

ORGANIZATION: ILLINOIS BLACK ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

POSITION: Founding Director

REPORTS TO: Steering Committee

LOCATION: Illinois (location flexible)

ABOUT THE ILLINOIS BLACK ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

Grand Victoria Foundation, Julian Grace Foundation, Steans Family Foundation and Chicago African Americans in Philanthropy and others have partnered to create a statewide Black-led and Black-focused advocacy organization called the Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative. Following two years of outreach and analysis, the IBAI Steering Committee is ready to hire a Founding Director to lead the development of the organization and to facilitate the creation of a common agenda.

Rooted in the brutality and economics of chattel slavery, years, in fact centuries, of historic racism have caused loss of life and dignity for Black communities and have established widespread exclusionary policies and systems throughout the United States. Racism against black bodies has created loss of life, disproportionate incidence of disease and an endless array of disparities to this day. In 2021, the Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative was founded due to the current heightened sense of urgency to create and advance a statewide Black Advocacy agenda in Illinois. Although catalyzed by the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black lives, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Chicagoan Laquan McDonald and others have driven momentum. This Initiative acknowledges and builds upon a long pre-existing desire and early efforts to launch a unified agenda.

In May 2020, a peer group of philanthropic organizations delivered a presentation on the COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting impact on Black communities in Illinois. This event attracted more than 500 registrants and signaled a profound interest among stakeholders and partners in a deeper understanding of the needs and priorities of Black communities throughout the state.



This same group commissioned a landscape analysis to investigate these questions. The analysis found strong support for a statewide entity and revealed a robust ecosystem of advocates. The analysis built the case for a race conscious approach to advocacy in Illinois and a call for specific actions that could be taken to support this endeavor and that can result in a socially and economically stronger state. Key recommendations that emerged from the landscape analysis were threefold:

- 1) **Sustain and increase funding for existing Black advocacy organizations statewide.** Devoting resources to any future statewide Black advocacy efforts must not mean reducing the funding for existing efforts. In fact, the capacity of statewide Black advocacy overall depends on the strength of the individual organizations that make Illinois' social change landscape. The work of this statewide effort and geographically rooted organizations throughout the state is mutually dependent.
- 2) **Establish a Black-led, Black-focused, statewide, multi-issue advocacy organization.** The Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative provides the important opportunity to align the landscape's assets towards a common agenda, narrative, and strategy. This work is envisioned to be Black-led at all levels, including culture, staff, and boards.
- 3) **Establish or leverage (through partnerships) key capacities for statewide advocacy.** A range of capacities and strategies must be leveraged (individually and in combination) to successfully achieve statewide advocacy. Such strategies include: Community organizing and coalition building; leadership development; communications support; action research and policy expertise; litigation and government relations; and electoral or political organizing.

In short, the IBAI can provide capacity for groups on the ground by moving resource and in some cases providing technical assistance, research, litigation and advocacy support. It challenges communities to examine what is at stake and what risks are involved to achieve Black liberation.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Founding Director will have the opportunity to build the Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative from the ground-up, organizing and gaining buy-in and engagement, building its management and financial capacity, driving change, and ultimately establishing a plan of collective advocacy and policy solutions for the needs of Black communities throughout Illinois. The IBAI presents the opportunity to center the Black experience, voice, and analysis in designing and implementing solutions that are laser-focused on repairing the harms of structural and systemic racism over generations. The time has come for a twenty-first century advocacy organization designed to unify and build Black community power and to both call out and dismantle exclusionary policies and structural racism.



This position presents the opportunity to create a highly visible, credible, and inclusive platform that takes into account historical racialized outcomes. It provides the moment to create an organization that is bold in its policy solutions and that addresses the need to redesign systems, rather than to “tinker “around the edges. Notably, this opportunity could bridge many circles of influence: 1) grass tops political structures, many of which are led by Black people, 2) traditional policy and advocacy entities, driven by research and data, and 3) grassroots organizations and work being done and driven by and within Black communities.

The Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative will unite the voices of Illinois advocates and organizations who speak up for the benefit of – and from the perspective of - Black communities throughout

the state of Illinois. To do this, the organization must be informed by the directly impacted and organized with the communal perspective and values of the Black experience. The Founding Director role creates the opportunity for the right leader to catalyze transformative change at a statewide scale, and beyond. A Black-centric culture will create conditions for the organization to:

- Take an explicitly race-conscious approach to a robust communications strategy that deconstructs racial stereotypes and false historic narratives of Black inferiority;
- Reframe and validate the affirmative and accurate Black experience as critical to the ultimate success of our social and cultural fabric, economy, and civic life;
- Produce data and analysis on issues with an intentional racial justice lens;
- Examine how the intersections between race, gender, class, and other individual characteristics inform redesign and reform of public systems and policy solutions;
- Support a vibrant ecosystem of activists, organizers, policy advocates, scholars, researchers, and civic and public sector leaders, and community residents working to achieve Black liberation across all dimensions of society; facilitate public discourse around some of our most urgent and vexing issues; and advocate for issues and win causes that promote justice and liberation for Black people and communities.

