

# Program Officer

## Position Description

Classification: Full-time, Exempt

Location: Chicago, IL

Date Created: July 6, 2021

**We are looking for a talented individual who wants to join a dynamic team that is working to fundamentally change our world through philanthropy and investing.**

### **About Builders Initiative/Builders Vision**

The Builders Initiative (BI) is a private foundation established by a member of the Walton Family and his wife (the "Principals"). BI is the philanthropic arm of Builders Vision (BV), the Principals' broader family office, which also includes a direct investing team (venture capital and private equity); an asset management team; and an operations team: all committed to the vision of a **humane and healthy planet**. Collectively BV is focused on four core issue areas:

- **A more humane and healthy food system**, with a focus on sustainable agriculture and food production, the welfare of farmed animals, and equitable access to healthy food in Chicago.
- **Sustainably managed and healthy ocean ecosystems**, with a focus on scalable innovations in fisheries management, restorative aquaculture to provide ecosystem benefits and healthy seafood, and resilience strategies to protect ocean habitats against climate change.
- **Renewable energy for all**, with a focus on accelerating the pace to 80% renewable penetration and planting seeds for the remaining 20%.
- **A flourishing, democratized arts sector**, with a focus on enabling artists to enhance communities through visual arts and storytelling and to lead communities to connect in Chicago and the Rural Midwest.

BV's mission is **shifting markets and minds for good**. BI and BV do this by applying a range of tools including grant-making, policy advocacy, strategic communications, impact investing, and direct investing to play three key roles:

1. Demonstrating economic viability: Showing that sustainable goods and services can be profitable for producers and accessible for consumers;

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2. Building systems: Investing in the “missing pieces” for market development; and
  3. Challenging mental models: Engaging in targeted activities that create new knowledge, change cultural norms, and make the case for change.

Given this variety of tools and roles, BI’s partners include non-profits, researchers, alliances, governments, peer investors and donors, companies, makers, and entrepreneurs committed to a better future. BI currently grants out about \$50M-\$70M, expected to scale significantly over the next few years. In addition, the foundation expects to deploy substantially more resources in mission-related investments over the coming years.

BV’s other entities, while well-established in their investing activities, are still in the very early stages of defining and implementing impact strategies to complement their investment approaches and the impact aspirations of the overall office. However, that process is now underway.

When appropriate, BV and the Principals also collaborate with the Walton Family Foundation (WFF) and other individual members of the Walton family to further shared social and environmental goals. They also rely upon many services provided by a central family office, Walton Enterprises, Inc. (WEI), based out of Bentonville, Arkansas. This office serves the needs of the broader Walton family and includes dedicated staff for the Principals.

### **Position Summary**

Builders Initiative recently launched Climate Equity as a first initiative under a broader Renewable Energy focus area, which includes equitable access to clean energy solutions and opportunities, address environmental injustices, equitable access to clean energy workforce, just transitions for fossil fuel communities, and system and capacity building. The work will initially be in the Midwest with a particular focus on Chicago.

In early 2021, the foundation conducted research into the needs and opportunities within climate equity in the Midwest and has begun to make exploratory grants. Builders Initiative is seeking a Program Officer to lead this work and help build out the Climate Equity strategy. Recognizing the long-term inequities in funding to justice organizations and the trust required to do this work well, the ideal candidate will be from the climate or environmental justice field and have some experience with grantmaking.

- Finalize a clear strategy for the Climate Equity program area, including the creation of artifacts, such as a theory of change, strategic framework, learning agenda, among others

- Manage the climate equity grant proposal process: evaluate proposals, conduct due diligence on potential partners, make recommendations, grant processing, in-grant management, close-out and reporting
- Shepherd grants that range from large, multi-year regrants to small, hyper-local project-based grants
- Serve as primary point of contact with climate and environmental justice organizations and build, manage and deepen relationships with grantees
- Support partners beyond providing funds, such as through network connections, technical assistance, and fundraising on their behalf
- Build strong partnerships with peer climate and environmental justice funders in order to share and learn about funding and networking opportunities
- Consider and potentially build and manage an advisory committee comprised of respected climate and environmental justice leaders
- Consider and possibly launch an investment fund to complement grantmaking
- Be flexible as the climate equity program area evolves and take the initiative to shape that evolution
- Partner with Builders Initiative's Director of Learning and Evaluation to identify key lessons learned and apply the learnings to strengthen the strategy and future grantmaking
- Partner with the Communications team to accurately and appropriately share the Climate Equity narrative and use the Communications tool to advance the area's goals
- Liaise with teams across BV to foster cross-team collaboration and learning
- Engage in cross-office learning opportunities, taking the lead when the topic is on the area of justice
- Identify and encourage Builders Initiative to evolve as a foundation to adopt anti-racism and justice-oriented grantmaking approaches

**Experience and Basic Qualifications:**

*We realize that people's lived experiences and motivations for entering the environmental justice space vary greatly. Given this, we are open to a wide range of experience and education backgrounds.*

- Well established relationships with Midwest environmental and climate justice stakeholders
- Evident passion for justice and social change
- Experience identifying, gathering and reporting on impact metrics
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience
- 5+ years in environmental or climate justice
- Grantmaking experience preferred
- Climate change technical issue-experience ideal, but not critical

*Additional characteristics that would support a candidate's success:*

- Shares the Builders Vision's values of bravery and creativity; beginner's mindset; integrity with humility; diversity and collaboration; and making the world better. It is vital that this candidate has a deep passion for The Builders Initiative's vision, mission and roles in social change.

- Value being a team player, operating with a great sense of collaboration and diplomacy, with a commitment to teamwork –treating other people with respect and dignity, while resolving issues in ways that preserve and strengthen key relationships
- Engage comfortably in growth roles and delegation.
- Prioritize practical solutions-based thinking
- Prioritizes process and result mutually, focusing on relationship building, listening, and co-creation
  - Client service; ability to assess and meet the Principals’ goals and preferences, curate information, elevate appropriate decisions and represent the Principal appropriately. A passion to serve in a way that demonstrates respect and care for family and staff and exceeds expectations
  - Community orientation and servant leadership; respects partners of all types uniformly and view partners as peers. Practices integrating listening and findings into strategic planning and grant decisions.
  - Strategic networks: Builds partnerships in service to alignment and “togetherness,” sometimes with unexpected allies
- Practice great detail-orientation and system thinking. You like to collect and streamline data for access and application. You demonstrate intellectual agility through analysis of complex data and effectively synthesize information and glean key points from research as well as interactions with the Principals and others
- Communicate well: in person, via phone, and through written communication
- Are technology savvy: very skilled with Word, PowerPoint and Excel, and learn other programs – such as Slack, Salesforce, Ally, Airtable – readily
- Possess unquestionable ethics and personal integrity.

### **Other Duties**

Please note this position description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive listing of activities, duties or responsibilities that are required of the candidate in this position. Duties, responsibilities and activities may evolve or change over time.

**To apply: Submit your resume to Jessica Sporleder at [jsporleder@weioffice.com](mailto:jsporleder@weioffice.com).**

*Builders Vision 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.*