



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE



### Executive Director

### National Employment Law Project

New York, NY or Washington, D.C.

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*“For 50 years, NELP has sought to ensure that America upholds, for all workers, the promise of opportunity and economic security through work. NELP fights for policies to create good jobs, expand access to work, and strengthen protections and support for low-wage workers and unemployed workers.”*

*– National Employment Law Project mission statement*

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### AN OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPACT

**The National Employment Law Project has been at the forefront of advancing workers’ rights for five decades and its resolve is greater than ever to defend and advance the rights of working people.** Economic injustice, structural racism and inequality are systemic and intersecting problems. NELP works from the ground up to build systemic change and ensure our nation’s workers can attain economic opportunity, security and dignity through their labor.

**NELP leads through effective policy and legal advocacy, strategic research and communications, capacity building support for grass roots partnerships and strong leadership.** With its current Executive Director, Christine Owens, stepping down later this year, NELP’s next leader will have an opportunity to build upon a track record of impact and success, supported by a committed and talented staff and board, as well as an engaged community of partners and worker allies at the federal, state and local level.

**In an environment where workers are engaged and mobilizing in response to growing attacks on their rights, the Executive Director will lead NELP in envisioning and implementing strategies to advance the interests of low-wage workers and dismantle structures that foster inequity.** Critical to that approach

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will be the ability to continue movement-building and develop worker-centered power and justice, with a keen understanding of the underlying and intersecting racial equity and social justice issues.

## THE ORGANIZATION

**NELP is a respected leader in federal workers' rights advocacy and the go-to resource for state and local worker movements, providing unmatched policy, legal and technical assistance.** The National Employment Law Project was founded in 1969 as a Columbia Law School clinic, dedicated to helping workers vindicate their rights. Today, NELP has a budget of approximately \$10M and a staff of 45, with offices in New York, Washington D.C., California and Seattle. NELP has strong relationships with think tanks, policy makers, labor unions and other worker organizations at the national, state and local levels. It also has the respect and support of committed and loyal funders, which have invested in the work of NELP. As advocates for workers' rights, including the right to organize and bargain, NELP and its staff union, Local 2320, UAW, negotiate terms and conditions of employment through periodic collective bargaining.

**NELP's ability to constantly assess and refine its priorities has allowed it to respond to significant shifts in our political and economic environment.** It works from the ground up in partnership with others to drive systemic change, often piloting ideas at the local level and scaling them nationally. NELP has been a key partner in successful worker movements, including the Fight for \$15 and a Union, which has lifted wages for 22 million low-wage workers since 2012, and Fair Chance Hiring campaigns to limit questions about convictions in job applications and reform occupational licensing requirements to open up more job opportunities for people with records.



**Other examples of NELP [campaigns](#) include advancing workers' rights in contract employment, turning "gig" jobs into good jobs; enhancing workplace health and safety, particularly in low-wage jobs dominated by women, immigrants and workers of color; strengthening enforcement of basic labor standards; and improving support for unemployed and injured workers, including those experiencing job loss due to natural or economic emergencies.**

**NELP is committed to living its values. As it fights to eliminate structural racism across the economy and in America's workplaces,** it takes all steps necessary to examine and end its own internal policies and practices that replicate societal patterns of racism. Over the past two years, NELP has implemented an organizational restructuring designed to deepen operational skills and capacities generally, while enhancing inclusion and diversity within leadership and creating clear pathways for growth and opportunity for all NELP employees. This internal work to dismantle structural racism and promote power-sharing is ongoing, and NELP is sharing its learnings from this crucial work with nonprofit partners engaged in similar reflection and change.

**NELP is committed to bringing a strong structural racism lens to its external work,** prioritizing activities that directly challenge structural racism and assessing all its activities to determine how to maximize equity in our policy impacts.

