Position Guide
Executive Director

https://www.deepcenter.org/

Our Stories Matter
MISSION AND FRAMEWORK

Deep Center’s mission is to empower Savannah’s young people to thrive as learners, community leaders, and agents of change. Through creative writing, cultural production, and art, Deep creates platforms for the city’s youth and the village of support around them, including their families and adult allies, to share stories, engage in debates, and make Savannah a more just and equitable place.

Deep Center’s framework is anti-racist, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive. We promote a roots-cause model of youth and community development that works on three parallel tracks: direct service, systems change, and narrative change. Deep lifts up youth and their village, advocates for just policies, and disrupts dehumanizing narratives with firsthand stories about youth and their families healing, growing, and thriving through individual growth and collective action.

ABOUT DEEP CENTER

Deep Center uses writing, art, and culture to fuel the creative fires of Savannah’s young people, helping them connect their learning to their lives, their lives to their communities, and their actions to transformational change.

In collaboration with adult writers, artists, and mentors, Deep youth learn how to tell their stories powerfully, celebrate their neighborhoods, elevate Savannah’s forgotten narratives, and find their place in history and current events. When this happens, they gain agency as learners, artists, and community leaders able to speak out on the issues affecting them and their families. And in collaboration with Deep’s youth leaders, adults in their village learn how to step back, listen, and work from the healing-centered paradigm when supporting young people.

Deep currently works with over 700 youth locally and across Georgia and more than 200 teachers, adult artists, writers, and community stakeholders every year. Since 2008, the organization has supported more than 4,500 young people with free writing, arts, and leadership programs, and have published more than 120 anthologies of youth and adult work, trained more than 400 local writing mentors,
hosted live readings reaching diverse audiences of 12,000, and shared Savannah’s stories around the nation.

Deep also works with adults in their village to make sure youth are seen in their full humanity, and to identify and advocate for administrative and legislative policies that make Savannah a safe place for all young people and their families.

The organization currently has 19 full-time staff, and 4 part-time staff. Deep has 10 Board members and an operating budget of $1.8 million.

For more information about Deep Center, its programs and impact, please visit: www.deepcenter.org. An overview of the organization’s programs and core values can be found at the end of this position guide.

**THE OPPORTUNITY**

The next Executive Director will be joining a committed community of staff, Board of Directors and community partners. Responsibilities include:

- Providing leadership and vision to implement programs and initiatives towards achieving the organization’s mission.
- Furthering the organization’s impact and ensuring critical programs have the resources they need to continue successfully.
- Creating and implementing effective fundraising plans, systems and programs; building durable and effective relationships with funders and donors; identifying new resource and revenue generation opportunities.
- Coaching and supporting staff while fostering an equitable and inclusive work environment.
- Running a fiscally sustainable organization and bringing mission criteria and financial rigor to opportunity assessment.
- Ensuring effective systems to track scaling progress, and regularly evaluate program components, to measure successes that can be effectively communicated to the board, funders, and other constituents.
- Ensuring a transparent, inclusive, and participatory workplace that, through living wages, quality benefits, and democratic decision-making, reflects the values of equity and justice Deep aims to effect in the community.
- Partnering and engaging with a volunteer Board of Directors, the organization’s governing body.
CANDIDATE PROFILE

The ideal candidate to lead Deep Center as it continues to build its impact within Savannah and the state of Georgia will:

- Understand social, economic, and cultural systems and how historical and contemporary structural injustices adversely affect some communities while benefiting others.
- Have successful management experience in a nonprofit organization or organizations, ideally within the social justice, youth and community development, creative arts and/or racial justice fields.
- Have a track record of effectively leading an outcomes-based organization and staff; ability to point to specific examples of having developed and operationalized strategies that have taken an organization to the next stage of growth.
- Have demonstrated success in fundraising through diverse sources from government to high-level donors and membership drives including major gifts and capital campaigns.
- Have demonstrated experience and success with policy development and advocacy.
- Have strong written and verbal communication skills; a persuasive and passionate communicator with excellent interpersonal and multidisciplinary project skills.
- Have experience cultivating, developing and inspiring a cohesive, high-performing team of staff and volunteers to further an organizational culture of respect and joy.
- Have strong marketing and public relations with the ability to engage a wide range of stakeholders and cultures.
- Understand the history and culture that shaped Savannah’s diverse communities and the South. Experience living in the South, a plus.


COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The salary range for this position is between $90,000 - $110,000 commensurate with experience. Deep Center offers a comprehensive benefits package, including but not limited to paid holidays, vacation, and health insurance.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

Deep Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer, complying with all applicable laws regarding equal employment opportunities for all qualified applicants and employees.
CORE VALUES

• **Depth:** We believe that a deep exploration of our community’s shared and diverse narratives is the surest way to open minds, encourage hearts, and inspire change.

• **Community:** We believe that solutions are found both locally and nationally. We leverage the talent, creativity, and care that exists in our city while sharing ideas with experts and practitioners nationwide.

• **Equity:** We believe in doing the right thing for Savannah’s most vulnerable populations.

