



# THE SUSAN THOMPSON BUFFETT FOUNDATION

## Senior Research and Evaluation Officer

Omaha, Nebraska

### OVERVIEW

The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation is a private grant-making foundation based in Omaha, Nebraska. With assets in excess of \$3 billion, it is among the largest foundations in the United States. The Foundation's core mission is to prevent unintended pregnancy and ensure access to safe abortion in the U.S. and internationally. It is 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 its long-standing commitment to creating college opportunities for low-income Nebraska high school students who reflect the values of its loving benefactor, the late Susan Thompson Buffett. These objectives are carried out through grant-making by the Foundation's U.S., International, and Scholarship Programs.

Compared to the size of its grant-making portfolio, the Foundation operates with a lean and efficient staff. A hallmark of its culture and approach is to constantly challenge itself and grantees to "think big" but to do so critically and carefully – by questioning, piloting, reflecting, learning, and putting that learning to effective use. The Foundation has built an environment in which people are not afraid to fail or change their approach in light of new evidence and information. Investments are seen as partnerships, entered into and executed thoughtfully and with humility.

The new Senior Research and Evaluation Officer (SREO) will join a thriving team as a core member of the Research and Evaluation Unit. S/he will take responsibility for leading mission-critical planning, research, and evaluation-related activities across the Foundation in collaboration with R&E colleagues, Program staff, grantees, and evaluation partners. Working under the direction of the Director of Research and Evaluation, the SREO will provide expertise, guidance, and standards for measurement and evaluation activities for her/his assigned programs. S/he will work with evaluation teams on the design and development of measures, metrics, and data systems, and along with Program staff, will facilitate evaluator and partner relationships to ensure consistent procedures and practices and a rigorous culture of data-informed decision making. S/he will serve as a credible and articulate spokesperson for evaluation findings, and will contribute to broader conversations about the implications of such findings.

The ideal candidate will be an innovative and interdisciplinary thinker with knowledge and experience relevant to the Foundation's programmatic areas. S/he will have a broad mastery of quantitative and qualitative evaluation methodologies and a demonstrated ability to design and implement new evaluation approaches. S/he will be proactive and have excellent interpersonal skills with which to support Foundation colleagues and partners. The SREO will bring a strong team orientation, the ability to adapt quickly to change, and demonstrated success working effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds. A terminal graduate degree is strongly preferred and extensive work and leadership experience in research and evaluation is required. Although candidates with a broad range of relevant expertise are encouraged to apply, the Foundation has a preference for those who have substantial research and evaluation experience internationally.

The Foundation is conducting this search with assistance from Vice President Allison Kupfer Poteet and Senior Associate Cara Pearsall of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group. Please see instructions for applying at the end of this document.



## FOUNDATION HISTORY AND MISSION

Founded in 1964 by Warren Buffett and the late Susan Thompson Buffett, the Foundation is committed to supporting their vision for creating a better world – one in which people are ever more loving, healthy, educated, and respectful to each other. The Foundation seeks to improve the lives of women and families through the work of its International, U.S., and Scholarship Programs. Across International and U.S. Programs, priorities include reproductive health service-delivery, training, research, and advocacy. The Scholarship Program focuses on maximizing the potential of the scholarships to improve college graduation rates among Nebraska students.

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The Research and Evaluation Unit (R&E Unit) is a dynamic team of six members who help drive learning across the Foundation by providing technical support and guidance related to research and evaluation to the U.S., International, and Scholarship Programs. In close coordination with Program staff and their grantee partners, the R&E Unit works to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the Foundation's grant-making by advising on the best uses of methodologically rigorous research and evaluation techniques. The R&E Unit provides wide-ranging support to the Programs, from guiding the early stages of research and evaluation-related idea-generation and conceptualization, to helping partners think through methodological and analytic approaches, to providing strategic guidance on the utilization of evaluation results. Typical R&E tasks include: conducting literature reviews; providing technical assessments and offering study design recommendations; helping Programs and grantees formulate research questions and hypotheses; and assisting with the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data for Program staff's routine monitoring activities. Additionally, the R&E Unit is engaged by the Programs to commission expert external evaluators to assess the potential impact of major areas of grant-making. As a part of this effort, the Unit serves as the technical interface between external evaluators, Program staff, and grantees. The R&E Unit itself does not carry out original research, conduct evaluations of Foundation projects, or publish.

## RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SENIOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OFFICER

Reporting to the Director of Research and Evaluation, the SREO will:

***Provide strategic guidance and technical expertise on research and evaluation to the Programs.*** In collaboration with the Programs, the SREO will help determine the evaluation needs of particular projects, commission those evaluations, and then work with selected evaluation teams to develop their methodologies and analysis plans. S/he will support Programs' efforts at continuous improvement and calibration where necessary based on new learning and findings. Related work of the SREO will include: providing technical assessments and recommendations for study design, methodologies and/or tools, and analytic approaches; supporting Programs and grantees in the formulation of research questions, hypotheses, and outcomes; leading the search for expert external evaluation teams; and assisting in the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data generated by Programs to drive internal monitoring, decision making, and strategy.

***Steward relationships with external evaluation partners.*** The SREO will be a trusted support and advisor to the Foundation's external evaluation partners, offering guidance on design, methodology, and strategy, ensuring alignment with programmatic objectives, and verifying that milestones and objectives are met and that work products are held to the highest standards. S/he will model collaborative and transparent



communication and ensure that the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion remain central when engaging with all partners.

***Support the R&E Unit's operations and strategic development.*** The SREO will promote a learning environment that fosters rigor and collaboration organization-wide. S/he will assist the Director of Research and Evaluation to mentor professional staff on the R&E team as needed, and model best practices that reflect the highest standards of excellence and integrity in work and partner interactions. S/he will support the Foundation's overall research and evaluation strategy.

## WHAT WE OFFER

The Foundation offers a unique opportunity to engage with talented and passionate staff and partners from around the world. Based on an honor system, staff have flexibility to ensure a healthy work/life balance within a friendly and non-bureaucratic environment. The SREO will have the opportunity to shape the R&E Unit's assignments while continuing to meet the needs of the Programs. To help ensure opportunities for professional growth and development, the Director of Research and Evaluation works concertedly with her team to find new ways to challenge them and continuously expand their learning.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate will possess most of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- A deep and demonstrated commitment to the Foundation's mission to advance access to contraception and abortion, and through this mission support women and families in the U.S. and worldwide.
- At least 8-10 years of experience coordinating research and evaluation projects that demonstrate growing professional responsibility over time with a strong grounding in both theory and application.
- Experience living and working in developing countries. Demonstrated sensitivity and an appreciation for cross-cultural identities, traditions, and dynamics.
- Expertise in relevant fields of social or health sciences such as, but not limited to: public health, public policy, demography, economics, international development, and sociology.
- Expert quantitative analysis skills, including a demonstrated understanding of the concepts and applications of descriptive and inferential statistics, regression analysis, sampling and power calculations, and experimental design (including randomized control trials). Fluency with modern statistical packages (*e.g.*, Stata, SAS, R, SPSS) (required). Extensive experience programming in statistical packages (preferred).
- Strong qualitative analysis skills including expertise in design and analysis of in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document content analysis.
- A proactive and engaging personality and an interest in seeking out answers and connections. Demonstrated ability to work closely with team members, establish relationships, and promote a sense of community.



- Excellent writing, editing, analytic, and oral communication skills, including the ability to collect, review, synthesize, and present information and findings to diverse audiences with myriad perspectives.
- Intellectual curiosity and an ability to succeed in a demanding environment. Personal integrity, high professional standards, and an ability to establish mutual accountability and respect.
- Energetic, collaborative, flexible style; a natural communicator with highly developed emotional intelligence; a sense of humor and collegiality that makes the work fun.
- A willingness to travel as needed, with an expectation of approximately 30%.

*Please note that though a terminal degree is strongly preferred, candidates with a Master's degree in the social sciences, and who have substantial professional experience, will be considered. Having published in peer-reviewed journals is desirable but not required.*

## TO APPLY

The Foundation is conducting this search with assistance from Vice President Allison Kupfer Poteet and Senior Associate Cara Pearsall of Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group.

Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply *as soon as possible*. To apply, please send a detailed cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, your resume (in Word format), and where you learned of the position to: [stbf-sreo@nonprofitprofessionals.com](mailto:stbf-sreo@nonprofitprofessionals.com)

*As an Equal Opportunity Employer, the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation is deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and actively seeks individuals who can offer broader perspectives to our organizational thinking and culture.*

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