



BoardWalk
CONSULTING

LEADERSHIP PROFILE



Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Families First

Atlanta, Georgia

**“Empowering families to ensure the success
of children in jeopardy”**

A COMPELLING OPPORTUNITY

Families First provides holistic social services designed to ensure the success of all children and break the cycle of poverty. For 128 years, the organization has been strengthening families and communities in ways that enable children to flourish and grow into productive adults. Families First collaborates with community partners and is known for unique, hands-on efforts to help lift up those in difficult and often dire circumstances.



This is a time of transition and promise at Families First. As the organization begins the search for its next CEO, its programs are achieving daily successes and high impact. Families First is solid financially, with an annual budget averaging \$10 million, a sizeable endowment, and new headquarters in Atlanta's Westside. Going forward, Families First aspires to a clearer, focused vision and strategic plan, enhanced infrastructure and cohesion, and a more diversified funding model.



Families First is seeking a CEO with proven leadership, communication and organizational skills. The CEO will be a strategic leader, manager and grower of people and resources. The CEO will have led in operationally complex contexts, and will have authentic passion for the mission and people of Families First.

Finding leaders that matter for missions that matter®

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The CEO will partner with a committed, 23-member Board of Directors and a talented leadership team comprised of longtime staff and recent hires. The organization is currently led by Interim CEO Marybeth Leamer, retired EVP of HR at Cox Enterprises and a former Board Chair. She has worked to ensure strong communications and collaboration during the transition.

Families First has a respected history, track record and brand. Its strengths include a mission and outcomes second to none and committed Board and staff members who are passionate about the mission. While revenues fluctuate year to year due to changing governmental and United Way funding priorities, the organization's balance sheet is strong and its endowment is over \$15 million.



The next CEO will lead the organization as it addresses challenges related to leadership changes, strategic planning, resource diversification and the mandate to advance internal alignment and collaboration. Infrastructure issues include technology and data management, financial reporting and facilities.

Families First aspires to holistic and sustained impact for the children and families we serve, by building on and scaling our core capabilities and partnering with other organizations for the wrap-around services essential to impact. The organization strives to be a thriving, vibrant, and healthy nonprofit known for thought leadership, innovative offerings, and proven outcomes. To realize these aspirations, Families First is working to strengthen and diversify its funding base, with greater emphasis on individual, philanthropic, and corporate giving, as well as new sources of earned revenue.

The CEO has an exciting opportunity: to lead one of Atlanta's most significant nonprofits to a future of even greater impact. The CEO will advance the organization's program focus and effectiveness, its infrastructure, partnerships and impact – creating deep and sustainable impact for more and more vulnerable children and families.

THE ORGANIZATION

Families First enhances the lives of thousands of people each year by delivering holistic, sustainable solutions, improving child well-being, promoting family self-sufficiency and helping to break cycles of generational poverty in replicable ways. Families First achieves this through 11 core programs and 21 services, a complex mix that is at once a source of pride and a distinct challenge to manage and fund.



The organization has thrived for 128 years by remaining true to core commitments of empowerment and enhancement, and has flourished because of a willingness to anticipate and adapt to changing community requirements, family dynamics and funding priorities.

What started as an orphanage in 1870 is now a holistic resource and advocate for children and families in need. The nonprofit has a full-time staff of about 125, many of them professionals with advanced degrees or certifications.

Families First completed a \$13.9 million capital campaign in 2016.

Consistent with its history of community engagement and commitment to addressing generational poverty, Families First moved its headquarters to a repurposed property in what used to be the E.R.Carter School, Atlanta's first public elementary school for African-American children. The building is in the heart of Atlanta's Westside, a neighborhood historically overlooked by the growth and prosperity in much of metro Atlanta. The campaign and office relocation were indicative of the organization's shift from its roots as a responsive social service entity to a more proactive community partner and advocate for children and families.

Families First is organized in three broad program areas plus administrative staff:

- *Child and Youth Permanency*, including services related to adoption, foster care, community-building and transition to adulthood
- *Family Sustainability and Empowerment*, providing housing-based programs promoting healthy environments, self-sufficiency and child safety while battling poverty, homelessness, mental illness and substance abuse
- *Healthy Families and Relationships*, providing families support in parenting skills, mental health counseling and school programs
- *Supporting Services*, including administration, finance and fundraising

The annual operating budget is derived from a combination of government fees and grants (35-40% of the total in a typical year), contract and service fees (20-25%), United Way support and philanthropic donations (~15%).

