Context
By nearly every measure, the Minneapolis–St. Paul region ranks among the country’s most desirable places to live and raise a family, offering exceptional cultural, social, and recreational opportunities. With more than 3 million residents, Minneapolis-St. Paul is one of the nation’s most economically robust regions, situated among scenic forests, rivers, lakes, parks, and golf courses.

The region has long been noted for its tremendous spirit of civic cooperation. Private corporations and foundations often join with government and community organizations to improve and expand the resources available to the community. The substantial private investment that results enriches the whole area and helps maintain it as a dynamic metropolitan center.

Despite these myriad assets and attributes, Minneapolis has a huge proficiency and relative achievement gap, with only 23 percent of black students scoring proficient in reading or math, while white students achieve at more than three times that level in both subjects. At the state level, Minnesota has the lowest graduation rates in the nation for Latino students, and second-lowest for black students.

Platform
Compelled to improve educational outcomes and narrow these gaping educational disparities, a coalition of 26 funders and local leaders convened in 2012 to identify the highest-impact levers for transformation. Calling this initiative MN Comeback, the group committed to ensuring that every student — initially focused on Minneapolis — would have access to a high-performing school, and set a multi-sector (traditional district, charter, and independent schools) goal of delivering 30,000 rigorous and relevant seats by 2025.

Today, these leaders, donors, and organizational partners are aligned in support of meaningful, systems-level change in Minneapolis. Owing to a seasoned, committed executive director, talented, growing staff, and millions of dollars in existing funding, MN Comeback is well on its way to transform education in Minneapolis.

Challenge – The talent landscape
To reach this citywide goal, Minneapolis needs a large, diverse group of talented education professionals with the experience, beliefs and commitment to provide all children, especially students of color, with an excellent education.

Currently, however, Minneapolis schools in every sector struggle to find enough high-quality educators to fill openings. Local school and system leaders report difficulties finding educators with deep cultural competence and demonstrated success in significantly raising achievement for students of color. They also struggle to find teachers and school leaders whose racial and ethnic backgrounds match those of their students, and report challenges filling openings in specific licensure areas, including special education, science, math, ESL, and Spanish. Despite
dedicating many of their limited resources to recruitment and hiring, schools and school systems consistently have vacancies that they cannot fill and/or fill openings with individuals whom they know will require substantial support to be successful.

Schools report significant challenges finding teachers who have the experience, beliefs, and commitment to be successful with their students. Many school and system leaders believe that residency programs that give aspiring and new teachers first-hand experience and practical training with a specific school’s curriculum, culture, and student population offer a solution. Despite high interest, many local schools lack the financial resources and capacity to independently design and sustainably run these programs.

Schools across sectors use various structures, including professional learning communities, instructional leadership teams, and extended leadership opportunities to build capacity and distribute leadership among teachers. These practices are often not fully effective because few local programs provide educators at this stage of leadership with strong, comprehensive development and support.

What’s more, all three school sectors struggle to find and retain school leaders. Looming retirement threatens the stability of some schools, and, more generally, the responsibilities of school leaders are so broad-ranging and evolving that principal turnover is frequent. Recognizing the complexities of the job, principals and their managers desire more practical training and ongoing support for new school leaders. Most local principal preparation programs, however, provide participants with limited internship experience and no formal support upon graduation.

Experienced school and systems leaders want additional development and support for themselves as well. They seek help with turning around low-performing schools, expanding opportunities and improving academic outcomes for students of color, and strategically planning for growth.

Opportunity
In response to the overarching desire for more practical training and support at all levels, several talent development programs have recently emerged to serve Minneapolis educators. While many of these programs generally align with the needs identified by local school and system leaders, their impact has not been systematically studied and/or demonstrated. Additionally, the current scale of these programs is often too small, and their sustained funding too uncertain to significantly impact the citywide talent market. Further, most of the talent programs currently serving Minneapolis have been independently developed and delivered, with limited collaboration across and between school sectors and program providers. The resultant program offerings are fraught with redundancies, gaps, fragmentation, and inefficiencies—and do not deliver equal access at all levels of educational leadership and for all three school sectors.

MN Comeback’s primary talent objective is to enable high-performing/high-potential schools to fill open positions with effective, racially diverse candidates. By 2025, MN Comeback aims to support the development of 2,000 educators across four segments of the talent pipeline, with 50 percent of them identifying as people of color.
Position
With these ambitious goals in mind, based on a deep understanding of both the local and national talent landscapes, and in collaboration with schools, school systems, and talent program providers, the director of talent will lead the design and execution of MN Comeback’s talent pipeline development strategy. The director of talent must also demonstrate an ability to bring an equity focus to this work while engaging with multiple community stakeholders.

