

# LAMBENT FOUNDATION

*Lambent Foundation leverages the critical role of arts and culture  
at the intersection of social justice.*

## DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

### BACKGROUND

Lambent Foundation was established in 2008 as one of the first national funders dedicated to supporting arts and culture as a strategy for social change. It supports contemporary cultural organizations and projects in a range of disciplines, nurturing some of the most promising artists and artist-driven organizations working at the intersection of art and social justice.

Lambent's engagement with philanthropy, contemporary art, and social justice are guided by a core set of values that illuminate the Foundation's grantmaking decisions and inform the work with its grantee-partners. These values provide a compass for Lambent's goals and aspirations, and include:

#### **Mutual Accountability**

Lambent works to transform philanthropic practice by promoting a culture of reciprocity, joint commitment, and mutual accountability among funders and grantee-partners;

#### **A Reimagining of the Relationship between Art and Social Justice**

Lambent advances justice and equity throughout the contemporary art world – from major museums to artist collectives – and supports artists and artistic practice as valuable disruptors of the *status quo*;

#### **Cultural Landscapes Matter**

Lambent operates in the three unique landscapes of Nairobi, New Orleans, and New York, honoring and engaging with the vibrant legacies of art and struggle that emerge from each landscape's singular history and culture;

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### **Honoring Uncertainty**

Transformation comes from embracing turbulence and ambiguity. As funders, artists, and people, the Lambent community takes risks, knowing that impact is not always quantifiable, and that transformative work thrives in a climate of trust; and

### **Championing the Emergent**

“Lambent” means flickering and emergent. Concepts like gender equity and racial justice are a narrow expression of the Lambent ethos, which champions the intangible, the expansive, and the intuitive. Lambent embraces global perspectives to elevate the uncertainties of artistic practice as a framework for changing the world.

In 2013, the advent of its fifth anniversary, and in response to recession-driven needs, Lambent embarked on a *strategic refresh* to assess its philanthropic practice, with the aim of developing more effective and innovative ways of directing its support. The process led the Foundation to focus on the broader issues related to mission achievement and field-wide impact, and prompted a shift in the Foundation’s understanding of art ecology as an “ecosystem”: a collection of parts that are interconnected and whose actions affect the whole.

The process also heightened an awareness of the potential for innovation when groups come together, and led to Lambent’s consideration, and ultimate adoption of **network theory** as a new grantmaking strategy – leveraging the collective influence, resources and power of Lambent’s grantee partners.

The underlying idea is that Lambent’s grantee partners form a “Network” an entity that creates value for both the individual members, as well as for the Network as a whole. Within this context, the Network will identify issue areas to address and goals to advance. It is Lambent’s hope that when fully implemented, Lambent’s grantee partners will come to value the Network’s assets as much as they value their relationship with Lambent – assets that include:

- Open and easy access to, and trust in, their Network partners for exchanging ideas, problems and solutions;
- Access to opportunities for partnerships within the Network; and
- Access to opportunities for partnership and leadership within the broader social justice community, thus allowing for greater influence and impact.

Working at this level requires all participants to move into a place of creative flow and deep relationship, setting the stage for a more co-creative process. Lambent’s network theory reaffirms the Foundation’s commitment to leveraging its influence, relationships and resources for collectively held power.

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Within the context of this new strategy, while continuing its standard annual grantmaking, Lambent has undertaken a multi-year commitment to making strategic investments of progressively larger amounts in a selected cohort of visionary organizations in Nairobi, New

Orleans and New York. These grants are intended to support each organization's next "big leap" or significant institutional pivot, and requires that each Partner:

- Meet certain organizational characteristics, in alignment with Lambent's values; and
- Reflect an organizational practice and ecosystem awareness defined by equity and inclusivity.

## **THE POSITION**

The **Director of Communications** is responsible for overseeing a robust communications framework and executing strategies that elevate Lambent as a respected voice for contemporary arts at the intersection of social justice. Reporting to Lambent's Executive Director, the Director of Communications should be a strong storyteller, with the ability to effectively translate concepts and ideas to diverse audiences – local to global. The Director will balance the responsibility of stewarding Lambent's institutional identity, while simultaneously illuminating the work of Lambent's grantee partners.

