

COMMUNITIES Unlimited

Director of Community Sustainability Position Profile

Communities Unlimited seeks a creative, entrepreneurial and collaborative rural-community focused professional, with a passion for serving rural communities. CU works with people to combine their ingenuity with technology, expertise and capital to unwind generations of inequity and ensure healthy water, healthy food, healthy businesses, healthy communities and healthy lives.



Summary

Since 1975, Communities Unlimited (CU) has built a strong history of delivering technical assistance to rural communities in seven southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. Our service area is home to 45% of the nation's persistent poverty counties.

CU is a Rural Development Hub that takes a holistic approach to supporting rural communities as they move toward prosperity and rebuild their economies after COVID19. The Community Sustainability team “blends” and coordinates CU’s many services to meet the needs and build on the opportunities in rural places across the South. The work begins with building diverse leadership teams that develop practical strategies to create new entrepreneurial opportunities and address priority needs like broadband, safe drinking water, disposal of wastewater, access to healthy foods, affordable and safe housing.

CU is a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and provides two main types of financial products: 1) loans for rural water and wastewater systems and 2) loans to support small businesses. CU is an approved lender under the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Microloan Program. CU’s outstanding loan portfolio is \$9 million.

CU is the Southern regional partner of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP). CU receives significant organizational pass-through funding from RCAP to support our water and wastewater work in rural communities. CU is also a member of the Opportunity Finance Network and its CEO serves on the executive committee of the Association for Enterprise Opportunity.

In 2018, CU joined 5 other CDFIs to form Partners for Rural Transformation, a national collaborative dedicated to advancing economic mobility in areas with persistent poverty. The group has published a policy paper about persistent poverty and raised \$2.6M in philanthropic dollars to deploy. CU is a founding member of the Memphis CDFI Coalition, a collaborative of 6 CDFIs serving the greater Memphis area which secured a \$2.8M grant in FY19 to leverage all of the resources of the coalition in two Memphis neighborhoods.

Headquartered in Fayetteville, Arkansas, Communities Unlimited has a staff of 70, located in offices throughout our seven-state region. The Director of Community Sustainability is a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Other members include: the CEO, CFO and 4 other Program Directors. The Director of Community Sustainability reports to the CEO and works closely with the Environmental Services, Lending, and Entrepreneurship teams. The Senior Leadership Team meets weekly and is actively involved in decision making for the organization and executing on the strategic plan developed together with the Board of Directors.

The Position

Reporting to the CEO, the Director of Community Sustainability manages all aspects of CU's Community Sustainability work including:

- Evaluating and selecting potential communities for long-term engagements
- Developing local leadership teams
- Identifying partners and resources, within CU and externally, to support the work
- Managing community sustainability projects
- Training
- Supervision of a small team
- Developing and managing the program budget of approximately \$600K.

CU's Community Sustainability work takes an asset-based approach but also clearly assesses a community's needs. The team has used a community assessment tool, leadership development curriculum and individualized technical assistance to develop diverse leadership teams that nurture new entrepreneurial opportunities in 11 communities with some 20 additional communities in the pipeline. The Community Sustainability work has been funded by the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative grants, USDA Rural Business Development Grants, private philanthropy and through contracts with communities.

The Director of Community Sustainability must be a highly collaborative leader – with external and internal stakeholders, be responsive to partners, customers, and the other members of the CU staff to identify unmet needs in our service area and pilot and implement new ways of supporting communities and connecting them to resources.

Skills and Experience

- Commitment to CU's mission and an ability to relate to people living in Southern rural communities, especially people of color.
- Excellent interpersonal, collaboration, and facilitation skills that helps bring people, resources, and communities together.

- An entrepreneurial spirit that seeks new mission-aligned opportunities and is able to identify and secure resources.
- Strong relationship building skills and ability to identify, cultivate and nurture partnerships with diverse stakeholders.
- Experience writing successful private and/or federal grant applications may be given preference.
- Responsibility for a program budget of \$75,000 or higher may be given preference.
- Strategic thinker who can develop new and evaluate existing tools.
- A collegial and empowering work style.
- Ability to travel and build relationships throughout CU's seven state service area.

Minimum Requirements

OPTION A: Bachelor's degree and a minimum of 4 years of professional experience living or working in rural communities.

OPTION B: Associate degree and a minimum of 6 years of professional experience living or working in rural communities.

Computer literacy and effective keyboarding skills (Windows/Microsoft) are required. Proficiency with Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint) is required. Experience with video conferencing tools (e.g. Skype, ZOOM, Google Meets, TEAMS) and Microsoft 365 (SharePoint, TEAMS) are a plus.

Valid driver's license is required (or ability to secure valid drivers license) and willingness to travel to field offices and project sites across CU's service area.

Must be located or willing to relocate to CU's 7 state service area. Location in or around Fayetteville may be given a preference.

Must be eligible to work in the United States of America.

Communities Unlimited, Inc. is an EOE M/F/Disability/Veteran employer, provider and lender.

We will begin accepting applications on May 25th, 2021. Please visit the Communities Unlimited website ([CLICK HERE](#)) for additional information and to apply.