

Job Description

Position Title: Director of Grantmaking and Organizational Learning



Department: Programs

Reports to: Chief of Staff & Impact

Location: Quincy, Massachusetts

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About the Organization

The **Nellie Mae Education Foundation**, New England's largest philanthropic organization focused solely on education, has worked for over 30 years to help our region prosper by preparing all its learners for success. We are proud of the milestones we have set, and the students and educators we have reached, since our founding in 1990. The Foundation has a rich history of partnering with diverse community actors, including grassroots and grassstop organizations, to improve student experience and academic attainment. We continue to champion efforts that prioritize community goals informed by research on practice and policy that challenge racial inequities in education and advance culturally responsive, student-centered public education for all New England youth. Nellie Mae Education Foundation works to ensure that all youth have access to excellent and equitable public education that prepares them to succeed and thrive in community. Headquartered in Quincy, MA, our team is comprised of professionals who share a commitment to putting youth and communities at the forefront of efforts to support and advance schools and school systems that promote racial equity and excellence.

Over the past few years, we have intentionally shifted our focus to work aimed at creating the conditions necessary to achieve educational justice and racial equity in alignment with our mission, vision, and value ensuring a quality public education for each and every child regardless of race, class, indigeneity, or any other social or cultural construct. The Foundation's multi-pronged strategy includes grantmaking that builds the capacity and sustainability of organizations and schools that work to promote racial equity in public education, together with grants that support broader network and advocacy efforts. Through racial equity lenses, we actively monitor how we amplify and understand voice; collect and analyze data; interrogate and make visible root causes of disparities we seek to eliminate; identify and advance solutions; achieve outcomes; and calibrate our privilege in the pursuit of educational justice.

To learn more about the Nellie Mae Education Foundation visit their website at: <https://nmefoundation.org>.



TAMMY DOWLEY-BLACKMAN GROUP, LLC
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About the Role

NMEF seeks an experienced, equity-driven philanthropy leader to serve as Director of Grantmaking and Organizational Learning. This senior leadership role is first and foremost responsible for the design, execution, and oversight of the Foundation's grantmaking strategy and operations, ensuring that grant funds are deployed effectively, compliantly, and in alignment with NMEF's mission and long-term strategic priorities.

Organizational learning is a supporting and integrative function of this role used to strengthen grantmaking practice, inform strategic decision-making, and ensure insights from grantees and partners are translated into continuous improvement. The ideal candidate brings deep expertise in grantmaking, strong operational and compliance acumen, and the ability to use learning as a strategic asset rather than a standalone function.

Compensation

The annual salary for this role will be based on a range, starting at \$175–225K, commensurate with the candidate's skills and experience. Nellie Mae Education Foundation provides health care, dental, and vision benefits, a 401(k) Retirement Plan with an employer match program, as well as a flexible paid time off policy.

Position Summary

The Director of Grantmaking and Organizational Learning plays a pivotal leadership role in advancing NMEF's mission by leading the Foundation's full grantmaking lifecycle from strategy and design through award, monitoring, and closure—while ensuring alignment with organizational priorities, financial stewardship, and regulatory requirements.

Reporting to the Chief of Staff & Impact, the Director serves as a key strategic partner to Initiative Leads, Program Officers, senior leadership, and the Board. The role ensures that grantmaking systems, processes, and decisions are coherent, equitable, and impactful, and that learning from grantmaking is intentionally captured and applied to strengthen future investments.

Summary of Essential Functions

Under the direction of the Chief of Staff & Impact, the Director will:

- Lead and oversee all grantmaking strategy, execution, and operations across the Foundation.
- Serve as a strategic thought partner to Initiative Leads and Program staff on grant design, implementation, and assessment.
- Ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory, and financial requirements related to grantmaking.
- Maintain a holistic view of the Foundation's grant portfolio to ensure alignment, integration, and strategic coherence.
- Use organizational learning practices to strengthen grantmaking effectiveness, adaptive strategy, and board-level insight.
- Represent grantmaking priorities and progress with senior leadership and the Board.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Grantmaking Strategy, Oversight, and Compliance (Primary)

- Direct the entire grantmaking lifecycle, including fund design, solicitation, review, award, monitoring, reporting, and closure.
- Ensure all grantmaking activities align with NMEF's mission, equity commitments, and strategic priorities.
- Maintain deep expertise in IRS regulations governing 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) entities, ensuring full legal and regulatory compliance.

