



Executive Director

Reports To: Board of Directors

Location: Sacramento, CA

Status: Full-Time, Exempt

Apply By: 5/15/26

Youth Forward seeks a compassionate, courageous, and deeply committed leader to serve as its next Executive Director. This is an opportunity to helm a dynamic nonprofit advocacy organization working at the intersection of youth leadership, public policy, public health and community power-building in Sacramento at a pivotal moment for underserved children, youth and families. The Executive Director will advance the organization's mission, strengthen its public presence, lead policy initiatives, ensure financial sustainability, and manage staff and organizational operations all with youth voice, leadership, power, and partnership at the center. The Executive Director will work closely with the Board of Directors and represent the organization to policymakers, funders, partners, and the public.

As Youth Forward heads into a new chapter, approaching a decade since inception, this is an exciting time to build off of the accomplishments of the founding leader, who is making a planned transition and welcoming fresh vision and perspective. The new Executive Director will have the opportunity to shape future strategy, expand influence, and strengthen the organization's role as a trusted voice and advocate for policy and systems change. This leader will bring a deep commitment to equity; a strong political and advocacy lens; and the ability to inspire and mobilize diverse stakeholders toward a shared vision of opportunity for young people. Join Youth Forward to work in partnership to build a better California in which all children can thrive.

About Youth Forward

[Youth Forward](#) is a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to advancing the wellbeing of underserved children, youth and families through youth leadership development, policy advocacy, coalition building, and community education. Established in 2017 and based in Sacramento, Youth Forward works to develop youth leaders; win investments in children and youth; and build partnerships locally and statewide that improve how systems and policies support the most vulnerable kids. By lifting up all children, Youth Forward builds stronger families and communities.



The organization was formed when a group of youth advocates and community organizers were brought together to address the threats posed to children and young people by the legalization of cannabis and to advocate on the issue of cannabis tax revenues. Youth Forward became a leader in efforts to regulate the cannabis industry ensuring that the state of California would invest the millions of new revenues from cannabis taxes in protecting and providing prevention programming for youth.

Youth Forward has expanded its work to include advocacy in support of youth mental health in the Sacramento region and to co-lead the city's largest grassroots coalition with 36 member organizations and over 2,200 individual supporters, [Sac Kids First](#). Youth Forward and Sac Kids First were featured in a 2021 documentary on youth organizing in California by the television station KCET in the episode [City Rising: Youth and Democracy](#). In 2022, the organization established a tribal department to support local native youth and assist tribes throughout the state in accessing state funding for substance use prevention and for environmental restoration.

Today, key initiatives encompass [Youth Leadership](#), [Youth Justice](#), [Youth Mental Health](#), [the Tribal Department](#) and [Cannabis Policy](#). Youth Forward - with its 9-member Board, 7-person team, and approximately \$1.2 million budget - has quickly built a strong foundation for considerable change-making winning significant victories for children, youth and families in Sacramento and across the state and catalyzing network and capacity building for other youth-serving organizations.

The Executive Director Position

The Executive Director serves as the chief executive of Youth Forward and is responsible for setting strategic direction, leading advocacy efforts, and ensuring organizational strength and sustainability. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will be a visible and influential leader—representing the organization across policy, philanthropic, and community spaces. This is a highly relational role, requiring a leader who can connect with and empower young people; support a passionate BIPOC team; navigate complex political landscapes; build coalitions; manage a nonprofit and translate vision into action and impact. Youth Forward's Executive Director must be willing to demonstrate creativity, boldness, optimism, and grit - even in challenging funding and political environments - to keep fighting for youth.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership & Vision

- Ground the organization and train staff in core community organizing concepts and practices
- Lead the development and implementation of organizing campaigns in alignment with its mission and values
- Identify emerging advocacy opportunities and threats within the policy and political landscape
- Ensure programs and campaigns advance measurable advocacy and policy outcomes
- Foster a culture of equity, accountability, collaboration, and impact

Organizational Management & Team Development

- Recruit, develop, and supervise senior staff; foster a high-performing, inclusive team
- Ensure effective systems, policies, and procedures are in place