## **MANDATE FOR THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**The Executive Director will lead NELP into its next exciting era,** build on a strong foundation and:

- 1. Provide strategic vision and leadership.** The Executive Director will have a keen understanding of the complex policy and organizing environment for workers at the national, state and local level and set a vision for how to create and preserve a strong workers' rights infrastructure that ends structural racism, reduces economic inequality and builds worker power. The Executive Director will help ensure that NELP provides proactive leadership for the development of a nationwide workers' rights agenda that is crucially informed by communities who would be impacted by those policies, while also supporting state and local initiatives led by advocates on the ground. The Executive Director will have the experience and insight to conceptualize the legal and political framework needed to drive lasting change, and to work in coordination with movement allies to execute those plans.



- 2. Build fundraising capacity and grow the resources of the organization.** NELP has earned the respect of funders over time. The Executive Director will build upon and grow these relationships to maintain and increase financial sustainability. They will also expand the organizational capacity and expertise of the Development team.
- 3. Continue the work of racial equity and power sharing.** The organizational

transformation which began in 2017 has resulted in greater diversity within NELP overall and in its leadership, along with an increased focus on management expertise. The Executive Director will continue this work, with an ongoing commitment to enhancing racial equity and power sharing internally and ensuring that NELP's external work prioritizes racial equity.



**4. Leverage national relationships for state and local work and movement building.**

The Executive Director will leverage NELP's expertise and stature in responding to the needs of local communities, deploying NELP resources to build the capacity of grassroots allies, with a special focus on communities of color. Consistent with NELP's role as a trusted national intermediary, the Executive Director will ensure that NELP's coalition activities drive a broad vision of workers' rights that unite communities to build worker power and protect the rights of workers to act collectively.

**5. Inspire and manage a high performing team and organization.** The Executive Director will maintain a healthy culture of mutual respect and value throughout the organization and leverage the considerable talent and passion of the team to achieve extraordinary results. He or she will manage the financial and operational aspects of the organization with fidelity and a commitment to excellence.

## THE CANDIDATE

**The Executive Director will be a visionary, compelling leader who connects well with the full diversity of NELP stakeholders,** including labor unions, Black and Brown-led worker centers and other worker organizations, national economic justice organizations, other grassroots partners, policy-makers and funders.

**The Executive Director will be a seasoned leader, knowledgeable of the multi-faceted labor movement** and its intersection with broader racial equity and social justice issues.

The Executive Director will be called to the work of NELP with **personal assets that include:**



- Bold and visionary leadership with knowledge of when and how to leverage research, policy proposals, litigation or advocacy and organizing to drive change;
- Credibility with public officials and the ability to assist in setting the agenda for the next decade;
- Demonstrated commitment to building worker power and workers' rights;
- Demonstrated commitment to and experience in addressing structural racism within an organizational context; and an understanding of why this is so critical to building worker power and workers' rights;
- A deep understanding of worker movements, key stakeholders (including unions and other worker organizations) within the broader movement, and the opportunities to assist in strengthening cross-movement relationships to advance the rights and interests of all workers;
- A deep understanding of how movements are built, including at the state and local level;
- Effective fundraising experience with diverse stakeholders;
- Strong financial acumen, including appreciation of and commitment to strong systems of financial management, reporting and accountability;
- High emotional intelligence and strong management skills with emphasis on effective and direct conflict management and resolution skills;
- Decisiveness as a leader who believes in, trusts and empowers staff;
- Organizational leadership, team-building and culture-building skills.



## THE RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director reports to a Board of Directors and manages a total team of 45. Direct reports include a Deputy Executive Director, a Chief Operating Officer, a Chief of Programs, and a Development Director.

## THE LOCATION

The majority of NELP staff is located in New York and Washington D.C. The board is open to the either location for the next Executive Director.

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For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email  
**[NELP@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:NELP@BoardWalkConsulting.com)** or call  
**Crystal Stephens, John Sparrow, Patti Kish or Diane Westmore at**  
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