



## Executive Director

Sorrell is proud to partner with the SPARK School Park Program in the search for its next Executive Director. SPARK works with schools and neighborhoods to develop community parks on public school grounds. Since 1983, SPARK has built over 200 community parks throughout the Houston/Harris County area. Currently, there are more than 160 active SPARK Parks. Each park is unique, with its design based on ideas and needs of the school and surrounding neighborhoods. While all the parks are different, a typical SPARK park consists of modular playground equipment, a walking trail, benches, picnic tables, trees, an outdoor classroom, and a public art component.

SPARK Parks are available for public use after the school day (including after-school programs) ends and on weekends and holidays.

A November 2023 *Urban Edge* feature from the Rice University Kinder Institute highlights some of the work SPARK has been doing in recent years to work toward a goal of eliminating Houston's park deserts: <https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/houston-spark-parks-40-years>.

For general information about SPARK see <https://sparkpark.org/wordpress/>.

### POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Board of Directors, SPARK's Executive Director (ED) is responsible for providing overarching leadership of the organization and managing the strategy and execution of its mission. The ED will implement SPARK's strategic goals, ensure sound financial management, foster critical partnerships, and secure fundraising objectives to ensure its continued sustainability and growth. The next ED will have an opportunity to build upon the legacy of SPARK's founder, Houston City Council Member Eleanor Tinsley, and her daughter, Kathleen Tinsley Ownby, who has led SPARK for the last 36 years. Working with the SPARK Board, the new ED will chart the organization's direction and priorities for the coming years while honoring its successful forty-year history.

### KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Strategic Planning

- Provide leadership to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the organization's direction and mission to reach its maximum potential.

- Set comprehensive goals for performance and growth.
- Establish and build consensus for policies that promote a healthy organizational culture.
- Evaluate organizational growth and development by analyzing and interpreting data and metrics.

### **Administration and Financial Management**

- Working with the Board, develop annual operating budgets and engage appropriate stakeholders to ensure accurate and timely information flow.
- Provide leadership to develop and implement programs, organizational priorities and financial plans as authorized by the Board.
- Oversee compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.
- Communicate resource and personnel needs of the organization to the Board to facilitate organizational continuity and planning.
- Utilize active Board and committee support network as an asset to advancing the mission of the organization.
- Coordinate all Board and committee meetings, including development of agendas with the Board President.
- Develop and manage the operating budget.
- Manage the selection of schools, the selection of architects / landscape architects, selection of artists, and budgets of parks.
- Actively manage the workload of the Assistant Director, including sending proposals and acknowledgements to donors and signing off on vendor payments.
- Foster ongoing relationships with other nonprofits that can benefit SPARK (e.g., Trees for Houston, Urban Harvest, Connect Community, Houston Parks Board, Tool Bank).
- Collaborate with the external auditor on confirmation letters from all schools and school districts that had activity the preceding year.

### **Fundraising**

- Oversee the development of an annual fundraising plan and engage in implementing the plan to expand the donor base and ensure the annual funding goals are met.
- Lead the cultivation of key contributors and actively communicate with SPARK's sustaining donors to maintain and enhance relationships.
- Oversee the updating and maintenance of donor records.
- Oversee the writing and signing of requests and acknowledgment letters.
- Actively communicate with City Council Members, County Commissioners, and School Board Members on donations to individual schools.
- Ensure calendars and solicitation letters are sent to repeat individuals and potential new contributors.
- Oversee the dissemination of calendars and coloring books to foundations and corporations to raise awareness and generate interest/support.

## **Communication**

- Maintain strong, ongoing communication with school district personnel, including construction and maintenance departments, accounting departments, principals, and public relations departments.
- Facilitate communication between principals, SPARK committees, architects / landscape architects, funders, and contractors.
- Work with school principals and ISD personnel on the dedication of parks including invitations, invitees, speakers, lists for certificates of appreciation, programs, and news releases.
- Coordinate with the graphic designer, photographer, and HISD printing department on the production of the SPARK Art Calendar, including plans for distribution.
- Coordinate with the graphic designer and printing department the production of the SPARK Coloring Book, including plans for distribution.
- Work with graphic designer on design of the SPARK Week invitation and plan events with principals.

## **Site Visits**

- Visit schools at various points in the engagement:
  - Before they are chosen;
  - To meet with principals;
  - During construction;
  - To plan dedications; and
  - To make sure they are open to the community.

## **Helpful Associations**

- Association of Fundraising Professionals
- Leadership Houston
- American Leadership Forum
- EarthShare Governing Board

## **ESSENTIAL SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND ABILITIES**

- Experience building and maintaining productive external collaborations and/or partnerships
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Strong written and verbal presentation skills
- Strong management skills
- Effective teamwork skills
- Dependability
- Strong decision making and problem-solving skills
- Financial acumen; accounting skills a PLUS
- Computer knowledge and efficiency, including iMac, QuickBooks, FileMaker, and Microsoft Office Suite

## **EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited university.
- At least 8+ years progressive leadership experience in the for-profit, nonprofit or public sectors.
- Demonstrated experience in leadership, strategy development and project management.
- Aptitude in decision making and problem solving.
- Strong understanding of operations and program management.
- Successful track record of managing personnel and leading others by influence.
- Experience working with nonprofit boards preferred.

## **COMPENSATION**

This is a full-time, salaried role; compensation is competitive and commensurate with experience; attractive benefits package.

## **OFFICE LOCATION**

SPARK's office is located at the City Hall Annex in downtown Houston, Texas.

## **APPLICATION AND REFERRAL PROCESS**

Applicant review is currently underway and will continue until the candidate has been selected. To nominate or be considered for this position, please contact Priscilla Plumb at [priscilla@sorrellco.com](mailto:priscilla@sorrellco.com) / 281.224.0881. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

## **ABOUT SORRELL**

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