

# Knox Education Foundation

## Chief Executive Officer Profile



### KEF's Mission

To advocate for student academic success in Knox County through research, data-driven innovation, collaboration, and public policy initiatives.

### Vision & Goals

To drive academic and long-term success for every student in Knox County.

*KEF has four goals that guide the organization's work as it advocates for student academic success:*

1. Advance Student Success – Develop, initiate, and advance research-based initiatives and policies that lead to strong academic outcomes for students.
2. Drive Innovation – Advocate for and fund innovative initiatives in public education to support student academic success.
3. Lead the Conversation – Coalesce the community around student-centered policies and initiatives.
4. Promote Accountability – Operate as the accountability partner to Knox County Schools to highlight opportunities to serve all students.

### Strategic Priorities

*To achieve these goals, KEF has four strategic priorities. As the education guardian for Knox County, KEF will partner with the district and the community by supporting and/or leading on:*

- Strengthening math and ELA foundations for all students
- Making Knox County the destination for high-quality educators in Tennessee
- Collaborating with Knox County leaders to advance education opportunities and outcomes for every student
- Preparing every student for a successful future

### Theory of Action

*KEF's theory of action is focused on:*

- Serving as a **student-centered strategist**, identifying and highlighting gaps in education including a variety of factors such as zip code, income, race, and services as well as identifying and seeding evidence-based solutions to improve student academic success.
- Being the **community convener**, serving as the organization in Knox County that galvanizes key stakeholders, organizes thought leaders, and drives conversation on critical topics relevant to student academic success.
- Being an **innovative driver**, catalyzing the community to advocate for student-centered public policy and drive initiatives grounded in research and data that advance student academic success.
- Filling the role of **courageous challenger** that is uniquely positioned to tell the truth and challenge the status quo, while working with the community to advocate for student-centered policies.
- Acting as the **thought leader** organization, serving as the leader in producing impactful research, writing reports, developing initiatives, and creating public policy solutions to improve student academic success in Knox County, with a forward thinking, future focused approach.

## **Meeting the Moment for Knox County: CEO Opportunity**

KEF is at a critical moment in the organization's work and in Knox County's efforts to drive educational outcomes and opportunity for students. The organization seeks a dynamic, innovative, and solutions-oriented Chief Executive Officer to shepherd the next phase of the organization's evolution and to drive the community's efforts to improve student outcomes.

Importantly, the CEO must reposition the organization from an entity predominantly designed to support KCS initiatives and programs to one that is truly serving as an independent critical friend – elevating a community-wide vision for educational success, partnering with public sector leaders to accelerate innovative and aligned work, and creating a sense of urgency for improvement for every student – privately and publicly – when and if necessary.

The next CEO will lead KEF at an important moment of growth and renewed vision. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the CEO will serve as the organization's strategic leader, primary external representative, and driver of impact. This leader will bring together partners across education, business, and community, and steward KEF's role as a critical thought partner to Knox County Schools. The CEO will guide the refinement and execution of KEF's strategic priorities and advocacy and ensure that the organization remains focused on improving outcomes for students across the county.

## **Leadership Priorities**

*The CEO will:*

- Advance KEF's strategic vision by keeping the organization aligned to its mission and grounded in data-driven, student-first decision-making – obsessively focused on improving student outcomes in Knox County.
- Build the organization's ability to do effective advocacy work while simultaneously supporting local education leaders in building proof points and pilots of innovative education improvement efforts.
- Strengthen partnerships with the district, civic leaders, and community organizations to support shared priorities and expand KEF's influence.
- Build support from local, regional, and national philanthropy to support innovative education improvement initiatives in Knox County
- Serve as a visible, credible, and leading voice on education outcome data who is able to elevate solutions that strengthen academic foundations, support educators, and expand opportunities for students.
- Partner with local, state, and civic leaders to advance student-centered policies and practices.
- Build and support a high-performing team that reflects KEF's culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.
- Ensure strong operations, financial stewardship, and effective board engagement that support long-term organizational sustainability

## **Leadership Attributes**

The ideal leader will be:

- Strategic and student-centered, able to connect long-term vision with practical execution.
- A strong relationship-builder who can navigate complex community dynamics and partner with diverse leaders.
- An effective communicator and politically astute to represent KEF publicly and inspire confidence across the community.
- Data-informed and outcomes-driven, committed to learning, transparency, and measurable impact.
- Adaptive, optimistic, and entrepreneurial, with the ability to manage ambiguity and change, identify new opportunities, and lead with purpose.

## **Compensation and Growth**

*KEF provides a competitive compensation package and tangible support that strengthen the CEO's impact in the community and growth as a leader.*

## **To Apply or Nominate**

*KEF seeks a mission-driven, collaborative, and forward-thinking leader who is committed to improving outcomes for all students in Knox County.*

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the search consultant in confidence and nominations are welcome. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position
- A current résumé

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**SAMANTHA GUTTER**

SLG STRATEGY