



Chief of Staff

THE ORGANIZATION

Achievement First (AF) exists to address the legacy of racism in education in America. We know that all children—regardless of race, zip code, or economic status—need and deserve access to a great education. At the core of our approach is the shared journey by our students and staff to fulfill our incredible potential.

Achievement First has consistently been rated one of the top charter school networks in the country, and we are still learning and growing. AF is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization that currently supports 41 public charter schools in New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The mission of AF is to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all children. We currently employ more than 2,000 staff — 47% of whom identify as Black, Latinx, or Multi-racial — who collectively educate nearly 15,000 students in Brooklyn, NY; Providence, RI; and New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford CT. More than 85% of our students qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. Our students are proving what's possible by achieving breakthrough results in terms of academic achievement and long-term college persistence.

Our focus and reach extend beyond the students and communities that we serve directly. Achievement First is an engaged and prominent partner in the broader education-reform movement, partnering with schools and networks from across the country and openly sharing all of our resources with all educators free of charge. We currently serve more than 100,000 additional students through two key partnership initiatives.

THE OPPORTUNITY

As the Chief of Staff, you will serve as a trusted strategic partner and advisor to the CEO. You will lead the CEO's front office and its communication, and as a part of the senior leadership team, work closely with Cabinet members and organizational leaders to identify and execute organizational priorities and mission critical initiatives.

Basics

- **Location:** AF Network Support staff are currently working remotely. However, relative proximity to NYC is preferred (i.e., within driving distance or ~2 hour train/plane ride away).
- **Start Date:** Ideally, early/mid-December
- **Position Reports To:** Interim CEO, Fatimah Barker
- **Compensation:** Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience
- **Travel:** This role may require occasional travel to AF school sites and/or public engagements

Responsibilities

- **Serve as a senior advisor to and proxy for the CEO.** Assist the CEO in thinking through the organization's big picture and day-to-day objectives and key results: set strategic direction and operational priorities and policies, navigate implementation, consider recommendations, anticipate and mitigate challenges, uncertainty and risk, and provide critical feedback. Brief and prepare the CEO for meetings, presentations and engagements, and ensure mission critical decisions and input are not missed. When needed, represent the CEO and serve as a proxy in interactions with internal and external stakeholders, particularly the Achievement First Board of Directors.

- **Engage and support the Achievement First Board of Directors.** With the CEO and the External Relations team, establish the cadence of board meetings and retreats, and facilitate across the organization to prepare materials, dashboards, data, financials and other information as requested by the board. Lead the onboarding of new board members, monitor term lengths, and if needed, support the research and recruitment of new board members.
- **Coordinate the C-Suite and CEO “front office.”** In partnership with the CEO, set and lead the Cabinet’s tactical rhythm and ensure a high level of Cabinet functioning, productivity and team culture for the Cabinet. Oversee and coach 3-5 “front office” administrative and special projects staff to ensure the CEO is effectively briefed and professionally represented, that her time is used wisely, and day-to-day priorities, projects, and resources are well managed.
- **Lead AF’s annual strategic planning and drive cross-functional projects.** In concert with the CEO, manage the end-to-end visioning and strategic planning process across Achievement First’s Network Support office and school site teams, and in conjunction with the CFO’s annual budgeting process. Throughout the year, ensure strategic plans remain relevant and responsive, and are translated into executable objectives that advance organization-wide performance. When appropriate, oversee the design, development and execution of the highest-priority initiatives, new verticals and/or other cross-functional efforts across the organization. In the first three years, this will likely include COVID-related health and safety, and back office systems and infrastructure investment (e.g., ERP/HRM implementation).
- **Own organizational culture and front office communications.** Bring to life the CEO’s vision of a joyful and collaborative workplace where employees can’t wait to come into work. In collaboration with the strategic communications team, develop original content, talking points, speeches, memos, and agendas for key internal and external purposes, including but not limited to stakeholder meetings, donor presentations, board materials, and all staff functions.

About You

- You have a bachelor’s degree and 6-8 years of experience, possibly more; you may have a master’s degree and/or prior experience in the education/nonprofit sector.
- You are a practiced senior leader, ideally with experience advising/guiding high-performing executives or teams of executives in working together to achieve organizational/business unit goals.
- You are humble, mature, situationally sensitive, and discreet; you take pride in supporting leaders worth supporting.
- You lead through others — you shepherd key initiatives and corral resources, but know how to accomplish the work without doing all of the work.
- You believe outcomes come from smart, thoughtful, inclusive, consistent, transparent and nimble processes; when you are at the helm, team members trust the process will be efficient and fair.
- You have demonstrated experience managing data and building ad hoc reports; you might not know SQL, but aren’t afraid to learn a new line of code.
- You understand and respect the mechanics of a mature organization but embrace the nimbleness of a start-up; you aim for long-term stability, can create order from chaos, and have a bias towards rolling up sleeves.
- You are able to balance multiple priorities — talking to a school leader, preparing for a board meeting, developing talking points, outlining contingency plans — gracefully and with practiced personal organization and time management.
- You are a natural problem solver, fixer and finder of resources; in moments of tension, you defuse and resolve conflict.
- You are an organizer by nature and connect with others easily; you feel comfortable communicating in person, by phone, over email, and know how to leverage the newest digital and project management tools.
- You work quickly, but deliberately and with high quality; you find the rapidly changing context of a social mission (in a global pandemic) motivating and adapt without skipping a beat.
- You seek to build context; like an ever expanding Wikipedia page, you seek new knowledge to improve your understanding of the space that you work in and to stay one step ahead of your principal.
- You honor the past and work of others, but you are not constrained by precedent — the “new normal” is still being defined and now is the time to think big.

- You are excited to lead with, advise and uplift the Interim CEO, Fatimah Barker, a Brooklyn-native, 15-year veteran of AF, woman of color and new mother, as she leads the organization through a pandemic and works to harness the intellectual rigor, creativity, passion, expertise, and joy of AF's talent to shape the organization's next chapter.

Application & Selection Process

- **Optional Q&A Webinar:** Join a confidential Q&A webinar with Interim CEO, Fatimah Barker, on Thursday, October 7th @ 6PM ET. [RSVP here](#).
- **Deadline to Apply:** Thursday, October 21st @ 5PM ET.
- **How to Apply:** [To apply, click here](#). The application is intended to share the kind of information that would be covered in a phone-screen interview and includes some basic questions, six substantive written questions, and a video submission. We anticipate the application will take approximately 2 hours to complete and suggest planning your time accordingly.
- **Looking Ahead:** If you are selected to move forward, you will be invited to complete a Performance Task, after which there may be 1 or 2 additional interview activities: a 1-hour Phone Interview followed by a Virtual Half-Day Interview, tentatively scheduled to take place the week of November 1, 2021.

Due to the high volume of applications we receive, we will only be able to notify those who advance to the performance task. Achievement First is an equal opportunity employer and an organization that values diversity. People from all diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. You can learn more about diversity at Achievement First here: <http://www.achievementfirst.org/aboutus/diversity>.