

Program Officer
St. Paul, Minnesota



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Northwest Area Foundation (NWAf)** stands alongside changemakers in its region of eight states and 76 Native nations and funds work that leads to racial, social, and economic justice. The eight states include Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. The Foundation's driving vision is that the people of its priority communities—including Native Americans, communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and people in rural areas—thrive on their own terms. A key motivation is to support grantee partners that change unjust systems to serve, support, and heal their communities.

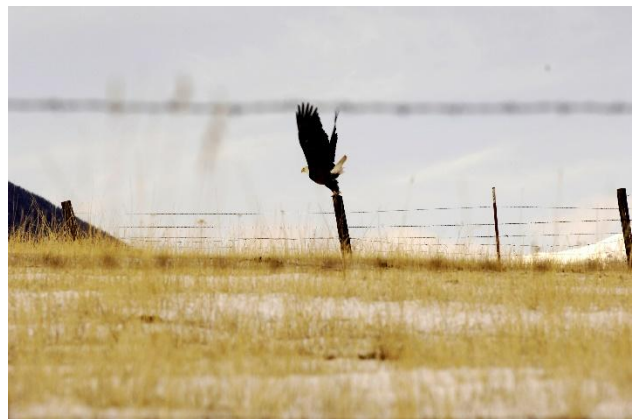
As we all move forward changed from the relatively recent and ongoing crises—a pandemic, economic turmoil, the upsurge for racial justice in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, and mounting pressures on priority communities—the Foundation continues to deepen its commitment to supporting grantee-led systems change. At this critical juncture in time, the Foundation seeks an experienced **Program Officer** to join the program team led by [Pakou Hang](#), the Foundation's Vice President, Program. Program Officers are the Foundation's primary relationship-holders with grantee partners seeking to reimagine and restructure unjust systems.

This position is hybrid with in-person office time required at least two days a week specifically on Wednesdays and Thursdays for collaborative time with colleagues. The anticipated starting salary for this position is in the range of \$120,000–\$135,000.



ABOUT THE NORTHWEST AREA FOUNDATION

NWAF is a private foundation established in 1934 by Louis W. Hill, son of the railroad entrepreneur James J. Hill, whose Great Northern Railway linked the Twin Cities of Minnesota to the emerging cities of the Pacific Northwest: Seattle and Portland, OR. Currently, its assets are near \$500 million, annual budget is around \$25 million, and its staff consists of 20+ people. NWAF's values represent not just who it is, but who it aspires to be, in decisions both big and small. **The six organizational values are: social justice, grantees come first, trust, listen and learn for change, heart, and courage.**



The Foundation is committed to hiring individuals who contribute to a richly diverse workplace. Hiring decisions are guided by the Foundation's commitment to support grantees, who work to build power, strong community ties, and untapped potential for Native Americans, communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and people in rural areas, all of which experience systemic barriers to thriving on their own terms.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PROGRAM OFFICER

The Program Officer (PO) holds primary relationships with grantee partners and works in close collaboration with other program staff, particularly the Vice President, Program, on all aspects of the Foundation's grantmaking and program-related investments (PRIs), ranging from day-to-day operations to broader strategy development. More specifically, the PO contributes to programmatic ideas and actively participates in grantmaking and PRIs by seeking, recommending, and managing grants and PRIs that support communities so they can thrive on their own terms. The PO engages in this work in the following ways:

Partner with grantee partners to reimagine and restructure unjust systems.

- Build and maintain relationships with current and prospective grantee partners. This often involves meetings with organizations in the Foundation's eight-state region in person or virtually on a regular basis. The nature of the relationship varies across communities, but in general the PO can expect to enter these relationships with candor, curiosity, and trust. Building and maintaining relationships does require travel within the Foundation's eight-state region. POs often attend grantee partners' events.
- Understand from grantee and PRI partners' perspective how the Foundation can be a better partner. A Foundation value is to listen and learn for change. Accordingly, the PO role is to incorporate grantee partner feedback in the Foundation's internal processes and its strategy.
- Partner with grant applicants on all aspects of the proposal process. This includes supporting applicants in developing realistic proposals that are aligned with strategic funding priorities and remain within the scope of the program grantmaking budget and applicants' capacity to deliver. Being supportive involves offering guidance for their proposals (e.g., dollar amounts, terms); meeting with prospective grantee partners' leadership to understand the organization and its work and purpose; assessing financials; and, if applicable, ultimately recommending grants for funding.
- Serve as primary contact for a set of grantee partners for the duration of their grants and/or investments. This involves staying connected to grantee partners' work, having regular touchpoints via virtual or in-person visits, reviewing grant reports, and providing thought partnership to grantee partners. The Foundation has 100+ active grants, and each PO manages a subset of these grants.
- Offer non-monetary support to grantee partners. This includes thought partnership, advocating or championing grantee partners' work to funders and others in the community, sharing tools or resources, and connecting grantee partners to others doing similar work.
- Co-create opportunities to learn alongside partners. This involves identifying learning opportunities that support justice and systems change and managing contracts with external consultants (e.g., researchers or evaluators) to carry out the learning.

