



Heising-Simons Foundation
Early Education Program Officer
Los Altos, California

Unlocking knowledge, opportunity, and possibilities

THE SEARCH

The [Heising-Simons Foundation](#) (Foundation) invites nominations and applications for the position of Early Education Program Officer (Program Officer). In 2007, [Mark Heising](#) and [Liz Simons](#) created the Foundation, a family foundation that works with its many partners to advance sustainable solutions in climate and clean energy, enable groundbreaking research in science, enhance the education of the youngest learners, and support human rights for all people. Since its first grant in 2007, the Foundation has awarded more than \$338 million including over \$75 million in 2017.

The Program Officer is a key position within the Foundation and supports the Foundation's grantmaking in Early Education (ages birth to eight years). Reporting to the Education Program Director, the Program Officer will have the unique opportunity to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate a new portfolio of grants related to educational improvement and equity, which may include a specific focus on dual language learners, low-income children, and children of color. The Program Officer identifies and works with prospective and existing grantees, monitors grantee progress, and explores new grantmaking areas. Close collaboration with other program officers and external partners, including other funders, is an important part of the work. The Program Officer will be deeply engaged in national conversations regarding educational equity and improvement, and will prioritize the sharing of best practices related to impact, sustainability, and scalability with the field writ large.

The next Program Officer will join a rapidly growing organization that has quickly distinguished itself. In the last six years the Foundation has hired more than 30 staff members, set up an office in Los Altos with another office opening shortly in San Francisco, added new program areas, and significantly increased the amount it awards every year. Using the deep expertise and skill of its Board and staff, along with current research, the Foundation has been successful in identifying and making high-impact investments in exceedingly challenging areas. It continues to seek ways to accelerate social change through innovative thought leadership and grantmaking.

As its growth continues, the Foundation desires a Program Officer who can build an exceptional new portfolio on the Education team. The right candidate will be a person who is inspired by the Foundation's mission and brings content expertise, intellectual curiosity, cultural sensitivity, excellent written and oral communication skills, and a deep commitment to addressing issues of equity and diversity in education. The successful Program Officer candidate will demonstrate high integrity, a passion for collaboration, and the ability to engage with a wide variety of internal and external partners including the Foundation's family of donors. The Program Officer will be a clear thinker who is open-minded, solutions-oriented, and daring. The successful candidate could have a background in a variety of settings – non-profit, government, research, practice – and bring professional experience across the education and/or philanthropic sectors.

ABOUT THE [EDUCATION PROGRAM](#)

The goal of the Foundation's grantmaking in education is to prepare children from birth through age 8 for school and life. The Foundation's funding focuses on overlooked components of quality early education including early math; family engagement; and dual language learning; as well as evidence, advocacy, and investment in order to ensure that the systems are in place for quality early childhood education. In 2017, grants under the Education program made up approximately 31.6% of money awarded by the Foundation, totaling \$23,666,455.

ROLE OF THE PROGRAM OFFICER

The Program Officer will join seven fellow members of the Education team and can be based in either the Foundation's Los Altos office or its San Francisco office.

The Program Officer is responsible for:

- Understanding the Foundation's history, values, and current funding initiatives.
- Possessing in-depth knowledge of early childhood education (ages birth to eight years), including current research, policy, and practice issues; innovative programs; and key leaders and organizations.
- Reviewing proposals for research, evaluation, policy, advocacy, and/or practice.
- Working with the Education team to develop strategies for the Foundation's early childhood education grantmaking.
- Participating in and supporting ongoing strategic planning efforts that will include identifying near- and long-term objectives, defining strategy targets, and measuring and monitoring progress.
- Identifying and working with prospective and existing grantees, monitoring grantee progress, and exploring new grantmaking areas.
- Screening proposals, applying breadth of expertise and a clear understanding of the Foundation's interests.
- Conducting site visits to current and potential grantees.
- Writing coherent, clear, well-analyzed, and accurate summaries of funding requests.

- Monitoring progress on approved grants, including scheduling and setting standards for, and reviewing, interim and final reports.
- Answering substantive questions about individual projects and program areas and assessing contributions of these investments towards the Foundation's strategic objectives.
- Providing non-financial support to grantees, including advice concerning capacity building, fund development, project activities, evaluation, and opportunities for collaboration with other Foundation grantees as appropriate.
- Working closely with the Foundation's communications staff on issues related to early education.
- Attending Board meetings to discuss and support program strategies and grant recommendations.
- Providing program information to and interacting with the Board throughout the year.
- Keeping the Education Program Director, the senior leadership team, and the Board informed on developments in the Early Education program area. Preparing senior staff and the Board for meetings, conferences, and grantee visits.
- Knowing the funding landscape, including other funders who support similar projects, and participating in joint efforts with other foundations and foundation affinity groups.
- Representing the Foundation professionally by responding to inquiries, attending meetings and conferences, public speaking, and publishing in appropriate venues.
- Developing position papers on new subject areas and new Foundation initiatives, including developing RFPs for funding within assigned areas.
- Seeking professional development opportunities to broaden knowledge of early education, philanthropy, and the non-profit sector.
- Keeping current with research findings and advances in methods.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are substantial opportunities awaiting the new Program Officer in the future. Specific opportunities and challenges include the following:

Launch and Manage a Portfolio of Grantees

Building on the strong track record of the Education team's work supporting high-quality, high-performing organizations, and seeding new organizations that bring a fresh approach to the field, the Early Education Program Officer will build out a new portfolio of grants. The Education team is in the midst of a formal strategic planning process that will conclude in June.