In year one, s/he will create several foundational systems and plans, including:

- Conducting a deep landscape analysis assessing key opportunities and barriers for high-performing schools to identify, recruit, and support highly-effective educators;
- Mapping out the market size, cost, and accessibility of currently available talent development programs for educators at various levels of leadership (e.g., teachers, school leaders); and
- Developing a definition for a “high-quality” talent development program, and establishing criteria for selecting programs for MN Comeback to support and grow.

Ongoing core responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

Organizational strategy
- Participating as a member of the MN Comeback leadership team, working closely with the executive director and other Cabinet members to coordinate strategies for transformational systems change across the education ecosystem;
- Assembling and managing a diverse advisory board of local leaders to build broad support for MN Comeback’s work and provide guidance on centralized talent pipeline development strategy investments, and marketing/recruitment efforts, and
- Developing and maintaining strong partnerships with school and system leaders, talent program providers, philanthropic supporters, and grant recipients.

Program development and coordination
- Developing, maintaining, and sharing deep expertise in innovative local and national talent strategies and programs;
- Recommending high-quality talent programs for MN Comeback to grow and support;
- Coordinating talent programs and resources to maximize efficiencies, accessibility, sustainability, and impact;
- Convening program providers and school leaders for ongoing collaboration; and
- Structuring and awarding micro grants to support promising talent initiatives aligned with prioritized needs.

Marketing and recruitment
- Developing centralized recruitment and marketing messages and materials for MN
Comeback-supported talent programs and schools; and
  • Leading and supporting centralized recruitment efforts to help build a pool of effective, diverse educators for opportunities at partner schools.

**Evaluation**
  • Assessing the quality and impact of MN Comeback-supported talent programs; and
  • Evaluating the impact of micro-grants.

**Qualifications**
The director of talent will be a passionate, visionary, and action-oriented professional who will lead the growth and strengthening of the pipeline of highly effective educators working in Minneapolis schools. S/he will have a deep belief that closing the opportunity gap in urban schools is possible, and bring an entrepreneurial drive to lead transformational change across lines of racial, socioeconomic and political difference. S/he will also bring outstanding strategic thinking and project management skills, a results orientation, and experience recruiting and developing effective, diverse educators. Specifically, the ideal candidate with bring the following experience, skills and personal characteristics:

**Experience**
  • A bachelor’s degree;
  • At least five years of human capital or other relevant leadership experience, including recruiting and developing educators (particularly educators of color) at various levels of leadership;
  • Demonstrated success crafting strategy and developing and executing aligned plans;
  • Track record of assembling, managing, and developing high-performing, diverse teams; and
  • Experience achieving goals in a fast-paced, innovative environment.

**Skills**
  • Ability to work with relevant boards of directors, identify sources of local and national funds, sell the vision and strategies of MN Comeback to potential donors;
  • Finesse to manage complex situations and multiple priorities while focusing on mission-critical work;
  • Excellent critical thinking and problem solving skills, including the ability to identify challenges and proactively generate creative solutions;
  • Quantitative and qualitative data analysis and synthesis skills;
  • Strong interpersonal and communication skills; and

**Personal characteristics**
  • Strong commitment to MN Comeback’s vision;
  • Belief that transformational change within the urban education system is possible and an urgent desire to be a leader of that change;
  • Belief that inclusive, culturally responsive training for and increased racial diversity of educators are critical to student success;
  • Entrepreneurial spirit motivated by launching new initiatives and building coordinated systems and structures;
  • Sophisticated ability to build and manage relationships with diverse colleagues and stakeholders; and
  • Enthusiasm, team-orientation, strong work ethic and positive energy.
Reporting
The talent office will be incubated within MN Comeback and led by the director of talent who will report to Executive Director Al Fan. An advisory board comprised of talent development program providers, funders, and cross-sector school and system leaders will support the director of talent. It will advise on ongoing talent strategy, provide input on talent investments, offer feedback on marketing and recruitment efforts, and build broader investment in the talent office's work.

As the vision for the talent office further develops, the director of talent will strategically build a staff to support this work. The director of talent will help identify the optimal organizational structure for this work long-term, either as a stand-alone nonprofit or operating as a partner within another talent-focused organization, e.g., A-Net, IHE, TNTP.

Location
Minneapolis, MN

Compensation
Competitive and commensurate with experience.

Application
The review of applications has begun and will continue until the position is filled. Submit applications – including a resume and cover letter – prior to July 8, 2016, to leslie@bellwethereducation.org.

For more information on MN Comeback, visit www.mncomeback.org.