



Research Director

Summer 2023

Please note that all applications must be submitted here:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/e06ed0c105044bc9973fbd7f639e7870>

Title

Research Director

Work Location

Remote, within proximity to Philadelphia, PA*

The Opportunity

Research For Action (RFA) is looking for two Research Directors to build and lead two newly restructured and collaborative education research departments that apply a wide range of culturally responsive and community-informed research approaches in education to identify, explore, support, and evaluate initiatives that aim to promote systems change for the advancement of racial equity and social justice. The Research Directors will be responsible for developing and overseeing a portfolio of mission-aligned education research projects within their departments, spanning pre-K through postsecondary, and for leading a collaborative team of diverse researchers in its execution through human-centered and equitable management practices. They will provide day-to-day leadership for their department and project teams.

Reporting directly to the Chief Research Officer (CRO), Research Directors are key members of RFA's leadership structure who actively contribute to developing organizational strategies that further advance RFA's mission internally and externally and serve as a critical liaison between research team members and leadership. The Research Directors will play an integral role in refining the goals and strategy of their new departments through a highly collaborative and inclusive process. Candidates for these positions thrive in dynamic environments and are able to capitalize on the opportunities that come with uncertainty. They bring a strong commitment and toolkit to apply critical and equitable approaches to research, a strong asset-based approach to management, and a complementary set of research skills and expertise.

*The persons in these positions must be based in or within a proximal distance of Philadelphia, PA that allows them to spend approximately two days per month at RFA's Center City Philadelphia office for in-person meetings or events. Presently, RFA staff are working remotely from PA and other states with occasional in-person organizational activities taking place in Philadelphia. Many RFA researchers engage in in-person research and other job-related activities across the nation.

About Research for Action

[RFA](#) is an independent, non-profit educational research organization with a mission of using culturally responsive and community-informed research to promote racial equity and social justice. For 30 years, we have conducted research and developed partnerships to strengthen public schools and postsecondary institutions; provided research-based recommendations to policymakers, practitioners and the public at the local, state and national levels; and enriched the civic and community dialogue about public education.

RFA's portfolio of local and national research, evaluation, and policy studies span critical topics related to advancing equity for students, families, and communities across the education pipeline. Some of our [recent and current projects](#) examine teacher diversity and Black teacher retention and attrition, the impact of statewide developmental education reform on community colleges, inequities in educational opportunity for minoritized K-12 students across the nation, the implications of new high school graduation requirements on district-wide outcomes, the rollout and impact of College Promise Programs, the implementation of an anti-violence community program, and the impact of COVID on Head Start and Early Head Start workforce stability. A focus on and commitment to community engagement is a defining component of RFA's research enterprise. Our Community Engagement division hosted its first [Teach-In](#) in April 2022.

Through December 2023, RFA is engaging in a year-long strategy- and culture-building process to further establish its mission, vision, and values, to chart its theory of action for impact, and to strengthen its culture in the post-COVID remote/hybrid environment. Team members who join RFA during this time will have the opportunity to contribute to organizational change and to shaping how RFA will aim to promote racial equity and social justice through culturally responsive and community-informed educational research focused on supporting systems change.

Key Responsibilities

Departmental Team and Portfolio Management

- Build RFA's capacity to conduct and deliver rigorous and culturally responsive education research that stands to serve students, partner communities, and the field in advancing racial equity and social justice through systems change.
- Build and develop a strong and cohesive research team in the remote environment, using equitable and human-centered management practices, and serve as team members' trusted advocate and liaison with senior management.
- Provide direct supervision to associate-level researchers, and guidance and support to all team members, supervisors, and project teams within the department (presently, departments include 8-12 multi-method researchers and a portfolio of 10-15 projects).
- Mentor, supervise, coach, and provide feedback to develop staff and supervisees using a supportive and collaborative approach and two-way feedback.
- Promote a culture of high performance, accountability, transparency, fairness, and continuous improvement that values learning and a commitment to equity and RFA's mission.
- Manage RFA's portfolio of work within the department, including project staffing levels and budgeting to meet organizational objectives. Oversee, direct, and organize the work of the department's research team.
- Demonstrate self-reflection of strengths and areas for improvement, address constructive feedback, and work collegially with project directors and team members to identify and engage in opportunities for growth.

Strategy, Vision, and Portfolio Development

- Develop and drive strategies to ensure the department's portfolio, partnerships, business opportunities, and dissemination efforts advance RFA's mission to advance racial and social justice in education.
- Execute and expand RFA's vision, toolkit, and capacity to pursue, conduct, and disseminate culturally responsive, community-informed, and equitable research and evaluation projects and deliverables.
- Identify and pursue business opportunities to strategically expand the work and influence of the department through partnership development and response to RFPs.
- Collaborate with colleagues across the organization to support the development of strategies and approaches that further RFA's mission externally and internally, including advancing an equitable work culture that promotes staff well-being and thriving.

