



Director of Strategic Initiatives

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

The Director of Strategic Initiatives directly supports the Chief of Staff (and by proxy, the CEO) as the principal project manager for Achievement First's annual and long-term planning processes – from initial input and ideation with the Cabinet to individual team plan submissions to day-to-day monitoring of OKRs and KPIs – and other high level initiatives that directly impact the organization's planning processes. In addition to the rightsizing and strong implementation of Achievement First's planning processes, the Director of Strategic Initiatives will oversee a team of 1-2 Associate/Coordinator level staff to own the incubation and/or initial implementation of new verticals as directed by the CEO and/or Chief of Staff.

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:** February 2022
- **Position Reports To:** Chief of Staff
- **Compensation:** Salary for this position is competitive and commensurate with experience. Additionally, Achievement First offers a comprehensive benefits package.
- **Travel:** This role may require occasional travel to AF school sites and/or public engagements

Responsibilities

- **Project Manage Annual Planning Process (50%).** Collaborate with the Chief of Staff, Superintendent and CFO to define the annual planning process timeline and critical inputs. Develop a planning process that reflects the needs of the Cabinet, school leaders, instructional teams, board, and other key stakeholders at the school and Network Support levels. Facilitate implementation through training of action owners, manage the submission and quality of planning inputs, and build and develop tools to codify agreed upon plans and

maintain visibility to Cabinet, action owners, board and broader organization. In collaboration with the Chief of Staff, hold individual contributors accountable to implementing the annual plan with fidelity, and escalate risks, capacity needs and mitigating actions, provide regular updates and insights to the Chief of Staff and Cabinet, and make recommendations for process and outcome improvements.

- **Project Manage Long-Term Strategic Planning Process (30%).** Oversee the research and assessment of high priority areas of risk (6-12 months, 1-3 years, 3+ years), both as an individual contributor and through Cabinet-level engagement. Serve as the primary liaison to external consultants supporting this work; where another project owner is already in place, work closely with the project owner to ensure long-term objectives are well coordinated and aligned/do not conflict with organizational goals and values. In conjunction with the Annual Plan, outcome of risk assessment and broader CEO vision, develop a process to engage the Cabinet to generate objectives for a 5-year Strategic Plan. Own the translation of 5-year objectives into annual objectives that drive organization-wide transformation, annual plan development and individual output. Create and execute tools and tactical rhythm that allows the CEO and Chief of Staff to keep the 5-year Strategic Plan, Annual Plan and ongoing OKRs in-sync and responsive to ongoing organizational needs.
- **New Vertical Coordination & Implementation (15%).** As needed and assigned by the CEO or Chief of Staff, own the coordination of new verticals; generally limited to no more than two at any given time, and ideally no more than one. Research new verticals and propose the criteria for launch: timing of launch, requisite capacity, projected budget, etc. Build and manage to a project plan approved by the CEO and Chief of Staff before overseeing the initial launch of the new vertical, managing cross-functional support teams and consultants, and wholly owning the work until it is handed off per the agreed upon project and capacity plans.
- **CEO Front Office Team Coordination (5%).** Provide strategic support to the Chief of Staff in maintaining the “Front Office” of the organization by maintaining documents, coordinating meetings across the team (Chief of Staff, EA to the CEO, Strategic Initiatives Associate/Coordinator, and other consultants and communications staff). Maintain internal team task lists, meeting agendas, budgets, and core documents. Support the hiring of and own onboarding of new Front Office team members.

About You

- You have a bachelor's degree and 6-8 years of experience, possibly more, preferably with management consulting experience or the delivery of complex organization-wide planning processes. MBA, PMP, or other project management systems certification are a plus.
- You are a practiced manager and rising leader, ideally with experience guiding the time and effort of high-performing executives or teams of executives in working together to achieve organizational goals.
- You lead by engaging others effectively — you shepherd key initiatives and corral resources, but know how to accomplish the work without doing all of the work.
- You see around corners and can anticipate the agenda that's needed today to mobilize and empower the objectives of next month, next quarter and next year.
- 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 are highly organized and fluidly manage documents in MS Office and GSuite, and are comfortable building a nimble stack of tools to get a new initiative off the ground.
- You have demonstrated experience managing data and building ad hoc reports; you might not know SQL, but you know how to navigate complex sets of data and communicate findings clearly in beautiful and digestible formats.
- You are a natural problem solver, fixer and finder of resources; in moments of tension, you defuse and resolve conflict.
- You are able to balance multiple priorities — overseeing an input session, meeting with a principal 1:1, building a project plan for a new initiative, cross-training the front office on a new tool — gracefully and with practiced personal organization and time management.

- You are an organizer by nature and connect with others easily; you meet people where they are and feel comfortable communicating in person, by phone, and over email, text, Slack, and carrier pigeon.
 - You have strong verbal and written communication skills, with a demonstrated ability to communicate strategically with senior executives.
 - 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 the board and organizational leadership.
 - You are humble, mature, situationally sensitive, and discreet; you take pride in supporting leaders worth supporting.
 - You are vaccinated against COVID-19 (see more below for policy details).
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APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS

- **Deadline to Apply:** Thursday, January 27, 2022 @ 5PM ET. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.
- **How to Apply:** [To apply, please complete this application](#). 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 1-2 45-minute Phone Interviews.
- **For What It's Worth:** Research shows that while men apply to jobs when they meet about 60% of job criteria, women and other marginalized groups tend to apply only when they check every box. So if you think you have what it takes, but you're not sure that you check every box, we still want to hear from you.

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 deeply values diversity. Achievement First provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. In addition to federal law requirements, Achievement First complies with applicable state and local laws governing nondiscrimination in employment in every location in which the organization is located. Achievement First expressly prohibits any form of workplace harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation and training.

People from all diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply. Learn more about diversity and inclusiveness at Achievement First here: <http://www.achievementfirst.org/about-us/diversity/>.

Achievement First requires vaccination against COVID-19 for all employees. Reasonable Accommodations based on a qualifying disability or sincerely held religious belief are being considered in accordance with applicable law. Click [here](#) to read our full policy.