

THE SUSAN THOMPSON BUFFETT FOUNDATION

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OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68131

402-943-1300

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
Research and Evaluation Officer(s)

Application Deadline:

Friday, 16 October 2015 by 10pm EST

Employment Opportunity: **The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation (STBF)**

Position: **Research and Evaluation Officer(s)**

Reporting to: **Director of Research and Evaluation, Dr. Sandra G. Garcia**

Background

The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation is a private grant-making foundation based in Omaha, Nebraska. With assets in excess of \$3 billion, we are among the largest foundations in the U.S. Our core mission is to prevent unintended pregnancy and ensure access to safe abortion in the U.S. and internationally. We are dedicated to improving the lives of women and families through reproductive choice that is dignified, respectful of women's fertility desires, and evidence-based. Equally important is our long-standing commitment to creating college opportunities for low-income Nebraska high school students who reflect the core values of our loving benefactor, the late Susan Thompson Buffett. Since the early 1960s, the Foundation's Scholarship Program has supported this aspect of our mission.

Compared to the size of its grant-making, the Foundation is relatively non-bureaucratic and small in staff size. A hallmark of our Foundation is that we constantly challenge ourselves and our grantees to "think big," but to do so critically and carefully – by questioning, piloting, reflecting, learning, and putting learning to effective use. We are not afraid to fail or change our approach in light of new learnings. We regard our investments as partnerships, and therefore regard our grantees as our partners. We seek to work with our grantees thoughtfully and with humility.

STB Foundation culture and values

Founded in 1964 by Warren Buffett and the late Susan Thompson Buffett, the Foundation is committed wholeheartedly to supporting their vision for creating a better world – one in which people are ever more loving, healthy, educated, and respectful to each other. As we work in Susie's name, we are especially cognizant of safe-guarding her vision, generosity of spirit, and ethical code of conduct. These are paramount to our Foundation family and we welcome applicants with a genuine understanding of, and appreciation for, the significance of these values and aspirations.

R&E Unit role and tasks

The International, U.S., and Scholarship Programs carry out the Foundation's grant-making. International Program priorities center primarily on reproductive health service-delivery and training. Within the U.S. Program, priority areas include reproductive health service-delivery and training, as well as research and advocacy. Within the Scholarship Program, the ongoing strategic focus is on maximizing the potential of the scholarships to improve college/university graduation rates among recipients. The Research and Evaluation (R&E) Unit provides technical support and guidance to each of these three Programs on select research and evaluation projects. The R&E Unit itself does not carry out original research or conduct large-scale evaluations of Foundation projects.

The R&E Unit supports the Foundation's Programs by providing technical support pertaining to research and/or evaluation-related questions. In close coordination with our Program staff (and at times their grantee partners), the R&E Unit works to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the Foundation's grants by advising on the best uses of methodologically rigorous research and evaluation techniques.

Our support to Programs on R&E related projects can run the gamut from guiding early stages of idea-generation and conceptualization, to helping partners think through methodological and data analysis approaches, to providing strategic guidance on the utilization of evaluation results. The objective of this assistance is to enable the Foundation (and its grantees) to carry out programming and decision-making that is guided by evidence of what works and what does not work.

Examples include: searching for and synthesizing scientific literature on a particular topic of interest; developing internal memos to provide a technical assessment of (and make recommendations regarding) a particular study design, methodological or analytical approach and/or study tool; helping Programs formulate research questions, hypotheses, and outcomes on evaluations of interest; and occasionally assisting with the analysis of quantitative or qualitative data generated by the routine monitoring activities carried out by our Program staff for internal purposes.

In addition, given the Foundation's unwavering commitment to effective grant-making, and in an effort to always be responsible stewards of Foundation resources, the R&E Unit is often called upon by Program staff to lead the search for external expert evaluators to assess potential impacts of major areas of grant-making. As a part of this effort, the R&E Unit may serve as the technical interface between external evaluators, Foundation Program staff, and grantees.

The R&E Unit is represented on the Foundation's senior leadership team and supports the Foundation's ongoing high-level strategic planning, particularly at the intersection of Program activities and R&E activities.

The R&E team

Currently, the R&E Unit is composed of a Director, two R&E Officers and one Administrative Assistant. This team supports the President and staff across the International, U.S. and Scholarship Programs. We seek to recruit two additional R&E Officers to join our Unit, and our Foundation family. Because of our relatively small staff size (the Unit's and the Foundation's), the success of the R&E team depends on highly qualified individuals who work well independently and who, at the same time, are authentic about teamwork within the Unit, with our Program staff, and with grantees. Specific project assignments among the team are determined on a case-by-case basis. To date, current R&E Officers work across all three Programs simultaneously.

