



# Position Guide

## Executive Director

[collab4kids.org](http://collab4kids.org)



Collaboration for  
Early Childhood



**KITTLEMAN**  
The First Source for Nonprofit Leaders, Since 1963



# Collaboration for Early Childhood

**Position: Executive Director**

**Reports To: Board of Directors**

**Location: Oak Park, IL (Chicagoland)**

## ABOUT THE COLLAB

Since its beginnings in 2002, the Collaboration for Early Childhood (the Collab) has embraced the vision that all children should arrive at kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed and eager to learn. The Collab's focus has always been on how much impact the organization could have on the youngest among us in the community.

In the early years of the Collab's work, the focus centered on the following:

- all parents should have information about child development and about services available in the community;
- all children should be provided with developmental screening and follow-up so that developmental delays and disabilities could be detected early and be appropriately addressed;
- parents should have access to intensive parent coaching services so that all families with children birth to three-years-old could have access to support;
- there would be opportunities for all parents to participate in a parent group or network that met them on their level;
- all children in Oak Park who needed preschool could attend preschool (either a part-day or an enriched full-day program), and that these programs would provide the educational experience needed for children to arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed;
- all early childhood professionals in Oak Park and River Forest would be engaged in ongoing, meaningful professional development, and;
- early learning programs would take full advantage of state-level resources for quality enhancement.

These early ideological steps were not taken alone – all the governing bodies in Oak Park helped to create the Collab. Through in-kind and direct financial support, they affirmed the vital role that high-quality early learning and care experiences play in ensuring the success of every child. They committed resources to working with early care and education professionals to weave a web of support for all parents of young children and to raise the skill level of early childhood staff and offer a continuum of services to all families with children birth to five.

To understand how the Collab functions within Oak Park and River Forest, it's useful to unpack the architecture of the collective impact model. Collective impact can be defined as "diverse organizations coming together to solve a complex social problem." The key elements of collective impact include: a common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and an organization that helps to mobilize, coordinate and facilitate to keep the goal in sight and the progress rolling. The Collab serves as the "backbone" organization here in Oak Park and River Forest. The organization works as a connector, collaborator and bridge-builder. A focus is to create equitable systems and improve outcomes by coordinating across community partners.

By the mid-2010s, expanding this mindset beyond our borders had become a part of the Collab's narrative. The organization became the model for the Illinois Early Learning Council, which aims to integrate the state's early childhood systems. Years later, as a former Illinois Senator, President Obama proposed a national early learning council, based on the Illinois prototype. And it began in Oak Park.

Each August, when the community's children begin their journeys through the school system in Oak Park, the community dedicates significant energy and resources to narrowing the opportunity gap that begins in the first few years of a child's life and stubbornly threatens to extend through to their elementary, middle and high school years, and beyond.

