Small Magic is seeking a Program Director, Childcare Centers to lead in a player-coach role for our program portfolio and team serving childcare centers across Birmingham.

KEY DETAILS

Reports to: Managing Director, Programs & Operations
Manages: Program Coaches (currently 2)
Location: Birmingham, AL (in-person)

Schedule: Full-time
Compensation: $85,000-95,000 annually

WHO WE ARE

Small Magic is a Birmingham-based organization focused on one goal: ensuring children under five are ready for kindergarten and a life of opportunity. We work alongside civic leaders and partners to strengthen the systems that support early learning across our city from direct-service program delivery to broader ecosystem work.

We are entering a defining chapter. With significant new public and private investments committed, Small Magic is doubling in size over the next 18–24 months. As we grow, we're building dedicated leadership for each of our two service lines. This role leads one of them.

WHAT YOU'LL DO

The Program Director, Childcare Centers owns the delivery, quality, and continuous improvement of Small Magic's childcare-facing service line. You are the person most responsible for what childcare providers and the children in their care actually experience when they engage with Small Magic.

This is a player-coach role. You are not just managing the work, you are also doing it. You carry an active caseload of childcare center relationships and own recruitment for the entire service line while simultaneously building the team, systems, and infrastructure to scale our impact.

The person in this role will:

- **Own the childcare service line end-to-end |** You are accountable for the quality, consistency, and outcomes of every interaction across Birmingham Talks (centers) and our new program, Quality Accelerator. You know what's working, what isn't, and why and you drive the adjustments needed to improve.

- **Lead an active program as a coach |** You are the lead for the new Quality Accelerator program, coaching a cohort of childcare providers to increase their quality star ratings. You build trust with center directors, deliver coaching and quality improvement support, and model the standard you expect for your team.
- **Recruit and nurture provider relationships |** You build and manage a portfolio of childcare center relationships. You are recruiting and retaining childcare center partners for our portfolio of programs across Birmingham Talks and Quality Accelerator. You steward relationships with current centers, reactivate historical partnerships, and build the pipeline that gets centers enrolled in our programs.
- **Lead and scale a team of coaches |** You manage the coaches delivering programs for childcare centers setting expectations, developing skills, and maintaining a high bar for how your team shows up for centers and providers. You understand that how we deliver matters as much as what we deliver.
- **Run with rigor and improve with intention |** You ensure programs are run well, the team is trained and upskilled, and the outcomes intended are being met. You recognize when a program element is hitting its ceiling and bring a clear recommendation to leadership before it becomes a crisis.
- **Own your data |** You are responsible for the performance data within your service line tracking reach, quality, and outcomes, and ensuring that data is accurate, timely, and useful. You partner with the Managing Director of Programs & Operations to translate that data into the performance narrative that informs organizational decisions and funder reporting.
- **Stay close to the community you serve |** You treat childcare center directors, teachers, and staff as partners and experts. You design and refine your work based on real insight, not assumptions. You understand how history, policy, and power shape the barriers your community faces, and you take that seriously.
- **Partner across the organization |** Your dyad partner, Program Director, Families, leads our work with families; you lead our work directly with childcare centers. You work closely with your dyad to share learning across service lines, and with the Managing Director of Programs & Operations to ensure your work connects to organizational strategy. You bring informed recommendations, not open-ended problems.

To make this concrete, if you were in the role today, you might be:

- Reviewing coaching session data and identifying a pattern that points to a training gap on your team
- Redesigning a touchpoint in your service line based on feedback from providers
- Reactivating a center relationship from years prior who maybe said no but could be a yes now

- Onboarding a new coach and getting them to full effectiveness faster than you did it last time
- Working with External Affairs on a partnership opportunity to showcase the work that Small Magic does
- By the end of year one, you'll have re-engaged and engaged new centers to participate in our childcare center-facing programs, launched Quality Accelerator with its first cohort, and led a coaching team that delivers well without you in every room. You'll have data that shows what's working, and you'll have used it to change something.

WHO YOU ARE

We'll evaluate candidates for this role based on demonstrated strength in the areas below:

- **Player-coach who leads from the front |** You can coach your team on Tuesday and carry your own center relationships on Wednesday. You don't delegate work you haven't done yourself. You know that at this stage of growth, credibility comes from being in the room with providers, not just overseeing the people who are.
- **Operator with ownership |** You've led a program or service function and know what it means to be accountable for outcomes. Quality Accelerator is new. You'll design it, run it, and improve it at the same time, and you won't wait for perfect to start, so you will not just manage problems, you'll actually bring solutions.
- **Sales oriented |** A meaningful part of this role is recruiting centers who are busy, stretched thin, or don't yet see why they need us, some of whom may have had said no previously to our programs. You'll earn their trust before you earn their participation.
- **People developer |** You have experience managing direct service staff and know how to set expectations, build skills, and hold a high bar with care. You develop people rather than just supervise them.
- **Data-informed |** You know how to use performance data to drive decisions. You ask whether what you're measuring actually tells you what you need to know.
- **Grounded in community |** You believe the people you serve are experts. You design and refine work based on real insight and deliver it with respect. Familiarity with Birmingham or similar Southern urban contexts is a genuine asset.
- **Steady improver |** You're energized by making good things better and you have the judgment to know when good enough isn't good enough anymore.

While not requirements for application, competitive candidates will likely have:

- Significant experience leading direct service programs, ideally in early childhood, childcare quality improvement, or provider-facing education
- Experience managing frontline or coaching staff
- Familiarity with childcare center operations, quality rating systems, or workforce development
- Familiarity with data collection and performance management in a program context
- Experience living in or working with lower-income communities

WHAT ELSE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Small Magic is committed to building a team that reflects the diversity and strength of the community we serve. We encourage applications from people and communities most impacted by inequity. Employment decisions are made without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or any other protected characteristic.

The compensation range for this role is $85,000-95,000, commensurate with demonstrated competency and prior experience. Benefits include a highly flexible work environment, premium health insurance, retirement matching (up to 5% after 3 months), paid time off (approximately 30 days), professional development funds, and a work-issued laptop.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications through the form located at smallmagic.org/careers are strongly preferred. If you don't have access to a Google account, you may send your application materials to programs@smallmagic.org.