



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE

President & CEO

**MDC, Inc.**

**Durham, NC**

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*"A South where all people thrive."*

*-- MDC's defining vision*

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# The Opportunity

[MDC](#) is a catalyzing force for economic progress in the South. As areas of the South flourish in population and economic growth, deep racial and economic disparities persist. MDC is working to change this. For over 50 years, it has been a vital player, connecting the region's most vulnerable populations to economic growth opportunities.

MDC equips Southern leaders, institutions, and communities with the necessary tools and strategies to advance equity - particularly racial and gender equity- and economic mobility. It provides research, convenings, and strategic support to develop strong leaders, disrupt harmful systems, and shape a South where all people thrive. MDC's reputation is stellar among the dozens of communities that have witnessed first-hand the power of its evidence-based approach to systemic change.

MDC has experienced significant growth since 2020, adding critical programs to expand its work in rural areas and enhance its work helping organizations address racial equity. It has also tripled its staff to 50, doubled its budget to \$8.9mm, and increased its donor base and financial reserves. MDC CEO John Simpkins has announced his departure effective June 2025. The Board seeks a new leader dedicated to systemic change in the South to continue the trajectory of growth and impact.

The new leader has an exciting opportunity to build upon a strong platform with a mandate to:

- Recognize patterns and problem areas across the South that hinder equitable growth and continue to build and drive bold solutions.
- Expand partnerships and resources to support the work.
- Continue to develop and build staff capacity.



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The CEO will inherit a financially healthy organization, a diverse, highly skilled, and committed staff, and an organization primed for continued impact and influence.

## The Organization

MDC was founded in 1967 as Manpower Development Corp. out of North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford's North Carolina Fund in collaboration with the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and the National Association of Manufacturers. Its original mission— designing job training programs for poor and displaced workers transitioning to an industrial economy and an integrated workforce—has evolved to the current focus: to advance equity and economic mobility across the South.

As the work has changed, so has the definition of MDC. The initials now embody the spirit and aspirations of MDC's work. Meaning. Dignity. Community. MDC believes the South thrives when individuals have the opportunity to live lives of meaning through work, which gives them a chance to build or restore dignity and to find that dignity fully realized through community.

MDC works across thirteen states in the South, from West Virginia to Texas, and has a pervasive and abiding commitment to help leaders in the region improve education, employment, economic security, and philanthropic outcomes, especially for the underserved and under-resourced.

MDC's approach is comprehensive. Its work is project-based, broad, and supported by leading regional and national foundations. It begins with data analysis, leverages a deep understanding of the region's history, and centers community voice and collaboration to drive systemic change.

Its relationships and project work are based heavily in North and South Carolina.

### Where We Work

MDC has a footprint in 13 states of the American South, with our deepest work taking place in North Carolina and South Carolina. Our headquarters are in **Durham, North Carolina**.



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It often uses the work in North Carolina as an incubator and proof of concept to guide its engagement in other Southern areas. The work is divided into four project areas:

[Rural Prosperity and Investment](#)

[Equity-Centered Leadership and Philanthropy](#)

[Economic Security and Mobility](#)

[Education](#)

Over the last five decades, MDC has developed a strong track record of success. Some notable accomplishments include:

- MDC partners with the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust as the activating agency for the Trust's [Great Expectations](#) initiative. Great Expectations is one of the South's largest philanthropic investments, a \$40mm, 10-year investment to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- [The North Carolina Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network \(NCIDR\)](#) is a collaborative of public, non-profit, and faith-based organizations formed in 2016 in response to Hurricane Matthew. It provides a sustainable voice and connection for community leaders to statewide organizations to gain equitable access to disaster recovery resources, serving historically disadvantaged populations before and after disasters.
- Launched in 2016, the [Network for Southern Economic Mobility](#), NSEM, convenes cohorts of leaders from participating cities wishing to leverage policy and operational changes to systems affecting youth and young adult mobility within their communities.

Two new additions to MDC's work are:



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- The [MDC Rural Forward](#) program provides capacity-building support to rural leaders, organizations, and coalitions to achieve equitable systems change. It provides program guidance and technical assistance and identifies opportunities for inclusive community engagement.
- The [Race Matters Institute](#) (RMI). It was added to MDC's portfolio in 2023. RMI helps organizations become more race-informed and equity-focused in their work. This fee-for-service model provides customized training, technical assistance, coaching, and product development to advance concrete actions that strengthen an organization's mission performance.

MDC is also recognized for its data-rich [State of the South](#) report, which began in 1996 and chronicles economic conditions and demographic trends. It has influenced shifts in philanthropy, nonprofit, and community organizations. State of the South recently expanded to a public-facing platform to build collaboration with and across communities for solution-oriented conversations. It fosters dialogue between subject matter experts and those with direct, lived experience in community settings. These convenings also include art, a powerful tool to convey what words alone cannot.

MDC's funding is primarily foundation-based. It has begun to build out individual giving and is growing its fee-for-service model, primarily via the Race Matters Institute. It has received federal funding in the past and this remains an opportunity in the future.

