



## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Position: Executive Director**

**Organization: Youth Speaks, Inc.**

**Supervisor: Board of Directors**

**Direct Report(s): Director of Production, Director of Programs, Creative Director, Director of Programs**

**Hours per week: 40 hours/week (full-time, exempt)**

Updated: April 14, 2021

*The Youth Speaks Board seeks a deeply experienced youth services/ literary professional to lead one of the nation's most recognized programs committed to a critical, youth-centered pedagogy. Youth Speaks places young people in control of their intellectual and artistic development.*

The Board is seeking an experienced professional to lead Youth Speaks, shaping its programmatic impact and presence not only in the lives of young people, but also across the Bay Area and beyond. This candidate must find inspiration in the intersection of arts education and youth development practice, civic engagement and high quality artistic presentation, and be committed to creating spaces for the artistic and intellectual development of young people creating social change through their voice.

### **Organization Profile**

Youth Speaks is a multi-faceted, BIPOC-led organization that understands that the power, insight, creativity, and passion of young people changes the world. Founded in 1996 in San Francisco, Youth Speaks is the leading nonprofit presenter of Spoken Word performance, education, and youth development programs in the world. Presenters of local and international youth poetry slams, festivals, reading series, and more, Youth Speaks also offers a comprehensive slate of literary arts education programs during the school day, in the after-school hours, on weekends and evenings. All told, Youth Speaks provides free arts education to thousands of teens per year in the San Francisco Bay Area alone, has helped create partner programs in over 60 cities across the United States, and has worked with young people globally.

For 25 years, Youth Speaks has been at the forefront of defining what it means to empower the voices of young people and is currently focused on the following key areas as we continue to grow and build as an organization:

- Increasing intergenerational engagement by creating more intentional pathways for youth and alum leadership within our programs, expanding partnerships and reach, and developing novel ways of engaging community, audience, and alumni.
- Delivering responsive programming by developing timely campaigns in response to current community events and delivering integrated digital and/or live programming to engage local and global audiences.
- Making data-driven decisions by developing metrics to inform decision making across the organization that will allow us to better understand the impact of programs and integrate intentionality and responsiveness.
- Sustaining and growing the field by strategically growing partnerships with international networks of spoken word individuals, organizations and collectives and other creative youth development programs.
- Securing long-term sustainability by implementing a development strategy that continues to support the programmatic vision of the organization, invests in our staff, and secures our future in our new office space.

## **Position Overview**

The Executive Director will lead Youth Speaks by: focusing on the organization's financial health, investing in the organization's national and international voice, and strengthening ties to the organization's local community.

The Executive Director will be responsible for managing the overall business operations of Youth Speaks, enhancing the internal processes and building the infrastructure that will allow the organization to continue to grow in support of its mission. This is an opportunity for a progressive, passionate, youth advocate to develop programming and advance the cause of creating spaces for young people to develop and amplify their voices as creators of societal change. The Executive Director's top priorities and responsibilities include but are not limited to:

## **Mission & Strategy**

- Exemplifying a genuine passion for the mission and youth development, this leader has a commitment for uplifting youth and their communities through language, arts, and expression. The Executive Director is comfortable and experienced in working across diverse communities, and has the empathy and knowledge to communicate across all constituencies, including to students, staff, donors, the Brave New Voices network, and the broader community.
- Continue reflecting and learning alongside the organization in order to meet new challenges with creative models and solutions and to center liberatory practices throughout the organization.
- Driven by the opportunity to create a world in which young people are heard, honored, and connected through creative ecosystems of interdependence and care; and also by providing guidance for opportunities in education and employment.
- Through a deep love and familiarity, the Executive Director is a natural advocate for the communities we ally with, and is sensitive and incisive regarding the goals of Youth Speaks.

### **Leadership & Culture**

- Convey compassion and understanding of the unique circumstances of youth being served; maintain an organizational climate that attracts, retains, motivates and develops a multi-cultural, diverse, high-quality staff and Board; create an environment that embraces data-driven decisions, collaboration, transparency, open communication and accountability.
- Manage, supervise, and evaluate staff to ensure that they are well-suited to address challenges and opportunities for Youth Speaks; ensure that a performance evaluation and review system is in place emphasizing well-defined goals, clear responsibilities and levels of accountability for all staff; and encourage staff opportunities for growth within the organization; hire, train, and retain staff in ways that improve programs and strengthen the organization.
- Provide a forum for staff concerns and continue the process of building a team that will be focused on program quality, funding, and organizational capacity; engender and support a collaborative environment; and upgrade personnel competencies among staff.
- Set and execute a vision that inspires staff, board, partners, and the community and establishes Youth Speaks as a thought leader in the arts education space.

## **Programs**

- Collect and leverage evidence of impact from Youth Speaks' programs in order to maintain best practices of youth engagement, arts education and to continue a strong history of dynamic programming.
- Drive strategic outcomes for Brave New Voices by working with stakeholders to determine a 5-year strategic and funding plan for the festival.
- Serve as a thought partner with the Director of Programs to help innovate our programs so they continue to best match our staff's capacity and expertise while remaining responsive to the evolving needs and aspirations of young people throughout the Bay Area and around the world.

