Read Fort Worth
Executive Director Search

The Organization

Founded in 2016 by Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price, Fort Worth ISD Superintendent Kent Scribner, private philanthropists, and business and community leaders, Read Fort Worth (RFW) is a collective impact effort formed to align partners, strategies, and resources and significantly improve early childhood literacy. RFW will serve as the backbone organization that supports existing initiatives, programs, and providers through data, communications, and facilitation to dramatically improve early childhood results. RFW is structured as a coalition of businesses, civic, education, philanthropic, nonprofit and volunteer leaders dispersed into “Collaborative Action Networks,” each of which have specific goals which fall under the umbrella of RFW’s goal. Together, these networks hope to ensure that 100 percent of Fort Worth third graders are reading to learn—not learning to read—by 2025 (“100x25”).

The partnership began with a tight focus on the Fort Worth school district and its 34,000 students in pre-K through third grade while laying a foundation for an effort that can grow to serve and partner with organizations across the region and across sectors. It also aims to improve student outcomes by engaging and empowering leaders, using actionable data and continuous improvement, aligning resources to what works, pursuing local and institutional policy change, and advocating for equity at all levels of the system.

Read Fort Worth’s Mission

To align partners, strategies and resources to significantly improve early childhood literacy so that 100 percent of Fort Worth third-graders are reading on grade level by 2025

The Challenge

Fort Worth children face a multitude of challenges that prevent them from receiving proper education. Data reveals that 75 percent of students that are not reading on grade level by third grade never catch up and are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Additionally, only one in three third-graders in Fort Worth ISD (FWISD) currently reads on grade level. Without significant intervention from a myriad of community stakeholders, opportunities for those children who have fallen behind will be severely limited. Consequently, FWISD, under the leadership of Dr. Scribner, developed the “100x25” framework by which all FWISD students will achieve grade-level reading by third grade. Recognizing that a monumental goal can only be achieved through collaboration, Dr. Scribner drove efforts to connect with influencers in the Fort Worth community and affect positive change. With the “100x25” idea at the forefront, RFW has committed to finding the right, research-based intervention which can change the learning trajectories for those students.

Because 75 percent of the third graders who struggle with reading never catch up, it is crucial for RFW to intervene early. Early learning can be hindered by developmental delays, which are more prevalent among lower-income infants and children. Educational barriers also include childhood trauma such as abuse; those who have experienced four or more adverse childhood experiences are 32 more times to have behavioral issues, and 10 times more likely to attempt suicide. Many of the FWISD children live in low-income households where parents lack the resources to provide what the schools and community centers are lacking. Despite FWISD’s best efforts, limited
resources keep 83 percent of FWISD elementary schools from meeting state standards. Similarly, out of the 413 Fort Worth child day care centers, only 40 are rated as “quality.” Read Fort Worth meets the challenge of serving under-resourced sectors of the community by gathering information from layered networks and sectors around the city and applying the data to improve early literacy by confronting these issues.

**Read Fort Worth’s Solution**

In an unprecedented effort to alleviate FWISD’s students’ challenges, RFW has begun to align partners and strategies to address systemic barriers in early learning by breaking down big-picture problems into micro-task forces and specific goals.

To combat health issues which prevent children from attending school or learning, The Child Wellness network has created a task force to focus on early physical health. Their goal is to identify key health issues that interfere with school attendance and early academic achievement (such as developmental concerns, asthma, cold/flu, etc.) RFW also focuses on reducing the number of Adverse Childhood Experiences by establishing community support systems in the city’s most dangerous areas. As half of all child abuse instances in Fort Worth occur in just five percent of the city’s geographic area, RFW’s goal is to target these high-risk neighborhoods and intervene before a child falls too far behind due to trauma.

RFW research shows that students enrolled in volunteer reading programs for one-and-a-half to two months of additional growth in literacy. RFW’s Reading Resources network is currently working to streamline recruitment and placement of reading volunteers and mentors. Six additional campuses have been identified for 2018-19 support. This network is currently raising funds to complete their first $250,000 goal.

Finally, to achieve “School Readiness,” RFW will work toward elevating the quality of teaching professionals, engaging families in student education, sharing data and research, and advocating for racial equity for early childhood education.

**The Opportunity**

The Collaborative Action Networks have already collected the data needed to establish that reading on grade level by third grade is a predictor of future success. Now that Read Fort Worth has the established goal of 100 percent grade-level reading by the third grade, these networks’ next step is to continue collecting and sharing data to find and implement the best plan to achieve this goal. RFW is seen as the lynchpin in the collaboration, and as the driving force behind data collection, will also play a role in the engagement of service providers to implement their data-informed solution(s). To that end, the Executive Director must manage the partnership with each Collaborative Action Network and provide leadership and vision to the overarching network.

