Organization

Founded in 1996, Street Poets is a nonprofit poetry-based violence intervention program for high-risk youth throughout Los Angeles County, which uses the creative process as a vehicle for individual and community transformation. Formed by current Executive Director Chris Henrikson along with a group of teaching artists and formerly incarcerated youth, the organization aims to break the cycle of youth violence by harnessing the healing power of poetry and music to build community, and by bringing people of diverse backgrounds together. Street Poets serves over 1,000 people annually, through in-school workshops, retreats, community events, and other programs, designing spaces where students can share their personal stories and reveal their creative talents.

Street Poets’ first performance was at the Los Angeles Theater Center in 1998, and in 1999, it began taking poetry performances out to local schools. At the core of the Street Poets methodology are writing workshops, which inspire young people to use the practice of poetry to bear witness to their own lives and the lives of those around them, to speak their truth and to dream a new world into being. Street Poets conducts workshops at middle schools, high schools, and juvenile probation camps throughout the Los Angeles County and beyond. One of its most impactful programs is the Poetry in Motion Van, a mobile performance venue and recording studio that inspires community creativity by empowering people of all ages and backgrounds to express themselves on the page and mic. Other programs include Good Seed Gardening—which teaches students to plant and tend gardens alongside the creation of poetry writing, the quarterly public reading series called Reading Series where students collaborate with published poets and spoken-word artists, and Rites of Passage, where students connect with the natural world through embarking on hikes, ocean trips, and retreats. Additionally, the organization produces and distributes a CD of spoken word, hip-hop, and songs each year to amplify the voices of youth and their healing power.

Street Poets consults and collaborates with other organizations and communities to inspire both individual and systemic change, transforming a culture from one driven by fear to one that celebrates healing and the creative process. At some sites, the organization collaborates with Rhythm Arts Alliance to incorporate African drumming into their core curriculum. Street Poets has gained and applied its learning from direct and deep collaboration with a wide range of teachers, mentors, and professionals in the fields of arts education, youth mentoring, psychology, and the healing arts. Through these longstanding partnerships and ongoing collaborations, Street Poets has evolved over the past 25+ years into a multi-dimensional, highly collaborative arts education organization that serves as a practical guide for teachers, mentors, counselors, and youth to cultivate collective spaces where deep healing and transformational change is possible.

Street Poets takes a gift-centered approach to mentoring work, recognizing that each young person is born with their own unique gift to share with the world. Spaces are created in which those gifts can be seen and celebrated. Most of the mentoring work is done in teams through which Street Poets provides guidance, healing opportunities, and access to resources. This mentoring model helps to address the practical challenges that arise in the lives of youth and alumni while nurturing their evolution as human beings.

Street Poets has been recognized for its excellence and impactful work. For example, Street Poets received the John Anson Ford Human Relations Award in 2003 and went on to receive the Cultural Fluency Award from Mount St. Mary’s College in 2013. In addition, Street Poets was awarded two large grants enabling it to acquire a new 4,800 sq ft space that will not only serve as the new permanent residence for the organization, but also as a hub for a variety of Street Poets’ collaborators and partners.

Street Poets is governed by a 14-member board of trustees, led by Board Chair Nick Streets. The staff of seven full-time employees and three part time includes a Director of School and Community Programs, a Director of Camp Programs, a Recording Studio Director, a Grants Manager, and teaching artists, administrative director, artistic director, director of program integration. For the fiscal year ending May 31, 2020, Street Poets reported total revenue of $704,804, with $576,858 from contributions and grants, and $124,184 from program services. Total expenses were $618,895.
Position Summary
Reporting to the board of directors, the Executive Director will provide strategic leadership, support Street Poets’ exemplary programs, and oversee all administrative and business functions, including financial management, external relations, and board communications and relations. They will grow Street Poets’ existing programs while developing new initiatives to further its mission. With a commitment to social justice and youth empowerment, the Executive Director will be the primary spokesperson and ambassador for the organization, deepening and cultivating relationships with a wide range of partners and collaborators, as well as fortifying fundraising strategies to build contributed revenue. They will guide and lead the team of staff and teaching artists, creating an organizational culture that is dedicated to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access, characterized by open and transparent communication.