Steward and leverage the Foundation's resources toward its mission.

The PO is responsible for deploying the Foundation's resources in ways that advance its mission. Funds are deployed through grants and PRIs, which involves the following activities:

- Support the program team's annual goal development.
- Contribute to annual discussions about how and what the Foundation will fund (e.g., determining the focus of "targeted initiatives" that would be the basis for building relationships and identifying new partnerships).
- Conduct outreach and networking to find potential grantee partners aligned with the Foundation's goals and mission. This also includes listening to organizations and responding to funding inquiries, ultimately deciding on whether or not to pursue a grant. Outreach and networking often require travel within the Foundation's eight-state region.
- Based on grant applications, POs put together written materials and verbal presentations for Foundation leadership and its board and make recommendations for funding.

Support partners via the full suite of Foundation tools and financial resources.

- PRIs. The Foundation has decided to deploy more resources through PRIs, and POs will be increasingly involved in managing PRIs directly or indirectly with community development financial institution (CDFI) partners. POs are responsible for ongoing monitoring of PRIs, including how PRIs: a) have been used by recipients, b) impact communities, and c) affect the ongoing financial health of recipients. PRI monitoring is done in partnership with the Foundation's finance and administration team, CDFI partners, and/or partner foundations.
- Strategic communications. In collaboration with the Vice President, Program and the Communications Director, write blogs and participate in other communications in order to share grantee partner work and the program team's perspective and experiences.
- Capacity building. POs support grantee partners by designing convenings that focus on building skills and knowledge and connecting organizations to each other and to resources.

Support Foundation processes as a member of the program team.

- Prepare and present reports for Foundation leadership and board members, in partnership with others on the program team (e.g., prepare summaries of grantmaking recommendations or decisions, evaluation reports, and grantee reports). POs also document grantee partner interactions in the Foundation's grants management database. POs will occasionally travel for board meetings.
- Participate in Foundation-wide workgroups or task forces (e.g., justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion steering committee) and other cross-Foundation projects, as needed, to contribute to the continued evolution of the Foundation's culture and practices.
- Keep apprised of community context. Keep up to date on what's happening in priority communities and on trends in social justice movements, the nonprofit sector, and other related areas, as appropriate.
- Network with nonprofits and fellow funders to stay updated on community needs, expand networks of potential grantee partners, and deepen understanding of the Foundation's region. These activities often require travel.
- Represent the Foundation at events (e.g., attending conferences, participating on panels, attending local events, participating in or joining webinars). Attending events may require travel.
- Perform other duties as assigned, including providing backup for PO colleagues.



DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS



Candidates should have an active curiosity and passion for the Foundation's mission and values and for working with partners that seek to build power and reimagine and restructure systems. Strong candidates will be collaborative, positive, and able to engage well with ambiguity and change. Candidates should also be adept at building relationships and responding to issues with clarity and diplomacy. Candidates who offer transferable skills, such as community organizing, working across functional areas at a nonprofit organization, or possessing deep, lived experience

within the Foundation's priority communities, are encouraged to consider this opportunity.

Strong candidates will possess many, but most likely not all, of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- A minimum of **seven years'** experience in the nonprofit, philanthropic, public, or private sector working on issues related to racial, social, or economic justice, preferably within the Foundation's region and/or with priority communities.
- **Post-secondary degree** (preferred), but individuals with lived and/or professional experience related to the core functions of this job are encouraged to apply.
- Experience working in a **collaborative, team-based, movement-driven environment**.
- Lived or work experience with one or more of the Foundation's **priority communities**.
- **Experience building relationships with a variety of people**, including experience creating welcoming and inviting spaces for dialogue, showing respect and solidarity with the work grantee partners are doing, and the ability to inspire trust and nurture authentic partnerships.
- Brings an orientation of **listening to learn**, and asks organizations about their vision for the future, their aspirations, and how they incorporate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into their work.
- Understanding of and experience with **incorporating equity and justice in the workplace and in relationships with community partners**. A deep commitment to supporting and uplifting the expertise of priority communities and addressing structural bias.
- **Proven commitment to racial, social, and economic justice**. Ability to seek input from and value the uniqueness of people from different groups and identities. Works effectively with individuals of diverse cultures, interpersonal styles, abilities, motivations, or backgrounds. Challenges practices or policies that may be exclusionary.
- **Understanding of mission-oriented and nonprofit organizations**, including the ability to analyze organizational strategic plans, evaluation reports, financial statements, and organizational budgets associated with grant applications.
- Experience **communicating with various audiences** (e.g., making small group and public presentations, producing clear and compelling written documents). Experience with storytelling,

including the ability to share the story of the Foundation's and grantee partners' work in ways that speak to various audiences, while making sure the humanity of the work shines through. A deep commitment to supporting and uplifting the expertise of priority communities.

