



## **LEADERSHIP PROFILE**

**Executive Director**

**Gateway Early Childhood Alliance**

**St. Louis, Missouri**

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We are working to create and sustain an early childhood system that ensures all children and families have access to high-quality early childhood care and education.

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# The Opportunity

Founded on the belief that every child in St. Louis deserves a fair start, The [Gateway Early Childhood Alliance](#) (The Alliance) has built something powerful and is now looking for the leader who will take it further.

The Alliance has spent years building coalitions, credibility, and the early childhood education (ECE) strategy needed to transform the region's ECE landscape. The infrastructure is in place, the community is engaged, and the momentum is real.

The organization is ready to take its next leap: transitioning to full independence as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, growing its funding base, and scaling its impact across the St. Louis region and beyond.

The incoming Executive Director will be the architect of that future. The leader needed is a bold institution-builder who can hold a wide coalition together, raise funds to sustain the effort, and ensure that the voices of providers, caregivers, and families remain at the center of every decision.

# The Organization

The Gateway Early Childhood Alliance shapes early childhood education quality and access across St. Louis. Its mission is direct and urgent with several defined challenges: years of systemic inequality, high costs, high educator turnover, unbalanced infrastructure, undefined metrics for quality and stress at home. Especially challenging is limited access. There are over 89,000 children between the ages of 0 and 5 in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. Licensed childcare facilities only have the capacity to serve 47,219 children. Service gaps are most pronounced for families facing the challenges of poverty. Just 19% of children eligible for subsidies have a seat in a program that meets accreditation quality requirements beyond the basics of licensure.



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The Alliance was born from deep research. In 2014, the landmark [For the Sake of All](#) report identified gaps in early childhood care as a leading driver of health disparities across the region. The report found that education is one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of health, and that gaps in life expectancy between those with low and high levels of education are widening. Investing in quality early childhood development for all children was one of the report's six core recommendations. Four years later, twenty-two organizational leaders came together to produce [The First Step to Equity](#), a comprehensive assessment of access and affordability in the ECE landscape. A community-led process followed, facilitated by WEPOWER, that developed [The Playbook](#) for reimagining ECE from the ground up. Building on this momentum, the Gateway Early Childhood Alliance officially launched in 2021 with the mission of quarterbacking a regional ECE system.

Today, The Alliance operates under fiscal sponsorship of the St. Louis Community Foundation and is preparing to stand on its own to fully execute its mission. It has a record that speaks for itself:

- Helped secure \$162 million in new state and local funding for children and families, including \$78M in childcare subsidy increases and \$56M for pre-kindergarten expansion
- Mobilized more than 100 community members for Child Advocacy Day at the state capital
- Launched the Nurturing Minds Project, an in-depth training, coaching, and support program focusing on Conscious Discipline to support social-emotional skills in young children. The project supported over 100 childcare professionals across 12 sites in the first year
- Commissioned the ECE Workforce Study in partnership with the University of Missouri-St. Louis, generating critical field data

**\$162M**

Secured for children & families

**100+**

Community members mobilized for advocacy

**100+**

ECE professionals supported

**12**

Nurturing Minds Project sites

- Hosted state legislative town halls connecting ECE providers directly with elected officials
- Helped secure \$7.6M in ARPA funding for St. Louis County and City

The Alliance operates at the intersection of public policy, philanthropy, and service delivery, and brings stable and sustained long-term strategy. It plays the critical role of system-integrator, working to:

- Align public and philanthropic funding streams
- Identify gaps and opportunities
- Support accountability for outcomes and equity

In this way, the Alliance functions as the infrastructure that brings coherence, alignment, and sustained impact to early childhood investments across the region.

### The Alliance delivers impact across four interconnected areas:

#### Coordination, Communication & Connection

Creating spaces for cross-sector planning, accountability, and community-responsive programming.

#### Power Building & Advocacy

Centering and uplifting provider and family voices to win supportive policies, funding, and expanded access.

#### Capacity Building

Investing in ECE providers and educators so they feel valued, supported, and equipped to deliver excellence.

#### Internal Infrastructure

Building an organization and team to drive the work and respond to the needs of the community it serves.

### Recent Developments

On November 3, 2026, there is an unprecedented opportunity for sustainable public funding to ensure children in St. Louis get the best possible early start. [Best Start for Kids STL](#) is a ballot initiative that will bring approximately \$22 million in annual investment for early childhood.

In its role as strategic intermediary, the Gateway Early Childhood Alliance will work to coordinate regional providers for this exciting new chapter in early childhood system-building.

As strategic partner and system coordinator, the Alliance will align investment priorities, strengthen coordination across providers and institutions, and ensure that resources are deployed in a way that is data-driven, equitable, and focused on measurable outcomes.

The Alliance's role is not to own or control the fund, but to reduce fragmentation, support accountability through data and continuous improvement, and ensure that investments contribute to a cohesive, system-wide strategy rather than isolated efforts.

Importantly, Gateway Early Childhood Alliance (and its Executive Director) operates as a nonpartisan educator, technical expert, and neutral convener. By providing research, analysis, and system-level insight to inform policy discussions and investment decisions, The Alliance maintains clear boundaries from political advocacy or campaign leadership.

