

# Deputy Director

## BlackStar Projects

### **Organizational Description**

BlackStar is filmmaker-centric, Black-founded, and Black-led organization that brings an intersectional analysis of race, gender and power into the work of providing high-quality opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) artists and critics, and thoughtfully curated experiences for audiences. Founded to focus on the work of Black filmmakers (of the African diaspora), we are now dedicated to solidarity across artists and communities of color, including Black, Asian, Latinx, Arab, Native and Indigenous, while still grounding our work in countering anti-Black racism. We recognize the power of storytelling, whether it be in journalistic, narrative or experimental context, in forming public opinion which in turn forms public policy. We are part of a larger movement of cultural organizing that uses arts and culture as a vital component in rectifying historical imbalances and creating a more equitable world.

BlackStar is focused on the following issues:

- POC Authorship and not individual representation
- Aesthetic quality over celebrity
- Supporting a POC artists community, not just producing an event
- Curating a high quality and accessible program

BlackStar's primary activity to date has been a four-day annual film festival that presents genre-defying independent work predominantly outside of the mainstream, engages filmmakers with new audiences, and provides a platform for collaboration among artists. The Philadelphia-based festival has expanded beyond traditional offerings of non-fiction, journalistic, narrative and experimental screenings, to include artist conversations, panel discussions, a catalog of essays and festival guide, parties and receptions open to the public. BlackStar's curatorial perspective places film in the context of documentary, journalism, contemporary art, and visual culture more broadly, and the festival itself provides curated and accessible experiences for diverse audiences that are often left on their own to navigate through the plethora of online content.

After nearly a decade of well-received work, focused around the annual film festival, we have expanded our programs substantially based on requests from the artists and audiences with

whom we most consistently engage. They've encouraged us (and in some cases lobbied us) to expand our one-day artists' retreat into a weeklong event (the forthcoming Filmmaker Seminar), expand our festival program catalogues into a regularly produced publication (the forthcoming journal, *Seen*), continue producing visual and performance art exhibitions, build a fiscal sponsorship program, produce a podcast, establish a Local Filmmaker Lab, and produce year-round programs.

## **The Search**

The Deputy Director is a new role at the organization. We hired our first staff in January 2020 and after nearly a year have realized we need additional capacity and administrative function. The Deputy Director position will work in partnership with the Artistic Director/CEO and a development consultant on all fundraising, serving often as the chief representative of the organization in meetings. Fundraising is currently split between the Artistic Director/CEO (foundations and major gifts), Operations Director (individuals and membership), and Communications Director (corporate sponsorship), the deputy will take on all three areas, but be supported by the other directors. The Deputy Director will work with the Operations Director on grant reporting and collaboratively on financial matters, specifically budgeting and reporting. Working closely with BlackStar's small, highly engaged staff, board, and consultants, the Deputy Director will be expected to help guide and manage the organization as it continues to hone its strategies, evaluate its effectiveness, and deepen its impact. The Deputy Director will also manage the fiscal sponsorship program. While not a programmatic position, the deputy is expected to be familiar with all programs and keep themselves abreast of developments within the organization and the field.

The role calls for excellent strategic and intellectual abilities, political instincts, and analytic skills. It also requires strong communication and management skills, and deep respect for the values and approaches that the organization pursues. The Deputy Director must have talents in both strategy and implementation and a gift for building and sustaining connections with diverse individuals and organizations. Experience in grantwriting and management is also important.

The ideal candidate will bring a track record building programs and raising money for a small-to mid-sized non-profit organization or as an independent film producer. Experience as a filmmaker is preferred, as is knowledge of the non-profit arts field. Candidates should have interests in BlackStar's three key areas – filmmaking, visual arts, and media arts – as well as a demonstrated commitment to intersectional feminism and social justice.

## **Job Description**

The Deputy Director will report to and work hand-in-glove with the Artistic Director/CEO and will serve as a thought partner and sounding board for her and other colleagues in the strategic design and growth of the organization, in implementing its strategies, and especially in tracking progress against them. The Deputy Director will oversee the day-to-day work of the organization's development team and serve as the go-to person for key fundraising decisions and management.

## **Specific/Key Responsibilities**

### Fundraising

- Develop and execute BlackStar Projects' annual fundraising plan
- Secure financial support from individuals, foundations and corporations
- Manage the implementation of FileMaker Pro and oversee staff responsible for data entry and gift processing
- Develop and maintain ongoing relationships with major donors
- Creating and executing a strategy for a large sustained base of annual individual donors
- Overseeing organization of special events
- Developing and tracking proposals and reports for all foundation and corporate fundraising with assistance from Development Consultant
- Pilot new initiatives for the organization as requested by the Artistic Director/CEO.

