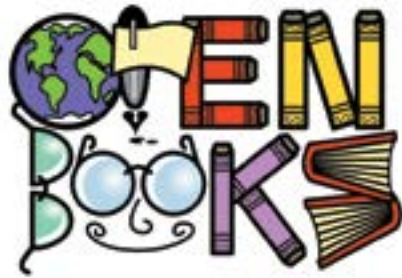




EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



OPEN BOOKS, LTD

open-books.org

Location: Chicago, IL

Reports to: Board of Directors

MISSION

Open Books' mission is to transform lives through reading, writing, and the unlimited power of books.



NOETIC



BACKGROUND

Open Books, a nonprofit organization, launched in 2006 to transform lives through reading, writing, and the unlimited power of books. Since inception, Open Books has impacted tens of thousands of Chicagoans, primarily children (birth – 12th grade), through in- and out-of-school literacy programs and the provision of free books via an increasing number of channels. Open Books' programs have boosted the skills and confidence of thousands of Chicago children, from the newborns who receive books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to the first and second grade readers in the Reading Buddies program. Open Books envisions a Chicago where all kids have a chance to develop the reading and writing skills they need to feel confident and flourish on their academic journeys and beyond.

Open Books approaches its work with an equity lens and addresses the barriers that make access to books and literacy programs

uniquely difficult for children and families in Chicago's resource-withheld neighborhoods. Ten priority neighborhoods served by Open Books include: Austin, Back of the Yards, Brighton Park, Englewood, Gage Park, Garfield Park, Little Village, McKinley Park, North Lawndale, and Pilsen.

Open Books literacy programs include reading, writing, and free book distribution primarily to their priority communities. They pair their own resources with existing community assets to amplify reach and impact. Through community engagement efforts – represented best by North Lawndale Reads, launched in 2021 – Open Books invites children, parents and caregivers, and families to deepen their knowledge and habits related to reading.

Open Books' first physical location in River North, complete with a bookstore, classroom, and administrative spaces, relocated in 2015 to coincide with the opening of the Chicago Literacy Alliance's Literacy center. That same



NOETIC

year, they launched Open Books' second location in the Pilsen neighborhood, which fulfills online retail sales and functions as a pay-what-you-want bookstore model with free children's books. In 2018, Open Books became the official partner of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for the greater Chicago area, which expanded capacity to build home libraries for children ages 0-5. In 2023, they opened a third physical bookstore in Logan Square to further expand the retail footprint. Open Books has new offices opening in North Lawndale in November 2023. Maximizing presence in North Lawndale, including a permanent physical location, is a key part of the current strategic plan.



Open Books receives between 1.2M to 1.5M donated books annually and has four key programmatic initiatives:

■ LITERACY PROGRAMS

Multiple programs that reinforce reading and writing, in- and out-of school, for children and young people, particularly birth through 3rd grade.

■ TRADITIONAL BOOK GRANTING

Partnerships with teachers, schools, and neighborhood partners, impacting more than 80,000 young people each year, to grant high-quality used books to children and families.

■ DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

International book granting program that builds home libraries with free, new books for children (ages 0-5.)

■ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, INCLUDING NORTH LAWNDALE READS

Open Books has a strong focus on community engagement and outreach activities, including a multi-year, multi-strategy community engagement campaign in Chicago's North Lawndale community designed to promote literacy and provide families with the resources necessary for early childhood reading.



Open Books' Logan Square, Pilsen, and West Loop bookstores serve as neighborhood hubs for literacy providing access to affordable books while book sales support programs and operations. During the pandemic, the Pilsen location moved to include a pay-what-you-want model where all children's books were free, and adults could name their own price for adult titles. Open Books has continued this model to ensure that all families are able to browse and select books to take home, with no barrier to entry for folks who may not have the means to afford books. The bookstores create spaces "where knowledge can be recycled."

Open Books is governed by a 17-member Board of Directors which oversees the fiscal, operational, and strategic health of the organization. The Associate Board is an active fundraising body, whose members help raise money and promote Open Books among young professionals, generally, in Chicago.



NOETIC

THE OPPORTUNITY

In a recent rebound from Covid years, where programming was halted, Open Books has rebuilt around a dedicated program staff resulting in a larger team with new members. The program team has reintroduced in-and out-of-school time reading programs, in addition to whole-family engagement, and streamlined initiatives like traditional book granting. Community engagement efforts, most visible in the North Lawndale Reads campaign, have introduced countless Chicagoans to Open Books and, most important, reading and literacy. Operations teams have found new ways to manage the intake, assessment, and sorting of books – the raw materials for literacy – so that they land in their “right” places. These efforts have resulted in increased numbers of books delivered and people served.