**It is important that the Director immediately:**

- Get to know Lambent thoroughly – its history, values, operations, philanthropic approach, and work culture;
- Gain the confidence of Lambent's Executive Director, other team members, and grantee partners, forging relationships built on trust and a shared vision;
- Begin to learn about Lambent's grantee partners, and the broader cultural, social and geographic landscapes in which they function;
- Begin an immersion in Lambent's network theory – learning and embracing the core principles and strategies – to be able to translate its potential and practice, both within the Lambent Foundation, and to external audiences.

## **ADDITIONAL KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Additionally, it is expected that the Director of Communications will:**

- Maintain a comprehensive and centralized communications platform. Such a system should incorporate multiple story telling strategies (written word, film, soundscapes, digital tools, podcasts and such) and technology tools to create a well-integrated approach to the gathering, translation and dissemination of information – both internally (within the Lambent Foundation and grantee Network) and externally, and serve as a critical backbone to Lambent’s work.

The platform should also provide a clear means of translating information into active, accessible intelligence to benefit both Lambent grantee partners, the contemporary arts and social justice sectors, and aligned philanthropic entities;

- Effectively communicate messages about Lambent’s unique history, vision, values, network theory, funding practices, and successes;
- In partnership with the grantee partners’ communications teams, contextualize various social justice issues (such as racial justice, gender equity, immigration rights, climate justice, and such). Take big ideas and create nuanced, first-person narratives for multiple target audiences;
- As appropriate; illuminate the social, cultural and political contexts in which the Grantee Partners are doing their work;
- Help Lambent become more strategic and cutting-edge in its use of technological strategies, including virtual imaging and digital mapping;
- Interface with outside contractors, as necessary;
- Support Lambent’s Executive Director, and all Lambent staff, in the preparation of external presentations, ensuring the strategic embedding of Lambent’s values and message;
- Develop clear communications policies and systems so that all staff approach the development of content in a consistent and uniform way.

## **IDEAL EXPERIENCE**

The ideal candidate should have the following experience:

- A minimum of 7 years of experience creating communications frameworks and plans;
- Experience creating, expanding and/or repositioning an institutional identity/image/brand;
- Success positioning nuanced concepts and ideas; familiarity with communications theories and strategies as they relate to societal change is a plus;
- Senior-level management experience, and the proven ability to work effectively with external contractors;
- Experience in a issue-driven, political, advocacy, or policy communications environment is considered a plus;
- Ability to manage multiple projects, set priorities, meet deadlines and accept new challenges;
- Knowledge of current communication technology and media, especially web-based communications and social networking considered a plus;
- Excellent editorial judgment, writing, and editing skills;
- Skills in crafting materials and messages and in preparing others in making presentations to a variety of audiences;
- Global experience and perspective, strongly desired.

## **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

The ideal candidate will be:

- Personally committed to Lambent's values of equity, creativity, collaboration and mutual accountability;
- A good listener, and creative communicator, able to translate complex issues in nuanced ways;
- Thoughtful, persuasive, and politically savvy; able to see all sides of an issue and prioritize and balance competing interests;

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- A strategic thinker who understands the power of brand and how to use it to further an institution's mission;
- Open and responsive to the ideas of others; willing to take intelligent and responsible risks; able to build consensus, educate and motivate;
- Strong oral communications and networking skills along with a demonstrated ability to work as part of the senior leadership team;
- Outgoing, straightforward and self-possessed; one who shares information readily;
- A persuasive advocate on behalf of artists and activists who is able to connect with a broad spectrum of people in meaningful ways.

*Equal employment opportunity and having a diverse staff are fundamental principles at Lambent Foundation, where employment and promotional opportunities are based upon individual capabilities and qualifications without regard to race, color, religion, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation/preference, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, disability, veteran status or any other protected characteristic as established under law.*

**To apply for this position, please forward a resume, as well as a substantive cover letter outlining your interests and qualifications via e-mail to:**

**Sandi Haynes, Executive Search Consultant**

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