

## Position Description

### van beuren CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

<b>TITLE</b>	Program Officer
<b>REPORTS TO</b>	Executive Director
<b>INSTITUTION</b>	van Beuren Charitable Foundation
<b>LOCATION</b>	Newport, Rhode Island

#### About the van Beuren Charitable Foundation ([www.vbcfoundation.org](http://www.vbcfoundation.org))

van Beuren Charitable Foundation (vBCF) is a Rhode Island-based private family foundation dedicated to investing in the quality of life and quality of place on Aquidneck Island and in its surrounding communities. Guided by a Board of Directors comprised of van Beuren family members who have deep familiarity with the community, vBCF invests its grants across four portfolios that support Healthy Lifestyles for all residents, Strong Starts for children and youth, Community Prosperity generated by economic opportunity and planning for the future, and Excellence in the Commons, those shared landscapes and built environments critical to quality of life and quality of place. Staff operates out of the Foundation's Newport office, located in a new open-plan workspace on the city's historic waterfront.

Aquidneck Island is a destination because of its scenic coastal areas; recreational and cultural opportunities; vibrant main streets; and rich, intact historic fabric. The communities the Foundation works in have extraordinary assets to build upon and sustain: engaged residents; pride of community; passion and stewardship for the landscapes and history; a proclivity to collaborate; and the connectivity that comes with smaller communities. These are also dynamic communities addressing challenges: integrating the needs of a growing multi-lingual population into the schools and economies; addressing the impacts of climate change; navigating healthcare economics; holding candid conversations about race, diversity, and equity; building a diverse and resilient economy; and supporting and managing growth and development. Aquidneck Island's education, economy, healthcare, infrastructure, social programs, and natural areas are all inextricably connected to the systems, policies, and programs in the greater region and throughout the state.

In 2016, vBCF adopted a strategic framework that intentionally seeks connectivity between its priority program areas, supports learning and adaption, and increases emphasis on impact. As a place-based funder, the spirit of partnership with our grant partners is critical to our success. The Foundation's

grantmaking is not restricted to Aquidneck Island, as the levers for change are not determined by geography.

Since its founding in 1986 by John A. and Hope H. van Beuren, the Foundation has made over \$100 million in grants and is one of the largest private foundations in Rhode Island. Its grantmaking and operations are guided by the core values of the van Beuren family: integrity, community, collaboration, leadership, and innovation. The Foundation's assets have grown from \$100 million in 2009 to \$325 million in 2021. The Foundation is staffed by a small, dedicated team of professionals in a supportive, high performing culture that values collaboration, continuous improvement, and collegiality.

For more information on van Beuren Charitable Foundation, please visit: [www.vbcfoundation.org](http://www.vbcfoundation.org)

### **Position Summary**

As the Foundation's grantmaking budget increases, the organization is hiring a third Program Officer, who will report to the Executive Director. In support of the connected portfolio approach, Program Officers operate primarily as generalists, working across the four portfolios. Each team member brings their own unique experience and skills to bear in support of the whole team. The types of grants the Foundation makes range from operating support, project/program, capital, and occasionally loans. The Foundation's grants support planning, implementation, and learning from the work. Because the Foundation seeks to have an impact, it encourages and supports local collaboration when appropriate.

The current team of two Program Officers reports to the Executive Director, who also carries grants across the various portfolios. Program Officers help build and manage the grants pipeline, maintain communications with grant partners, and articulate to the board and external partners lessons learned from the various initiatives the Foundation supports. Staff members like one another and exhibit a collaborative spirit, a team-first mentality, and a can-do attitude infused with humor and flexibility. Everyone feels respected and empowered to share points of view and perspectives in a safe way.

van Beuren Charitable Foundation is guided by the strategic thinking and coaching of an engaged and knowledgeable Board of Directors.

### **Responsibilities**

- Partner with the Executive Director and the rest of the team to coordinate the Foundation's competitive grantmaking process and grants monitoring.
- Assess and cultivate funding opportunities consistent with the Foundation's portfolio priorities by reviewing proposals, visiting sites, and engaging with the community.
- Evaluate proposals and present to grants team recommendations for action on funding requests based upon strategic fit with portfolios.