POSITION SUMMARY

The Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative seeks a visionary and dedicated Founding Director to support the establishment of an intersectional¹ statewide organization focused on advancing advocacy and building an agenda for Black communities. The Founding Director will help to structure a contemporary collaboration dedicated to racial equity, social justice, and systemic and structural change for the political, social, and economic empowerment of Black people and communities in Illinois.



The Founding Director will have the opportunity to:

- Oversee the creation and implementation of a transformative approach to Black-centered and Black-focused advocacy in Illinois;
- Develop and/or identify the best tools and methods possible for realizing the goals of this effort and of the Black community;
- Make recommendations for staffing as well as for programmatic and budgetary operations for both program launch and 3-5 year operational budget;
- Develop mission, guiding principles, and measurable goals and objectives;

¹ An organization grounded in, centered and focused on the discrimination (such as sexism, classism, ability, heterosexism, etc.), needs and experiences of all Black people but explicitly those who are women, girls, LGBTQI+, disabled, poor, immigrants (documented and undocumented), and those who are criminalized and incarcerated.

- Produce tools and methodology to document and track implementation, organizational and programmatic progress, and lessons learned.

Funding has been secured for a minimum of the first two years of operation. In this context, a successful Founding Director will:

- Collaborate with current and new project stakeholders and manage their engagement in the on-going process;
- Collaborate with the IBAI steering committee to inform the structure and objectives of the effort and coordinate their engagement in the on-going process;
- Develop goals and objectives, and a process to track and measure organizational success;
- Develop an operations plan for the effort - including budget projections, staffing, space and equipment needs, and other operational supports.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

The ideal candidate will be an experienced leader and strategist who has worked in the field of social justice, especially in the Black community. This leader will build momentum for relevant, critical, and provocative dialogue across sectors that builds collaboration and meets the urgent need to develop a Black-centered, intersectional approach to advocacy and power building in Illinois. The Founding Director will be afforded the unique opportunity to work in partnership with leaders in policy advocacy, movement building, constituency and community building, research, philanthropy, and other disciplines required to launch a new statewide entity.



The successful candidate must be aware and informed of the history of the Black Struggle and the history of both intentional and institutionalized racism. Candidates must exhibit a clear understanding, ability, and passion for the organizational development required to weave and operationalize a vision for change on behalf of Black communities throughout the state of Illinois. A strong commitment to collaboration across disciplines as well as evidence of leading successful partnerships with a variety of stakeholders is expected. The position will require clear analysis of structures and systemic barriers that sustain the status quo and alternative strategies to build economically, politically, vibrant, and sustainable Black communities. Excellent demonstrable and compelling communication skills will be central to this position.

Although previous CEO experience is not required, the successful candidate will present a track record of leadership that has resulted in strong processes and a high functioning organization. Externally, candidates should exhibit the following qualifications:

- A background in advocacy, community organizing, coalition building, social movements, organizational development, or related field
- Ability to develop and/or influence public policies leading to long term, permanent social change

- Ability to build political power
- A demonstrable comprehension of the current advocacy landscape in Illinois
- Experience in collaboration and consensus building across sectors, stakeholders, and in particular with local community residents and leaders
- Ability to integrate and translate data, research, community experiences, and leadership insights into clear collective messages and policy recommendations
- Ability to develop and sustain meaningful and productive partnerships leading to building trust and empowering Black communities

Candidates should be equally equipped to lead, build and manage a skilled staff team as well as internal operations. Candidates should possess:

- Experience in successfully leading advocacy or policy campaigns, multi-stakeholder coalitions or other mission-driven entities
- Ability to cultivate and steward both internal and external strategic relationships
- Ability to direct, monitor, and evaluate new teams
- Ability to manage organizational budget
- Superior project management skills and attention to detail



Key personal qualities will include self-awareness, flexibility, and the ability to be even keeled. A sense of humor, humility, and the ability to develop others will serve the Founding Director well.

The salary for this position is budgeted at \$150,000. The Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative will offer a comprehensive benefits package, including but not limited to paid holidays, vacation and health leave, group health and disability insurance.

To apply, please submit a current resume and letter of introduction to Kittleman & Associates, LLC at <https://bit.ly/2WQjhLJ> (click on the Apply button at the bottom of the page). For more information about the Illinois Black Advocacy Initiative, please see documents at the bottom of the same link.