



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

President & Chief Executive Officer Foundation for the Mid South

Jackson, MS

"We enable communities to develop solutions to better conditions and improve lives."

The Opportunity

The [Foundation for the Mid South](#) has been improving lives in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi for almost 35 years. Created in 1989 by a strong coalition of public- and private-sector partners, FMS has since inception sought to build upon and strengthen a growing spirit of cooperation throughout its three-state region.

The need for the Foundation's leadership has never been greater. Still an under-resourced part of the country, the needs within FMS's footprint continue to be disproportionately great, even as increased awareness of racial, social and economic inequities throughout the country mean increased competition for scarce philanthropic and governmental resources.

With the recent retirement of its long-time CEO, the Board of Directors of Foundation for the Mid South seeks an energized, focused leader who can help bring cohesion to the Foundation's strategy, discipline to its operations, transparency to its communications and renewed vigor to its relationships.

The Organization

Founded by local leaders committed to an equitable future, Foundation for the Mid South for many years had a national reputation for innovation and impact. The Foundation was widely recognized as a genuine thought-leader on critical issues facing many regional communities, especially in the areas of education, wealth building, health and communities. Its programmatic priorities have received support from an array of national funders over the years, many of them long-time partners who remain central to the Foundation's work today.



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Two recent examples of FMS’s important work:

- In January 2023, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a long-time partner, awarded FMS \$1.5 million to continue the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) efforts.¹
- In late 2021, FMS became a partnership recipient of a \$15-million college-readiness grant awarded to Delta State University by the U.S. Department of Education. This grant will assist more than 2,700 Mississippi Delta students, starting in the sixth and seventh grades and continuing through the first year of post-secondary education.

Foundation for the Mid South is home to a small but dedicated [staff](#) whose commitment to the region is undiminished by the special challenges of the last several years. It is governed by a diverse [board](#) of accomplished leaders, each of whom has a record of significant impact, either within the region or on behalf of its interests.

FMS has assets of about \$18 million. Its annual revenues from all sources have varied in recent years but have generally been on the order of \$2.5-3 million. Most recent audited financials are available [here](#).

Board and staff members look forward to a CEO who can leverage creativity, commitment and coalitions to the benefit of the region.

¹ TRHT is a comprehensive, multi-year national and community-based process to effect transformational and sustainable change. Through TRHT, partners address the historic and contemporary effects of racism in their communities and institutions. More info [here](#).

The Mandate

The new CEO of Foundation for the Mid South can expect a multifaceted mandate:

- **Complete** a strategic review of the Foundation’s programs and potential to ensure its resources and outreach are optimally focused and leveraged across the region
- **Restore** a spirit of cohesion and accountability within FMS itself and between the Foundation and its partners, both funding and programmatic
- **Ensure** FMS is present and active in spheres of influence relevant to its mission and its geography, always attentive to ways in which the Foundation can contribute to collective progress regarding issues and communities of primary strategic interest
- **Build** the Foundation’s staff as needed to support the evolving strategy
- **Expand** FMS’s network of relationships to ensure the sustainable funding its mission deserves.

The Relationships

<p>The CEO reports to:</p>	<p>FMS Board of Directors</p>
<p>And manages an evolving group of direct reports, currently including:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Administration • Chief Financial Officer • Grants & Technology Manager • Associate Director of Programming for MS Delta GEAR UP
<p>Other key relationships include:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current funding partners • Potential funders invested in FMS’s footprint or receptive to FMS’s focus • FMS program partners and collaborators • Community and philanthropic leaders throughout Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, especially those promoting regional solutions to regional challenges; e.g., members of the Delta Philanthropy Forum • National centers of influence and other thought leaders on issues most relevant to FMS’s strategy • Peers within Philanthropy Southeast • The Foundation’s consultants, advisors, legal counsel, investment counsel and auditors

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The Candidate

The ideal candidate to lead Foundation for the Mid South may come from a variety of backgrounds, including foundation or nonprofit management or even the corporate and professional sectors. A candidate need not be located within the region to receive serious consideration, but a deep and demonstrated understanding of the mid-south region is critical to success.

Among the assets and attributes being sought are the following:

Expertise: The ideal candidate will demonstrate...

- Consequential leadership success in organizations known for significant local and regional impact
- A pattern of visionary, strategic thinking, creative collaboration and pragmatic execution, all informed by a charitable spirit
- Capable hands-on leadership of a dynamic organization staffed with superb people addressing complex issues from both grassroots and policy perspectives
- The personal and managerial capacity to expand the Foundation’s influence and impact while empowering staff members to stretch themselves in new and compelling ways
- Success in tackling the tougher issues of the day, particularly ones requiring consensus (and funding) from disparate groups and constituencies. While we are not seeking a subject-matter expert, working familiarity with at least two of the Foundation’s current focus areas would be additive
- A commitment to leadership development and team-building, both internally and throughout the communities of service, broadly construed

- A record of developing and expanding successful, sustained relationships with major funders
- Savviness in board relations and board engagement
- Consistency, resiliency and creativity in pursuit of progress against bold goals
- Financial literacy; a leader who combines business acumen with a philanthropic bent, someone who intuits the importance of sound budgets, timely reports and the inherent value of data-informed metrics.

Culture: FMS seeks an executive who...

- **Demonstrates an authentic understanding** of the region’s history and the pervasive impact of economic deprivation and racial provincialism across the three-state service area
- **Enjoys** the respect of foundations, community leaders, program partners and collaborators
- **Embodies** humility in action and words
- **Exhibits** deep-seated passion for the Foundation’s focus, balanced with personal humility in pursuit of the Foundation’s vision.
- **Demonstrates** superb skills and demonstrated success in broad-based resource development on local, regional and national levels.
- **Respects** the value and integrity of a high-performing team supported by necessary resources, open communications, clear goals and high expectations, all borne of a shared commitment to a bold strategy
- **Manifests** an overarching commitment to impact; a leader prepared to take decisive steps in pursuit of measurable progress.
- **Thinks** strategically in partnership with the board, the staff and the broader community in refining and executing the Foundation’s mission.



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FMS seeks an executive who is genuinely comfortable working closely with people of diverse backgrounds, interests, education levels and sophistication.



- **Is genuinely comfortable** working closely with people of diverse backgrounds, interests, education levels and sophistication.
- **Exudes** the commitment and the charisma to be an effective champion for the Foundation’s mission and programs with various constituencies, including corporations, academic institutions, philanthropies, elected or appointed governmental bodies, nonprofit organizations or community constituencies.
- **Leads** with firm values but an adaptable management style; an executive comfortable leading through change.
- **Ensures** an environment characterized by a positive, multicultural work ethic and a commitment to collective success.
- **Supports** the professional development of staff, a commitment evidenced by a successful track record of recruiting and retaining a diverse team.

The Location

Foundation for the Mid South is headquartered in downtown [Jackson, MS](#), “[the City with Soul](#),” the capital of the state and its most populous city. With board members, program partners and funders located across the region and beyond, the CEO can expect considerable travel to develop or nurture important relationships based elsewhere.

For potential consideration or to recommend a prospect, please email

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or call **Sam Pettway** or **Lysondra Somerville** at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).