With these objectives as a starting point, the Program Officer will cultivate the appropriate relationships needed to develop this portfolio. There is significant room for innovation and calculated risk taking, and the Foundation has shown an interest in funding areas that are important to an organization's success but may not be typically covered by other funders. The Program Officer will make key recommendations regarding grantee selection, then establish and maintain effective relationships with grantees. As a trusted partner, the Program Officer will manage grants, assess progress, respond to financial and programmatic reports, and ensure that funds are spent wisely and according to grant agreements. Broadly, the Program Officer will also oversee and develop effective and responsive guidelines for measuring the success of programs and grants.

Advance an Ambitious Strategy While Contributing to Its Continued Development

The Program Officer is a key leader in setting strategy for a portfolio, as well as the larger Education program area. In partnership with the Education Program Director, the Program Officer will establish a strategy that is aspirational and continually tested against defined goals and clear programmatic objectives. The Program Officer will work closely with grantees to develop and modify strategies that effectively use available resources while fulfilling program goals. There may also be opportunities for joint grant-making efforts within the Education Program and with other funders. As such, the Program Officer will seek opportunities to partner and will think creatively about opportunities where it might be productive to partner with colleagues inside and outside of the Foundation.

The Program Officer will incorporate lessons from their grantmaking into future decision-making. This individual will also share key findings with the Education team, the Foundation, grantees, and the public. The Program Officer is expected to contribute to conversations about strategy, and work with other program directors and program officers in setting and monitoring strategic goals.

Support a Healthy, Diverse, and Inclusive Community

The Foundation's growth and success has been fueled by the collective passion, commitment, and talent of its Board and staff. Camaraderie, integrity, humor, commitment, humility, and respect are important characteristics of the Foundation's culture. With these in mind, it is expected that the new Program Officer will foster and continually reinforce a climate of inclusion in which all members of the Foundation's community have the ability and support to reach their individual and collective potential.

Qualifications and Characteristics

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the Foundation seeks candidates with many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- Master's degree in a relevant field.
- Background and deep understanding of early childhood development and education, the science of learning, with a focus on ages birth to eight years, including knowledge of key early childhood education research findings and best practices.
- 5+ years' relevant educational or professional work experience in early childhood education with experience and a focus on equity in early education.
- General understanding of research and evaluation methods.
- Experience with and understanding of California's early childhood education policy and practice, and linkages with K-12 education, as well as an interest in dual language learners.
- Experience in and understanding of the particular strengths and challenges for dual language learners as well as children facing particular structural challenges in gaining a high quality early education experience from a developmental, cultural, and/or political lens.
- Demonstrated initiative and the ability to plan and think strategically about program design and implementation, manage large projects and budgets, set realistic goals and objectives, effectively balance multiple priorities, and manage time well.
- Excellent research, writing, and communication skills, including an ability to synthesize material and to identify major opportunities in a specific area.
- High degree of self-motivation, strong interpersonal skills, and demonstrated ability to develop productive relationships with colleagues, grantees, and stakeholders as part of multifaceted partnerships.
- An understanding of how foundations function and of the grantmaking process. Prior experience in philanthropy or grantmaking organizations preferred.
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to represent the Foundation in diverse forums.
- Personal motivation to exhibit the Foundation's values, and support the Foundation's mission, vision, and goals.
- Integrity, solid judgment, and critical thinking skills.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office applications, cloud based systems, and Salesforce.
- Ability to travel locally and nationally as needed to achieve the goals of the Education program and the Foundation.
- A sense of humor and a commitment to teamwork.

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications should be sent in confidence to:

www.imsearch.com/6582

Ericka Miller, Vice President
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(202) 682-1504

The Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome a diverse pool of applicants and make employment decisions based on merit. Foundation policy prohibits the unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, marital or caregiver status, physical disability, mental disability, military service, legally protected medical condition, prior record of arrest or conviction, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Reasonable accommodation will be made so that qualified applicants with disabilities may participate in the application process. Please advise, in writing, any special needs at the time of application.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Heising-Simons Foundation is a family foundation based in Los Altos, California. The Foundation was founded by Mark Heising and Liz Simons. Mark and Liz each grew up with a tradition of giving, learning about the importance of the communities that surrounded them, and of the value of philanthropy. They met at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1979. Liz earned her masters in education from Stanford University, became a Spanish-bilingual teacher, and founded Stretch to Kindergarten, a spring-summer early childhood education program. Mark earned his master's in electrical engineering and computer sciences from the University of California, Berkeley, became a chip design engineer, and went on to hold six U.S. patents. In 2007, they established the Foundation, and were later joined on the board by their daughter, [Caitlin Heising](#), who graduated from Brown University and works with a nonprofit human rights and strategic philanthropy consultancy. In 2016, [Liz and Mark joined the Giving Pledge](#), publicly committing the majority of their wealth to philanthropic causes.

MORE ON THE FOUNDATION

For additional information about the Heising-Simons Foundation, please visit <https://www.hsfoundation.org>.