

Director of Strategic Initiatives, Learning & Insights

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The [Powell Foundation](#) is a private, family foundation that strives to be a catalyst for impactful initiatives that enhance the quality of life in the communities it serves. The Foundation prioritizes funding organizations that serve residents in Harris, Travis, and Walker Counties, principally in public education, the arts, conservation, and human services. A primary focus of the Foundation is ensuring that all children have access to a robust, first-class public education and the support needed to develop to their full potential. The Foundation is incorporated in Texas and governed by a board of eleven directors comprised of three generations of the Powell family and three independent directors. It is served by a small staff located in Houston.

ABOUT THE POSITION

The **Director of Strategic Initiatives, Learning & Insights** is a relational, versatile, and strategically-minded leader at the Powell Foundation. Reporting directly to the Executive Director, this individual executes high-priority special projects and acts as the “connective tissue” across the organization’s growing learning function. Unlike traditional evaluation roles that prioritize quantitative methods and tools, this position seeks to integrate qualitative inquiry and observation to distill learning and insights and uncover context and meaning (i.e., “how” and “when”) by leveraging interviews, case studies, observations, and user-centered approaches. One of the Director's earliest contributions will involve articulating and operationalizing the Foundation’s integrated approach to learning, evaluation, and measurement. The Director serves as a thought partner and provides additional capacity for cross-cutting priorities that do not naturally fall within any single function. Additionally, the Director will serve as an in-house consultant across functional areas, helping the Foundation test hypotheses, pilot initiatives, and refine approaches to translate strategy into initiatives that amplify the Foundation’s community impact.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

Consistent with the Foundation’s commitment to continuous improvement, the Director’s work is organized into five areas:

Strategic Alignment, Planning & Continuous Learning

- Support the Executive Director, Board, and staff in keeping the Foundation's strategic framework connected to grantmaking, operational decisions, and team workplans; hold a strong knowledge of the Foundation's overall rhythms of work across programs, finance and operations, and governance, identifying constraints, synergies, and interdependencies across teams so that planning and learning stay grounded in how the work actually moves.
- In consultation with the Executive Director, formally codify and develop the Foundation's framework for learning and evaluation, establishing guiding principles, identifying the Foundation's key strategic questions, and standing up evaluation efforts to support the Foundation's understanding of its impact; build the practical tools and cadence, anchored in Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles (or similar), that shepherd the Foundation through regular practices of data reflection and insights reporting; support a culture of inquiry and reflection that prioritizes interdisciplinary dialogue and creative risk-taking.
- Own the Foundation's practice of tracking progress against strategic priorities, indicators, milestones, and the implementation plan, identifying where practice and plan have diverged; serve as a liaison to the Strategic Planning Committee, collecting and interpreting data, distilling themes and insights, and ensuring the

Executive Director and Board have robust evidence to inform direction-setting.

- Own the production of the Foundation's annual Activity Report, working cross-functionally to gather insight on the Foundation's progress against its strategic plan's goals; shape the report into a clear, compelling narrative.

Special Projects & Organizational Capacity

- Lead special projects on behalf of the Executive Director, ensuring initiatives maintain momentum to propel the Foundation's strategic priorities and are effectively integrated into the Foundation's core work.
- Serve as the Executive Director's thought partner on the Foundation's cross-cutting priorities, navigating ambiguity to chart the path forward and researching, analyzing, structuring, and developing options along the way, while ensuring decisions rest with the Executive Director; at the request of the Executive Director, add capacity and execute on bodies of work that do not naturally sit within any single team, convening stakeholders and carrying initiatives from idea to impact.
- Assess stakeholder needs and recommend a shared project management framework (such as MOCHA, RASCI, or RAPID), establishing the shared language and approach the Foundation needs to clarify ownership, sponsorship, and execution across every team's work.
- Lead the institutional shift required to implement a shared project management framework, building the training, tools, and habits that make it the Foundation's standard way of managing work, so that any staff member can lead a body of work with clarity and shared accountability.

Program and Operations In-House Consulting

- Serve as an in-house consultant to the grants team, in service of the programmatic strategy that the Director of Programs owns; add research capacity through focus groups, interviews, sector surveys, and landscape scans; serve as a thought partner to help team members test hypotheses and launch, pilot, and lead new initiatives.
- Working in coordination with the Director of Programs, collaborate with program staff to build learning agendas that answer key questions about the Foundation's impact and strengthen the evidence base for grantmaking strategies; conduct portfolio reviews across grants and sectors to surface patterns and trends in how the Foundation's grantmaking has advanced its strategic priorities.
- Serve as the Foundation's resident expert in measurement, weighing in as program staff shape grant opportunities and helping refine grantee-articulated goals so that those goals are meaningful and measurable enough to support the Foundation's learning and reporting down the line.
- Provide surge capacity where cross-functional or organizational priorities warrant additional support, including sourcing for select grantmaking opportunities; extend support, in a lighter form, to identify and address operations and governance capacity gaps as requested.

