



Project STEP
Executive Director
Boston, Massachusetts

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About Project STEP

Founded in 1982, Project STEP (String Training Education Program) is a 501(c)(3) organization that recognizes that certain racial and ethnic minorities are vastly underrepresented in classical music. Their mission is to address this imbalance by identifying musically talented underrepresented students from Boston and surrounding communities, providing them with comprehensive music and string instrument instruction. Project STEP sets the highest standards for disciplined study and performance and offers a platform for students interested in pursuing classical music careers as well as other courses of study.

With progressive programming for students beginning in elementary school, Project STEP's comprehensive package of high-quality, long-term training, support services, and financial support are intended specifically for children from backgrounds underrepresented in classical music. Their students, who are primarily Latinx and Black, are able to break through institutional barriers to become excellent musicians, creative and confident students, and successful young adults. Students and their families make commitments to spend up to twelve years in STEP, where students are challenged to achieve and maintain high levels of musicianship. The perseverance, social and leadership skills, self-discipline, confidence, problem solving skills, and strong work ethic they develop in the process prove to be invaluable in their future musical and non-musical pursuits. Students in Project STEP gain deep life skills, as well as learning and career opportunities that make them role models and mentors in their families and communities.

Project STEP is a founding partner of the Boston BEAM Initiative (Bridge to Equity and Achievement through Music) along with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras, Community Music Center of Boston, and the New England Conservatory. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of their national work to further diversify classical music and launched in 2019, this initiative serves students from underrepresented backgrounds in grades 6-12 who are committed to being music majors in college/conservatory and interested in pursuing careers in classical music. In recognition of its accomplishments, Project STEP won a National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award in 2014, the highest award in the country for youth arts programs, and was invited to perform at a White House State Dinner for President Barack Obama in 2016.

For more information on Project STEP, please visit projectstep.org.

The Opportunity

As we approach Project STEP's 40th anniversary, we are looking for a passionate, visionary leader who can continue to carry out and evolve Project STEP's mission to expand representation of diverse backgrounds, identities, and communities among string musicians. Our next leader must be able to build on our fundamental strengths with a critical eye toward institutional development, execution, and evaluation. In collaboration with Project STEP's Artistic Director, the person we seek will root the community at the center of the organization's work and will share a clear vision for the future of string music education and achievement for underrepresented students.



The Executive Director provides comprehensive leadership and direction of Project STEP and works closely with the Board of Directors, the Artistic Director, and staff to develop, implement, and oversee administrative operations so that Project STEP fulfills its mission. As the administrative leader of Project STEP, the Executive Director implements the strategic plan and maintains the organization's financial stability and growth. Often acting as the "face" of Project STEP, the Executive Director will lead critical relationship building efforts in fundraising, marketing, partner relationships, and community outreach. This position reports directly to the Board of Directors.

Board Governance: Works with the Board in order to fulfill the organization's mission.

- Leads Project STEP in a manner that supports and guides the organization's mission as defined by the Board of Directors.
- Communicates effectively with the Board in a timely and accurate manner, providing all information necessary for the Board to function properly, make informed decisions, and fulfill its fiduciary responsibilities.
- Promotes active Board involvement through the oversight of staff support for Board Committee functions and scheduled Board meetings.

Financial Performance and Viability: Develops resources sufficient to ensure the financial health of the organization.

- Responsible for the fiscal integrity of Project STEP, including the development of the annual budget in conjunction with the Finance Committee of the Board. Maintains sound financial practices; produces monthly financial statements; oversees grants management; and 501(c)(3) administrative reporting details.
- Responsible for fiscal management, including operating within the approved budget, ensuring maximum resource utilization, and maintaining Project STEP's positive financial position.
- Helps to develop and oversee a fundraising plan, including the solicitation and management of grants, corporate sponsorships, individual giving, and the planning and implementation of special events. Works closely with the fundraising team to maintain and cultivate donor relationships and stewardship programs.
- Distributes financial aid applications to families annually. Works with the Financial Assistance Committee of the Board to manage and process grants.

Organizational Mission and Strategy: Works with Board, staff, and parents to ensure that the mission is fulfilled through programs, strategic planning, and community outreach.

- Enhances Project STEP's image by being active and visible in the community and by working closely with students, parents, partners, and other civic, professional, and private organizations.
- Dynamically and enthusiastically represents Project STEP in the Greater Boston community and beyond. Promotes community awareness of, and support for, the organization through print and electronic media, advertising, websites, and social media.
- Develops an annual calendar of classes, programs, and activities that carry out Project STEP's mission.
- Develops annual action plans aligned with the organizations strategic plan to successfully fulfill its mission into the future.

Organization Operations: Ensures that operations of the organization support the accomplishment of annual goals and overall mission of the organization.

- Collaborates with the Artistic Director to implement instructional programs and performances that reflect positively on Project STEP.
- Maintains close working relationships with students, parents, and families. Relays policy-related information to parents and maintains an open dialogue with the Artistic Director on artistic and policy-related items.
- Recruits, supervises, evaluates, and retains competent, qualified staff.
- Plans, implements, documents, and measures high-quality program results that are consistent with Project STEP's goals and mission.
- Responsible for effective administration of day-to-day Project STEP program operations.
- Acts as the primary liaison for facility-related matters, in conjunction with the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Symphony Hall and other facilities (e.g. YMCA, concert venues).
- Responsible for negotiating agreements, signing contracts, notes and other instruments made and entered into on behalf of Project STEP.



