

**Title:** Project Director

**Start Date:** ASAP

### Who We Are

Improving schooling outcomes for youth and reducing disparities in achievement are among our nation's most urgent challenges. Graduation rates of black and Hispanic youth remain far lower than those of their white counterparts, and this gap is mirrored by striking disparities between rich and poor.

We believe that the lack of progress in improving outcomes for low-income youth stems in part from not knowing enough about what works, for whom, and why. Consider the problem, for instance, of reducing cancer mortality among low-income populations. Surely more funding is necessary to ensure that everyone has adequate access to decent health care. But there is also another, perhaps even more fundamental barrier to progress: we desperately need a cure for cancer. We believe that a similar knowledge gap is a barrier to progress in reducing disparities in educational attainment, albeit one that is less visible.

The Education Lab does the most rigorous possible research in close collaboration with local government and nonprofits, to learn about what works and to help scale the most promising solutions. We believe the most promising way to have impact at scale is to carry out demonstration projects with philanthropic support, with the goal of using the results to guide public-sector dollars to those uses that generate as much social good as possible. Under the direction of leading social scientists, we work with partners to use data and evidence to make progress, including: leveraging administrative data to understand a program's impact, providing technical assistance to agency and nonprofit partners to inform operations and strategy, and conducting research using cutting edge methods and behavioral and social science. Our goal is to assemble a portfolio of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to generate new evidence about what works, for whom, and why, and to conduct benefit-cost analyses of different interventions to enable policymakers to prioritize resources for the combination of strategies that achieve the greatest social good per dollar spent.

For more information about the UChicago Urban Labs, go to <http://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/>

### The Project

The Education Lab has done several studies of high dosage tutoring and has found very encouraging results. Over two separate randomized controlled trials of an intensive, in-school tutoring program run by Saga Education, UChicago Education Lab found that students who received the program *gained one to two-and-a-half years* of additional learning compared to those who did not participate ([SAGA Tutoring | UChicago Urban Labs](#)). This finding – and subsequent findings from later studies – indicate that this personalized learning approach has

the potential to accelerate students' learning there thereby reduce persistent disparities in education performance. Some of our work in this area was recently released as a working paper titled "Not Too Late", highlighting the potential of programs like these to substantially improve outcomes for adolescents who have fallen behind grade level ([Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes Among Adolescents | NBER](#)).

Partly inspired by these results, we are developing a series of large-scale, multi-arm, randomized experiments across multiple cities to study variations of this personalized learning approach at scale and to empirically identify what works best for whom and in what context. We expect this program to serve tens of thousands of students, allowing us to learn more about these promising models while delivering real supports to as many students who might benefit as possible. To help us execute on this vision, we are seeking a project director to coordinate and drive these efforts.

### **The Role**

The University of Chicago Education Lab seeks a full-time Project Director to oversee the execution of this personalized learning project. The Project Director will work under the direction of Education Lab leadership on the following:

- Play a coordinating role between the Education Lab and our education and project partners, who may include researchers from various institutions, large-scale research organizations, school district officials, funders, policymakers, school leaders, and teachers.
- Work with the Faculty Directors and Research Directors to produce high quality deliverables, including concept papers, recruitment materials, grant reports, and project summaries as needed
- Provide key project management on the project including:
  - convening diverse stakeholders such as program providers, school district officials, and the research team, assisting with agenda-setting, note-taking, and follow up on next steps
  - monitoring the budget;
  - writing and submitting grant reports;
  - managing key stakeholder relationships when asked;
  - ensuring compliance with data sharing agreements and legal requirements of the grant;
  - overseeing execution and submission of research permissions like the district level research review and the Institutional Review Board
- Assist in finalizing the scope and plan for the project, including assisting in finalizing programmatic details of the interventions offered, recruiting school districts and study schools and participants, securing funding and finalizing research approvals
- Develop a workplan for the project that sets intermediate deadlines and identifies key

milestones and critical interdependencies between workstreams.

- Work with research staff on specific tasks related to execution of the evaluations described above at the request of the research leadership.
- Codify research and programmatic decisions in a project manual to preserve institutional knowledge

### **Education and Experience Required**

- Bachelor's degree in public policy, education, social work or a closely related field required; a master's degree is preferred.
- A minimum of five to seven years of full-time work experience in a professional setting, including at least three years of experiencing managing full-time employees.
- Strong project management skills including demonstrated success navigating various stakeholder interests to produce a common goal. Knowledge of or experience working with high needs or vulnerable populations preferred.
- Previous experience working with a research study preferred.
- Previous experience working in the education sector preferred.
- Demonstrated ability to manage a large portfolio of projects with multiple partners.
- Demonstrated ability to multitask in fast-paced, dynamic environment and bring clarity to ambiguous landscapes.

### **Competencies**

- Outstanding interpersonal skills and the ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with a broad array of partners, including "managing up."
- Strong project and program management abilities.
- Ability to work independently in a fast-paced environment.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to present complex ideas in a simple and straightforward way for non-technical audiences required.
- Demonstrated ability to exercise sound judgment required.
- Demonstrated ability to work both independently and as part of a team.
- Understanding of research; ability to effectively communicate research to non-technical audiences.
- Knowledge of education or education policy preferred

### **To Apply**

We seek a diverse pool of applicants who wish to join an academic community that places the highest value on rigorous inquiry and encourages a diversity of perspectives, experiences,

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groups of individuals, and ideas to inform and stimulate intellectual challenge, engagement, and exchange.

All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, protected veteran status or status as an individual with disability.

The University of Chicago is an Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity / Disabled / Veterans Employer.

**Please submit a resume, cover letter, and reference contact information** to UChicago's Workday system. Within the Workday system, this listing can be found by the position title or by the requisition number, JR10975.

**If you have an active UChicago Workday account**, you will need to complete the Internal Candidate application process. Simply log in to Workday and select the career worklet to begin.

**External candidates** should apply at <https://uchicago.wd5.myworkdayjobs.com/External>.

**If you have questions about the Workday system**, please contact our Shared Services department at <https://services.uchicago.edu>

Job seekers in need of a reasonable accommodation to complete the application process may contact the Shared Services Office by calling 773-702-5800 or by emailing [sharedservices@uchicago.edu](mailto:sharedservices@uchicago.edu) with their request.