CCSSO is committed to ensuring that all students participating in our public education system -- regardless of background -- graduate prepared for college, careers, and life.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OVERVIEW

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the five US extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. State education agencies, and those who lead them, play a critical role in ensuring that our schools and educators meet the needs of each student they serve.

CCSSO's work is guided by its 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, and anchored in its commitment to provide an equitable education to every child. CCSSO's equity commitments are the foundation of all that they do, and the goals and strategies outlined in the strategic plan directly advance these commitments. The strategic plan focuses on six specific areas of work in service of chiefs, their agencies, and children across the nation:

1. Students: Implementing high expectations for each student
2. Critical student transitions: Creating multiple pathways for student success
3. Teachers: Providing high-quality instruction and educational support
4. School and district leaders: Continuously improving schools for each student
5. State leaders: Leading effective state education agencies
6. Our organization: Providing a strategic, supportive Council

Beyond these strands of work and equity commitments, the CCSSO team and chiefs adhere to set of core values that round out their orientation and guide their actions. Bringing together dedicated leaders and excellent ideas to achieve measurable progress for every student, CCSSO is, above all, focused on kids – college and career readiness for all – produced by flexing together to have collective, systemic impact. Recognizing that when the members are successful, students are successful, CCSSO works in service of individual chiefs (and their SEAs) so that they can productively lead their respective public education systems. Consistently reflecting on their practices, continuously monitoring and adjusting their work, and asking how it could be better, CCSSO maximizes the impact of the goals they have set. Finally, CCSSO is focused on helping states create the right conditions and expectations that provide each student access to the resources and educational rigor they need, at the right moment in their education, across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, or income.

OPPORTUNITY

CCSSO is seeking a mission-driven leader committed to educational equity and one possessing an unwavering belief that every child can succeed. The position represents a rare and privileged opportunity to transform public education outcomes across the country.

Currently seen as a beacon of strength, integrity, and leadership in a swiftly changing education landscape, CCSSO must continue to assert itself as a nonpartisan champion for all member states and the students they serve, and to foster conditions that advance equity, and yield better outcomes for all students. With states at the forefront of the education conversation and all eyes on chiefs, the incoming Executive Director will lead an organization at a critical moment in its evolution, poised to deploy a talented, proud, and profoundly engaged team that has co-created a positive, high-performing culture that equips the organization to meet changing conditions from a position of strength, and with the capacity for increased impact.

The ideal successor will drive the organization's strategic vision and mission, nurture its culture of excellence, and position CCSSO to play an increasingly important role in the field. S/he will serve as a compelling ambassador on behalf of state chiefs, as well as an energetic fundraiser, and values-driven leader of staff who can activate pathways and partnerships that will drive continued collective impact across the country.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Ready to leverage the strength and momentum of its team, organizational integrity and policy expertise, CCSSO must continue to play a leadership role in setting the education policy agenda for the nation at a time of rapid change. In this context, the next Executive Director must be an authentic leader with a deep understanding of how to operate inside the beltway, while at the same time understanding the critical leadership role state chiefs and their agencies play in ensuring every child graduates ready for college, careers, and life. S/he will: guide the organization through execution of the Board-driven and Board-approved strategic plan, ensure the availability of adequate resources by stewarding relationships with philanthropic partners; provide organizational leadership; strengthen organizational culture and capacity, and develop the team to provide ongoing support to all of CCSSO's critical stakeholders.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are fundamental to CCSSO's core values, and the organization recognizes the importance of diversity both regarding staff's personal experiences in the workplace, and the quality and strength of the advice that is presented to members. The new Executive Director will encourage environments that support awareness, learning, and the open exchange of ideas in CCSSO's work with both staff and external stakeholders. *Specific responsibilities include*:

<u>External Leadership</u>

- providing vision and direction to CCSSO members, education leaders at the federal and state levels, staff, and other stakeholders; serving as a credible voice and thought leader for the organization and the country;
- representing CCSSO as its public face and voice, communicating the Council's achievements, expertise and impact broadly and efficiently, while contributing to the national education dialogue as a whole;
- facilitating inspirational, nonpartisan discussion among the members on complex, multi-faceted education issues; galvanizing, motivating and guiding these diverse stakeholders while finding and articulating common ground; and effectively sharing CCSSO's perspective on a variety of policy issues affecting elementary and secondary education in a way that reflects and incorporates the diverse thoughts and beliefs of members; and
- advocating on behalf of state chiefs in dialogues with the federal administration, Congress, vital nonprofit organizations, and the public at-large; representing what is right for students and the role chiefs/state education agencies can readily offer to inform, support, and ensure educational equity policy, regulatory, and programmatic decisions at the national, state, and local levels.