MDC's staff is highly diverse, demographically and culturally. Its professionals have backgrounds in research, educational attainment, community development, public-private partnerships, policy, family economics, communications, economic mobility, and various other disciplines relevant to MDC and its clients.

The team has grown rapidly over the last five years. It was recently reorganized to have two vice presidents; one leads the programmatic work, and the other leads the operations.

The staff is collaborative, kind, and committed to the work. One described the culture as “having a hustle mentality where we do the best we can for people that need us the most.”

MDC has an office in downtown Durham that is available to all staff and used intermittently by some and regularly by others. Since the pandemic, most of the staff continues to work remotely. Recent additions to the staff have included individuals living and working outside of Durham.

## The Responsibilities

The next President of MDC will inherit a healthy organization and engaged staff. The leader will continue the evolution of the work, fundraising, and building and growing staff capacity. The leader will:

### **Provide leadership and vision.**

- Provide thought leadership on issues most vital to developing equitable economic opportunities in the South for those most in need.
- Work with the board and staff to expand upon the existing strategy, with particular attention to thought leadership, expansion across the South, and greater clarity and branding of the work.
- Anticipate trends and opportunities, initiating and leading catalytic change to drive equity and economic mobility for those most in need.
- Inspire confidence with staff, partners, and the larger community.



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The leader will be a persuasive advocate for the mission, persistent in attracting the necessary resources.

- Champion the spirit and substance of the work to ensure foundational principles of equity and inclusion undergird every aspect of the work—both internally and externally.

### **Attract and grow resources and the Board.**

- Be a persuasive advocate for the mission, persistent in attracting the necessary resources.
- Inspire confidence with existing funders and partners.
- Continue to build the infrastructure within MDC to support a sophisticated development function, with increased emphasis on individual donors and general operating funds.
- Enlist the full team to build a culture of philanthropy internally.
- Determine the priority and opportunity for federal funding.
- Grow the size of the Board, currently 7, attracting new, committed leaders to help advance the work.

### **Strategically grow MDC's reputation and impact.**

- Recognize patterns across the South that require solutions.
- Develop a strategy to increase MDC's presence across its service area and determine whether MDC will be an incubator for programs in the South, or provide regional teams on the ground throughout its service area.
- Continue to convene the best and brightest minds to develop strategies to systemically lift those on the margin.
- Ensure ongoing programmatic excellence and rigorous program evaluation.

## Refine the message of MDC and continue to build the brand.

- Provide a clear message that effectively communicates the broad, varied, and complex issues MDC addresses.
- Continue to build and define the brand.

## Inspire the people and manage the business.

- Be a visible, present leader for staff.
- Invest in and develop the growing staff and management team's skills and capacity.
- Drive accountability and results with an empowered staff, clear goals, and responsibilities that align the entire organization.
- Continue to build a culture of teamwork and cross-collaboration.
- Foster unflinching values of equity, mutual respect, and diversity as an organizational and societal strength.
- Ensure efficient operations and organizational effectiveness through sound fiscal practices, attention to internal resource allocation, and the highest legal, ethical, and professional standards throughout MDC.
- Refine the strategy for virtual and in-office work.

## The Candidate

The ideal candidate is a respected leader with extensive relevant experience driving change and a demonstrated passion for increasing equity in the South.



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## Professional Experience

- Experience working and leading in the South
- Demonstrated commitment to building economic mobility and racial equity
- Strong existing relationships with foundations and the facility for attracting the resources to support an ambitious strategy
- Core competency in systems change, public policy, philanthropy, or strategy consulting
- Experience successfully leading a nonprofit or public-focused entity
- Respect for the power of data and the individual lives and life experiences that data represent
- Strong people management skills and the demonstrated ability to develop and inspire a high-powered team in a collaborative manner
- Financial and business management skills and a proven record of delivering healthy and sustainable momentum
- Experience leading a virtual organization is a plus

## Personal Assets

- High emotional intelligence and an ability to bridge divides
- Deep understanding of the South
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- An engaging and accessible manner
- Humility, authenticity, and an infectious commitment to learn, adapt, and grow

# The Relationships

<b>CEO reports to:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">The Board of Directors</a></li></ul>
<b>And manages a staff of ~50 through:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vice President of Partnerships and Programs</li><li>• Vice President for Operations and Culture</li></ul>
<b>While stewarding other important relationships, such as:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Funders and partners</a></li><li>• Influencers and thought-leaders, regionally and nationally, in fields relevant to MDC's work</li></ul>

## The Location

MDC and most of its staff are located in [Durham, North Carolina](#). The MDC office is in the historic John Sprunt Hill building in downtown Durham. The next leader will ideally be located in Durham, but there is an openness to consider other locations in the South.

Durham is home to [Duke](#) and [North Carolina Central](#) universities and is part of North Carolina's economically vibrant [Research Triangle](#). It has a rich heritage in arts, culture, sports and entertainment. For example, the [Durham Performing Arts Center](#) is among the top ten US arts centers in theater ticket sales, and the [Museum of Life and Science](#) is one of North Carolina's top family destinations. Durham also boasts a dynamic dining scene and several parks that add to its appeal.



**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email:**

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or call Crystal Stephens or Lysondra Somerville, at  
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