Under the leadership of Eric Johnson, the organization increased both earned and philanthropic revenue resulting in growth from \$1.7M to the current operating budget of \$3.5M today. Approximately \$2M of the budget is generated from bookstore operations and the remaining \$1.5M is generated through philanthropy.

With this foundation, the opportunity now exists for a visionary, inclusive relationship builder and strong leader to carry forward a fiscally and operationally strong organization, build its visibility, drive a collective vision and programmatic focus, and increase both earned income and funds raised resulting in continued growth.

Prior to growing external partnerships and programs, it will be critical for the new leader to focus inward on the internal dynamics of the team to ensure there is a shared culture and united vision focused on the mission. Achieving growth will first require stabilizing, galvanizing, inspiring and fostering collaboration between the two primary divisions: 1) programs and 2) bookstores and operations, to provide clear direction focused on the organizational mission. There is a natural tension between



the bookstore operations and community engagement and literacy programs. Striking the balance between these two critical arms of the organization will require strong, decisive leadership.

The new leader will establish credibility and trust with the management team resulting in a strengthened common culture where resources are equitable and are designated in support of the mission. Since 2020, Open Books has dedicated a large portion of energy toward DEAI. With this in mind, the Executive Director will need the ability to lead with cultural humility and have strong multicultural competencies. They will need to ensure the organization continues to focus on and strive towards being a workplace where everyone feels welcome. With Board enthusiasm for DEIA,



NOETIC



increased reach and impact, the new Executive Director will plan and execute a strategy that centers equity and brings together bookstore operations, programming, and community engagement initiatives to benefit the ten priority neighborhoods targeted by the organization.

Currently the organization is growing in the North Lawndale neighborhood with expansion into a physical space, which may require launching a capital campaign. Ensuring an increased presence and impact in North Lawndale is a key priority going forward as is executing on a plan to create a bookmobile, a readymade vehicle to introduce Chicago's residents in our ten focus neighborhoods to Open Books.

The opportunity also exists to expand the Cook Country partnership with the Dolly

Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This will require a leader who can work with government partners to secure funds to support growth of the program. Ongoing clarification of expectations of the partnership with the Dollywood Foundation is expected as well.

The highest potential for financial growth and increased sustainability is philanthropy. There is an opportunity to increase both the organization's visibility among key donors and to generally broaden the base of support resulting in increased financial gains. The new leader will work with the Board of Directors and the Director of Development to increase both the visibility of the organization and its donor base. Engaging with the Board to build a culture of philanthropy throughout the organization will enable a stronger fundraising case.



THE POSITION

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director is responsible for the overall growth and impact of Open Books and all its functions. The Executive Director leads all facets of Open Books, which includes three brick and mortar neighborhood bookstores, administration of all programs and community engagement initiatives.

The Executive Director will develop and oversee a budget of \$3.5M. Additionally, the Executive Director is responsible for the strategic processes of the organization, managing and developing a dedicated paid staff of 25 who seek to transform lives through reading, writing, and the unlimited power of books along with more than 300 volunteers. The direct reports for the Executive Director are currently the Managing Director of bookstores,

Program Director, Director of Community Engagement, Director of Finance and Administration and the Director of Development.

The Executive Director will partner with the Board and staff in the execution of a strategic plan, developed in the spring of 2023, as well as in the development of strategic directions and policies in the fulfillment of the organization's mission. This individual is responsible for the overall management and operation of Open Books in compliance with Board-adopted policies and with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations and laws. The Executive Director provides a leadership role in initiating and maintaining community relationships and securing the operating and investment funds necessary to sustain current and future operations.



NOETIC

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE

External Relations & Advancement (50%)

- Continually position Open Books as a leader within Chicago's literacy ecosystem through the lens of mission-driven and program impact in the city's historically underserved and marginalized communities, particularly on the West and South Sides
- Continue to grow and diversify, in partnership with the Development Director, supporting staff, and Board of Directors, the organization's philanthropic footprint
- Engage the Board of Directors, Associate Board, and other external champions/stakeholders in broadening the scope of Open Books' fundraising strategies
- Build and support the organization's marketing and communication function and ensure effective collaboration across all Open Books functions
- Represent Open Books in various venues, including but not limited to key donor meetings, public forums, media spots, and other opportunities to promote the organization's mission
- Serve in a leadership capacity on key initiatives related to Open Books and/or Chicago's literacy environment (e.g., Dolly Parton's Imagination Library statewide expansion)
- Spearhead relevant strategies to engage elected officials (City of Chicago and State of Illinois representatives) in Open Books activities and initiatives that help achieve organizational objectives

