

Position Description
Director of Communications
The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

The Opportunity

The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation is seeking a Director of Communications for a new philanthropic foundation. Reporting to the Executive Director, the Director of Communications will be the first “story-teller in chief” for the Foundation. The Director will lead the development of a communications strategy that documents the start-up and ongoing programs of the Foundation, amplifies the work of its grantees, and informs the broader public about issues of critical importance through publications, web presence, and learning events.

The Foundation is still in its infancy. Because it is a startup, this is an evolving position that requires both strategic thinking and hands-on execution. The successful candidate will be creative and resourceful, a journalist at heart, with a keen interest in truth-telling and how information technology can be used to benefit humanity. S/he must be a skilled framer who can distill ideas and synthesize information from a wide range of sources. Team spirit, curiosity, an appetite for startups, and a flexible mindset are musts, as are commitment to responsible stewardship, integrity, and kindness. The position will provide a front-row seat on the design of a new grant-making foundation and the opportunity to learn a lot about philanthropy. Because the grant-making strategies are not fully defined, the Director will have a seat at the table as they are shaped and launched.

Organization Overview: A New Philanthropic Foundation

The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation is dedicated to improving lives and societies across the globe by supporting advancements in information technology and neuroscience research that benefit humanity.

The Foundation is the legacy of Patrick McGovern (1937-2014), an enterprising business leader and tireless advocate for science. McGovern was the founder of International Data Group (IDG), a global research, investment, and publishing company that created nearly 300 information technology publications such as PCWorld, MacWorld and the Dummies guides. IDG chronicled the rise of digital technology and made it intelligible to millions, then moved beyond publishing to research and venture investing worldwide.

From his early childhood, McGovern was fascinated by information technology and neuroscience. He dedicated his early life to these pursuits, eventually receiving a full scholarship to MIT, where he graduated with a degree in biophysics. Recognizing a need for applicable research on the emerging field of computers, McGovern founded IDG in 1964 and grew the company to span 97 countries across the globe. Throughout his career McGovern was a trail-blazer and forward thinker. He was incredibly hard-working, a risk taker and an optimist who often told his employees “the best is yet to come.”

More on Patrick McGovern's approach to leadership and the company's history can be found in [Future Forward: leadership Lessons from Patrick McGovern, the Visionary Who Circled the Globe and Built a Technology Empire](#), by Glenn Rifkin, McGraw Hill Education, 2019.

Inspired by his deep belief in the potential for information technology and neuroscience research to do good, McGovern left almost the entirety of his estate to fund the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation. The Foundation's endowment is approximately \$1.2 billion, and the Foundation will ramp up its giving over the next five years to make \$50 million or more in annual grants.

The Foundation's work is guided by six core values drawn from Patrick McGovern's life and leadership:

- Remain dedicated to mission
- Respect human dignity
- Invest in people
- Strive for excellence
- Be responsive to change
- Always keep a "let's try it" attitude.

We understand "respect human dignity" to include diversity and inclusion, which are core values of the Foundation. It's important to us that our staff reflect the world we inhabit. We believe that diversity of lived experience, backgrounds, personality, thoughts and identities strengthens our work and makes us smarter. Respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own and the ability to work well with all kinds of people are highly-valued management skills here. We seek candidates who demonstrate cultural humility, sensitivity, and willingness to learn, who respond vigorously to injustice and stand up for those who are mistreated.

The Foundation is governed by an active and deeply-engaged board that includes family members and independent trustees. This board has led the Foundation through its formation, setting the mission, managing the sale of the company that funded the Foundation, and making initial grants. Recently they hired the Foundation's first employee, Executive Director Melinda Marble.

More information about the Foundation can be found on its website: mcgovern.org

Summary of the Role

The Foundation seeks a Director who shares the trustees' desire for a communications strategy that conveys first and foremost that it is a trustworthy, appreciative, and reliable partner. The Foundation should not be the center of, but rather a locus for, collaboration, and its strategies reflect the reality that it does not know all the answers.