## **General Management, Finance, and Administration**

- Ensure that day-to-day operations and services are professionally and efficiently organized and administered; ensure proper administration of contracts, including compliance with relevant employment laws and other legal requirements.
- Maintain the organization's fiscal health; ensure that the organization adheres to a sustainable financial plan based on a Board-approved annual budget; ensure that financial performance positively tracks budget and operating plans; foster an atmosphere of transparency and accountability in matters relating to the organization's financial condition.

## **Fundraising**

- Personally drive fundraising solicitation, especially with major private, government and business donors; develop fundraising alliances; lead and direct all fundraising efforts; appeal to donors, creating special and donor cultivation events for Youth Speaks; manage the Director of Advancement.
- Continually explore new and creative marketing strategies that expand the revenue base; develop corporate sponsorships, and government & nonprofit partnerships

## **Public Relations, Communications, & Advocacy**

- Maintain, promote and provide visibility for Youth Speaks, by serving as a credible and effective spokesperson, in person and in writing; to reinforce and build positive understanding of and reputation for Youth Speaks' work; with the

goal of dispersing and helping activate our liberatory methodologies beyond Youth Speaks to youth art and education spaces throughout the world..

- Actively cultivate positive relations with community organizations, youth arts organizations, social services, public policy organizations, and funders.
- Serve as a spokesperson and advocate for youth and their communities locally and internationally; when appropriate, help influence government policy in support of the communities we ally with and individuals and organizations aligned with our mission and vision

### **Board relations**

- Work with the board to ensure board capacity supports strategic vision;
- Cultivate a deep and collaborative partnership with the board rooted in transparent communication and clear roles and opportunities for engagement and service.

### **Required Qualifications**

- A leader that deeply values diversity, equity and inclusion as a way of being.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Excellent interpersonal and relationships management skills
- Thoughtful and dynamic relationship to intersectional identities that disrupts oppressive power structures
- Experience identifying fundraising opportunities, developing relationships with potential donors, and managing fundraising campaigns to move organizations toward financial goals.
- Preference for someone that lives in the San Francisco Bay Area or willing to relocate here

### **Preferred Qualifications**

- A mission-driven individual with a passion for uplifting and collaborating with communities and cultivating youth through language, arts, and expression;
- Comfort and experience working across diverse communities, with the empathy and knowledge to communicate across all constituencies, including to students, staff, donors and the broader community;

- Proven strategic thinker with the foresight, capacity, and experience to understand and balance complex and discrete community needs and implement clear, action-oriented, innovative strategies that address challenges with thoughtful, effective solutions that engender broad support;
- 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;
- Proven senior-level managerial, financial and operational experience and problem solving experience in the nonprofit sector; strong management experience and the ability to inspire confidence through clear, competent, transparent data-driven decision-making;
- A measurable track record attracting financial support from multiple sources; 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;
- A high level of public relations insight; this executive will be able to speak fluently 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, persuasive, and clear communicator, the Executive Director will have an inspired ability to build community across demographic lines, using accessible language to share information, strategy, and processes to individuals with differing levels of familiarity;
- Decisive and resourceful, with the organizational sensitivity to gain the support and confidence of the Board and staff at all levels; a team builder, collaborator, confident and competent, with strong skills in management and leadership; one who trusts and empowers the leadership team; understands the subtleties of recruiting, motivating, directing and retaining a diverse group of personalities with different work styles;
- Co-creates a joyful workplace, and a love for snacks and spoken word.

## **About Youth Speaks**

### **Mission and Vision**

Youth Speaks creates spaces that challenge young people to develop and amplify their voices as creators of societal change.

Youth Speaks envisions a world in which young people are heard, honored, and connected through creative ecosystems of interdependence and care.

## **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 using their voices to shift culture in the creation of a more just and liberatory world for themselves and their people.

## **Program and Results**

One of the world's leading presenters of Spoken Wordperformance, education, and youth development programs, Youth Speaks produces local, national, and international programs supporting young people and their voices including poetry slams, festivals, anthologies, 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, and has helped launch an international network of over 70 programs who believe in the power of young people.

Youth Speaks serves approximately 200,000 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.

## **To Apply**

Please submit a resume and a thoughtful cover letter detailing your interest and experience to [boardofdirectors@youthspeaks.org](mailto:boardofdirectors@youthspeaks.org) with the subject line "Executive Director" by **Friday, May 28th, 2021**.

## **EEO/AA**

Youth Speaks is an equal opportunity employer. We strongly encourage and seek applications from women, people of color, including bilingual and bicultural individuals, as well as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. Applicants shall not be discriminated against because of race, religion, sex, national origin, ethnicity, age, disability, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, marital status, or medical conditions. Reasonable accommodation will be made so that qualified disabled applicants may participate in the application process. Please advise in writing of special needs at the time of application.

Youth Speaks will consider qualified applicants with criminal histories in a manner consistent with the requirements of San Francisco's Fair Chance Ordinance.

**\*No phone calls please. Due to the anticipated volume of applications only candidates for interviews will be contacted, we appreciate your understanding of the resource constraints during Covid-19, working remotely, and caregiving obligations amongst others.**