Strategy & Organizational Development (25%)

- Oversee strategy, allocate resources and appropriately consider emerging opportunities for the organization, including implementation of Open Books' current strategic plan (FY2024–FY2026) and developing and implementing future strategic plans
- Continue to grow and diversify Open Books' Board of Directors (between 17 and 22 members) to include greater representation

across demographics, experience, and skill sets, and to actively manage and engage the Board in all organizational activities, including volunteer opportunities, fundraising, and other means of deepening Open Books' impact

- Champion Open Books' efforts to foster a diverse, equitable, accessible, and inclusive environment across all aspects of its operations, working with staff and Board to consistently ensure that Open Books' programs, policies, and practices align with the principles of diversity, equity, access and inclusion (DEAI), and to continuously assess and refine these initiatives based on feedback, best practices, and in accordance with Open Books' core values
- Facilitate the establishment of a new Open Books headquarters, including administrative office space, bookstore, and classroom(s)/program spaces on Chicago's West Side
- Negotiate and review agreements and contracts, including but not limited to multiple leases related to retail and real estate
- Build programmatic capacity and audience growth including community engagement, literacy programs, and book access initiatives, including overseeing construction and execution of the organization's new bookmobile – a multi-year project designed to expand Open Books' physical reach related to community engagement and programs

Leadership & Management (25%)

- Lead and manage the Open Books staff/team by working closely with the leadership team (five direct reports) to create a productive, open, equitable, and accountable working environment
- Effectively communicate and collaborate with Open Books' staff, especially between various organizational functions
- Consistently examine staffing/personnel needs and allocate resources to ensure respective functions can perform their responsibilities
- Demonstrate effective conflict resolution among the Open Books team, with particular focus on mutual challenges & resource allocation



NOETIC



THE PROFILE

Open Books seeks to hire a dynamic self-starter and passionate advocate for literacy to serve as its next Executive Director. The ideal candidate will have lived experience or demonstrated success working with the communities served by Open Books. We seek a visionary who will work with the Board, staff, and external partners, as appropriate, to identify opportunities to innovate programs and partnerships. The leader will be collaborative, decisive, inspiring, and resilient, a multi-tasker, who is credible, trustworthy, welcoming, humble, and kind. This individual will have strong listening skills and will be comfortable rolling up sleeves and working in an entrepreneurial non-profit that includes both programmatic and sales operations.

Desired attributes include the following:

- Commitment to Open Book's mission and equity in promoting and expanding literacy among Chicago children and families.
- Ten years or more of professional experience, including strong organizational vision, demonstrated leadership and management experience; non-profit experience preferred.
- Enthusiasm for serving as the organization's chief public-facing ambassador, including developing strategic partnerships, brand presence, and access to resources.
- Strong ability to communicate and collaborate with multiple Open Books teams,

including literacy programs, book operations and retail sales, development/fundraising, marketing and communication, human resources, and finance and accounting.

- Strong ability to develop and manage strategic objectives, necessary resources, annual budget, and fiscal projections, working closely with Director of Finance and Administration and Board Finance Committee.
- Strong development/fundraising experience across multiple funding audiences, including corporations, foundations, and individuals.
- Drive to support and foster high-impact in- and out-of-school programs designed to strengthen reading and literacy in Chicago communities that lack relevant resources.
- Dedication to coaching and developing Open Books team members, including five direct reports, with a track record of problem solving and conflict resolution.
- Outstanding interpersonal skills in managing relationships among diverse stakeholders, including staff members, board members, donors, elected officials, and program partners.
- Experience in, or commitment to, furthering organizational goals towards diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) among internal and external stakeholders.
- Demonstrated leadership in organizational change.



NOETIC



SALARY & BENEFITS

\$130,000 - \$150,000 plus competitive benefits, including medical and dental insurance (multiple BlueCross BlueShield plans for individuals and families). Voluntary vision and life insurance and 401(k) contribution. Paid time off and paid holidays. Flexible work environment.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications and nominations are being received by Noetic Search. Please click [here](#) to submit a current resume and cover letter. For more information, noeticsearch.com or open-books.org

Open Books is an Equal Opportunity Employer and complies with the spirit and law of anti-discrimination protections to foster a diverse workforce.

