



Chief Development Officer

Sorrell is pleased to partner with Kickstart Kids (KSK) in the search for its next Chief Development Officer (CDO). Kickstart Kids is a Houston-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower at-risk youth through a school-based martial arts character education program that instills discipline, respect, responsibility, confidence, and perseverance. Founded by world-renowned martial artist Chuck Norris, Kickstart Kids currently serves thousands of students across multiple school districts across Texas, creating measurable, long-term impact in students' academic performance, behavior, and life outcomes.

Kickstart Kids' program integrates martial arts training with a values-based curriculum delivered during the school day by certified instructors. The organization is widely recognized for its ability to positively influence students' character development, self-esteem, and decision-making skills, particularly in underserved communities. As Kickstart Kids continues to expand its reach and deepen its impact, philanthropy and strategic communications play a critical role in sustaining and scaling its work.

The CDO will serve as a senior leader responsible for advancing Kickstart Kids' fundraising, marketing, and communications strategies to support organizational growth, financial sustainability, and increased public awareness.

For more information on Kickstart Kids and its high-impact work with youth, please visit the [website](#).

Position Overview

Reporting to the Executive Director and working closely with the Board of Directors and senior leadership, the CDO will lead the design and execution of comprehensive annual fundraising and marketing plans with clearly defined goals, metrics, and timelines. This role is responsible for increasing contributed revenue across individual, foundation, and corporate giving; strengthening donor engagement and stewardship; and overseeing all aspects of brand management, marketing, and communications.

The ideal candidate will be both strategic and hands-on, combining high-level planning with direct execution. Priorities for this position are to identify new revenue opportunities and increase fundraising results, cultivate and steward donor relationships, play a major role in development strategy, grow and manage a team, and to fully leverage KSK's Board toward fundraising and external relations efforts. Additionally, the CDO will ensure that Kickstart Kids' messaging is consistent, compelling, and aligned with the organization's mission and values. Effectiveness in this role will require quickly learning the organization's work, meeting partners who support the mission, and developing a practical understanding of the projects that shape the organization's impact.

Highlights of the CDO's responsibilities follow:

Strategy, Vision, and Leadership

As a member of the leadership team, the CDO will play an integral role in shaping Kickstart Kids' long-term growth and sustainability. Key responsibilities include:

- Developing and implementing comprehensive annual and multi-year fundraising and marketing strategies that align with Kickstart Kids' mission, goals, and financial needs.
- Providing leadership and oversight for all fundraising and marketing initiatives, ensuring alignment across departments and external platforms.
- Serving as a strategic thought partner to the Executive Director and Board on development, marketing, and communications priorities.
- Managing departmental budgets and resources to maximize impact and efficiency.

Fund Development Responsibilities

The CDO will oversee and grow a diversified fundraising program, with responsibilities including:

- Managing and increasing individual, foundation, and corporate giving through prospect identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
- Identifying and pursuing new funding sources, including grants, sponsorships, and strategic partnerships.
- Planning and executing special events and fundraising initiatives that increase revenue and enhance visibility (e.g., annual Boots and Black Belts Gala).
- Maintaining an accurate donor database and providing regular reports on fundraising progress to senior leadership and the Board. (KSK is currently migrating over from Donor Perfect to Bloomerang.)
- Collaborating with the Board of Directors to identify meaningful opportunities for board members to participate in fundraising and donor engagement.

Marketing, Communications, and Brand Management

The CDO will oversee Kickstart Kids' unified messaging and public-facing communications, including:

- Directing the creation, production, and distribution of all marketing and communications materials, including website content, social media, newsletters, brochures, annual reports, and press releases.
- Ensuring consistent and effective use of branding across all print and digital platforms; updating and enforcing brand guidelines as needed.
- Leading media relations strategy, including development of media partnerships, press materials, and interview preparation for staff, Board members, and spokespersons.
- Responding to media inquiries and proactively elevating Kickstart Kids' visibility and reputation.

Partnerships, Evaluation, and Accountability

Additional responsibilities include:

- Researching, cultivating, and managing program partnerships and strategic alliances that extend Kickstart Kids' reach and increase avenues of support.
- Overseeing evaluation processes to track, measure, and communicate program impact to donors, partners, and stakeholders.
- Ensuring organizational accountability through management of nonprofit profiles, listings, and reporting requirements.

Desired Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree.
- 8-10+ years of development leadership with major gifts and campaign experience.
- Experience crafting donor-centric cases for support.
- Strong management, goal-setting, and coaching skills.
- Expertise in donor databases is essential.
- Exceptional communication and cultural fluency across diverse communities.
- Proven record of building and overseeing strategies to differentiate an organization in a competitive environment.
- Evidence of securing multiple seven figure gifts annually.

Desired Personal Attributes

- Deep alignment with and commitment to Kickstart Kids' core values: loyalty, courage, honesty, discipline, respect, kindness, dedication, and responsibility.
- Highly relational, collaborative, and mission-driven leadership style.
- Strategic thinker who is also detail-oriented and execution-focused.
- Entrepreneurial mindset with the ability to identify opportunities, solve problems, and adapt to changing needs.
- Strong sense of integrity, accountability, and professionalism.
- A big-picture thinker who also pays attention to details.
- Demonstrated ability to motivate and support team members and to build strong, trusting relationships with peers and potential partners.

Compensation

Compensation is competitive and commensurate with experience. Attractive benefits package.

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 Laura Sorrell at laura@sorrellco.com / 713-854-5351 or Priscilla Plumb at priscilla@sorrellco.com / 281.224.0881. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

About Sorrell

Sorrell is a highly relational provider of executive recruiting. Our mission is to serve as partners with our clients to accelerate their efforts to attract, hire and retain talent that impacts the future of the organization. For more information, call 713.840.1870.