• **Root-Cause Analysis:** We believe that the people are not the problem, the problem is the problem. In an inequitable ecosystem that is the product of an unjust history, putting the burden of change only on young people and vulnerable populations ignores their day-to-day realities, sets them up to fail, and misses the root causes of their challenges. A clear-eyed approach focuses on strengthening not simply young people, but the village around them and the unjust structures at odds with their wellbeing.

• **Co-learning:** We believe that we build true knowledge and understanding by valuing every person in the room for the unique fund of knowledge they bring.

• **Truth:** We believe that when we value the honest voices of young people, they gain confidence in themselves and the power to take charge of their stories and to transform their communities.

• **Courage:** We believe that honesty—both in writing and in life—requires bravery and conviction. We strive to inspire intellectual and emotional courage in our young people.

• **Joy:** We believe that true creativity springs from a motivated and joyful approach to complex problem-solving. We delight in our work and deliberately incorporate fun into everything we do.
PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

Block by Block: Deep Center’s year-long program for creative writing, leadership, and community-building. Up to 40 young authors (ages 15-18) who have completed the Young Author Project join adult artists, allies, and community stakeholders to celebrate and elevate communities by researching, documenting, and remixing the past and present stories of their families, streets, and community. Participants master the art of written and performance storytelling in a variety of genres—including poetry, spoken word, and realistic and speculative fiction—through rigorous creative-writing workshops. They also collaborate with local artists throughout the program to render their unique stories through visual and other media.

Community Organizing: Deep Center works to organize, support, and build power amongst a broad coalition of everyday people, community stakeholders, faith communities, unlikely allies, working-class youth and families from communities of color and other marginalized communities to build awareness, critical literacy, networks, power, and skills to lift up young people as social justice leaders, artists, and advocates to transform Chatham County’s and Georgia’s juvenile and criminal justice systems, education systems, and other pressing social systems.

Drop-In: Originally a spin-off of our Block by Block program in 2018, Drop-in was created to offer fun, accessible, culturally-responsive, and trauma-informed programming, especially for systems-involved youth. Systems-involved youth include young people in foster care, juvenile court, and alternative schools. Drop-in provides a thoughtful and intentional entry into Deep spaces and practices, without the immediate long-term commitment that other programs like the Young Author Project or Block by Block require. Furthermore, the program’s design and our paid staff’s expertise addresses the trauma young people might have experienced in traditional learning spaces. We meet young people where they are through the array of creative options that foster learning, build community, and develop skills, such as hair-braiding, entrepreneurship, music production, cooking, know-your-rights activism, and more. Our aim is to build love and trust with these young people and direct them into our other programs to ensure their long-term support by the Deep Center community.
Healing Schools: In partnership with the Savannah Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS), Deep is working to develop and implement a model for a healing-centered school climate, which will prepare students to be engaged, thriving participants in our democracy and communities: they will have the resources they need, be celebrated and served according to who and where they are, and be lifted up with their families and teachers as leaders able to influence school and district policies.

Policy and Advocacy: Deep Center works from a root-cause and system-change framework to identify and change the barriers our young people, their families, and other members of our village face. In an inequitable ecosystem that is the product of an unjust history, the burden of change is often carried by young people and vulnerable populations. We have come to understand that, for us to truly support Savannah’s youth and families, we must lift them up while simultaneously working to dismantle these ceilings through data, evidence-driven public and internal policy, and legislative advocacy at all levels of government.

Work Readiness Enrichment Program (“WREP”): A collaboration between the Chatham County Juvenile Courts, the Savannah Chatham County Public School System, and Deep Center, WREP was created to reduce the number of youth being committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). At the time of its creation, Chatham County had twice the number of court-involved youth as any other county in Georgia, including Fulton and Gwinnett—home to Atlanta, the most populous metro area in Georgia and the ninth-largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States. WREP serves male youth aged 14-16 who have seen chronic suspensions, are behind in school, and have a history of court involvement.

Writing Project: Deep’s Writing Project is a specifically for educators. Part of the National Writing Project’s network of 175+ sites across the country, Deep Center is honored to be the first National Writing Project site based in a community organization. The mission of the National Writing Project is to focus the knowledge, expertise, and leadership of our nation’s educators on sustained efforts to improve writing and learning for all learners, and the key mechanism for that is to create and support teacher leaders.

Young Author Project: Deep’s introductory program, engages public middle school students with language and their stories to help them grow as learners, celebrate their lives and communities, and express themselves with skill, confidence, and courage. Youth are selected by a teacher at their school based on demonstrated need, enthusiasm, and dedication. Select young authors are chosen by their peers to read their published works at Deep Speaks, the Youth Author Project’s end-of-semester book launch and live reading before 550 family members, peers, and community members.
Youth Leadership Team: Deep’s Youth Leadership Team hosts two pathways, the Slam Team and the Action Research Team (ART), which are made up of young people who identify strongly as creative writers, are passionate about engaging with hearts and minds in some of Savannah’s and our nation’s most challenging topics, and are committed as experts, in their own right, to helping support and improve Deep Center. The Slam Team and ART also go on periodic leadership trips around the region and the nation to share their and Deep’s work, engage in dialogue about culture and the critical issues facing our communities locally and nationwide, perform, and learn from national peers.