Who You Are

You are a leader who has deep passion for the arts and culturally relevant education, an intuitive understanding of young people, and a willingness to deeply embed in communities of the Greater Boston Area. You embrace complexity and have the ability to create a unified and strong vision around staying relevant in, with, and to the community--while serving more young people, educators, and families across the region. At the same time, you have the skills and drive to keep the operational side of the organization going -- by managing operations, leading fundraising efforts, and monitoring the organization's financial health.

You are naturally at ease and engender comfort in rooms with young people, parents, artists, educators, and our philanthropic partners; have respect for fundraising, communications, and finance; maintain a learning mindset; are able to lead artists; and have a proven and developed perspective about the complexities of running a successful nonprofit arts and education organization. We expect that you will have expertise in the performing, visual, or media arts and/or Pre-K-12 educational systems and identify closely with the communities we serve -- primarily Latinx and Black students and their families.

Our constituents (youth, families, artists, staff, Board, educators, community members, and funders) believe that success in the role will require an established record of leadership (in formal and/or informal capacities), as well as the abilities to set and articulate a clear vision; engage staff, teaching artists, and volunteer leadership around that vision; and hold the mission at the center of the work.

Candidate Profile

The Executive Director of Project STEP will possess the following attributes and competencies:

Passion for the Mission

The Executive Director will believe deeply in the power of arts education to increase representation and diversity in the field of string playing and the larger world of classical music. The successful candidate will embrace Project STEP's mission and be energized by the opportunity to share broadly the important role arts education plays in promoting creative, educational, and professional advancement for underrepresented students across the Boston area and beyond. With a strong equity focus and a deep appreciation for music education as a critical lever in advancing social justice, the Executive Director will bring a passion for working on behalf of young people and their families from diverse backgrounds. As a representative of the organization, the Executive Director's demonstrated enthusiasm for Project STEP's values and ability to engage others in its mission-driven work will galvanize both internal and external constituents toward a shared sense of purpose. A background in arts education, arts administration, or an active artistic practice is appreciated.



Strategic and Visionary Leadership

The Executive Director will be an experienced leader who enjoys inspiring and collaborating with staff to achieve measurable goals across an organization. Bringing a growth mindset, they will be excited about the opportunity to increase the impact of the organization in the coming years. They will have the proven ability to develop and promote the strategies needed to advance the work of a mission-based organization, from funding to mission delivery to gathering evidence of proof of concept. Able to balance responsibility with creativity, the Executive Director will consistently have an eye on the future and be looking for ways for Project STEP to grow, collaborate, and lead in the evolving landscape of arts education. Working directly with program, development, and operations staff, they will skillfully manage in all directions to assess and anticipate challenges and set and implement a strategic vision for Project STEP's next phase of growth.

Building Relationships to Grow Impact

The Executive Director must possess dynamic and effective interpersonal and communication skills to inspire trust and confidence and grow and sustain excellent relationships with a range of diverse internal and external audiences. The successful candidate must demonstrate a high level

of credibility and cultural competency within a multicultural environment. Able to deftly navigate the nuances of interacting with various constituents and cultures simultaneously, this leader will embody a deep respect for the families, communities, and partners that Project STEP works with across both the arts and education sectors. The Executive Director will model Project STEP's values around equity and empowerment. Their natural ability to build rapport and foster collaboration with staff, constituents, and funders will successfully translate into measurable growth in the organization's programmatic outcomes, funding, and overall development.

Business Acumen, Operational, and Change Management

The Executive Director brings strong staff, operational, and strategic financial management experience with a track record of successful fundraising, sound financial oversight, and an ability to effectively communicate both financial and programmatic results to a Board of Directors. The successful candidate will bring experience building and leading teams to navigate dynamic challenges and guiding team members' growth and development. The Executive Director will share a commitment to program excellence and possess the ability to inspire and empower staff and engage individual skills and talents to build a collaborative and cohesive team. They will understand and implement best practices in nonprofit management, planning, marketing and communications, and fundraising to meet ambitious goals and ensure sustainable development in programming, funding, and operations across the organization to attain strategic goals.

Ambassador and Fundraiser

The Executive Director will be an inspirational and charismatic leader who will serve as the chief 'ambassador' for Project STEP and model its values with a high level of integrity and transparency. An articulate, informed, and passionate public speaker and clear and persuasive writer, they will represent Project STEP and will be seen as a leader in the field. The Executive Director will be effective at conveying Project STEP's mission and vision and generating additional support and partners for the organization. They will be an energetic fundraiser and asset developer who will fully embrace this aspect of the role. The Executive Director will bring a creative and entrepreneurial approach to revenue generation, enabling Project STEP to maintain its broad, enthusiastic donor base and access previously untapped support.

In addition, strong candidates will offer:

- Bachelor's degree required; background in music, preferred.
- Senior management experience in music/arts administration required in non-profit, government, or for-profit environments. Preferred candidates will have a commitment to Creative Youth Development, and a deep belief the transformative role of arts, culture, and arts education in cultivating and sustaining thriving communities.
- Proficiency or fluency in Spanish a plus.

Compensation & Benefits

Compensation for this role is competitive and commensurate with experience with a salary range that starts at \$90,000.

Contact

Beth Schaefer and Marisa Chock of Koya Partners have been exclusively retained for this search. To express your interest in this role please submit your materials [here](#). All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

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Project STEP is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+ applicants.

About Koya Partners

Koya Partners, a part of the Diversified Search Group, is a leading executive search and strategic advising firm dedicated to connecting exceptionally talented people with mission-driven clients. Our founding philosophy—**The Right Person in the Right Place Can Change the World**—guides our work as we partner with nonprofits & NGOs, institutions of higher education, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

For more information about Koya Partners, visit www.koyapartners.com.