## THE COLLAB'S PROGRAM SERVICES MODEL

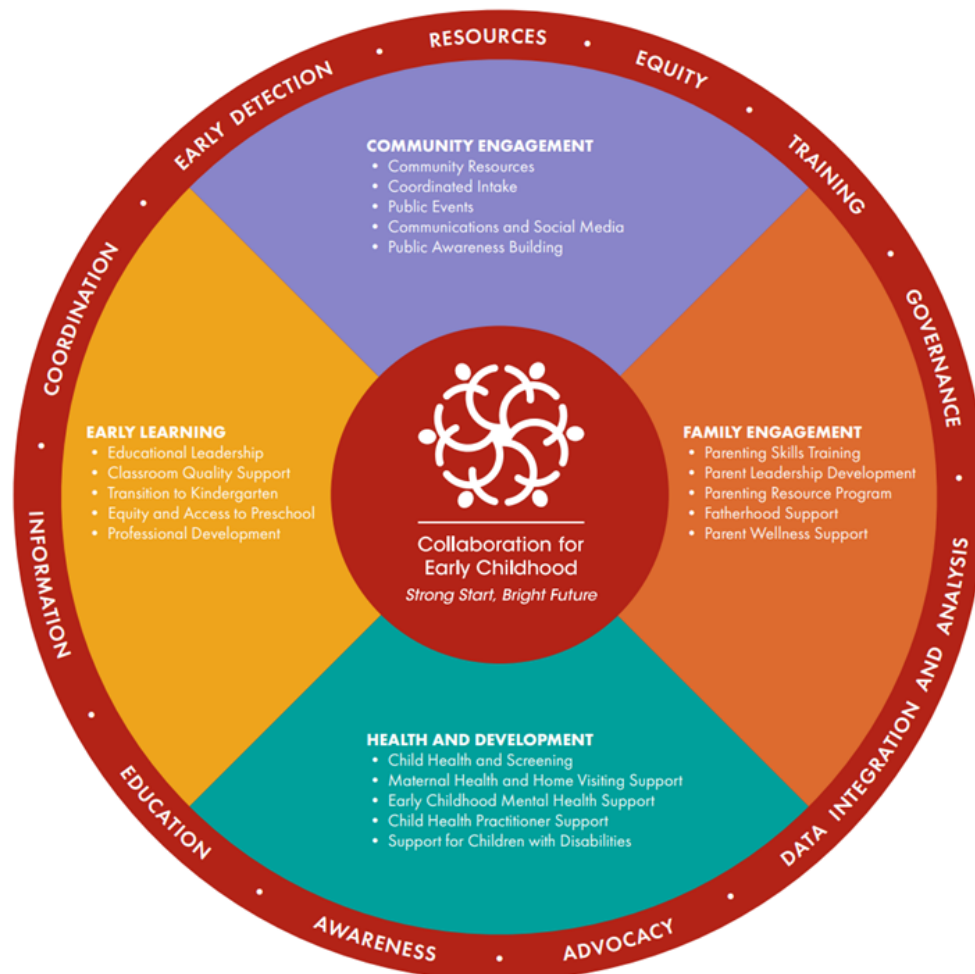
With more than 70 public and private partners, the Collab provides leadership and coordination in four strategic areas.

**Community Engagement:** Every opportunity to bring the needs of children into the public dialogue is a win for the community. The Collab works side-by-side with service providers and community members to share resources, host events, and increase awareness of early childhood issues.

- **Community Resources:** Serving as a central early childhood resource hub and point for health professionals, service leaders, educators, parents and caregivers.
- **Coordinated Intake:** Connecting families to home visiting programs and high-quality preschool through a single point of contact.
- **Public Events:** Inviting a broader audience to join in conversations about early childhood issues on both a local and national level.
- **Communications and Social Media:** The Collab highlights its work and the work of community partners across Oak Park and River Forest.
- **Public Awareness Building:** Reinforcing the importance of these crucial early years and why supporting young children matters.

**Early Learning:** Early childhood educators and directors play a pivotal role in a child's life and set the stage for future success in kindergarten and beyond. Through classroom supports and a robust calendar of professional development opportunities for early childhood educators, the Collab works to strengthen the success and quality of the preschool classroom experience.

- **Educational Leadership:** Providing a space for early childhood directors and family childcare professionals to come together to share information, solve problems of practice and connect at our roundtable meetings.
- **Classroom Quality Support:** Supporting the continuous growth of teachers and caregivers through consultations, resource delivery, and training and technical assistance.





- Transition to Kindergarten: Building bridges between preschool and kindergarten teachers to smooth the transition for families headed to kindergarten.
- Equity and Access to Preschool: Ensuring that all children have access to high-quality preschool. The Collab works to streamline outreach and need.
- Professional Development: Providing a series of workshops over the course of the program year, the Collab also hosts an annual Early Childhood Symposium every winter.

**Family Engagement:** Parents and caregivers are their child's first and most important teacher. Working in partnership with local organizations, the Collab helps build the capacity of parents and caregivers to be leaders in their community.

