

Public Interest Communications Strategist: A New Role for Erb Family Foundation's Last 10 Years of Changemaking

What causes people to care — and act on that care? That's what we want to know at the Fred and Barbara Erb Family Foundation. We want to see what the world looks like, in Southeast Michigan and beyond, when people care deeply, become involved and take action to improve the health of the Great Lakes, strengthen the region's arts and cultural organizations, advance Alzheimer's research, promote sustainable business, and protect democracy.

Since we made our first grants in 2008, we've given more than \$180 million to improve the quality of life for residents in Southeast Michigan and around the Great Lakes. Recently, we decided to act even more boldly. We decided to spend down its assets by 2034. This allows us to get funding into communities when the need is most urgent.

We are guided by our values: to make a lasting transformative difference; embrace possibility; work and learn in partnership; and pursue fairness and respect. We use grantmaking and other supporting work to help us make a greater difference now and future-proof work that will continue after the Foundation closes its doors. Putting strategic communications to work for changemaking—a public interest communications approach—is essential to making a difference, because it taps into what causes people to care and motivates them to act where they can make a difference. It is our hope to inspire our community to do that long after we've made our last grant.

We recognize that we cannot achieve this long-term goal without the help of a visionary communicator who shares our passion for these issues and is eager to experiment with bold new approaches.

We are hiring for a new role: a public interest communications strategist who will work side by side with our leadership, learning, and program teams, especially for our Great Lakes and democracy priorities.

The Opportunity for a Public Interest Communications Strategist

If you're a strategic communicator committed to positive change, this could be your moment.

Changemakers have been practicing public interest communications for centuries, but the field has only recently adopted this name. If you're hearing about public interest communications for the first time, it might show up in your work experience as approaches that:

- Develop and implement science- and evidence-based, strategic communications.

- Achieve significant change on an issue that transcends the interests of any one organization.
- Recognize what people care about and trust – and tap into those connection points.
- Focus efforts on the audience members with the greatest likelihood of acting and making change happen.
- Activate new ways of thinking, identify what works best and course correct as needed.
- Work toward solutions that address underlying systems that create a condition.

The Foundation has just under 10 years to make meaningful, lasting change via our program areas. A public interest communication strategist will make the most of this time and champion communication approaches that will help our partners continue their work after we close our doors. We want to hire someone who's a systems-level thinker and takes an iterative approach to the work: thinking strategically and setting priorities while actively trying things out and assessing what works best. Specifically, we're seeking:

- A team member with experience putting strategic communications to work to achieve social change, such as positive behavior changes individuals made for improved environmental conditions or civic engagement.
- A colleague who will hear and respect many viewpoints from staff members, board members and partners and be able to recommend a clear path forward that focuses on where the Foundation will make the greatest possible difference.
- A doer who walks on that path, implements approaches, coaches colleagues and partners to join in, evaluates progress, and course-corrects along the way.
- A lifelong learner who builds on emerging insights from the developing field of public interest communications (including insights from psychology, sociology, neuroscience and more) and who accepts feedback and counsel from colleagues.
- A champion who will help create a culture of communications by demonstrating its changemaking power.
- A strategist who can look at the big picture and do tactical work.

Core Duties and Responsibilities for our Incoming Changemaker

We anticipate the public interest communications strategist will craft a strategic communications plan for the Foundation and review work in the Great Lakes and democracy programs to identify opportunities for strategic communications to improve progress toward the programs' outcomes. These efforts will ensure the Foundation is prioritizing resources, encouraging learning and providing relevant support to grant partners.

Based on the strategic communications plan, identified projects within Great Lakes and democracy, and the strengths of the selected candidate, day-to-day work will likely include:

- Leading Foundation communications to ensure the organizational voice is amplifying the work of grant partners and expressing the values of the Foundation brand.
- Providing strategic counsel for grantee projects where public interest communications will improve progress toward our shared goals. This may include providing coaching for grant partners, identifying and engaging partners/consultants to support grantee communications goals, and ongoing collaboration with Foundation program staff to

evaluate how public interest communications is supporting progress or where the approach requires adjustment.