R&E Officer position description

Perhaps the most exciting, rewarding, and also challenging aspect of this job is that the Unit's research and evaluation-related technical support to Program staff and grantees is too diverse to capture fully with a succinct list of "duties and responsibilities." The examples provided above are illustrative, not exhaustive. Similarly, because the R&E Unit is a relatively fresh creation of the Foundation, our work continues to evolve and expand in new and non-traditional ways. Indeed each member proactively contributes to shaping the vision and scope of the Unit's direction. At the same time, there are sufficient structures and processes in place to support our team's growth and development in a thoughtful, well-organized, and constructive way.

Ideal R&E Officers: Our ideal candidates will have a passion for the Foundation's mission; embody the values and ethical code of conduct of our benefactor; possess relevant academic training and a demonstrated understanding of the methods of scientific inquiry; have a strong mix of both theoretical and applied research and evaluation experience, and demonstrate an understanding for how to operationalize the Unit's Program support role.

Required personal characteristics: We seek applicants with sterling professional integrity and a strong work ethic. We will only consider applicants who are kind and empathetic, and who work well with others, but who are also able to communicate and enforce a firm position when needed – with respect and collegiality. To do this job well requires having a flexible, adaptable, and creative disposition. We warmly welcome anyone who loves to laugh and who enjoys the thrill of a job that is neither "cookie-cutter" nor routine. This job requires individuals who know how to work confidently and with humility.

What we offer: R&E Officers have the opportunity to shape the Unit's assignments, while continuing to meet the R&E needs of the Programs. To help ensure continuous opportunities for professional growth and development, – an important consideration for a Foundation whose staff is as small as this one – the R&E Director works concertedly with her team to find new ways to challenge them to continuously expand their learning. Broadly, the Foundation offers a unique opportunity to engage with talented and passionate staff and grantees from across the world. Based on an honor system, the Foundation offers flexibility to staff aimed at ensuring a healthy work/life balance within a friendly and non-bureaucratic work environment.

Qualifications

Applicants must be interested in, and committed to, reproductive rights and health internationally and in the U.S. Field experience in the developing areas of the world is a plus.

We will select R&E Officers from among top candidates representing professionals with a range of social science backgrounds, levels of expertise, academic training, and applied research and/or evaluation experience. Interested applicants must have a graduate degree at the master's or doctoral level (or equivalent terminal degree) and at least 5+ years of experience in designing and conducting research and/or evaluations; analyzing data; interpreting results; and applying lessons learned, preferably in the fields of public health, public policy, and the social or health sciences, such as, but not limited to: demography, economics, international development, medical sciences, and sociology.

Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and applications of descriptive and inferential statistics, regression analysis, sampling and power calculations, and experimental design (including randomized control trials). Familiarity with modern statistical packages (*e.g.*, Stata, SAS, R, SPSS) is required. Though not required, extensive experience programming in statistical packages is a plus. With respect to qualitative research skills, we seek applicants who are familiar with the design and analysis of in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document content analysis. Ideal applicants will possess a mix of both quantitative and qualitative skills.

Excellent writing, communication, and inter-personal skills are required, as is demonstrated experience at being a constructive team member. Applicants must be willing to travel as needed, about 30%. Having published in peer-reviewed journals is desirable but not required.

Location

These positions will be based in Omaha, Nebraska in the heart of the United States. Omaha is a midsize city replete with opportunities for those who enjoy the outdoors, art, and good local food and music (for more information, see [here](#) and [here](#)). Residence in Omaha is non-negotiable. Non-U.S. citizens must have a valid U.S. residential or work permit.

Compensation and benefits

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. The Foundation offers a full and generous benefits package, including medical/dental insurance and a retirement program.

Application process and deadline

Interested applicants are asked to respond as soon as possible by sending a Vitae (or resume) and a cover letter to the attention of Dr. Sandra G. Garcia, Director of Research and Evaluation at the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, 222 Kiewit Plaza, Omaha, NE 68131, **OR by email** to: admin@stbfoundation.org. Application materials are due **no later than 10pm EST on Friday, 16 October 2015**.

Applications without a cover letter will not be reviewed. References, writing samples and other information may be requested at a later date. Semi-finalists may be asked to submit a brief essay or technical exercise, as well as participate in telephone interviews with R&E staff. Finalists may be invited to interview in-person at the Foundation.

Individuals interested in conducting research studies and generating publications are advised not to apply.