Storytelling, Communications & Reporting

- Synthesize the Foundation's work, learning, and results into coherent, well-reasoned reports for the Board and, when appropriate, external audiences; manage the Foundation's communication cycles.
- Finalize and socialize the communications playbook developed by the Foundation's consultant, and lead the testing and implementation of its priority recommendations, in consultation with the Executive Director.
- In collaboration with the Director of Programs, identify emerging trends and opportunities and shape insights into narratives that frame the Foundation's grantmaking and learning.
- Ensure cohesion in the Foundation's external communications; provide coaching support to peers in drilling

down key messages and elevating strategic priorities; lend a critical eye to sharpen and refine storytelling within presentations, media collateral, and thought pieces.

Team Management: Learning, Insights & Grants Operations

- Manage the Grants Manager, providing coaching, supervision, mentorship, and guidance; oversee day-to-day priorities and champion ongoing development through regular professional feedback.
- Oversee the Learning, Insights & Grants Operations team's function, including the systems, data, tools, and processes that allow the Foundation to measure, manage, and understand the impact of its work, improve grantmaking practices, and accelerate its ability to support grantees.
- Serve as a strategic thought leader, identify, communicate, and reinforce the connections between the Learning, Insights & Grants Operations team's work and the Foundation's broader vision, mission, and strategic plan; contribute to a culture of collaboration, innovation, and mutual respect.
- Regularly collaborate with team leaders to identify synergies and interdependencies in the work; lead other projects at the Executive Director's request; and participate in and execute other Foundation duties as assigned to support the team and the organization.

SKILLS & EXPERIENCE DESIRED

The ideal candidate is a curious, versatile leader who is comfortable moving across subject areas, figuring things out, and taking on work that does not fit neatly in anyone else's lane. This is a "jack-of-all-trades" role in the best sense: the successful candidate is as willing to build the spreadsheet as to design the framework, and is energized rather than unsettled by ambiguity. They possess exceptional professional maturity, sound judgment, and integrity, serving as a trusted advisor to the Executive Director and Board, and they excel in a small, collaborative team.

Specifically, the successful candidate will have the following experience, skills, and mindsets:

- At least 10 years of professional experience, with relevant roles related to strategy, planning, learning, evaluation, program management, or organizational development within a non-profit, philanthropic, public sector, or mission-driven organization.
- Demonstrated ability to take work from idea through execution—not only to advise on it. Comfort operating as both a strategist and a hands-on implementer.
- Experience helping translate an organization's strategy into operating plans, annual goals, and work plans, and keeping colleagues accountable to them through influence rather than direct authority.
- Strong analytical skills and fluency with data; enjoys working with information to structure problems, test assumptions, build useful tools, and support decision-making; knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods and the ability to determine the appropriate mix to meet informational needs; capacity to use qualitative methods and observational inquiry to drive strategy, dialogue, and reflection.
- Systems and data fluency; comfort owning and improving the platforms that support grantmaking, learning, and reporting (experience with Salesforce or a comparable CRM or grants management system is a plus).
- Exceptional project management skills with the capacity to manage ambiguity and competing priorities. A strong manager, mentor, and team builder.
- Sound judgment and critical thinking; the ability to build operating structures that drive decision-making and to leverage a range of approaches to problem-solving.
- High emotional intelligence: a style reflecting approachability, transparency, and humility, with the diplomacy to work across functions without owning them. Holds tremendous respect for the work of grant partner organizations and the lived experiences of the people they serve.

- Strong interpersonal, listening, and facilitation skills, with a proven ability to meet people where they are to build alignment and buy-in among diverse stakeholders.
- A passion for building a learning-focused workplace culture, holding a natural inclination for curiosity and learning.
- Strategic agility and a willingness to take risks in the pursuit of innovative approaches.
- Exceptional written and oral communication skills. Ability to translate complex, cross-disciplinary material into concise and approachable content for different audiences; responsive and accessible to requests for support and guidance.
- A deep commitment to the Foundation's values; demonstrates professional maturity and sound judgment, including maintaining confidentiality and discretion with sensitive information.
- A bachelor's degree is required (master's degree preferred).

HOW TO APPLY

Interested candidates should apply [here](#). Letters of interest will be accepted through September 25, 2026. Applications will be reviewed as they are received so early applicants will get a priority review. We will contact those candidates who most closely match the requirements. We thank you in advance for your interest.

The starting salary range for this position is \$135,000 to \$145,000, depending on experience and qualifications. This is a full-time position (40 hours per week) based in Houston, with a hybrid work schedule that includes up to two remote days per week.

The Powell Foundation offers a comprehensive Total Rewards package to all full-time employees, including:

- Employer-paid medical, dental, vision, life, and disability insurance
- Generous Paid Time Off (PTO), accruing from the first day of employment
- 12 paid holidays, including 10 common holidays and 2 flexible holidays for personal or religious observance
- Paid parental leave
- A 401(k) retirement savings plan with up to 4% employer match
- An annual Professional Growth Wallet for ongoing learning and development
- A four-week paid sabbatical after five years of continuous service
- Staff Designated Gifts recognizing employee tenure milestones

The Powell Foundation 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.