- Oversee human resources, compliance, and risk management
- Promote staff development, retention, and organizational well-being

Board Relations & Governance

- Partner with the Board of Directors to support strong governance and accountability
- Provide regular updates on organizational performance, finances, and strategy
- Support board engagement in fundraising, advocacy, and strategic planning
- Ensure compliance with legal, ethical, and regulatory requirements

Advocacy & Policy Leadership

- Direct the organization’s advocacy agenda at the local and state levels
- Build and maintain relationships with policymakers and local and state agencies
- Represent the organization in coalitions, public forums, legislative hearings, and media engagements
- Oversee policy research, analysis, and the development of advocacy materials

External Relations & Communications

- Strengthen the organization’s brand, visibility, and credibility with key audiences
- Cultivate partnerships with allied organizations, community leaders, and stakeholders
- Support strategic communications, messaging, and public education campaigns

Fundraising & Financial Sustainability

- Lead fundraising strategy, including grants, individual giving, and events
- Cultivate and steward relationships with funders and philanthropic partners
- Oversee budget development and financial management in collaboration with the Board
- Ensure long-term financial health and diversification of revenue streams

The Ideal Candidate

The ideal Executive Director for Youth Forward is a leader who is strategic and action-oriented and who cares about young people—someone who brings a strong commitment to equity and justice; a sophisticated understanding of advocacy and policy; and an innate belief that young people must play a central role in social change efforts.

KEY QUALIFICATIONS & COMPETENCIES

The ideal candidate will bring many of the following experiences and traits, along with other relevant lived and professional experiences and skills that you are welcome to highlight in your application:

Desired Qualifications & Experiences

- At least three to five years of senior leadership experience in nonprofit advocacy, public policy, youth development, or a related field inclusive of overall administrative oversight
- Demonstrated success in advocacy, policy change, movement-building, and/or coalition-building
- Knowledge of child and youth development and the relevant policy landscape
- Proven fundraising experience inclusive of funder relationship development

- Strong financial skills with experience managing an annual operating budget of at least \$1,000,000 and proven capacity to grow an organization's annual budget
- Strong people management and organizational leadership experience
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Lived experience or strong connection to the communities most impacted by the organization's mission strongly preferred
- Experience working with or leading coalitions and grassroots advocacy efforts preferred
- Media relations and public speaking experience preferred
- Bachelor's degree with emphasis on or exposure to public policy, youth development, community organizing, nonprofit management, or other related fields; advanced degree preferred

Desired Leadership Competencies

- Strategic thinking and political acumen
- Relationship-building and coalition leadership
- Equity-centered leadership and cultural competence
- Decisive, adaptable, and mission-driven
- Emotional intelligence and self-awareness to build trust with diverse stakeholders
- High integrity and accountability

Compensation, Benefits & Work Environment

The competitive annual compensation range for the Executive Director is targeted to be \$135,000 to \$165,000 annually, commensurate with experience. Benefits offered include health insurance, a retirement plan, paid time off, and professional development support. The Executive Director will work out of Youth Forward's Sacramento office in a hybrid culture in office 3-4 days a week. The Executive Director can also expect to attend local meetings and events and travel periodically for other convenings. For candidates currently based outside of the Sacramento region, relocation support will be considered.

The Application Process

Youth Forward is partnering with [Walker & Associates Consulting](#) – a Bay Area-based strategic management consulting and executive search firm promoting equitable community impact – to facilitate this search. To apply, email a cover letter, resume, and list of three professional references (references will not be contacted without your advance notice) to youthforward@walkeraac.com by **Friday, May 15, 2026**, at 5:00 pm PT. Use the subject line: ED Application. Please submit PDF or Microsoft Word files only, preferably in one combined file. Resume review begins immediately. *Questions or Nominations?* Contact Jeannine N. Walker at jwalker@walkeraac.com.



Youth Forward is an equal opportunity employer and especially encourages candidates from diverse backgrounds with lived experience and/or strong connections to the communities Youth Forward serves to apply.