POSITION DESCRIPTION: Learning Officer

Location: Boston, MA

About the Barr Foundation
The Barr Foundation’s mission is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts. As stewards, Barr nurtures and enhances vital community assets. As catalysts, the Foundation cultivates and advances the breakthrough ideas that will shape our collective future. Barr focuses on achieving impact as a constructive partner, willing to exercise leadership.

Based in Boston, the Foundation focuses regionally, and selectively engages nationally, working in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, the public sector, and civic and business leaders to elevate the arts and creative expression, advance solutions for climate change, and expand educational opportunity. Barr is one of the largest private foundations in New England with assets of more than $2.0 billion and a 2020 grantmaking budget of $95 million.

A set of core values defined by the Barr Foundation’s founding trustees expresses beliefs about what constitutes effective philanthropy and guides how the Foundation carries out its philanthropic mission. The Foundation is committed to strive for excellence, act with humility, adopt a long-term perspective, and embrace risk. Additionally, while each program is guided by distinct priorities and goals, Barr embraces a common set of approaches in all aspects of its work, namely flexibility and nimbleness, a broad range of tools, knowledge and learning, openness and transparency, and active collaboration.

For more information on the Barr Foundation, please visit: www.barrfoundation.org/.

Barr’s Learning & Evaluation and Sector Effectiveness Programs
The new role of Learning Officer, described below, will have responsibilities spanning the Foundation’s Learning and Evaluation and Sector Effectiveness teams. Barr’s Learning and Evaluation team works with our core program teams to help track progress and impact of our strategies and gather insights to inform our work and the field. Barr’s Sector Effectiveness team seeks to support knowledge, capacity, policies, and practices essential to the health and impact of the nonprofit and philanthropic sector. Across all of this work, Barr seeks to learn from as well as to contribute to the field.

As our core program strategies mature, we aim to more clearly understand our impact and learning to date – and to demonstrate (and ideally contribute to) best practices in grantmaking.
Learning and Evaluation and Sector Effectiveness provide key resources to the program teams, including support for learning internally across Barr and between Barr and the field.

For more information, please visit www.barrfoundation.org/impact-learning and www.barrfoundation.org/sector-effectiveness.

Learning Officer Position
The Learning Officer will report to Barr’s Director of Learning & Evaluation. Under her direction and in partnership with the Sector Effectiveness and program teams, the Learning Officer will play three primary roles:

1) Support program teams in designing and implementing evaluations and applying the learning from those efforts.
2) Engage with and manage a portfolio of grants with leading regional and national social sector infrastructure organizations advancing and strengthening the field (currently approximately $1.5 million per year).
3) Work with all Barr teams to synthesize learning from internal and external efforts, and translate those lessons into practice at Barr.

Key Responsibilities

Advancing learning and practice at Barr

- Support program teams in integrating and applying lessons and leading practices from across the social sector in philanthropy, nonprofit capacity building and effectiveness, and organizational development.
- Support the Director of Learning and Evaluation in developing, articulating, and implementing Barr’s overall approach and frameworks for learning and evaluation.
- Increase Barr’s internal capacity for learning through a variety of activities such as:
  - Supporting and building the capacity of program staff to gather, analyze, interpret, and visualize research and data relevant to program strategies.
  - Supporting program teams and Directors to develop RFPs/RFIs for projects that advance team learning agendas.
  - Identifying and onboarding evaluation partners, and cultivating successful collaborations between consultants, program teams, intermediaries, and our grantees.
  - Supporting and managing learning and evaluation projects to successful completion.
  - Documenting effective approaches and developing resources to support consistent and effective approaches to learning and evaluation across Barr’s program teams.
- Promote Barr’s culture of learning through activities such as:
  - Planning and implementing engaging learning events for Foundation staff that build Barr’s organizational capacity for evaluative thinking and strategic learning.
o Supporting program staff in sense-making of evaluation results and research from the field.
o Identifying, curating, and sharing relevant lessons across programs, so all program staff can benefit from promising practice and lessons learned.
o Facilitating peer learning within and across program teams.

Lead and manage nonprofit/philanthropic sector support and grantmaking

- Serve as program officer for the nonprofit/philanthropic infrastructure grant portfolio, working with the President and Sector Effectiveness team to engage with and support a select number of regional and national organizations, currently approximately $1.5 million in grants per year.
- Evaluate and respond to inquiries, conduct site visits, actively assist organizations in developing proposals; and draft internal documents and analyses for Foundation leadership and trustee consideration.
- Manage active grants as assigned; assess grantee progress, analyze and act on financial and programmatic reports, and elevate key lessons and field developments that might inform Barr’s strategies and approaches to its work as well as others in the field.
- Manage relevant budgets and contracts.

Field engagement

- Collaborate with the Director of Evaluation and Learning and the Communications and Program teams to share Foundation learning with grantees and the broader field.
- Maintain a wide breadth and depth of knowledge about current trends, professional practices, and policies related to the nonprofit/philanthropic sector, learning, and evaluation.
- Work with the President, Director of Learning and Evaluation, and Sector Effectiveness team to organize meetings and convenings of field experts to share best practices, encourage collaboration, and explore strategies for greater impact.
- Learn and provide leadership in the professional field through speaking engagements, writing, and the use of social media.

Desired Skills and Experience
While no single candidate may embody all the qualifications below, an ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences.

- At least five years of relevant experience including direct experience with evaluation or applied research projects, policy analysis, and/or research.
- Experience working across the social sector with foundations, nonprofits, and/or mission-driven organizations, as an external consultant or internally in a programmatic role with strategic responsibility.
- Knowledge of and experience applying nonprofit organizational assessment tools and capacity-building models.
• Experience generating/refining theories of change and logic models.
• Experience developing metrics and indicators for assessing portfolio or strategy goals.
• Ability to clearly analyze and communicate concepts, research findings, and data interpretations and their implications to diverse policy and practitioner audiences.
• Analytical rigor, with demonstrated ability to think systemically, strategically and critically, balanced with empathy and humility.
• Well-honed consultative and facilitation skills; ability to build strong relationships with staff and key external partners, including researchers, evaluators, and nonprofit organizations.
• A self-starter able to work independently; highly organized with great attention to detail and strong project and time-management skills.
• Excellent listening, writing, and presentation skills, particularly in working with diverse constituencies in a variety of settings.
• Comfort working in a diverse team setting; team-oriented, willing to pitch in as needed.
• Commitment to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
• A collegial spirit in sharing ideas and receiving feedback.
• Demonstrated competence with the Microsoft Office suite, including the ability to manage, analyze, and visualize data and intermediate/advanced proficiency with Excel and Powerpoint; familiarity with Salesforce or similar database programs would be an asset.

To Apply
Please visit https://bit.ly/38cdWPm to apply for this position. Only applications submitted via this link will be considered. Applications for this position will be reviewed on a rolling basis, with preference given to applications received before Friday, March 6, 2020.

All inquiries may be directed in confidence to: Denise Gillespie, Director of Human Resources, via email at barrjobs@barrfoundation.org. This position offers a competitive salary with excellent benefits.

Barr Foundation is an equal opportunity employer, with a commitment to building and fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. We welcome candidates who would both contribute to and learn from working in such an environment.

2/7/2020