

# WRITERS IN THE SCHOOLS (WITS) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## **About the Organization**

Since 1983, **Writers in the Schools (WITS)** has worked hand-in-hand with educators and professional writers to teach students the craft of writing. WITS is transforming the hearts and minds of young people all over Houston.

Creativity prepares children for the future. Over 65,000 students and educators in over 400 Houston area classrooms plant their own stories each year and discover the WITS magic that's cultivated every day when students, writers, WITS staff and community members join together. WITS' mission is to engage children in the joy and power of reading and writing. We hope to revolutionize the way reading and writing are taught, nurturing the growth of the imagination and awakening students in the adventures of language. In 2021 and beyond we hope to expand our impact to serve all school districts in the Houston area and to provide innovative education experiences for students in a quickly changing environment. We are looking for our next Executive Director who can provide the strategy, leadership and guidance needed to manage this growth.

## **About the Position**

The Executive Director of WITS provides the direction, vision, and strategic planning necessary to engage hearts and minds in the joy and power of words. The Executive Director will secure the resources and provide the leadership and planning necessary to ensure WITS' continued growth and impact. The ED should be a thoughtful leader with the ability to work closely with a diverse group of staff, donors and community members. With a keen cultural awareness, the ED understands the importance of diversity in all facets of WITS' work and WITS' role in the Houston community. The ED has a demonstrated ability to manage people and complex relationships. The ED will report directly to the Board of Directors.

## **Job Responsibilities**

The Executive Director's primary responsibilities include the following:

### **Writers in the Schools' Mission and Vision**

- Create and implement strategies that advance literacy and creativity in and outside of school environments in the midst of a changing school and community landscape.
- Exemplify best practices for effective organizational management, including practices that assess the effectiveness of WITS' programming, as developed and tested by similar literary arts organizations, especially members of the **WITS Alliance**.
- Maintain and expand WITS Houston's role as the hub of WITS Alliance, an international network of literary nonprofits founded at least in part on Houston's model.
- Build and nurture strategic partnerships with peer organizations and organizational leaders to advance literacy and creativity throughout the community at multiple sites.
- Guard the organization's integrity and credibility by ensuring excellence in all aspects of WITS's work.

### **Fund Development**

- Guide the staff and the Board in a robust and diversified fundraising program that ensures the financial viability of WITS.
- Maintain and expand existing donors and funding streams and initiate new opportunities with individual donors and foundations to ensure consistent financial support that guarantees WITS' long-term stability.
- Shepherd WITS' programming that ensures earned revenue to allow appropriate cash flow for programming throughout the Houston area.
- Anticipate funding needs and engage staff to ensure they have the resources needed to succeed in

maintaining important initiatives.

### **Management**

- Oversee fiscal planning, program innovation and execution, and human resources.
- Ensure day-to-day operations are professionally administered and in a state of continuous improvement as best practices continue to evolve.
- Champion and value diversity, equity and belonging on the Board of Directors and staff as the organization increasingly strives to reflect the communities it serves.
- Ensure that the Board is kept fully informed on the condition of the organization and that Board meetings and Board committees operate effectively and efficiently.

### **Staff Management**

- Inspire and motivate a cohesive staff, ensuring strong internal communication, coordination, and accountability while fostering an environment of continuous learning and improvement.
- Supervise, guide, inspire and mentor staff to meet priorities, achieve organizational and strategic goals and fulfill the organization's mission.
- Cultivate a supportive, team-oriented environment where independent thinking is encouraged, and staff are held accountable to specific goals.
- Attract, recruit, and mentor a diverse staff that values creativity and free expression.
- Create an open, inclusive culture that invites conversation, enables staff to bring their true selves to work, and ensures personal growth and development.

### **Public Representation**

- As one of the official representatives of the organization, represent WITS to the press and public, articulating the organization's positions and communicating its mission to increase WITS' visibility and public understanding of WITS' work.
- Foster relationships with writers, writing programs, educators, literary arts activists, social change advocates and community leaders to keep opportunities for expanding literary arts and creativity on the public agenda.
- Lead a communications strategy that values a diverse set of voices to represent the organization's positions on its work, including new branding and potentially website redesign.

### **Skills & Experience**

The ED will be thoroughly committed to WITS' mission. The ideal candidate will have at least five years of senior management experience in nonprofit management, arts education, education or relevant business-related experience. All candidates should have leadership experience that includes a demonstrated commitment to the development of others through coaching, relationship management, and talent development.

Additional experiences include:

- Proven ability to effectively direct and expand a performance- and outcomes-based organization with multiple constituencies.
- Demonstrated experience of having developed and implemented bold strategies that have taken an organization to the next stage of growth and impacted communities.
- Experience in arts/arts education or experience leading creative team members and familiarity of Houston, preferred.
- Demonstrated commitment to working on equity and access-related issues across diverse socio-economic communities.
- Unwavering commitment to quality programs and data-driven program evaluation.
- Excellence in organizational management with the ability to coach staff, manage, develop and

appreciate high-performance teams, set and achieve strategic objectives, and manage a budget.

- Past success working with a Board of Directors with the ability to cultivate existing and new board member relationships.
- Strong marketing, public relations, and fundraising experience with the ability to engage a wide range of stakeholders and cultures.

### **Desired Qualities**

The successful candidate will have a proven track record of success in working collaboratively, leading a team and working closely with partners.

Specifically, the successful candidate will be:

- Passionate, mission-driven person with a creative, entrepreneurial, action orientation.
- Strong data-driven decision maker; analytically minded with strong understanding of finances and good operational practices.
- Excellent communicator with strong presentation skills (both written and verbal); ability to effectively articulate WITS' mission and offerings in a clear and compelling manner.
- Experience managing a cohesive team to impact communities; strong facilitation and change management skills.
- A high degree of professionalism, confidence and flexibility that ensures the incumbent can work collaboratively and effectively with team members and partners of diverse backgrounds.
- Excellent judgment, integrity, and commitment to personal accountability and high standards of ethics.

### **How to Apply**

Interested candidates should apply [here](#). Letters of interest will be received until **February 1, 2021**. The compensation package is commensurate with experience and includes a competitive base salary as well as benefits and vacation. The position is in Houston, Texas.

We will contact those candidates who most closely match the requirements. Thank you in advance for your interest.

WITS is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applicants and employees are treated without regard to such factors as race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other reason prohibited by law.