- Parenting Skills Training: Engaging Oak Park and River Forest parents and caregivers in opportunities to promote healthy development in their children through different forms of parenting skills training.
- Parent Leadership Development: Building the capacity of families to be advocates for their children and strong voices in the community.
- Parenting Resource Program: Bringing together community partners to connect families with early childhood information, resources and parenting workshops.
- Fatherhood Support: Partnering with Welcome to Fatherhood Inc. to support a forum for fathers to discuss issues around parenting, relationships and self-development.
- Parent Wellness Support: Parents and caregivers don't have to do it alone. The Collab maintains a collection of resources to help families to be the best that they can be.

**Health and Development:** Making community resources more readily available for health care providers enriches the lives of the children in their care. The Collab coordinates home visiting services and administers vision, hearing and developmental screenings.

- Child Health and Screening: Training early childhood pediatric and community sites to administer developmental screenings and conduct referrals as needed. The Collab's Hearing & Vision Screening Technician administers screenings across the Oak Park and River Forest communities.
- Maternal Health and Home Visiting Support: Partnering with home visiting programs and the Village of Oak Park's Public Health Nurse, the Collab helps families get connected to support through a single point of contact.
- Early Childhood Mental Health Support: Working with early childhood providers to navigate children's social and emotional health needs and to help create an environment that nurtures children's success in the classroom.
- Child Health Practitioner Support: Building community awareness and connections to early childhood health resources for health professionals.
- Support for Children with Disabilities: Serving as a resource hub for families with children with disabilities or developmental delays.



## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Executive Director of the Collaboration for Early Childhood will be provided the opportunity to substantially shape the long-term future of this highly accomplished, regionally recognized early education organization with a trusted reputation, dedicated staff and an engaged Board of Directors. Specifically, the Executive Director will be charged with taking the organization into its next phase of organizational life. Critical strategic opportunities exist for the Collab to expand its impact across all program areas and expand to nearby geographies; seeking out opportunities and partnership with other communities that are doing this critical work.

The Collab's next Executive Director will have the opportunity to leverage the organization's expanded influence and funding, potentially beyond the state of Illinois. The Executive Director will enhance the organization's advocacy profile and will help shape a policy agenda for early learning. He/She/They will help expand the organization's opportunities for revenue generation, diversification and strategic partnerships. Most significantly, the Collab will continue to serve as one of the state's primary thought leaders in early childhood education.

This next leader will have the opportunity to continue to deepen relationships with the local schools, PTOs, Village management, the business community and healthcare providers. The ED will help move the organization towards being a more professionalized, mature nonprofit by continuing to support the Board and their goal to transition from being a working board (doing) to a governing board (vision, oversight).

The chief executive will be supported by a motivated, dedicated 14-member board seeking to build upon a strong foundation and advance our effectiveness, impact and influence with ambition. The budget for 2023 is \$1.9 million and is funded by the following mix: 88% Intergovernmental Agreement contract, 5.3% grants and other funders, 4.6% individual philanthropic giving and 0.9% program revenue. Recently the organization was awarded ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding of an additional \$270K-\$300K per year for the next 4 years. The Collab has 15 budgeted staff positions (9 FTE, 6 PTE). In addition to the ARPA grant, the Collaboration has recently received significant funding from state-level organizations to support community efforts to increase the numbers of children enrolled in preschools.

The Collab has been thoughtful about their organizational journey around diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility through the lens of early childhood education. There is an ever-growing appreciation for health equity, racial justice and the new conversations and collaborations that may bring new opportunities and deeper impact.

## POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director provides leadership and direction in fulfilling and advancing the vision, mission, values and goals of the Collaboration. The Executive Director is responsible for leading the Collab in achieving its operational and strategic goals including successful performance on the Contract for Services with the Village of Oak Park and School Districts 97 and 200; donor development and grant seeking; program development and operations; fiscal management; board relations; human capital management; data collection and analysis; and administrative matters. The Executive Director also serves as an advocate for the interests of young children and their families to the private and public sectors outside of Oak Park.

