

## Position Announcement

### Research Specialist and Senior Policy Associate

#### Who We Are

The Center for Early Learning Funding Equity (CELFE) was established to develop and promote research and data-informed strategies to transform funding of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs for children ages 0-5. Housed in Northern Illinois University's Division of Outreach, Engagement, and Regional Development (OERD), CELFE works in collaboration with academic, data, and research partners across the NIU system as well as with external partners.

CELFE began its work focused primarily on Illinois' ECEC system, in which our Director, Theresa Hawley, Ph.D. has spent almost 30 years in as a researcher, advocate, and government systems change leader – working to improve ECEC policies with children and families at the center. Now, CELFE is building on that experience and the passion for systems change to focus more deeply on the funding adequacy and equity of the ECEC system. The scope and reach of CELFE are expanding to include all states and municipalities interested in transformation. CELFE is currently engaged in projects with Maine, Nebraska, and Colorado in addition to Illinois.

CELFE is only in its third year and needs to *scale up* our internal capacity to meet the growing needs of states and clients interested in understanding how to transform their own ECEC systems through an equity lens, with children and families at the center. As such, we are hiring a **Research Specialist and Senior Policy Associate** to support current projects and help develop new client-based work.

#### The Opportunity

The Research Specialist and Senior Policy Associate will bring a diverse and extensive set of experiences that provides leadership to manage the current work of CELFE, while also generating ideas and strategies to build the ECEC field's understanding that public financing [https://celfe.org/wp-admin/post-new.php?post\\_type=page](https://celfe.org/wp-admin/post-new.php?post_type=page) and the mechanisms by which we distribute resources to providers and families are critical levers for transforming ECEC in the US. The successful candidate will bring a substantial track record of past work, including working with systems-level data to inform policy and practice change at the local, state, or federal level. Further, experience in writing policy memos, research documents, and/or published articles outlining the use of data and research to inform ECEC policy and practice is also a priority.

Specifically, responsibilities for the ideal candidate include, but are not limited to:

Prospect and develop clients, generating fee-for-service projects for CELFE

- Plan and execute projects to support client goals, including such tasks as:
  - Leading meetings with clients to identify and clarify goals

- Planning and implementing stakeholder engagement processes
  - Working with CELFE colleagues and clients to design solutions to meet client needs
- Generate and establish partnerships with research, policy, and advocacy organizations to establish collaborative projects that contribute innovative and strategic policy approaches to achieve more equitable and adequate funding for early care and education, including:
  - Following current research across the ECEC spectrum relevant to the work of CELFE
  - Conceptualizing and pursuing research project partnerships to expand and elevate the mission, vision, and values of CELFE while contributing to the larger ECEC field of policy, research, and finance strategies
- Manage staff as appropriate.
- Participate in and help to lead team activities that help to develop and grow junior CELFE staff
- In concert with the Executive and Deputy Director, promote CELFE with potential funders/foundations to support the ‘field building’ goals central to the CELFE Mission, Vision, Values, and strategic business plan/goals

The Research Specialist and Senior Policy Associate should bring with them both a broad and deep set of skills, experiences, and accomplishments to be successful in the role

Specifically, skills should include but not be limited to

1. Extensive knowledge of early care and education systems of governance, finance, and of public funding streams at the federal and state level
2. Ability to identify gaps in data/research and writing related to ECEC funding equity and develop a workstream and product to fill the gap and promote CELFE philosophies and Mission/Vision/Values
3. High comfort level with the use of technology-based platforms for project management, advanced research and data analysis, communication and presentation of information
4. Quantitative and qualitative research design skills
5. Data analysis skills, including use of statistical software packages
6. Data visualization skills
7. Strong project management experience and skills
8. Demonstrated ability to write policy briefs, papers, and project/research findings in early childhood, education (k-12), and/or economics/labor market/finance publications to mostly non-academic audiences (government, policy and advocacy and policy research)
9. High comfort level and skill with publicly presenting data, research findings and client work at conferences, workshops, and webinars as it emerges from CELFE’s work

10. Meeting planning, convening, and facilitation skills
11. Strong communication in person and in a virtual environment.
12. Knowledge of and experience in government, public policy, and ECEC systems and programs
13. Problem-solver with strong initiative to keep work moving; helping to establish clarity of goals and purpose if it doesn't already exist
14. Strong leadership and management of content, strategy, product and people

#### Education & Experience

1. Master's Degree required (Ph.D. preferred) in social science, education, public policy or related field, with coursework in research methods and analysis.
2. Minimum 7 years of experience (10 years preferred) managing projects and/or people.
3. Bilingual Spanish/English a plus
4. Management of junior and mid-level data, research, and policy staff
5. Established track-record in fundraising, developing project budgets, and other business skills required in a start-up environment.
6. Working inside government and/or working closely with publicly funded programs and systems is helpful.

#### Attributes

1. Strong commitment to equity
2. Passion for early childhood education and care with children and families at the center
3. Comfortable with a start-up environment and flexibility to adapt to uncertainty and changes in work priorities
4. Can manage multiple projects simultaneously and meet client-driven deadlines and needs.
5. Ability and willingness to travel for in-person meetings, attend and present at conferences and/or client-related meetings

**CELFE is a hybrid, Chicago-based organization with all staff currently working a portion of every week in-person. While remote candidates will be considered, CELFE has a strong preference for in-person candidates.**

The salary range for this position is between \$95,000 - \$125,000 based on experience and relevant skill.

Qualified candidates will be required to complete the NIU online application.

Direct any questions and letters of interest with resume to Sessy Nyman at [nnyman@niu.edu](mailto:nnyman@niu.edu) by October 23<sup>rd</sup>.