## The Mandate

The next Executive Director will continue the impactful leadership of Gateway Early Childhood Alliance and focus on:

### Strategic Leadership

- Shape the strategy for a coordinated regional ECE system
- Execute and deepen the impact of The Alliance's established Playbook across the St. Louis ECE ecosystem
- Deftly steward the organization's relationships, finances, reputation, and influence
- Lead the transition from fiscal sponsorship under the St. Louis Community Foundation to independent 501(c)(3) status



Gateway Early Childhood Alliance (and its Executive Director) operates as a nonpartisan educator, technical expert, and neutral convener.



Identify and pursue local and national grant opportunities and develop collaborative funding models is a focus area for the next Executive Director.

- Cultivate public/private partnerships and opportunities that benefit the early childhood ecosystem

### **Fundraising**

- Lead the fundraising strategy and increase revenue streams and sustainability through proactive, relationship-forward, and donor and funder engagement
- Identify and pursue local and national grant opportunities and develop collaborative funding models

### **Organizational Oversight**

- Set an atmosphere of transparency and respect between staff and the board through clear expectations, best practices, transparency, and accountability in service to The Alliance's strategic goals and core values
- Demonstrate strong business acumen including budget formation and management
- Ensure the organization has the resources, staff, and operational infrastructure necessary to optimize its impact

### **External Affairs & Relationship Development**

- Serve as the face and voice of The Alliance to community partners, funders, policymakers, and the public
- Expand and solidify The Alliance's coalition within the broader St. Louis community
- Build trust and strong relationships with Alliance caregivers, providers, educators, and advocates through active listening and collaboration

## Advocacy

- Collaborate in policy and advocacy work to keep provider's voices and perspective at the center
- Work across political boundaries at the county, city, and state level to support early childhood education
- Support the development and implementation of public funding opportunities for the ECE ecosystem

## The Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate is an engaging leader with considerable experience, perspective, knowledge and demonstrated success in contexts relevant to leading the Gateway Early Childhood Alliance. The next Executive Director brings a combination of visionary ECE leadership, strong relationships, and pragmatic operations skills and success.

Assets sought in the new ED include:

**Unwavering Commitment to Children** and practices and policies that support early childhood education excellence and development.

**Fundraising Mindset** with a genuine affinity for building relationships and sustainable financial support for the mission along with demonstrated skills in all parts of fund development including cultivation, solicitation, and long-term stewardship.

**Entrepreneurial Leadership** Experience and comfort in building systems, structures, and expanding networks.

**Deep Sector Knowledge** Comprehensive understanding of ECE best practices, resources, funders, and the legislative and regulatory landscape. A leader who knows the field and the players.



The ideal candidate is an engaging leader with considerable experience, perspective, knowledge and demonstrated success in contexts relevant to leading the Gateway Early Childhood Alliance.



Assets sought in the new ED include demonstrated experience addressing systemic inequities affecting children and families in St. Louis or similar communities.

**ECE Advocacy** Experience working across political lines to influence policy that promotes and supports ECE.

**Organizational Agility** A systems thinker who can hold the long view while managing immediate operational demands. A leader who prioritizes long-term sustainability, scalability, and organizational health and brings collaborative leadership style.

**Dynamic Communicator** A compelling public presence who can both inspire a room of policymakers and connect authentically with a parent on the front steps of a childcare center.

**Equity and Community-Centered Values** A deep, abiding commitment to eradicating disparities and centering the voices and needs of those most directly impacted by systematic inequity.

**Coalition Builder** Skilled at cultivating new partnerships while strengthening existing relationships across a wide coalition. Ability to listen, manage, motivate, and unite people around common goals and strategies.

### Preferred Qualifications

- Master's degree in education, human services administration, or a related field, with a minimum of five years of senior management experience
- Demonstrated experience addressing systemic inequities affecting children and families in St. Louis or similar communities
- A resume that shows commitment and long-term orientation as The Alliance is seeking a leader to stay, build, and see the work through

# The Relationships

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Reports to:</b>               | CEO, St. Louis Community Foundation   |
| <b>Strategic direction From:</b> | Gateway Early Childhood Alliance Advisory Board   |
| <b>Direct reports:</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Director of Communications &amp; Advocacy</li><li>▪ Operations Manager</li><li>▪ Executive Assistant</li></ul>                                    |
| <b>Key partners:</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ ECE Providers</li><li>▪ Regional coalitions &amp; allies</li><li>▪ Funders &amp; supporters</li><li>▪ Elected &amp; appointed officials</li></ul> |



# The Location

[St. Louis](#) is a city that invites you to put down roots. Home to a rich cultural heartbeat, world-class arts institutions, and vibrant neighborhood festivals, the region offers the kind of community texture that makes early learning come alive.

Historic neighborhoods and a growing innovative ecosystem sit side-by-side. World-class universities fuel research and collaboration. And one of the most affordable urban lifestyles in the country means leaders can plant deep roots here.

# Compensation

\$125,000 - \$150,000 - The Alliance offers a competitive compensation and benefits package.

For potential consideration or to recommend a prospect, please email [GatewayAlliance@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:GatewayAlliance@BoardWalkConsulting.com) or call **Terri Kohan** or **Michelle Hall** at 404-262-7392.