**Responsibilities**

Reporting to the Chairman of the Executive Council and working closely and regularly with the Superintendent’s office at FWISD, the Executive Director of Read Fort Worth is a dynamic, strategic leader that possesses extraordinary vision and entrepreneurial acumen with the ability to cultivate and build critical relationships with key stakeholders to propel the work of the
partnership forward in a thoughtful and systematic manner. S/he is responsible for building upon
the foundation that has been laid, to work alongside the community, to strive to identify the
successful practices, policies and programs that will move the needle for children in Fort Worth.
The Executive Director will also drive internal and external functions, including strategy,
communications, community engagement, and data functions. S/he must be driven by a sense
of compassion, respect and belief in the enormous potential of our community and children. In
summary, the Executive Director works effectively to meet Read Fort Worth’s ambitious impact
goals. Specifically, s/he will:

• Provide visionary and dynamic leadership and management to a high-performing team of
  employees and community members, accountable for nurturing the efficiency and
effectiveness of both;
• Be responsible for high-level strategic thinking and facilitation to clarify and delegate
  priorities while creating and monitoring progress towards organizational and individual
goals;
• Work with Executive Council in annual planning and budgeting processes;
• Maintain a close working relationship with Fort Worth ISD and the superintendent or the
  superintendent’s designated liaison(s);
• Oversee the daily operations, establishing and maintaining appropriate systems for
  measuring necessary aspects of operational management;
• Select, contract with, and oversee the work of consultants as appropriate (e.g., data
  management, communications, etc.);
• Serve as a strong, neutral, and skilled facilitator who can guide the team, partners, and
  stakeholders towards consensus and defined, shared vision, action and results;
• Build deep relationships with and understand cross-sector (education, social service,
business, civic) partners across the Fort Worth area who are connected to and enable the
success of every child;
• Advocate for the key outcomes and strategies identified by Read Fort Worth and its
  partners to improve student outcomes and diplomatically influence key leaders in scaling
  practices that work;
• Ensure the community is kept apprised of goals, objectives, priorities, successes, and
  opportunities of Read Fort Worth and its partners;
• Model the use of data to inform decision making and the use of improvement processes
to scale what works in education and the commitment to see those improvements take
hold over time;
• Work with the Read Fort Worth Executive Council to engage members in supporting and
  advocating for the core tenets of the partnership’s work and the community’s priorities;
• Secure investments and build ongoing relationships with investors to ensure that
  resources can be targeted to support agreed upon activities in the strategic plan that can
  be directly connected to organizational goals and outcomes;
• Represent Read Fort Worth externally to partners, media, funders, policymakers, and
  others; and
• Value diversity, equity, and cultural differences, bringing cultural competency to their daily work.

**Required Competencies**

**Leadership**

• Provides visionary, adaptive leadership, modeling Read Fort Worth’s guiding values at all times and fostering a culture that reflects them;
• Develops, coaches and mentors Read Fort Worth team members;
• Identifies capacity gaps and creates hiring plans that acknowledge and plan for possible organizational growth and shrinking;
• Helps create a work environment that embraces and appreciates diversity;

**Strategic coherence**

• Maintains understanding of current implementation challenges and develops comprehensive solutions to address them;
• Develops systems to share organizational decisions with the Read Fort Worth Executive Council and staff members;
• Provides direction and support to partner organizations in aligning their work to the Common Agenda (e.g., identifying opportunities for program work to support specific goals);
• Develops advocacy priorities alongside Executive Council and community to coordinate supporting activities of the partnership;

**Communication**

• Establishes, facilitates, and executes effective and open communication with staff, particularly related to internal decisions and strategy;
• Communicates the objectives of the partnership to the community and potential partners in a concise and effective manner;
• Leads and manages the creation of yearly summary reports of Read Fort Worth’s progress for Executive Council, partners and external audiences; and
• The following duties may be done in coordination with a communications consultant or staff:
  - Developing communications materials as Read Fort Worth evolves, potentially including summary documents, brochures, FAQs, and other items;
  - Developing web and social media strategy; and
  - Assisting in the creation of a press strategy, including drafting press releases, coordinating with media outlets;

**Interaction with Others**

• Builds Read Fort Worth’s identity as a respected, neutral convener among a broad spectrum of local stakeholders, possessing the ability to coalesce diverse groups of stakeholders;
• Builds constructive working relationships characterized by a high level of acceptance, cooperation, and mutual respect;
• Effectively deals with difficult conversations or situations when they arise;
• Influences others to be excited and committed to furthering the partnership’s objectives;
• Coordinates with other projects and coalitions in the same field to maintain a full understanding of the current landscape of local and regional activities, and seek alignment;

Personal Effectiveness

• Takes personal responsibility for the quality and timeliness of work, and achieves results with little oversight, managing own time, priorities, and resources to achieve goals;
• Adapts to changing business needs, conditions, and work responsibilities; and
• Maintains composure in highly stressful or adverse situations.

Required Qualifications

• Bachelor’s degree in Business, Education, Communications, Community Development or equivalent degree. Master’s Degree preferred;
• At least 3-7 years of relevant work experience, including at least 3 years managing teams in a fast-paced and high-growth non-profit, social enterprise, or business start-up environment;
• Familiarity with the local area and / or focus of the initiative (e.g. collective impact, education);
• Advanced strategy and planning skills, including an ability to think strategically on both organizational and systemic levels over multi-year horizons;
• Strong data acumen and ability to oversee complex shared-measurement systems;
• Strong facilitation and presentation skills before multiple types of audiences;
• Experience with complex project management and stakeholder management;
• Demonstrated success in cultivating fundraiser relationships;
• Outstanding communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to build authentic relationships with a diverse set of high profile stakeholders;
• Comfort with ambiguity and ability to thrive in a fluid, entrepreneurial environment;
• Willingness to “roll up one’s sleeves” and extend beyond formal responsibilities based on the needs of the work; and
• Experience in a start-up environment.

Other Considerations

Compensation  Competitive with comparable organizations, and commensurate with capability, experience, and prevailing market trends

Location  Fort Worth, Texas

Travel  Limited

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Peña Search Consulting is committed to providing personalized attention to each client’s unique needs, to effectively address its long-term leadership goals.