- Providing coaching and support for Foundation colleagues as they engage in strategic communications activities designed to amplify the voices of grant partners, showcase their thought leadership, validate the importance of specific approaches within their programs and express the values of the Foundation brand.
- Developing opportunities for Foundation colleagues and grant partners to better understand and activate public interest communications strategies and approaches.
- Hiring and supervising partners/consultants supporting this work (including budget and RFP development, evaluation and updating approaches/scopes).

Qualifications and Skills You'll Bring to Our Mission-Driven Work

- Experience putting strategic communications to work to make progress toward social change the Foundation seeks.
- Organizational/brand leadership for establishing organizational voice and an effective approach to amplifying partners' voices.
- The ability to listen and maintain openness to new ideas and perspectives from our partners who may be coming into the work with a range of values and cultural approaches.
- Understanding of the communications and information ecosystems of our focus areas, including how owned and earned media shapes belief and intent to act, stories resonate with specific communities, network-building plays a role, and educating policymakers can make a difference.
- A growth mindset that's both optimistic and pragmatic — dreaming big while setting clear priorities.
- Collaborative approach that values contribution over credit.
- Demonstrated experience of a learning mindset: getting up to speed quickly on multiple subject areas, developing relevant public interest communications approaches and activating new insights from the field and colleagues.
- Culture-building experience to encourage embrace and activation of public interest communications approaches.
- Management experience coordinating with peers, staff and partners/consultants.
- Experience working with philanthropic funders.
- Relationships in southeast Michigan and/or the Great Lakes region.
- Ability to maintain the highest levels of integrity, ethics, discernment, diplomacy and strict confidentiality.
- Strong writing, speaking and interpersonal communications.
- Proficient with Microsoft 365 including Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, HeyOrca etc. and ability to work in an online grants management system.

You may have many, but not all, of these qualifications and experiences. We strongly encourage you to apply if you are passionate about putting public interest communications to work in service of our mission and meet most of the qualifications, as we value a broad range of experiences and backgrounds.

Education and Experience That's Relevant to the Role

The public interest communications strategist will have a bachelor's degree in a communications field or adjacent discipline (journalism, public relations, advertising, etc.) and at least eight years of work history using strategic communications in service of the public interest. At least two years of that experience should include leadership in the form of supervising staff or consultants and developing and leading strategy. We encourage candidates with an alternative but comparable level of expertise to apply.

Work Arrangements, Compensation and Benefits

The public interest communications strategist will report to the Foundation's Learning Director and collaborate with them on Foundation-wide approaches to integrating communications into our culture.

Our offices are in Birmingham, Mich. Full-time staff work a hybrid schedule, including three days in person (Wednesday and two flexible days) and two remote days. Work will require attendance at grantee partners' evening and weekend events and occasional regional travel.

While performing the duties of the job, the public interest communications strategist is regularly required to communicate effectively with internal and external partners. They will be frequently required to perform work at a desk and to operate a laptop. They may occasionally need to position themselves to stoop, kneel, or crouch, and to move up to 20 lbs.

In the normal course of work, employees operate a laptop, iPad, telephone, cellular telephone, web conferencing equipment and copier/printer. This position requires the employee to make decisions in a timely manner and anticipate all the potential ramifications of decisions made. The employee must be able to read and interpret documents, understand/follow complex written and oral instructions, be able to express themselves clearly/concisely, perform mathematical functions, and handle multiple, concurrent tasks.

The salary for this position begins at \$120,000 and may be adjusted according to qualifications and experience. The Foundation offers a comprehensive benefits package including employer-paid health, dental, and vision insurance and a generous 401K plan.

Apply for this Changemaking Opportunity

Please email employment@erbff.org to send a letter outlining your qualifications and describing why you are interested in the role. This letter can be in the body of your email. Please also send your resume and three project examples from past work (links to online content or case studies showing your work) to help us better understand your experience. The Foundation will fill the position as soon as we identify the right candidate.

Erb Family Foundation is an equal opportunity employer, and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions), sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, citizenship status, and genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.