- Partner closely with Finance and Legal teams to ensure accurate budgeting, reconciliation, reporting, and audit readiness.
- Monitor grant performance, timelines, and outcomes, working with teams to address risks and adjust strategies as needed.
- Serve as staff lead for Board committees related to grants and programs, preparing materials and facilitating informed decision-making.

Program Integration and Strategic Alignment

- Maintain a comprehensive, Foundation-wide view of all grant funds and programmatic investments.
- Work collaboratively across departments to ensure alignment between grantmaking, communications, evaluation, and operations.
- Advise senior leadership including the Chief of Staff & Impact and President/CEO—on opportunities to amplify impact through grantmaking strategy.
- Support the transition or closure of legacy grant portfolios when necessary, ensuring continuity and institutional knowledge retention.

Organizational Learning and Knowledge Integration (Secondary)

- Use organizational learning as a tool to strengthen grantmaking practice, not as a standalone function.
- Partner with Program staff to capture lessons learned from grantees, initiatives, and partners that inform future investments.
- Support the development of focused learning agendas that enhance grantmaking decisions and board-level understanding.
- Ensure insights from evaluation, community feedback, and grantee experience are synthesized and shared in actionable ways.

Systems, Technology, and Infrastructure

- Oversee grantmaking systems and platforms to ensure data accuracy, usability, and alignment with operational needs.
- Ensure systems support effective grant tracking, reporting, compliance, and learning integration.
- Collaborate with internal teams to continuously improve tools and workflows that support grantmaking efficiency and effectiveness.

Team Leadership and Staff Development

- Supervise and support grantmaking staff, fostering collaboration, accountability, and high-quality execution.
- Provide mentorship and professional development opportunities aligned with grantmaking excellence.
- Cultivate an inclusive, high-performing team culture grounded in trust, clarity, and shared purpose.

Financial Stewardship and Reporting

- Manage grantmaking budgets in partnership with Finance leadership, ensuring fiscal discipline and strategic alignment.
- Ensure timely, accurate reporting to the Board, grantees, and external stakeholders.
- Contribute to organizational budgeting and planning processes as a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Competencies, Knowledge, and Skills

- Deep expertise in grantmaking strategy, operations, and compliance
- Strong understanding of equity-centered and community-informed philanthropy
- Strategic thinker with strong execution and operational discipline
- Ability to translate learning into improved grantmaking decisions
- Excellent relationship-building and communication skills
- Comfort operating at both strategic and detailed operational levels

Education, Experience, and Qualifications

- Master's degree required (MS, MBA, MPA, or equivalent).
- 10+ years of experience in philanthropy, nonprofit leadership, or public-sector grantmaking.
- Demonstrated success leading complex grant portfolios and compliance-heavy environments.
- Experience using learning and evaluation to strengthen grantmaking practice.
- Proven ability to manage teams and collaborate across functions.

Travel

Nellie Mae Education Foundation currently operates in Massachusetts with responsibilities across the six New England States. This position is expected to be in the office full-time one week per month, as well as travel to conferences and board meetings up to four times a year.

How to Apply

This search is managed by Tammy Dowley-Blackman Group, LLC.

- Please send materials and questions to hiring@tdbgroup.com with the subject line: *Director of Grantmaking and Organizational Learning*.
- Cover letter highlighting the outlined experience and qualifications.

The recruitment is open until filled and materials will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

The priority review deadline for applications is Friday, January 23, 2026.

Equal employment opportunity and having a diverse staff are fundamental principles at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, where employment and promotional opportunities are based upon individual capabilities and qualifications without regard to race, color, religion, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation/preference, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, disability, veteran status or any other protected characteristic as established under law.