More information can be found at www.familiesfirst.org.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES

The next CEO of Families First will lead an organization with significant strengths, potential and challenges. The CEO will bring proven leadership, communication and organizational management experience honed in complex, relevant contexts, as well as authentic passion for this mission. The CEO will:

- 1. Be a credible, inspiring, strategic leader of this organization at this time.** The CEO will bring proven leadership and organizational skills, and will be an outstanding listener, thought leader, unifier and communicator. The CEO will bring a combination of big-picture thinking and operational savvy to the challenge of developing and defining Families First vision, strategy and focus areas, and will be a great partner for an engaged Board and talented staff. The CEO will build the clarity, cohesion and organizational capacity for enhanced, measurable impact.
- 2. Manage the business of this complex, operational nonprofit.** The CEO will have experience leading in relevant organizational contexts with significant human, programmatic and physical assets, complicated financials and funding streams, technology and organizational development needs. The CEO will have financial savvy and experience with business planning, forecasting, systems and processes.
- 3. Be a great people manager and relationship builder.** The CEO will be expert at building, managing and inspiring teams and skillful at hiring, developing, motivating and retaining outstanding staff. The CEO will relish listening, communicating, sharing and seeking ideas from others. The CEO will relate well with all Families First stakeholders -- individuals and families the organization serves, donors, funders and partners including corporate, government, community leaders and nonprofit organizations, staff and Board members.
- 4. Grow and diversify resources.** The CEO will be a compelling external presence, adept at connecting with current and new donors and funders. The CEO will be a passionate communicator of the Families First story, an enthusiastic fundraiser and grower of philanthropic, individual and corporate support, grant and earned resources. The CEO will find creative, new and diverse ways to secure growing support for the mission.
- 5. Build trust, reputation and partnerships.** The CEO will be the face of Families First and a confident, compelling public speaker. The CEO will cultivate and create relationships across the community. The CEO will earn the trust of all Families First stakeholders, and will be adept at creating win-win partnerships across the continuum of holistic social services.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate is a compelling, strategic and passionate leader of complex mission, operations and teams. Personal characteristics being sought include:

- An authentic leadership style that inspires and respects others, welcomes ideas and builds participation
- Ability to hire and build an outstanding, cohesive team
- High emotional intelligence, listening, communication and relationship skills
- An approach that fosters confidence, transparency, clarity and stability
- Ability to advocate, persuade and influence
- Integrity, fairness and sound judgement
- Innovation and flexibility
- Business, management, finance, systems and process skills
- Ability to think and act boldly, and to execute operationally
- A unifier who drives for win-win outcomes
- Ability to build consensus *and* to take tough decisions as needed
- Ability to prioritize and create focus
- A sense of humor and balance

THE RELATIONSHIPS

The CEO reports to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board of Directors
And manages a staff of about 125 through direct reports, including	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chief Programs Officer• Chief Financial Officer• Chief Development Officer• Chief Human Resources Officer• Chief Strategy Officer
And stewarding other important relationships such as	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community leaders in the Westside neighborhood• Program partners (state & local governments, nonprofit organizations)• Key philanthropic and program supporters (corporate, foundation and individual champions)• A cross-section of leaders and influencers from across the service area

THE LOCATION

Until 2016, Families First was based in midtown Atlanta. With major donor support, Families First was able to acquire a former school in Atlanta's Westside community and convert it into its new headquarters office and a community showcase.

Cradle to the civil rights movement, Atlanta's historic Westside is where Martin Luther King, Jr. lived when he articulated the vision for a society based on justice, equal opportunity and love of one's fellow human beings. Families First's new center is barely a mile from the organization's founding site in 1890, when the Leonard Street Orphans' Home was opened on land that eventually became Spelman College.



**For potential consideration, or to suggest a possible candidate,
please email**

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or call Kathy Bremer or Laura Lovelace
at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392)**

