



Vice President, Program

St. Paul, Minnesota

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf)** stands alongside changemakers in its region of eight states and 76 Native nations and funds work that leads to racial, social, and economic justice. The eight states include Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. The Foundation's driving vision is that the people of its priority communities—including Native Americans, communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and people in rural areas—thrive on their own terms. A key motivation is to support grantee partners that change unjust systems to serve, support, and heal their communities.

As we all move forward changed from the relatively recent and ongoing crises—a pandemic, economic turmoil, the upsurge for racial justice in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, and mounting pressures on priority communities—the Foundation continues to deepen its commitment to supporting grantee-led change.

Internally, it has made measurable progress to strengthen justice-centered systems designed to support a deeply engaged staff and build an inclusive culture and belonging. At this critical juncture in time, the Foundation seeks a new **Vice President, Program (VPP)** to lead its Program team, which conducts grantmaking and makes program-related investments (PRIs) to support the mission. The VPP will lead a team that currently includes five Program Officers, two Program Coordinators, and a Program Operations Manager. The VPP works closely with the CEO to develop and implement the Foundation's funding approach and serves as the lead staff to the Board of Directors' Program Committee. The VPP also works closely with the CFO to execute the Foundation's impact investing strategy, which includes both PRIs as well as market-rate mission-related investments (MRIs). As a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the VPP will collaborate cross functionally with peers leading the communications, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI), finance and operations, and HR functions for the organization. As a representative of the Foundation with key stakeholders, including grantee partners, communities, and philanthropic peers, the VPP will deepen connections to the field and spearhead the Foundation's evaluation efforts.

This position is hybrid with in-person office time required at least two days a week, specifically on Wednesdays and Thursdays, for collaborative time with colleagues. Foundation staff may work from home, or in other work-friendly environments, on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays.

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST AREA FOUNDATION

NWAf is a private foundation originally established in 1934 by Louis W. Hill, son of the railroad entrepreneur James J. Hill, whose Great Northern Railway linked the Twin Cities of Minnesota to the emerging cities of the Pacific Northwest, Seattle, and Portland, OR. Currently, its assets are near \$500 million, annual budget

is around \$25 million, and its staff consists of 20+ people. NAAF's values represent not just who it is, but who it aspires to be, in decisions both big and small. **The six organizational values are: social justice, grantees come first, trust, listen and learn for change, heart, and courage.** The Foundation is committed to hiring individuals who contribute to a richly diverse workplace. Hiring decisions are guided by the Foundation's commitment to support grantees, who are led by and for Native Americans, communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and people in rural areas and create changes to policies, practices, and beliefs that overcome injustice and allow their communities to thrive on their own terms.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM

Reporting to the CEO and working in close partnership with the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Directors, the VPP will have opportunities to make immediate measurable impact on the work of the Foundation in the following ways:

Provide vision and Program leadership to advance the mission of NAAF.

- Lead the Foundation's Program team, overseeing grantmaking and PRIs to advance the mission alongside our priority communities. Work closely with the CEO to develop and implement strategic funding approaches and serve as lead staff liaison to the Program Committee of the Board of Directors.
- Shape and oversee all aspects of Program activities, including grantmaking, capacity building, convenings, and evaluation. Partner with the CEO and Senior Leadership Team in shaping and operationalizing NAAF's strategy and fostering a culture aligned with NAAF's values to realize a vision in which all the people in its priority communities thrive on their own terms.
- Forge and nurture strong relationships with diverse allies—peer foundations, government agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector—to enhance community impact and develop regular feedback loops that deepen and broaden the Foundation's understanding of its impact. Inspire community, regional, and national leaders about its mission, vision, values, and program goals, to build support for its priorities.
- Work closely with the Communications Director to find ways to activate and inspire peers in the Foundation's network of influence, lift up grantee stories, identify program-related activities that should be complemented by strategic communications, and elevate NAAF's theory of change to serve as a model for the field.

Align Program team activities with values to foster collaboration, trust, and accountability in all that the Foundation does.

- Build and maintain strong, collaborative relationships between the Program team and other departments, creating a seamless and supportive environment in which everyone contributes to the success of NAAF strategies and realization of the theory of change.
- Ensure that all internal and external practices within the Program department align with the Foundation's JEDI action plan, holding the team accountable to its values, and creating brave space for dialogue, commitment to learning, continuous reflection, and improvement.