- Ability to bring **innovation and a learning orientation** to programs and systems that advance racial, social, and economic justice by asking questions and probing for root causes, seeing underlying or hidden patterns, and looking beyond the obvious to understand why barriers exist or problems occur.
- Experience **managing multiple priorities**, organizing and prioritizing tasks, managing time efficiently, meeting deadlines, working independently, managing budgets, and collaborating with colleagues.
- **Creative and critical thinking**, including experience holding large amounts of information about context and trends in a topic area, for priority communities, or for a large geographic region, and experience drawing on that knowledge base to make connections and offer ideas about how to improve work.
- **Experience with or interest in learning various technology and software programs**, including: Microsoft Office Suite, Google Docs, Zoom, Salesforce and other grants management software, etc.
- **Active driver's license**, an essential component of the travel requirements of this role (see next section).



EXPECTED PROGRAM OFFICER TRAVEL

As an integral part of the program team, frequent travel is an anticipated requirement for this role, involving site visits, community gatherings, grantee partner-sponsored events, and the annual board retreat. Additionally, the PO may be asked to represent the Foundation at conferences and events or to host board and staff members and grantee partners for events.

Travel commitments are expected to be 20–25 percent of a PO's working time (approximately once per month) under standard circumstances.

- A typical schedule of travel includes 10–12 trips annually, of 2–3 days in length.
- Travel days often require work outside of typical business hours.
- Travel is by air and car. *Maintaining an active driver's license is required due to the nature of traveling within the region.*
- Travel is domestic, primarily in the Foundation's eight-state region, which includes travel to rural and remote parts of the region.





WORK ENVIRONMENT

The Foundation operates in a hybrid environment. Employees are expected to be in the office at least two days per week, on Wednesdays and Thursdays, with the option to work from home up to three days per week in accordance with Foundation policies. The in-person work environment is an office setting with a designated workspace at the Foundation's office in St. Paul, MN.

This position requires regular use of a computer, other office equipment, and communication technology such as, but not limited to, videoconferencing equipment, telephone, copy machine, and printer.

Work is performed in an office environment with minimal exposure to excessive noise, dust, fumes, vibrations, and temperature changes.

Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to perform the principal duties and responsibilities of the position in accordance with applicable law and Foundation policies.



COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

The PO is a full-time, exempt position reporting to the Vice President, Program. The Foundation offers a competitive and holistic rewards package that includes salary and benefits. The anticipated starting salary for this position is in the range of \$120,000–\$135,000.

The actual starting salary will be commensurate with the years, breadth, and depth of relevant experience, education, certifications, credentials, special skills, accomplishments, and other factors relevant to the position.

The Foundation's benefits are generous and include:

- Competitive compensation, including relocation support when applicable.
- Strong medical, dental, and life insurance benefits for staff and their dependents with competitive monthly premiums and flexible spending accounts.
- Minimum of four weeks of paid time off, and 12 floating holidays.
- Retirement programs, including 403(b) matching at 50 percent of deferrals up to an annual maximum of \$5,000, with access to financial planning resources.
- Money purchase pension plan, after one year of service, in which the Foundation makes a generous contribution that vests over a four-year period.
- Matching gift program for charitable donations, with one-to-one match up to \$2,000.
- Additional benefits such as an employee assistance plan, paid parental leave, and tuition reimbursement.



TO APPLY

More information about the Foundation can be found at: www.nwaf.org.

This search is being led by [Allison Kupfer Poteet](#), [Phuong Quach](#), and [Robert Diggs](#) of [NPAG](#). Candidates may submit their cover letter, outlining their interest and qualifications, along with their resume via NPAG's [website](#) by **Wednesday, January 8, 2026**.

Prospective candidates may [sign up to learn more via Microsoft Bookings](#). Nominations may be submitted [via this email link](#).

An Equal-Opportunity Employer Committed to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and all employees and applicants for employment are afforded equal opportunity in every area of hiring and employment without regard to race, color, ethnicity, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, age, disability, mental illness, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, genetics, military/veteran status, citizenship, arrest record, and any other legally protected characteristic.

The statements in this document are not intended to encompass all functions and qualifications of the position; rather, they are intended to provide a general framework of the requirements of the position. Job incumbents may be required to perform other functions not specifically addressed in this description.