Relationship Building

- cultivating new chiefs for membership as they emerge in their respective states;
- building coalitions with key education, business and advocacy organizations, and sharing CCSSO's perspective on a variety of policy issues affecting elementary and secondary education;
- establishing productive working relationships with Council members, understanding the individual and collective needs of state chiefs of education and supporting their work, where possible; and
- overseeing funding relationships, and building a base of financial support from federal, foundation and other sources that are aligned with CCSSO's strategic priorities.

Organizational Management

- driving and managing the execution of the strategic plan in collaboration with a capable, engaged Board;
- inspiring staff at all levels to continue to achieve ambitious goals, and maintain a culture of excellence and accountability;
- mentoring, managing and developing the senior leadership team; partnering with the team to lead and manage organizational growth;
- modeling and supporting results orientation throughout the organization, with emphasis on delivering creative, impactful offerings to state education agencies; and
- ensuring the financial health of CCSSO through appropriate financial planning, fundraising, and budgeting.

QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates for this position must bring **experience** in the following areas:

- ten or more years as a senior executive with substantial expertise in public education in roles requiring significant aspects of: advocacy, coalition-building, federal and state education policy development and fundraising ;
- substantial executive leadership experience in a complex organization, including demonstrable success with strategic planning/execution, and operational and financial stewardship;
- experience in an organization which must influence its members or constituents in the absence of any formal authority over them;
- a history of good decision making, settling disputes equitably, taking unpopular stands when necessary, and encouraging robust debate when necessary;
- experience building and maintaining strategic partnerships with political actors, and other essential stakeholders and constituencies; relating well to all kinds of people and building rapport;
- proven and significant management and team-building experience at a senior management level; experience serving as an external advocate and spokesperson for an organization; and
- significant experience working directly with a Board (or comparable supervisory entity).

Next, candidates must have the following **skills**:

- demonstrable expertise in education policy and advocacy;
- political savvy, and instincts sharp enough to navigate and establish productive relationships across the educational, philanthropic and political landscape;
- a reputation for "flexing together" to unite and create synergies among members with sometimes competing or politically diverse interests;

- superb communications skills, including the ability to convey ideas and positions to numerous audiences; ability to function as the "narrator in chief," telling CCSSO's story in a way that resonates internally and externally, and makes people feel connected and included;
- ability to leverage and build relationships with key donors to secure philanthropic support; and
- a proven ability to attract, recruit, retain, and develop excellent staff.

Finally, candidates for the position must possess the following **personal characteristics**:

- genuine servant-leadership orientation, marked by mission/values alignment and transparency;
- a sense of urgency and a deep-seated commitment to working toward educational equity, with an understanding of the hard, sustained work required to achieve desired outcomes;
- a level of integrity and energy compelling enough to bring divergent groups together in a collaborative fashion and inspire them to act;
- the executive presence to inspire confidence and passion both internally and externally and the requisite persistence and zeal to lead a mission-driven organization toward ambitious goals;
- the gravitas and sophistication needed to be the public face of CCSSO, and the eloquence and persuasiveness (both oral and written) required to serve as its spokesperson to a wide variety of audiences;
- the maturity and wisdom required to optimize Board members;
- humility and the willingness to assess oneself, reflect on one's limitations, and be open to new ideas, and feedback; and
- entrepreneurial spirit and a high level of motivation.

REPORTING

The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors. Reporting to the Executive Director are three Deputy Directors, the Chief Financial Officer, and the current open position of Chief Officer for Equity Initiatives.

EDUCATION

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution required; advanced degree strongly preferred.

LOCATION

Washington, DC.

COMPENSATION

Salary is competitive and commensurate with qualifications and experience.

APPLY

The review of applications will begin immediately. **Applications, including a cover letter and resume, should be submitted electronically by Wednesday, February 14**, and will be considered on a rolling basis. Nominations, applications, or inquiries about the position and/or the search process should be directed to Leslie Nair, Partner at Promise54 via ccssoed@promise54.org.

Promise54 was created in 2017 to fulfill the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Promise of disaggregating academic opportunities from race and class.
We specialize in a strategic, systematic approach to end-to-end talent support for education organizations, are known for expert facilitation and project management,
and we do all of our work with a deeply infused focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

PROMISE54