

About the Organization

Short Summary

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation, New England's largest philanthropic organization focused solely on education, believes every young person in New England should be able to access excellent, rigorous, and relevant educational experiences that support their healthy development and prepares them to thrive in school, community, and careers of the future.

Long Summary

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation has worked for almost 25 years to help our region prosper by investing in solutions and organizations that prepare ALL learners for success. We believe that success is directly related to the health of schools, youth-serving institutions, and the network of youth, educators, parents, and community organizers and organizations that ensure young people and families are seen, understood, and supported to thrive. While the current education ecosystem often operates through entrenched, top-down approaches, our grantmaking strategy works to upend that dynamic by inserting feedback loops and strengthening mechanisms at every level to interrogate for whom and how budget, policy, and practice choice points enable or hinder healthy student experience and outcomes.

The Foundation is now entering a new phase of its work. Over the past year and a half, Nellie Mae has undertaken an in-depth strategy refinement process to sharpen its impact and position the organization for the next chapter of education systems change in New England. Guided by the knowledge, feedback, and insights of more than 2,500 community members—along with message testing, media tracking, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires—the Foundation clarified both what it will prioritize going forward and how it can uniquely contribute through its grantmaking. This work reaffirmed a shared vision and mandate to **ensure every young person in New England has access to excellent, rigorous, and relevant educational experiences that support healthy development and prepare them to thrive in school, community, and the careers of the future.**

With this refined strategy as a foundation, Nellie Mae is focused on supporting efforts that translate community insight into coordinated action. We want community insight to move upward – and for funding, policy, and practice to respond in alignment downward – so the whole ecosystem becomes more connected, aligned, and supportive of young people.

We invest at three interconnected levels:

1. **Community Engagement** so that those most proximate to the challenges have the access, resources, and infrastructure to shape and advance a shared agenda; supporting communities to use qualitative and quantitative data to define root causes of student disengagement and develop plausible solutions.

2. **State Fieldbuilding and a Knowledge and Information Ecosystem Infrastructure** that support development of a durable and responsive education data and knowledge ecosystems — and support state and local actors to apply knowledge and take action that advance healthy student experiences and outcomes.
3. **Regional Field and Capacity Building** to advance a unified vision and shared agenda, informed by community insights and data, that activates others and builds momentum for long-term systems change.

At the core of this next chapter is a commitment to continuous learning and evaluation, and to elevating the voices of the community members so that Nellie Mae's investments remain responsive, adaptive, and positioned to drive meaningful change at scale. Learn more about what we do on our [website](#).

About the Role

What You'll Do

Reporting to the Chief of Staff and Impact, the **Connecticut Program Officer** will help shape and execute NMEF's regional strategy through efforts that strengthen community-to-state-level coalitions; advance the idea of education justice (ensuring that all students consistently experience high-quality education and achieve successful outcomes), promote and protect data and knowledge systems; and translate community-rooted priorities into policy, budget, and practice change. By stewarding grant funds within assigned initiatives, this role strengthens NMEF's overall impact while ensuring strategy and execution remain tightly aligned within and across the region.

The **Connecticut Program Officer** will build and sustain strong partnerships across **Connecticut**, support the development of artifacts such as concept papers and other knowledge products, and help ensure grantmaking advances community-centered solutions that support healthy student development and outcomes. This work directly applies NMEF's grantmaking approach, implementation decisions, and the organization's technical assistance and learning practices.

This is not a traditional place-based policy role. It is a connective leadership position that bridges community knowledge and formal policy systems; builds trust across geographic and ideological lines; and balances near-term urgency with long-term systems change. Candidates should be hard-wired to the community and have a deep desire to work with and through local, regional, and/or national, grantees, partners, and stakeholders. It is a compelling opportunity for someone who thrives at the intersection of strategy, relationship organizing, and strong execution.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

Grantmaking and Program Strategy

- Strengthen and align community-to-state-level education coalitions in service of systemic transformation that ensures all students consistently experience high-quality education and achieve successful outcomes, including advocates, community-based organizations, intermediaries, and in-system leaders.
- Cultivate and steward strong, trust-based relationships with local grantees, intermediaries, and technical assistance partners.

- Lead and support the design, launch, and ongoing stewardship of grant funds for assigned initiatives.
- Support coalitions to develop policy briefs, messaging, and rapid-response tools that elevate community-rooted solutions and counter divisive and regressive narratives.
- Monitor grantee progress, budgets, and outcomes in partnership with grantmaking and learning colleagues.
- Provide strategic support and problem-solving assistance to grantees and initiative partners.
- Serve as a lead for specific grant funds or initiatives, as assigned.

