to elevate and strengthen the impact of the organization, collaborating in ideating, creating and launching new touch points for youth.

Position Summary:

The Executive Director will be responsible for managing the overall business operations of Youth Speaks, enhancing the internal processes and continuing to build the infrastructure that will allow the organization to support its mission in an evolving world. With a dedicated team and an engaged Board, the successful candidate will help forge new partnerships to build on Youth Speaks' existing programs, increasing the organization's visibility, impact, and financial resources. The Executive Director will establish, cultivate, and maintain strong working relationships with staff, key stakeholders, and with a network of corporate partners, foundations and other partnering organizations, including schools, partner nonprofits, and arts and cultural institutions. In close collaboration with the Board of Directors and staff, this new executive will lead Youth Speaks to its next level, exploring opportunities to leverage and enhance the organization's current model, programs, and resources.

This leader will be instrumental in developing the strategy to increase the organization's fundraising potential and activities. This will include the opportunity to build off of and develop comprehensive fundraising strategies with new and innovative approaches, while strengthening current development initiatives through thoughtful cultivation of national level partnerships, managing all major donor (individuals, corporations and foundations) relationships, and working closely with the Board of Directors. With a strong public relations mindset, the Executive Director will be a strong voice for Youth Speaks as the external face of the organization, motivating and inspiring others to support the mission.

In partnership with the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will assure that the organization has short- and long-range strategies which achieve its mission and goals with consistent, realistic, and timely progress. This professional will cultivate a strong and transparent working relationship with the Board of Directors and ensure open communication about the measurements of financial, programmatic, and impact performance against Youth Speaks' milestones and goals. The Executive Director will be committed to supporting existing core programs, maintaining a cohesive, positive organizational culture within Youth Speaks that emphasizes collaboration, collegiality, and accountability while supporting an open climate that attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse staff of top quality people.

Core Competencies:

The Executive Director will be a dynamic, visionary, culturally engaged and empathic leader with the capacity to envision and strategically plan for the future direction of the organization. With a significant track record of success and experience in fundraising, leadership and management, this individual will have a combination of breadth and depth with a range of departments and job functions.

With a genuine passion for the mission and a belief in young people, this leader will have a passion for empowering communities and cultivating youth through language, arts, and cultural participation. The Executive Director will be comfortable and experienced in working across diverse communities and communities of color, and will have the empathy and knowledge to communicate across all constituencies, including to students, staff, donors, educators, other organizations, and the broader community.

The Executive Director will have a progressive outlook towards best practices, including the capacity to innovate and pioneer new models, and to create a culture of accountability and transparency. The Executive Director will be a resourceful person who can handle conflict, foster understanding, and advance ideas. A natural leader, this individual will have the ability to communicate candidly with stakeholders across the various levels of the organization.

The Executive Director will be an expert in public relations, able to speak to its vision, history, mission, demographics and diversity with fluency, clarity and transparency. An experienced fundraiser, the Executive Director will be able to cultivate and steward donors and be successful and creative in development opportunities for Youth Speaks. A Bachelor's degree is required and a graduate degree is preferred.

The ideal candidate will have the following personal competencies and characteristics:

Passion for the Mission and Cultural Competency: The Executive Director have a passion for the mission of Youth Speaks, spoken word, arts and social justice, and an innovative and thoughtful approach to the future. This leader will be driven by the opportunity to provide safe spaces for young people to develop their voices, apply themselves towards impacting the community, and providing guidance and leadership for the national and increasingly international network and field Youth Speaks has cultivated. Experienced with the intersection of issues that impact these communities, the Executive Director will be a natural advocate for young people, and strive to be sensitive and incisive regarding the goals of Youth Speaks. The Executive Director will be an empathic leader, treating others with respect, and an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusiveness. An individual of unquestioned integrity, ethics and values, this leader is someone who can be trusted without reservation.