McGovern's communications efforts will highlight those who are doing and benefiting from the work. They will pose questions, seek knowledge, and invite response. They should be clear, legible and direct, kind, necessary, and true. In every communication the Foundation will seek to be transparent about its work and its intentions.

As a thought partner with the ED and trustees, the Director will play a key role in setting the tone internally and in the outside world for the Foundation as an open, transparent, and friendly collaborator, an institution focused on ideas and values and committed to its grantees. Two-way communication, listening and feedback from the Foundation's various constituencies must be as important to the Director as external messaging. While the Director will sometimes serve as the voice of the Foundation, much of the work will involve supporting and amplifying the voices of others, including grantees, staff, and trustees. The Foundation is less interested in recognition or promotion than in advancing important ideas and causes.

Key Responsibilities

First 90 days:

- Gain an in-depth understanding of the Foundation's work to date through listening sessions with staff and trustees.
- Create initial internal communications tools and style book, including confidentiality policies and protocols for handling press queries.
- Participate in design of grant application materials; write templates for routine grantee communications.
- Assess current website and communications materials.
- Develop a workplan with short- and long-term communications goals, priorities, and strategies for:
 - External communications and web presence, including publishing.
 - Communicating with grant seekers.
 - Amplifying the work of grantees and key learnings.
 - Creating a technology platform that makes the work of the Foundation available to trustees in real time (in cooperation with the Director of Finance and Operations).
 - Regular communications with the McGovern extended family members.

Ongoing:

- Cultivate external relationships with institutions, thought leaders, the media and the public that advance the work of the Foundation and its collaborators.
- Follow news and research trends in the Foundation's areas of interest and digest for staff and trustees.
- Integrate and translate key themes and topics that emerge in the Foundation's work and identify opportunities to amplify and advance them.
- Implement, assess, and strengthen powerful, multi-dimensional communications strategies.
- Oversee the Foundation's approach to designing, implementing, and conducting ongoing assessment of its relationships with partners and grantees, and its public perception.
- Develop and refine an authentic and consistent brand identity for the Foundation.
- Organize forums and learning events that share insights and learning in the field.
- Ensure that complex materials are shared with the trustees in a user-friendly and captivating format; design and conduct a final edit of each trustee meeting board book for clarity and cogence.
- Foster clear and strong communication internally.

- Develop a method for assessing the effectiveness of the communications work that is performed.
- Prepare an annual workplan and budget.
- Source, build and lead a small team of staff or consultants for the communications program over time.

Qualifications

Experience:

- A minimum of five years of experience as a communications professional or in a highly translatable field.
- Broad expertise in many of the following areas: communications, media relations, journalism and government relations.
- Track record in developing and implementing organization-level communications strategies.
- Experience producing effective communications products from conception to publication.
- Demonstrable effective use of social networking tools and new media to engage and inform the public.
- Experience advancing a social issue.
- A practiced collaborator with diverse stakeholders.
- Reputation as a kind straight shooter.
- Design experience a strong plus.

Skills:

- Exceptional writing and speaking skills.
- An excellent listener and facilitator with the confidence to argue in support of strongly-held opinions and the willingness to change course based on new evidence.
- Can understand, synthesize and organize data so it can be understood by others.
- Proven ability to manage multiple projects and competing demands.
- Technical skills needed to build out platforms and web presence.
- Ability to embrace and enact the Foundation's values and mission of supporting IT and neuroscience research to benefit humanity.

Attributes:

- Integrity.
- A creative and user-friendly design thinker.
- A thought partner who is willing to be a critical friend.
- Politically-savvy and resourceful strategist.
- An avid, wide-ranging reader.
- Sense of humor and optimism.

Applications

Applications will be held in the strictest confidence. Due to the pace of this search, candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible. To apply, please forward a resume and cover letter to E. Catlin Donnelly & Associates at mcgoverndc@ecdonnelly.com

The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression, military status, or disability, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and grant-making.