- Supervise the Program team, guiding its work to align with the organization’s vision while fostering individual professional growth and development. Cultivate and empower a dynamic Program team, ensuring each member thrives through strong coaching, leadership, and guidance. Co-create and model efforts to create a workplace that fosters equity, inclusion, and belonging; promotes learning; and enables team members to show up authentically and do their best work.

Guide strategy, evaluation, and learning across the Program team and the Foundation to drive progress toward NWF’s vision.

- Lead the ongoing development and refinement of the strategic grantmaking approach, ensuring the Program team’s work is aligned with long-term objectives and that initiatives are effectively developed and implemented.
- Stay informed on key funding issues at both regional and national levels, ensuring that NWF is positioned to lead and innovate. Represent the Foundation to a broad range of partners, leaders, and collaborators across its priority states and communities.
- Provide thought leadership and new perspectives to the work of the Foundation, guided by grantee partners’ lived experiences.
- Partner with the CEO and CFO to leverage all NWF’s assets toward its mission and vision, including PRIs managed by the Program team alongside MRIs.

Continually enhance Program excellence and impact by ensuring effectiveness of all grantmaking systems, coordination across functional teams, and responsiveness to grantee feedback.

- In partnership with the Program Operations Manager, work to align external grantmaking with internal processes and timelines. Develop, implement, and oversee processes and protocols that promote effective coordination and a spirit of collaboration between Program staff and colleagues across the functional areas of the Foundation.
- Review and refine grantmaking systems, coordinate initiatives, and oversee request for proposal (RFP) processes, ensuring grantmaking runs smoothly from start to finish.
- Take a hands-on approach to evaluating grant proposals, drafting reviews, and providing oversight on reviews from other team members to ensure quality and alignment with team goals. As needed, the VPP will also serve as a Program Officer for selected grant partnerships.
- Design and oversee comprehensive Program evaluation efforts in order to assess and enhance the effectiveness and impact of the Foundation’s work.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS

The VPP will bring a deep and demonstrated commitment to racial, social, and economic justice; a creative and adaptive leadership style; and a proven record of leading teams and programs in a values-driven environment. Strong candidates will be collaborative, optimistic, and able to lead staff toward clarity and decisions amidst ambiguity and change. They will be adept at building relationships across diverse contexts and cultures and able to respond to challenges with clarity, humility, and diplomacy.



Strong candidates will possess many, but likely not all, of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

Vision and Values Alignment

- Understanding of and experience with **incorporating equity and justice into the workplace, and in relationships with community partners**. A deep commitment to supporting and uplifting the expertise of priority communities and addressing structural bias. Works effectively with individuals of diverse cultures, interpersonal styles, abilities, motivations, or backgrounds, while also challenging practices or policies that may be exclusionary.
- **Leads with heart**. Holds high emotional intelligence and authentically leads with empathy, humility, compassion, and love.
- Vision for and commitment to the way philanthropy can **build deeper relationships with and accountability for** the communities it serves. Reputation among peers as an **expert advisor** on topics of direct relevance to this role and the Foundation's grantmaking portfolio.
- Lived or work experience with one or more of the Foundation's **priority communities**. Ability to authentically connect their own personal lived and professional experiences with the Foundation's mission and values.

Program and People Management

- Demonstrated success in **developing, implementing, and managing a grantmaking program**, preferably within NWAF's region and priority communities.
- Experience with and some understanding of both **PRIs and MRIs** and the role that each play in the amplification of a foundation's mission.
- Experience leading a team and building a **collaborative, team-based environment** that respects and encourages the contributions of all staff.
- Experience **managing multiple priorities**, organizing and prioritizing tasks, managing time efficiently, meeting deadlines, working independently, managing budgets, and collaborating with colleagues.
- Ability to bring **innovation and a learning orientation** to programs and systems that advance racial, social, and economic justice. Experience in **program development and analysis**, reaching conclusions, and communicating recommendations.
- **Creative and critical thinking**, including experience holding large amounts of information about context and trends related to the Foundation's funding—or for priority communities or a large geographic region—and experience drawing on that knowledge base to make connections and offer ideas about how to improve work.

