The Joyce Foundation
Position Description

Democracy Program Officer

Reports to: Democracy Program Director
Status: Full-Time
Location: Chicago, IL (currently hybrid - 3 days a week in office)

FOUNDATION OVERVIEW
The Joyce Foundation is a private, nonpartisan philanthropy that invests in public policies and strategies to advance racial equity and economic mobility for the next generation in the Great Lakes region. We support policy research, development, and advocacy in six program areas: Culture, Democracy, Education & Economic Mobility, Environment, Gun Violence Prevention & Justice Reform, and Journalism. We focus our grant making primarily in the region, while also exploring promising, evidence-informed policy solutions nationally and at the federal level. The Foundation makes charitable distributions of over $50 million annually on assets exceeding $1 billion. We have a staff of 35 and are governed by a 12-member Board of Directors.

The Joyce Foundation has long been a leading funder in advancing voting rights and elections policy in the Great Lakes region and nationally – supporting research and policy development, education and advocacy for effective implementation and evaluation, and, when needed, supporting litigation to ensure fair enforcement of voting laws. You can read the full Democracy Program strategy here.

The Foundation’s Board of Directors has approved an expansion of the Democracy Program to deepen our investment in both policies and engagement practices to improve voter participation and close turnout gaps. This work reflects the Foundation’s commitment to equity. As part of this expansion, the Foundation is growing the Democracy Program Team by adding a Program Officer who will have primary responsibility for shaping this expanded body of work.

POSITION SUMMARY
The Joyce Foundation seeks a Program Officer to oversee its recently expanded Voter Access & Engagement portfolio within the Democracy Program. This is an exciting opportunity for a strategic thinker to develop and implement a plan to support voter access and engagement programs and policies in the Great Lakes region focused on closing voter participation gaps among voters of color and language minorities, young voters, and other historically excluded groups, as well as voter engagement efforts that align with the Foundation’s program issue priorities.

In addition to its grantmaking activities, the Foundation is a leading convener of local, state, Midwest region and national thought leaders and election experts. The new Program Officer will bring strong content knowledge of the voting rights and elections field and will leverage that expertise to work collaboratively with other funders as well as seeking opportunities to co-fund with the goal of scaling up the Foundation’s work and achieving improved and more equitable voter participation.
Principal Duties and Responsibilities

**Develop and implement a Voter Access & Engagement strategy**

- Track and analyze the current landscape of voter participation data and turnout gaps in the Great Lakes states, identify strengths and weaknesses in state voter engagement efforts and voter access policies, and identify opportunities where additional investment could have an impact, both in the short-term and long-term.
- Synthesize this analysis into a written strategy with clear benchmarks and metrics for success.
- Monitor, on an ongoing basis, the voter access and engagement field; stay abreast of local, regional, and national trends; and collaborate with grantees, peers, and allies.

**Collaborate with the Democracy Program Director on strategic investments in overall voting and elections policy**

- At the outset of this position, the new Program Officer will focus on the above development of the Voter Access & Engagement strategy. After that strategy development is complete or is nearing completion, the new Program Officer and Democracy Program Director will assess which current grants/projects should shift over to the new Program Officer’s portfolio.
- Leverage in-depth knowledge and analysis of voter participation data and barriers to full participation to identify recommendations for improving voting and elections policies and practices. Work independently and in collaboration with the Program Director to identify potential investments to support improved voting policy related to increasing voter participation and removing barriers.

**Manage a portfolio of grantees**

- Cultivate relationships with current and prospective grantees with an eye towards achieving a diverse portfolio of grantees and partners.
- Review letters of inquiry and invite proposals consistent with the program strategy, review and evaluate proposals, conduct further assessments through inquiries and site visits, and when appropriate, attend virtual or in-person events such as funder briefings and coalition meetings.
- Prepare written recommendations and make presentations to the Foundation’s leadership and Board of Directors.
- Foster meaningful relationships with current grantees and support them in successful implementation of approved grant programs.
- Collaborate with the External Affairs team to highlight the work of grantees.
- Monitor grants for fulfillment of contract requirements and legal compliance, including review of regular grant reports.

**Field leadership**

- Cultivate relationships with peer funders, associations, and other partners working on voter access and engagement policies.
- Pursue opportunities to co-fund promising work that will advance the Foundation’s mission and strategy.
- Represent the Foundation publicly at events and in partnerships in a manner consistent with our mission and values.
- Develop and host convenings, webinars, or other events in support of program goals and sharing learning opportunities.
QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

- A minimum of 5-8 years of experience with progressively increasing responsibilities working on voter engagement and voting policy. The ideal candidate has experience in policy development and familiarity with effective voter outreach practices, who balances creativity with evidence-informed strategy.
- Deep understanding of the legal and practical barriers that impact access to voting, effective practices for educating and motivating focused populations to vote, and how to track and assess impact.
- Strong strategic, analytic, and communications skills, including the ability to formulate strategy, write clearly and succinctly under time pressure, and craft and deliver presentations for a variety of audiences.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in developing networks and productive working relationships with diverse constituencies and a demonstrated commitment to centering racial equity in your work or volunteer experience.
- Bachelor’s degree or experiential learning equivalent required. An advanced degree is a plus but not required.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The starting annual salary for this position is $120,000. Joyce provides a generous benefits package including health, dental, and vision insurance; a retirement contribution; paid vacation and sick leave; and employer matching donations. If the selected candidate needs to relocate to Chicago, the Foundation will pay for reasonable relocation expenses.

TO APPLY

The Foundation has secured assistance from Sheila Leahy of SAL Consulting, Inc to support the search process. Sheila welcomes inquiries at sal.consulting.inc@gmail.com. Interested parties are encouraged to apply early. The process is completely confidential.

Applications must be sent to joycedemocracy@gmail.com with only your name in the subject line, and include:

- A cover letter that speaks to both your practical and policy experience with respect to voter access and engagement that prepares you for the role as outlined above
- A current resume

First-round interviews for this position are anticipated to begin in January with a subsequent round in early March.