- Conduct due diligence; present written and oral recommendations to the Grants Committee of the Board of Directors; and monitor progress of grants made.
- Maintain current records within the Foundation's database.
- Ensure compliance with grantmaking standards and legal requirements.
- Conduct research and prepare analytical reports/briefing papers, and work on special projects as assigned.
- Collaborate with the Executive Director and grants team to develop grantmaking strategies that will have a strong impact on the Foundation's portfolios. As appropriate, convene groups and potentially lead initiatives.
- Work closely with community organizations, local leaders, and other funders to identify opportunities for further investment, technical assistance, and collaboration as they relate to the Foundation's mission, funding priorities, and interests.
- Stay current of developments and potential partners in fields of interest to the Foundation.
- Maintain knowledge about current trends and issues impacting the Foundation's portfolios.
- Work to support grant partners by reviewing drafts of reports, connecting grant partners to other resources, and attending meetings when possible.
- Collaborate with grant partners to facilitate communications and information sharing, encourage collaboration, and develop deep knowledge of the field.
- Be willing and able to travel for site visits and other meetings (largely in Rhode Island, occasionally in New England and New York City). Occasional evening meeting attendance is required, and out-of-town travel may require weekend departures or arrivals. The Program Officer will spend a substantial amount of time out in the community, engaging with partners and grantees.

### **Selection Criteria**

The most compelling candidates come from the foundation, grantmaking, and/or nonprofit arenas, and possess the following:

- **Domain Experience and Credibility:** The individual must possess an understanding of nonprofit organizational development and operations and have field experience in one of the Foundation's four portfolio areas. The Foundation seeks a person who exercises versatility and has experience across more than one program area and who sees connections between the four portfolio areas. A

bachelor's degree is required; graduate degrees in relevant fields are welcomed. vBCF also values life and work experiences that enrich a candidate's perspective on the Foundation's mission.

- **Administrative and Organizational Experience:** The successful candidate should have at least five years of related experience, be exceptionally organized and detail-oriented, and have a high sense of responsibility and accountability for results. An understanding of foundation operations is helpful, but prior grantmaking experience is not required.
- **Intellectual Curiosity:** The individual must have an analytical mindset, an appetite for learning, and skill in systems thinking, as well as the ability to assess, synthesize, and present complex information.
- **Organizational and Operational Experience:** Required is particular experience evaluating a grantee's operational and financial health and effectiveness, assessing financial statements, and assessing the design, development, and program outcomes. A process orientation is valued. An ability to follow trends and to utilize research and data—both quantitative and qualitative—to craft narratives is expected.
- **Authentic Embrace of Cultural Competency and Inclusion:** The person must have an ability to work with people who have diverse perspectives and backgrounds to facilitate strong relationships and shared interests and must possess evidence of cultural competence. Fluency in Spanish is a plus.
- **Collaborative Interpersonal and Relationship Building and Communication Skills:** The ideal candidate has the confidence, presence, and energy to develop relationships internally and externally with diverse constituencies. The candidate will have the ability to build strong and collaborative relationships and must have proven abilities to communicate crisply and clearly in speech and writing and to demonstrate active listening skills.
- **A Team Orientation:** Reflecting the ethos of the Foundation, the person must navigate different personalities, function independently, promote teamwork, and exercise diplomacy, discretion, and judgement with humor and grace.

The Foundation offers competitive compensation commensurate with experience, professional development opportunities, and an excellent benefits package.

van Beuren Charitable Foundation has retained the services of Lincoln Leadership ([www.lincolnleadership.co](http://www.lincolnleadership.co)) to conduct this search. For those interested in the search or to recommend someone for the role, please contact confidentially Andrew C. Wheeler, Founder & President, at (267) 257-1910 or [awheeler@lincolnleadership.co](mailto:awheeler@lincolnleadership.co). For best consideration, please apply by March 1, 2022.