Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab
GPL Assistant Director, Opportunity Accelerator

The Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab is seeking an Assistant Director to serve as the project lead for the Opportunity Accelerator Initiative. Opportunity Accelerator (OA) is a national initiative focused on building the capacity of government to achieve better economic mobility outcomes for residents. OA strategies include diagnosing and remedying service gaps, centering racial equity and community voice in decision-making, implementing performance management approaches that align provider and government goals to meet community needs, and collaborating across sectors to achieve population-level outcome targets.

About the Government Performance Lab

The mission of the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (GPL) is to speed up progress on difficult social problems by improving how state and local governments function. We do this by working closely with state and local governments to develop and test hands-on tools for designing, managing, and sustaining initiatives that lead to the creation of more just and effective service systems in areas including child and family wellbeing, criminal justice, homelessness, and behavioral health, and economic mobility in historically marginalized communities.

We hire and train full-time team members to collaborate closely with government innovators, providing applied research and technical assistance for high-priority initiatives, often for 12-36 months. GPL capabilities include improving how governments spend money through results-driven procurement and contracting, applying data-driven performance management to the improvement of core agency practices and contracted services, redesigning the service matching and referral systems to improve beneficiary success, and supporting governments in incorporating equity and client voice into government’s core functions.

Because many of the challenges we work on are rooted in historic and systemic wrongs, particularly systemic racism, we know that addressing them requires solutions that center on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We are committed to increasing diversity, improving equity, and fostering inclusion in our internal and external work – from the methods we use to hire and train our staff to the way we select and execute projects in the field.

The GPL is seeking an Assistant Director (AD) with a passion for improving government performance and solving social problems. Successful GPL team members are typically:

- Skilled facilitators
- Creative problem solvers
- Strong project managers
- Thoughtful relationship builders
- Strong analytical thinkers
- Capable of navigating complex organizations and stakeholders

GPL Assistant Directors codesign and oversee portfolios of projects with stakeholders, partners, and governments. In their role, they manage teams of fellows and Project Leaders to enable them to execute high-impact work and develop as professionals. As senior leaders at the GPL, Assistant Directors also produce new ideas about improving government performance and assist with GPL enterprise initiatives (e.g., contributing to key GPL operations, advancing the GPL’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion).
Promising candidates for this position will be innovators as much as operators, detail-oriented, strategic thinkers, and have a track record of achieving results. They must be flexible and thrive in a fast-paced, entrepreneurial, and highly interactive environment.

**Responsibilities**

**Project Leadership:** Lead portfolios of projects with state and local governments that produce measurable and meaningful impacts on client outcomes and service delivery. Core responsibilities include:

- **Project Design:** Collaborating with Managing Director, develop project scopes of work that create measurable local impact on economic mobility outcomes and generate learning that can inform GPL strategy and national practice. Identify opportunities to increase project impact by integrating equity into project design.
- **Project Execution:** Manage teams of fellows and project leaders to execute high-impact projects. Ensure projects meet key milestones.
- **Stakeholder Management:** Work with government counterparts to advance project decisions and resource allocation, build government commitment and ownership, and ensure satisfaction with GPL technical assistance.

**People Management:** As a direct manager of fellows and Project Leaders, guide team members in their professional development, improve their technical skills, and support them in having a positive experience while working at the GPL. Core responsibilities include:

- **Growing skills:** Train staff in core GPL capabilities, including analytical thinking, project management, stakeholder management, and communications.
- **Fostering positive experience:** Create a management relationship within which staff feel supported, included, and valued. Build an inclusive and supportive team culture.

**Thought Leadership and GPL Strategy:** Advance the GPL’s ability to communicate key insights from projects, and help foster a positive GPL-wide organizational culture. ADs are members of the GPL leadership team and contribute to GPL enterprise activities and strategy. Core responsibilities include:

- **Thought leadership:** Lead GPL’s knowledge generation and documentation for a specific strategic capability or policy vertical, including generating, summarizing, and documenting insights from related project work across the GPL to move staff to the cutting edge of knowledge in an area.
- **Spreading Insights:** Facilitate cross-jurisdiction learning, by creating and delivering internal trainings, as well as compelling external publications and webinars that share incisive insights and new solutions to a broad audience.
- **Culture, Operations and Strategy:** Contribute to an inclusive and supportive team culture, within which team members feel supported, included, and valued. Contribute to key GPL operations and strategy, including hiring, fellow and manager training, research and communications, and development.

**Basic Qualifications**

- Bachelor's Degree and a minimum of 5 years of professional experience.
- Success in previous management, coaching, and development of direct reports and diverse teams.
- Excellent written and verbal communications, including memos, slide decks, and public speaking.
- Sound quantitative and analytical skills, with experience generating and using data to drive insights and communicating those insights to others.
- Ability to navigate complex organizations, develop trust with senior leaders, and build relationships among diverse groups of stakeholders - including community members, community-based organizations, and advocates.
- Strong demonstrated track record of independently structuring work, driving significant project progress, managing multiple work streams, and engaging with clients.
- Experience conceptualizing, structuring, and delivering projects and programs that result in meaningful improvements to an organization’s operations or impact.
- A willingness to travel is required.

Additional Qualifications

Many kinds of experiences could prepare an individual to thrive in this role. We expect the strongest candidates will have many, but likely not all, of the qualifications listed below:
- Master’s degree or equivalent preferred.
- Demonstrated commitment to GPL’s mission of improving government performance and solving social problems through previous experience working with state or local government, non-profit organizations, or organizations focused on addressing serious social challenges.
- Experience in qualitative research and/or stakeholder engagement that has produced insights about the needs of individuals, and experience synthesizing those insights into actionable programmatic or policy changes to better meet their needs.
- Experience in a rapid-growth, entrepreneurial organization or team.
- Proven capacity to solve problems and identify key strategic insights that advanced the goals of the organization.
- Track record of building, maintaining, and navigating complex relationships, such as with senior executives, clients, peer organizations, or funders. Experience balancing priorities across multiple stakeholders.

Additional Information and Application Instructions

Compensation: GPL Assistant Directors are funded for one year at a salary range of $92,000 - $102,000 plus benefits. Depending on project status, there are sometimes opportunities to extend the position.

Location: The location is flexible, but it requires access to a major U.S. airport for occasional travel.

Start date: We aim for this role to start in April 2022.

Application instructions: To apply, please submit your application using the GPL’s Online Application Form.

Harvard University is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, or any other characteristic protected by law.