Expertise in Development and Fundraising: The Executive Director will be an experienced leader with a measurable track record of success in advancement and development, and the expertise and mindset to build strong relationships with current and potential donors and the Board. This leader will have demonstrated expertise with various fundraising and communications channels with success as a high touch leader engaging with all of Youth Speaks' constituents, including with foundations, individual donors, community leaders, and other supporters. The Executive Director will be a flexible self-motivated team player who will serve as counsel to Board of Directors in identifying and devising evolving development strategies for Youth Speaks.

External Relations and Communications: The Executive Director will have a high level of public relations insight. Serving as a leader in the arts, education, spoken word, cultural organizing, and youth empowerment fields, the Executive Director will be the outward-facing voice of Youth Speaks, helping to guide messaging, communicate about new initiatives or developments to all stakeholders, and help to build the brand of the organization as it continues its national growth. This executive will able to speak fluidly and extensively about Youth Speaks' history and impact, growth strategy, and future direction, as well as the impact of the organization's work with youth. An influential and persuasive communicator, the Executive Director will have an inspired ability to build community across demographic lines, using accessible language to explicate information, strategy, and processes to individuals with differing levels of familiarity.

Strategic and Entrepreneurial Leader: The Executive Director will be an experienced leader with an entrepreneurial and enthusiastic spirit, and the background and skills to deliver on the vision for Youth Speaks and the organization's impact on the community. This individual will be a proven strategic thinker with the foresight, capacity, and experience to understand and balance complex and discrete constituent needs. This individual will demonstrate the ability to diagnose critical areas for attention, and implement clear, action-oriented, innovative strategies that address challenges with thoughtful, effective solutions that engender broad support. Agile in ambiguous situations and capable of providing stability when faced with quickly-changing circumstances, the Executive Director will possess the ability to challenge the status quo yet employ a servant-leadership approach that does not threaten the culture

at Youth Speaks.

Business Acumen and Management Expertise: This individual will have the vision to develop and implement progressive innovations to the Youth Speaks model and leverage relationships with partner organizations in order to amplify the organization's reach and impact. The Executive Director will be a strong manager and inspire confidence through clear, competent, transparent decision-making, and will foster a culture of accountability and support. In concert with the Board and with the organization's financial and personnel needs in mind, this leader will forecast progress towards stated goals and position the organization for growth and success with sustainable solutions. A results-oriented problem solver, the Executive Director will have the perspective to consider the impact of decisions on the organization, and make sound recommendations. This individual will demonstrate the ability to build, nurture, and retain a strong team of professionals focused on excellence, accountability, and efficiency.

Relationship Builder and Collaborator: The Executive Director will be exceptionally skilled at developing, building, and sustaining excellent relationships, both internally and externally to the organization. This leader will be a natural collaborator with a demonstrated ability to connect with and build bridges among the various stakeholders at Youth Speaks, including students, program staff, artists, educators, community leaders, the Board, and other constituents. The Executive Director will be thoughtful, and open, working collaboratively to find efficiencies and opportunities for the benefit of Youth Speaks, the field Youth Speaks has cultivated and invested in, and the youth that the organization serves. Calm under pressure, this individual will be consultative, promoting open dialogue with team members to identify best practices, synthesize divergent views, and coalesce all constituencies around a shared view or plan. The Executive Director will be accessible to staff and proactive in partnering with others to address the human impact of change.

Contact:

Youth Speaks has engaged Koya Leadership Partners to help in this hire. This search is being led by Michelle Bonoan and Medelene Beasley. Please submit a compelling cover letter and resume [here](#) or email Michelle and Medelene at the following:

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About Koya Leadership Partners:

Koya Leadership Partners is a national retained executive search and human capital consulting firm that works exclusively with nonprofits and social enterprises. We deliver measurable results, finding exceptionally talented people who truly fit the unique culture of our client organizations and ensuring that organizations have the resources and strategies to support them. For more information about Koya Leadership Partners, visit www.koyapartners.com.