Organizational Leadership

- Take initiative to proactively and actively identify opportunities and challenges for meeting RFA's mission internally and externally and propose human-centered collaborative solutions.
- Collaborate effectively with colleagues across the organization, offer and receive constructive feedback, and manage generative conflict.
- Effectively represent and implement leadership decisions internally.
- Provide constructive feedback and support across all levels of the organization; build and rebuild trust with and among colleagues.
- Consistently and reliably implement RFA's research and administrative practices in a timely, efficient, and thoughtful manner.

Qualifications

RFA considers any combination of professional experience, volunteer work, coursework, and other transferable skills as qualifications. Candidates need not demonstrate all criteria to be considered for the role.

- Demonstrated passion for RFA's mission and areas of work.
- Successful track record of serving in leadership role(s) at non-profit and or/ research organizations.
- Successful track record of developing a portfolio of applied research projects and securing funding opportunities.
- Successful track record of research team management that is asset-based and based in human-centered and equitable management practices. Able to delegate and empower team members to exercise agency and creativity, and deploy and grow their own expertise.
- Experience conducting and overseeing a wide range of high-quality applied education research studies. Ph.D. or advanced degree in the social sciences preferred.
- Experience with a variety of mixed methods social science research methods and approaches, e.g., exploratory research, emergent design, participatory research methods, developmental evaluation, implementation research, program evaluation, experimental and quasi-experimental methods, and impact and confirmatory analyses.
- Experience with culturally responsive and equitable evaluation (CREE) and applying critical approaches to research.
- Experience working closely with external partners and funders on evolving research projects with shifting timelines and deliverables, facilitating discussions with multiple stakeholders and constructive decision-making, and providing continuous feedback to project partners.

- Excellent written and oral communication skills and ability to relay complex and technical information to a wide array of internal and external audiences, and represent an organization externally.
- An active and effective strategic thinker who routinely identifies ways to improve their organization and expand its impact.
- Willing to travel locally and nationally to support projects, development partnerships, and represent the organization externally.

Work for RFA

Culture: RFA is a fast-paced, team-based, diverse organization with staff that have a wide range of expertise and experience in various educational settings and research areas. Our staff members strive to engage in self-reflection continually both to support each other and to serve communities with an orientation toward social justice. Presently, RFA is undergoing a strategic planning and culture-building process where staff participate in culture-building activities and in setting RFA's strategic direction and core values. RFA is currently a remote organization with occasional in-person, Philadelphia-based activities. We are seeking individuals who are interested in shaping the direction of the organization, who embrace continual growth and change, and who are excited to critically engage with issues of racial and social justice. RFA welcomes applications from people of all underrepresented backgrounds and credentials.

Salary and benefits: The salary range for the Research Director position starts at \$140,000 per year. RFA's total compensation package includes a low-cost to the employee health, dental, and vision insurance program, flex spending plans, an employer-funded retirement plan after two years of service, and a generous paid holiday and time off program for all benefits-eligible staff.

Other requirements: The Research Director position is a full-time position. A location in Philadelphia or proximal distance to RFA's Center City Philadelphia office that allows the directors to spend approximately two days per month at RFA's Center City Philadelphia office for in-person meetings or events is required. This position may require additional episodic project-related U.S. travel of up to 15% (dependent on COVID mitigation measures). RFA is unable to sponsor or take over sponsorship of an employment Visa at this time.

How to apply

Applications for these positions will be reviewed and interviews conducted on a rolling basis until the positions are filled.

Complete an application online with the following documents:

- A resume
- A cover letter explaining your interest in the position that answers the following three questions:
 - What personal and professional skills and experiences have you gained that make you interested in this position and a good fit for it?
 - How would you describe your commitment to equity and/or social justice as it relates to RFA's mission? How does this commitment translate to 1) your research, and 2) how you support and manage researchers?
 - In your opinion, how can educational research contribute to systems change in the US? What parts of that process are most exciting to you and would draw most on your strengths and passions as an education researcher and departmental leader?

All qualified applicants receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, domestic violence victim status, veteran status, disability, history of disability or perceived disability, or other status protected by law.

For questions about this position, please contact Alison Murawski at hr@researchforaction.org.

Please click here to upload your materials and apply:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/e06ed0c105044bc9973fbd7f639e7870>