### *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*

- Champion inclusiveness, racially and culturally appropriate practices, and equity throughout the Collab's activities, communications, financial and management practices, and programs

### *Community and Public Relations*

- Represent the Collab to the Intergovernmental Agreement Governing Board
- Represent and promote the Collab to education, social service, health, business and civic organizations
- Establish and maintain effective professional relationships with federal, state, county, village and community organizations and funders on behalf of the Collab
- Actively engage community members and organizations so that the breadth of the community and its perspectives are present in Collab discussions and decision-making
- Act as a spokesperson for the Collab with media, community organizations, other agencies and groups
- Advocate for quality and equitable early childhood education and care for all young children
- Promote Collab involvement in state and community level committees working to improve services and or advance the early childhood field



#### *Human Capital Management*

- Recommend staffing to the Board to ensure that the Collab achieves its goals and its mission
- Manage the Collab's staff including: hiring, termination, ongoing staff development and providing verbal and/or written evaluations of staff, engagement of contractors and monitoring of performance on contracts, and participation of volunteers; inform the Board of Directors regarding staffing issues as appropriate
- Ensure that employment policies are enforced and in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and Collab policies

#### *Donor Development and Fundraising*

- Oversee all donor development and fundraising activities including: grant writing, cultivation and stewardship of donors, event planning, and identifying new donors

#### *Board Relations*

- Cultivate partnerships with the Board of Directors and oversee the preparation and distribution of Board materials; serve as ex officio on Board committees and work with the Board leadership to implement Board decisions
- Inform the Board of early childhood issues and community needs, concerns and opportunities and their impact on the Collab; make recommendations to the Board regarding these issues
- Serve as a liaison between the Collab Board and its provider, jurisdictional and community partners

#### *Strategy Development and Planning*

- Develop and execute the strategic plan, long term goals and operational plans of the Collab with the Board of Directors, the Collaboration Council, the staff and committee members

#### *Program Leadership*

- Assure alignment of Collab programs with the Contract for Early Childhood Services and the Plan for Progress
- Oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of programs

#### *Data Collection and Analysis Leadership*

- Oversee collection of data, promulgation and implementation of data sharing agreements with partners, and adherence to industry standards for data security
- Oversee contractors who develop and maintain the Collab's Unified Early Childhood database and support the data collection efforts of the Collaboration and its partners
- Staff the Measurement and Evaluation Committee and work with committee members and contractors on data analysis and report development

### *Fiscal Management*

- Ensure the Collab has the financial wherewithal to thrive and deliver on its mission, including the necessary financial discipline needed to achieve its goals
- Prepare and manage the annual budget including expense management
- Ensure accurate financial reports are prepared monthly and provide explanations of financial activity each month to the Board Treasurer and Board of Directors
- Oversee all financial activity, including management of contracted bookkeeping

## CANDIDATE PROFILE

The next Executive Director will be an experienced, visionary leader with progressive leadership experience and a passion for the unique mission and vision of the Collaboration for Early Childhood. This person will bring to the Collaboration demonstrated accomplishments in working successfully and respectfully in racially, ethnically and economically diverse settings to achieve practices and partnerships that dismantle structural inequities and increase inclusion. The new leader will have the ability to guide the organization through its next phase of growth and change and will have demonstrated the ability to increase an organization's regional public visibility, footprint and scale. He/She/They will have experience building collaboration among an array of external organizations and stakeholders to improve programming and policy outcomes for the early childhood learning sector. Experience in the field of early childhood and education is highly desired but not required.

He/She/They will have prior management experience, preferably in nonprofit management and/or collective impact leadership, and will have analytical, organizational and problem-solving skills that support sound decision-making. Strong business, financial and organizational knowledge will be evidenced by a proven ability to set clear priorities, delegate and guide the investment of human and other resources to help achieve goals.

As the chief representative of the Collab, the successful candidate will have excellent written and oral communication skills including public presentations. A proven track record of political acumen and diplomacy will be highly beneficial. He/She/They will embrace data to inform program decisions and provide evidence needed for policy direction and fundraising. The ability to articulate the story and meaningful work of the organization will be very important.

