

# HEARTLAND FORWARD

AN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC RENEWAL

## Executive Director, Programs Position Description

Heartland Forward is seeking a skilled economic development professional with extensive experience in collaborating with multiple stakeholders to advance our program advocacy and public policy activities by joining the organization as Executive Director, Programs in Bentonville, Arkansas.

### Summary

The Executive Director, Programs will lead Heartland Forward's work for all of its program advocacy and public policy activities in our four program areas 1) Regional Competitiveness, 2) Innovation and Entrepreneurship, 3) Human Capital and 4) Health Risks and Disparity. We desire to transfer our applied research into policy actions at the state, regional and local levels and this position will be a key point of contact with the "do" part of the "think and do" tank. The Executive Director, Programs will work closely with the Heartland Forward leadership team in identifying and developing relationships with practitioners and public policy officials to communicate best practices and facilitate their implementation.

This position will report to the President and CEO and play an integral role in fulfilling the policy implementation agenda of Heartland Forward. We aim to turn our research into action and set in motion transformative changes that will impact the heartland's economy, human capital formation, labor force skills training, research, development, commercialization (universities, small and large firms and federal labs), entrepreneurship, access to early-stage risk capital and quality of place issues. The successful candidate will have experience in applied knowledge-based or technology-based economic development and be able to engage in external collaboration to foster implementation.

Must be effective at advocating for adjusting public policies and practices consistent with our research findings. In many respects, this position will serve as a consultant to external organizations to connect practitioners to policy officials.

Specific duties will include the following:

- Identify, hire, and manage resources
- Ensure cohesive coordination and collaboration between workstreams
- Research, identify and build relationships with critical partners in our main areas of program and policy advocacy
- Develop stakeholder contact database and provide strategic recommendations on additions or adjustments
- Assist in determining potential groups to plan events in collaboration with
- Develop a detailed strategic plan for our program area
- Compile recommendations and a policy toolkit that can be shared with stakeholders
- Gain the participation of practitioner and policy stakeholder groups so that they may advocate and adopt our recommendations
- Establish goals by which we can measure our program and policy impact
- Determine partnership and sponsorship opportunities to support events and programs
- Make presentations and participate in discussions with the media and stakeholders



## **Who we are looking for:**

### **Basic qualifications required for the role:**

- Master's degree in economics or related field (e.g., geography or sociology, if undergraduate degree is in economics) with 10+ years of experience
- Understanding of regional economic and demographic data
- Demonstrated policy experience in a "think tank", corporate, consulting or government setting
- Experience in developing PowerPoint presentations and managing complex data with Excel spreadsheets
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills. Must be able to translate complex economic and planning issues for an educated audience

### **Additional helpful experience includes:**

- Ph.D. in economics or related field (e.g., geography or sociology, if undergraduate or master's degree is in economics)
- Hands on consulting work as an economic development professional
- Entrepreneurial and/or start-up research experience a plus

### **Characteristics that support success:**

- Must be a self-starter who takes initiative
- Ability to meet deadlines, prioritize assignments, and juggle multiple tasks simultaneously
- Service approach with a highlighted sense of accountability, empathy, and humility
- Highly resourceful team-player, solution-oriented, and comfortable operating with incomplete information

**Heartland Forward has retained the services of INSIGHT EXECUTIVE SEARCH to assist in the recruitment. Anyone interested in applying should contact:**

**Ari Ayares, Vice President**  
**INSIGHT EXECUTIVE SEARCH**  
[Ari.Ayares@insightexecutivesearch.com](mailto:Ari.Ayares@insightexecutivesearch.com)

## **About Heartland Forward**

Heartland Forward is a 501 (c) (3) nonpartisan, nonprofit "think and do tank," focused on improving the economic performance in the center of the United States by advocating fact-based solutions to foster job creation, knowledge-based and inclusive growth and improved health status. Most research and policy efforts by existing think tanks in the Heartland are focused on their individual state or metro areas within a state. We think a cross-cutting view is critical to solving the region's challenges, and Heartland Forward will fill this void. While recognizing the differences between places in the center of the country, we will analyze the region holistically to identify common issues and solutions.

The Institute will pursue its mission through independent, data-driven research, action-oriented convenings, and impactful policy recommendations. Its flagship convening is the Heartland Summit, a two-day summit where policy leaders, entrepreneurs, elected officials, and economic development officials come together to meet in the middle and pursue solutions to strengthen the Heartland's economy.

*Heartland Forward is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to building and maintaining a culturally diverse workplace. We encourage women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans to apply. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, status of protected veteran, among other things or status as a qualified individual with a disability.*