Statewide Learning, Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

- Advance the development and use of durable state-level data and knowledge systems (e.g., *State of Students and Children*) that protect visibility into student experiences amid federal data erosion.
- Support the advancement of just and equity state policy, budget, and practice priorities aligned to a shared regional agenda.
- Maintain a working understanding of youth voice and educator-focused efforts nationally to inform state and regional alignment.
- Partner with research and policy organizations to translate data and evidence into actionable insights for policymakers, advocates, and educators.
- Support the completion and transition of sunseting initiatives from NMEF's previous strategies.

External Leadership and State-Specific Fieldbuilding

- Serve as a visible representative of NMEF and a connective leader between community engagement efforts and state policy tables.
- Build and steward relationships with community leaders, advocates, policymakers, funders, and intermediaries.
- Partner with state education agencies, legislative leaders, and executive-branch stakeholders to strengthen responsiveness to community insight and evidence.
- Collaborate closely with colleagues across community engagement and regional fieldbuilding to ensure vertical integration of NMEF's strategy.
- Coordinate with national and regional communications partners to ensure coherence within and across targeted messaging.

Team Collaboration & Leadership

- Contribute to NMEF's internal learning and sensemaking processes to continuously refine strategy based on evidence and field feedback.
- Partner with colleagues to identify cross-state and cross-regional opportunities that increase organizational impact.
- Contribute to a culture of learning, adaptation, and continuous improvement across the Foundation.
- Work independently and collaboratively across teams to advance integrated strategies.
- Serve as a liaison to Board committees, as needed, supporting preparation of materials and participation in meetings alongside grantmaking colleagues.
- Monitor and support budget stewardship for assigned grant funds.

Who You'll Work With

You will report to the **Chief of Staff and Impact**.

This role **does not supervise staff**, but you will support the development of colleagues, intermediaries, and technical assistance partners by offering guidance, thought partnership, and feedback.

You will frequently collaborate with the:

- **Programs Team** to co-design strategies, strengthen learning practices, and align implementation across initiatives.
- **Learning, Research, and Evaluation Team** to assess progress toward outcomes and integrate insights into grantmaking.
- **Operations Team** to share learning, develop Board materials, and ensure budget and operational alignment.

Required Skills and Experience

- Minimum of **7–10 years of experience** working at the state level on education policy, advocacy, systems change, and/or fieldbuilding, with a track record of eliminating access and opportunity gaps.
- Experience in education-focused public policy, public interest work, and/or philanthropy.
- Strong understanding of how policy, budget, data, and narrative interact to shape education systems.
- Demonstrated record of building relationships across diverse communities and leading for just and equitable outcomes at a systems level.
- Experience designing, supporting, or advocating for educational resources and initiatives at the local and state level.
- Demonstrated experience managing grants, including monitoring progress, budgets, and outcomes.
- Proven ability to translate complex information—including data, research, and lived experience—into clear strategy and action.
- Experience operating effectively in politically complex or uncertain environments.
- Strong collaboration skills and ability to build productive relationships with internal teams and external partners.
- Excellent organizational skills, attention to detail, and ability to effectively manage multiple priorities independently.
- Comfort navigating ambiguity, adapting to change, and contributing effectively within a team-driven environment.
- Proficiency with Microsoft Office and comfort using digital collaboration tools and communication platforms.

Additional Details

Compensation

The salary range for this role is **\$175,000 to \$225,000** and will be competitive and commensurate with geography and

experience.

Hybrid Work Environment

This hybrid role offers a unique opportunity to lead transformative initiatives while maintaining strong connections with communities and stakeholders across New England. It combines flexible work arrangements with purposeful travel, empowering a senior leader to advocate for a shared vision for student success, equitable student outcomes, and policies and practices that set enabling conditions for all students.

Candidates must maintain residency and deep ties to Connecticut, and are expected to participate in in-office meetings on Mondays at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and during the monthly Home Week (calendar published annually).

Candidates should expect to travel up to 65%. This is a field-based/building position and when not in office (on required days) we are looking for a team member who is eager and excited to be out in the community within their state leading the charge. By design the staff member will attend relevant conferences, summits, local meetings, etc., all in service of building a shared agenda.

Benefits

 **Health coverage plans** (medical, vision, and dental).	 Competitive **vision & dental** benefits	 Generous **paid time off** including 12 holidays and office closure between Christmas and New Years
 **401K retirement plan** including an employer match contribution and discretionary contribution	 Long and short term **disability and life insurance**	 16 weeks of **paid family leave** and 12 weeks of **medical leave**

Equity at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will be considered for employment without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military status, or current employment status, in alignment with federal, state, or local law.

Qualified Individuals, please apply: <https://www.on-ramps.com/jobs/3621>