### Management

- Develop annual operations plan for programs, in alignment with organizational and strategic plan.
- Recruit, train, supervise, support leadership development of staff.
- Manage budget development, modifications, and monitoring.
- Prepare reports for the Board of Directors.
- Participate in organizational strategic planning, Board Committee work, and staff retreats, as appropriate.
- Promote a supportive and open office culture with clearly defined responsibilities, policies, systems, and procedures.
- Oversee the vetting and selection of outside consultants.

### Communications and Advocacy

- Work closely with the Communications Director to maintain a visible public presence of BlackStar, including effective representation and dissemination of information about programs and mission.
- Develop relationships with key individuals and peer organizations in BlackStar Project's orbit, locally, regionally and nationally.
- Represent the organization in the community, both as the point person on trustee-initiated grants and on other matters as appropriate. Help maintain and grow networks that inform and increase the effectiveness of its work.
- Help ensure that the organization stays agile and responsive to changing conditions, political realities, and unexpected challenges.

## **Qualifications and Experience**

For this important role, BlackStar seeks a leader who is deeply committed to our mission and vision. Experience in arts administration is essential and the more fundraising and management experience, the better. BlackStar has a tradition of being comfortable with ambiguity; it experiments and innovates and then follows up with reflection. Therefore, the Deputy Director must be astute enough to ask the right questions to keep BlackStar adapting and on the learning edge. The position also calls for collaborative management and team leadership skills, as well as an eye for detail and an interest and patience with internal operations and administration.

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- Informed passion for BlackStar's mission, vision, and values. A demonstrated commitment to working for social, racial, gender, economic, and environmental justice.
- Excellent strategic and intellectual abilities and analytic skill coupled with pragmatism and a roll-up-one's-sleeves attitude. Sound judgment. A willingness to innovate and learn from mistakes made along the way.
- Deep experience and strengths in evaluation and technical assistance.
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills. A communication style that is direct.
- Impeccable integrity, honesty, and a reputation for a balanced, non-ideological approach. A willingness to challenge conventional thinking coupled with the ability to collaborate effectively, listen well, and bridge philosophies.
- Substantial experience in designing, delivering, or supporting initiatives and programs to enhance community. A breadth of program experience is preferred over specialization.
- An understanding of filmmaking and/or non-profit arts administration, and of the history of BIPOC participation in the field.

- Entrepreneurial spirit and drive. An eye for creative, strategic opportunities tied to a commitment to accountability and results.
- Experience working comfortably and effectively with well-known and highly visible individuals across a broad spectrum of industries.
- Solid skills and experience in staff leadership, administration, financial management, budgeting, and planning. Comfort with technology.
- An outgoing, open, and optimistic personality. Outstanding interpersonal skills. Tenacity, pragmatism, high energy, patience, and good humor.
- An advanced degree in a relevant field would be an asset.

## Compensation

The salary will be commensurate with experience and the range will start at \$65,000. BlackStar's benefits package includes but is not limited to medical, dental, and vision coverage, paid time off and public holidays, and reimbursements for home office utilities. The position is headquartered at BlackStar's offices in Philadelphia but will be remote until further notice and pending health and safety measures during the global pandemic.

## Timeframe

We seek to have a Deputy Director in place by January 2021.

Applicants should be legally able to work in the United States. While the job can be currently performed from anywhere, candidates will be expected to be available, at a minimum, during EST business hours and relocate to Philadelphia when the organization returns to an office environment (currently anticipating Fall 2021).

## How to Apply

Applications should be submitted via email as a single PDF and include a resume, one page cover letter, and writing addendum. **Material received by October 23 will be assured full consideration.** All applications will be kept confidential. Send material to [jobs@blackstarfest.org](mailto:jobs@blackstarfest.org) with the subject header: "BlackStar – Deputy Director".

Please also include an addendum with answers to at least two (2) and no more than three (3) of the following prompts (each answer should be a single paragraph of no more than 250 words):

- If you could adapt any book or play, that has yet to be adopted into a film, what would it be and why?
- If you could re-cast *The Wiz* today who would you choose to play Dorothy, Scarecrow, Lion, Tin Man, and The Wizard and why?
- In your opinion what would most help independent filmmakers of color?
- Required to choose one, which would you say is your favorite Spike Lee film and why?
- Tasked with creating a public conversation between an older established artist and a younger emergent one (of the same discipline), who would you choose and what would you want them to discuss?
- What is your favorite film screened at BlackStar since 2012? Why?
- Which rapper or musician do you most wish would become an actor?

*Applications that fail to include the addendum or follow instructions will not be considered.*

BlackStar Projects is committed to the principles of equal opportunity employment at every level without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital or familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity characteristics or expression, age, non-job related disability, or political affiliation.