



GROW YOUR OWN TEACHERS

Chicago/Lake County Program Director

Opportunity Guide

www.growyourownteachers.org



About Grow Your Own Illinois

Grow Your Own Illinois' (GYO-IL) mission is to support racially diverse and community-connected individuals to become certified teachers in hard-to-staff schools and positions to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes for its students. Its goal is to ensure the Illinois teaching population reflects the rich racial diversity of its students. GYO-IL believes that Illinois students, their neighborhoods, and the teacher candidates are all enriched by the process.

GYO-IL supports the education and excellence of teacher candidates through their pursuit of a teaching license, providing financial and academic assistance, social-emotional support, and culturally sustaining instructional strategies. Coordinating innovative partnerships among the universities, community colleges, school districts, and community organizations that make up each consortium, GYO-IL advocates for policies that facilitate increasing the number of teachers of color. Creating a pipeline of high-quality, racially diverse, and community-connected teachers, GYO-IL continues to support teachers once they are in the classroom.

GYO-IL emerged in the early 2000s from the grassroots efforts of two Chicago nonprofits to identify individuals committed to teaching in their neighborhood schools. The entities came together to "grow" local educators with local roots. GYO-IL currently administers four locally run consortia programs across the state serving approximately 250 teacher candidates. It directly manages and runs the Chicago consortium program.

The Cornerstone Chapter – Chicago

GYO Chicago, with approximately 100 teacher candidates, is the largest among the GYO-IL consortia. Since its inception, it has worked diligently to create a teacher pool that reflects the vibrant, diverse student body it serves. GYO Chicago continues to seek community-based solutions to address the current teacher shortage and the persistent teacher diversity gap.



GYO Chicago provides holistic teacher candidate support through state-funded forgivable education loans, as well as individual guidance and mentoring to navigate higher education, earn a teacher's license, and transition into the classroom. GYO candidates participate in peer group meetings for additional social and educational support, as well as discussions and workshops addressing social, racial, and economic disparities in schools. Since 2020, GYO Chicago has proudly graduated 90 educators of color who now teach in Chicago Public Schools and other nearby districts.

The GYO consortium includes a smaller program in nearby Lake County. The Lake County program currently has spaces for up to 20 candidates.

Who are GYO teacher candidates?

- Para educators working in their local schools who have a desire to pursue classroom teaching.
- Community members or parents who have a history of active involvement in schools and are interested in enrolling in or returning to college with the intent of becoming a licensed teacher.
- Students with non-traditional backgrounds, including career changers who are interested in pursuing a career in teaching but have not yet been admitted to their college of education.

Candidates can rely on GYO to have their backs!

The Opportunity:

Chicago/Lake County Program Director



GYO-IL seeks an energetic and motivated professional to serve as its next Program Director for the Chicago/Lake County consortium. Reporting to the GYO-IL Executive Director, the Program Director will run the largest of the four consortia in the state of Illinois.

The Program Director will have the opportunity to be a change agent in the Illinois education system, helping to develop a strong pipeline of teachers of color rooted in their school communities, leading to a lasting impact on the lives of young people. The successful candidate will be a proactive and solutions-oriented leader with strong organizational skills to implement systems and structures that ensure consistent, high-quality program delivery and management. The Program Director manages Chicago/Lake County staff and brings a unique ability to liaise with multiple GYO-IL staff and lead with flexibility, inclusivity, and deliberation.



Performance Objectives

Program Leadership and Strategic Operations

- Oversee, lead, and execute all aspects of Chicago/Lake County candidates' experience from recruitment and admission, through the teacher licensure program, and graduation and employment.
- Implement systems for tracking candidate progression, identifying challenges, and providing customized support.
- Consult with universities and licensure programs, as well as community colleges and pathway programs on behalf of enrolled candidates to help resolve challenges that arise (e.g., meeting course requirements, financial aid, or tuition concerns, etc.).
- Lead the development and implementation of candidate cohort meetings, collaborating with Candidate Coordinators to plan, facilitate, and evaluate the meetings. Adapt the meeting structure to maximize impact for candidates across university enrollment, licensure programs, and stages in the consortium.
- Assess and document program successes, strengths, challenges, and needs for continuous improvement and organizational learning.
- Represent and advocate for the Chicago/Lake County consortium in statewide advocacy work through state conferences, legislative forums, funder meetings, and public events.