Effective Communications

- **Experience creating welcoming and inviting spaces for dialogue**, showing respect and solidarity with the work people are doing, inspiring trust, and nurturing authentic partnerships. Brings an orientation of **listening to learn** and asking organizations about their vision for the future, their aspirations, and how they incorporate JEDI into their work.
- Experience **communicating to a variety of audiences**, including making small-group and public presentations and producing clear and compelling written documents. Experience interacting with a board of directors or a smaller committee of a board. Familiarity with storytelling, including the ability to share the story of the Foundation's and partners' work in ways that speak to various

audiences, while making sure the humanity of the work shines through. A deep commitment to supporting and uplifting the expertise of the Foundation's priority communities.

Additional Desired Qualifications

- A minimum of **ten years'** experience, including **five years** of management experience, in the nonprofit, philanthropic, public, or private sector, working toward economic, social, and/or racial justice, preferably within NWAf's region and priority communities.
- **Experience with or interest in learning various technology and software programs**, including Microsoft Office Suite, Google documents, Zoom, Salesforce, and other grants management software, etc.
- **Active driver's license**, an essential component of the travel requirements of this role (see next section).
- **Post-secondary degree is preferred**, but individuals with lived and/or professional experience related to the core functions of this opportunity are encouraged to apply.

EXPECTED TRAVEL

Travel is a core expectation of this role, whether for purposes of relationship building, grant monitoring, participation in the annual Board retreat and Board meetings outside of St. Paul, and representation of the Foundation at conferences. Travel commitments are expected to range from 20-25% of work time.

In summary:

- Occasional travel is required.
- The VPP can expect to travel about 20-25% of work time, or approximately once per month, and more heavily from time to time when required for program development or monitoring.
- Travel includes site visits to grantee and PRI partners, and attending conferences and Board meetings.
- A typical schedule includes 9-10 trips annually, each lasting 2-3 days. Travel days often require work outside of typical business hours.
- Travel includes air travel and travel by car.
- Travel is domestic, primarily in NWAf's region, which includes travel to rural and remote parts of the region.



WORK ENVIRONMENT

- The Foundation operates in a hybrid environment. Employees are expected to be in the office at least two days per week, on Wednesdays and Thursdays, with the option to work from home up to three days per week in accordance with NWAf policies. The in-person work environment is an office setting with a designated workspace at the Foundation's office in St. Paul, MN.
- This position requires regular use of a computer and other office equipment and communication technology such as videoconferencing equipment, telephone, copy machine, and printer.
- Work is performed in an office environment with minimal exposure to excessive noise, dust, fumes,

vibrations, and temperature changes, and frequent use of office equipment including computers, printers, and copiers.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the principal duties and responsibilities of the position in accordance with applicable law and NWAf policies.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The VPP is a full-time, exempt position reporting to the CEO. NWAf offers a competitive and holistic package that includes salary and benefits. The anticipated starting salary for this position is in the range of \$185,000 – \$230,000.

The actual starting salary will be commensurate with the years, breadth, and depth of relevant experience, education, certifications, credentials, special skills, accomplishments, and other factors relevant to the position.

NWAf's benefits are generous and include:

- Competitive compensation, including relocation support when applicable.
- Strong medical, dental, and life insurance benefits for staff and their dependents with competitive monthly premiums and flexible spending accounts.
- Minimum of four weeks of paid time off and 12 floating holidays.
- Sabbatical program.
- Retirement programs, including 403(b) matching at 50% of deferrals up to annual maximum of \$5,000, with access to financial planning resources.
- Money-purchase pension plan, after one year of service, in which NWAf makes a generous contribution that vests over a four-year period.
- Matching gift program for charitable donations, one-to-one match up to \$2,000.
- Additional benefits such as an employee assistance plan, paid parental leave, and tuition reimbursement.

TO APPLY

More about **Northwest Area Foundation** may be found at: www.nwaf.org.

This search is being led by [Allison Kupfer Poteet](#), [Phuong Quach](#), and [Andres Marcuse-Gonzalez](#) of NPAG. Candidates may submit their cover letter, outlining their interest and qualifications, along with their resume via NPAG's [website](#) by **Wednesday, January 8, 2025**. NPAG welcomes expressions of interest, questions and/or nominations [submitted via this form](#).

An Equal-Opportunity Employer with a commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

NWAf is an equal opportunity employer and all employees and applicants for employment are afforded equal opportunity in every area of hiring and employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, age, disability, mental illness, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, genetics, military/veteran status, citizenship, arrest record, and any other legally protected characteristic.

The above statements are not intended to encompass all functions and qualifications of the position; rather, they are intended to provide a general framework of the position's requirements. Job incumbents may be required to perform other functions not specifically addressed in this description.