Role and Responsibilities

Strategic Vision and Leadership
▪ Guide and lead Street Poets in the fulfillment of its organizational mission, supporting staff, artists, and board members in their collective responsibilities.
▪ Develop and implement a strategic vision for the organization, consulting equitably with staff and board in decision making while ultimately being the primary decision maker.
▪ Collaborate with the staff, board, and external partners in overseeing and growing operations, resource development efforts, and programs.
▪ Further the current program methodology, while initiating new and existing program initiatives, special projects, and creative partnerships.
▪ Champion equity, diversity, inclusion, and access strategies, that are in alignment with Street Poets’ mission and values.

Community Engagement and External Relations
▪ Engage with a wide variety of stakeholders, creating authentic connections and meaningful relationships with schools, community arts and social service organizations, elected city officials, and media outlets, to enhance the organization’s brand and reputation.
▪ Further deepen ongoing community collaborations with partners, as well as form new connections, partnerships, and resources.
▪ Establish and maintain productive working relationships and rapport with low-income communities of color through previous experience with citizen groups, business leaders, and community organizations.
▪ Spearhead a fundraising strategy while actively seeking out new and renewed sources of contributed income by cultivating relationships with individual donors, corporate sponsors, private foundations, and other funders.
▪ Speak authoritatively on the power of the work to funders to develop and cultivate strong working relationships with grantors, outside advisors, experts in the field, public sector partners, and colleagues in philanthropy.
▪ Establish and oversee the implementation of a new media and communications strategy for the organization, as well as cultivate effective internal and external collaborative marketing relationships with the media, promotional partners, business partners, and other stakeholders.

Financial Management and Administrative Leadership
▪ Oversee financial management and demonstrate solid business acumen by developing annual budgets, financial goals, and cash-flow projections, to ensure appropriate systems of accountability.
▪ Cultivate a safe and healthy work environment where all staff, artists, and board members work together in the spirit of transparency and trust.
▪ Communicate openly and effectively with the board in a timely and accurate manner so that they can make informed decisions.
▪ Manage board and committee meetings and ensure that the interests and skills of the board of directors are aligned with the organization’s needs.
▪ Manage and mentor a diverse team, setting performance goals and objectives to support employee engagement and offering professional development support.
Traits and Characteristics
The Executive Director will be an empathetic, emotionally intelligent, and socially conscious leader. With a passion and commitment to Street Poets’ mission and methodology, they will communicate priorities to staff, program directors, and teaching artists to grow the organization’s impact. The Executive Director will be flexible and approachable, and committed to supporting staff through personal development and mentorship, while leading as the outward facing ambassador for the organization. With solid fiscal and fundraising capabilities, the Executive Director will be a collaborative individual, who leads by example, and is able to form new connections and partnerships in support of Street Poet’s mission and values.

Other key competencies include:

- **Diplomacy and Personal Accountability** – The ability to handle difficult or sensitive issues effectively and tactfully and answer for personal actions.
- **Appreciating and Understanding Others** – The capacity to identify with and care about others, while understanding the uniqueness and contributions of others.
- **Leadership and Teamwork** – The dexterity to organize and influence people to believe in a vision, creating a sense of purpose and direction, and cooperating with others to meet objectives.
- **Employment Development/Coaching** – The acumen to facilitate, support and, contribute to the professional growth of others.

Qualifications
A bachelor’s degree or equivalent educational credential is required. An advanced degree in arts administration, nonprofit management, business, or a related field is preferred. It is expected that the candidate will have a minimum of three to five years of nonprofit management leadership experience that includes fiscal accountability, fundraising, and working with youth and adults of diverse backgrounds and cultures. A working knowledge of Spanish is useful and a demonstrated passion for poetry and the arts is critical. Experience managing government contracts is beneficial. Exceptional writing abilities and verbal presentation skills are expected.

Compensation and Benefits
Street Poets provides a competitive and equitable compensation package with a salary range between $100,000 and $125,000, and benefits that include paid vacation, sick leave, personal days and holidays, health insurance, and a voluntary retirement plan.

Applications and Inquiries
To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click here or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

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Street Poets is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the organization and all aspects of its work, recognizing this commitment as essential to realizing its mission.