Team Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement

- In collaboration with the GYO-IL Executive Director, foster organizational staff development, team building, and collaboration. Provide hands-on management and guidance for GYO Chicago/Lake County Candidate Coordinators to effectively support candidates in personalized ways, helping to resolve challenges that arise.
- Build the capacity of the GYO Chicago/Lake County team to fulfill the needs of the organization and maximize impact.
- Collaborate with GYO-IL Director of Coaching and Induction to conduct Chicago/Lake County's new coaching program for graduates who are early career teachers.
- Maintain regular communication with school districts, university and college offices, neighborhood schools, and community organizations to coordinate support, learning, and employment placements for candidates.
- Work in partnership with GYO-IL's Director of Partnership Sustainability to engage and expand the role of community-based partners in candidate recruitment, support, training, and early career teacher experiences.



Performance Objectives

Fundraising, Reporting, and Fiscal Responsibility

- Assist with fundraising activities for the Chicago/Lake County program, collaborating with the GYO-IL Executive Director on meetings with funders, relationship building, proposal writing, and reporting.
- Manage Chicago/Lake County program budget and monitor program expenditures on an ongoing basis, submitting budget transfers when necessary and ensuring fiscal responsibility.
- Assume responsibility for the collection, analysis, and reporting of Chicago/Lake County's data. Prepare and submit required quarterly and annual narrative reports. Regularly report candidate and graduate data as requested for state and federal reports. Work with GYO-IL Grants Manager to prepare and submit quarterly and annual financial reports.
- Diversify funding and programming to expand GYO's footprint across Illinois.



The Qualified Candidate

The ideal Chicago/Lake County Program Director is a proactive and resourceful individual with strong attention to detail and follow-through. The successful candidate champions education equity and racial justice, with a passion for supporting GYO teacher candidates' personal growth, academic development, and future achievement.

The Program Director is a straightforward communicator with a leadership style that emphasizes coaching and mentoring. The Director manages a staff of four coordinators, maintaining a balance approach while maintaining a balanced approach among empathy, high expectations, and accountability.

The Chicago/Lake County Program Director brings high proficiency in managing and executing multifaceted initiatives, with an ability to partner with a dynamic leadership and staff team to foster a positive and productive work environment.



Specific Requirements Include:

- Experience in teacher education (classroom teaching and/or experience collaborating with teacher candidates).
- Knowledge of teacher licensure programs and requirements in Illinois, as well as knowledge of PK-12 schools and higher education institutions.
- Experience working within racially diverse communities and understanding of life experiences that BIPOC candidates navigate.
- Proven organizational skills to develop plans of action, then continue to follow through on implementation to drive results.
- Demonstrated success in managing collaborative work teams and bringing people together around shared vision and goals, with emphasis on staff development and mentoring.
- Experience with proposal writing, budgeting, and internal and external reporting.
- Bachelor's degree required; relevant advanced degree or equivalent training preferred.

Don't check off every box in the requirements listed above? Please consider applying anyway! Studies have shown that underrepresented communities - such as women, people of color, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and immigrants - are less likely to apply for jobs unless they meet every single qualification. Grow Your Own Illinois is dedicated to building an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible workplace that fosters a sense of belonging – so if you are excited about this role but your experience doesn't align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we encourage you to consider still applying.

How To Apply

Compensation for this position has recently been benchmarked by Grow Your Own Illinois and KEES and is in the fair market range. This position offers a competitive salary with the range beginning at \$100,000 along with strong benefits including medical, dental, and 403B. GYO-IL offers 15 days of vacation and 12 sick days.

GYO-IL is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. GYO-IL does not discriminate based upon race, religion, color, national origin, gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, status as a protected veteran, status as an individual with a disability, or other applicable legally protected characteristics.

APPLY HERE

To ensure confidential tracking of all applicants, no applications will be accepted via email. ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

Applications with specific cover letters will be given priority consideration. All candidate-submitted materials and credentials will be reviewed for consistency and accuracy. Candidates can expect that KEES will verify employment/ academic/ background information both in the screening process and for the finalist(s) in a formal background check.

This search is being managed by Yoo-Jin Hong, Executive Search Manager, and Randi Blasutti, Project Manager, of KEES. Questions may be addressed to rblasutti@kees2success.com.

About KEES

KEES (formerly Alford Executive Search) is a nonprofit executive search firm that builds diverse teams and dynamic leaders in the nonprofit and public entity sectors.

A woman-owned and operated firm, KEES offers a full array of nonprofit consulting services including executive search, leadership development, interim staffing, and HR support. For more information, please visit [KEES](https://www.kees2success.com).