This next leader will urgently advance equity for children and families in the Collaboration's communities and do so in a way that brings a wide variety of stakeholders into the work of the Collaboration, including its deliberations and governance.

The next Executive Director will serve as the primary external representative of the Collaboration and will possess strong networking skills to help foster the fundraising revenue and build a culture of philanthropy for the organization. He/She/They will have demonstrated skills in development, including cultivating and soliciting major gifts, corporate and foundation grants, and seeking out creative grant opportunities that align with the mission and vision of the organization.



The next Collab leader will have the drive and skill to sustain a culture that is positive and productive; this leader will help the team continue to grow a culture of accountability and of mutual support. The Collab seeks an active listener with a relational approach who will support and value the important skills of staff and who will bring a cooperative, communicative and compassionate nature to problem solving.

In addition, some of the important personal attributes we seek include integrity, honesty, transparency, authenticity, nimbleness, optimism, humility, emotional intelligence, good listening skills and a sense of humor.

The minimum of a bachelor's degree is required, though a master's or advanced degree is preferred. Evidence of continuing education, certification and executive level training is desirable.

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# Mission, Vision and Core Values

## Mission

The Collaboration for Early Childhood is a community-driven organization that cultivates the development of the whole child, birth to age five, by engaging families, local organizations, early childhood educators, caregivers, and health providers to create equitable, nurturing and interconnected systems of support.

## Vision

The Collaboration for Early Childhood envisions communities where every young child has the care, relationships and resources needed to thrive and to begin school safe, healthy and empowered to succeed.

## Core Values

**Collaboration   Whole Child   Equity   Community-Driven   Organizational Professionalism**

### Collaboration.

Works with partners in a way that is mutual and respectful; encourages listening, knowledge sharing and joint problem-solving; allows each party to strengthen its own capabilities by learning from others; and realizes a shared commitment to more equitably serving the needs of young children, families and early childhood professionals.

### Whole Child.

Meets each child where they are and supports all aspects of the child's development – physical, social, emotional, cognitive – while respecting each child as a member of the community and as an individual, including the child's ability, culture, ethnicity, gender, language, race and religion.

### Equity.

Ensures that a diverse range of voices contributes to the Collaboration's efforts, particularly the important work of dismantling systemic barriers that have historically limited access to high quality services and supports for children and families who are under-resourced or marginalized, while celebrating the range of backgrounds, experiences and identities that comprise an inclusive community.

### Community-Driven.

Engages local families and early childhood professionals to gather their wisdom and perspectives, utilizing the findings to ensure the Collaboration's work is continually and culturally responsive to the expressed needs, hopes and interests of young children, families, early childhood professionals and communities in which they live.

### Organizational Professionalism.

Operates with honesty, integrity and accountability, in a way that is continually informed by research and community input; reliably, responsibly and respectfully delivers high-quality work and effective outcomes; and transparently reports progress and adjusts strategies to ensure continuous improvement in impacting the children, families, early childhood professionals and communities with whom we work.





## BENEFITS & APPLICATION INFORMATION

The salary range for this position is between \$120,000 and \$140,000 and will be commensurate with experience. The Collab offers a comprehensive benefits package, including but not limited to 12 paid holidays, vacation days and group health insurance, as well as a retirement plan.

*It is the policy of the Collaboration to afford equal employment opportunities regardless of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, religion, marital status, disability, sex, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, military or veteran status, order of protection status, genetic information, or any other category protected by applicable law. This policy of equal employment applies to all aspects of the employment relationship, including but not limited to: initial consideration for employment; job placement and assignment of responsibilities; performance evaluation; promotion and advancement; compensation and fringe benefits; training and professional development opportunities; formulation and application of human resource policies and rules; facility and service accessibility; and discipline and termination.*

### TO APPLY

Applications and nominations are being received by Kittleman & Associates, LLC. To apply, please send a current resume and letter of interest to <https://bit.ly/3tBKpLu> (click on the Apply button at the bottom of the page).

For more information on the Collaboration for Early Childhood, please visit [www.collab4kids.org](http://www.collab4kids.org).

