

## Finding Your First Measurement Director

Nonprofits that seek to use measurement to continuously improve their impact eventually may decide to create a full-time position to lead their performance measurement function. But don't assume the best person for the job will necessarily be a "data work"—someone who can execute complex analyses that reveal powerful insights about an organization's programs. Few would argue the value of such a skill set, however, often more important can be the interpersonal and change management skills a Measurement Director<sup>1</sup> should have. In addition to "hard skills" of understanding the data, Measurement Directors also need to have the "soft skills" that will ultimately help staff across the organization see the value of using measurement to make better decisions.

This short article, based on research for the report "Building Capacity for Measuring and Managing Performance" and on experiences we've had through our Executive Search work, takes a look at how to approach hiring for this type of role. It explores resources for finding qualified candidates, sample job descriptions from nonprofit organizations, and questions to ask during an interview.

### How do you describe the role?

A clear and comprehensive job description is critical to attracting candidates who are a good fit with the role. But without gaining agreement among your leadership team around the specific responsibilities of the role, and the qualifications and experience level of the optimal candidate you want to attract, even the best written job descriptions and interview process will fail.

"[Hiring Toolkit: Navigating the Hiring Process](#)" provides guidance on not only how to develop the job description but also how to process applications and screen resumes, conduct successful interviews, check references, extend an offer and manage a new employee's transition.

Here are a few job descriptions you might view as examples:

- [Horizons for Homeless Children – Director of Evaluation and Innovation](#) (March 2011)
- [Latin American Youth Center – Director of Learning and Evaluation](#) (January 2012)
- [The Mission Continues – Research Director](#) (November 2011)
- [ORBIS International – Director of Monitoring and Evaluation](#) (October 2011)

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<sup>1</sup> We will use the term 'Measurement Director' to refer to the leader of the organization's performance measurement work. Other titles we've seen include Director of Evaluation and Learning, Director of Performance Improvement, and Chief Knowledge Officer.

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## Where do you look?

There are three main channels for finding a Measurement Director. We've listed these in order of affordability.

**Using your networks:** According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 70 percent of all jobs are now found through networking! Use your own networks and those of your staff, board members, funders, partners, and so on. Also consider local performance measurement affinity groups in your area. New York, for example, has an [Alumni in Performance Measurement and Management Group](#) led by Patrick Germain of [Safe Space](#); Boston has an [Outcomes WorkGroup](#) led by Jennifer Lowe of [Crittenton Women's Union](#); and San Francisco has a [San Francisco Bay Area Evaluators group](#).

**Posting the job:** Here are a number of websites and resources we've seen organizations use to post Measurement Director positions; some of the websites require membership but most serve as public resources that organizations can use to find qualified candidates.

- [American Evaluation Association](#)
- [Bridgestar](#) (Bridgestar is an initiative of The Bridgespan Group)
- [The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)
- [The Foundation Center](#)
- [LinkedIn Groups](#) focused on performance measurement (Performance Measurement, PMA-Performance Management Association, etc.)
- Leading private or nonprofit evaluation firm alumni job portals or LinkedIn groups (e.g., Abt Associates, Mathematica, MDRC, PPV). *Some of these are membership-based.*
- Leading strategy consulting firm alumni job portals or LinkedIn groups (e.g., McKinsey, Bain & Company, Booz Allen Hamilton) *Some of these are membership-based.*
- Leading academic evaluation group job boards (*Specific universities to target should depend on what field you are in and where you are located. For example, for public health, leading institutions include: [Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health](#), [Harvard University School of Public Health](#), [Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health](#). For global development, they include: [Harvard Kennedy School's Master of Public Administration-International Development program](#), [University of California Berkeley's Center for Effective Global Action](#), [MIT Poverty Action Lab](#).)*
- Diverse candidate job boards: [HBCU Network](#), [African-American Nonprofit Network](#), [Hispanics in Philanthropy](#), [Latino Professionals Network](#)
- For global postings: [Devex](#) (social enterprise targeting international development through recruiting and business information services). Regional or country evaluation societies:

Canadian Evaluation Society, European Evaluation Society, Eastern Evaluation Research Society, etc. (See the [IOCE website](#) for a full list.)

**Hiring a search professional/firm:** This will be the costliest option but given the short supply and high demand for qualified Measurement Directors, organizations are increasingly finding this to be a valuable route – particularly if you are looking for a seasoned candidate. A search firm will help you draft the job description, post on appropriate job boards, conduct outreach through their and your networks, review resumes, conduct screening calls, ideally deliver three to four leading candidates for your consideration, and then conduct professional reference checks on your top candidates. Search firms structure their fees differently. For example, some will charge based on the complexity of the search while others will charge based on some fixed percentage of the Measurement Director’s first year salary; some will charge to be retained regardless of the outcome of the search while others will charge contingent on a successful placement. When deciding whom to choose, start with professionals or firms you know, either through your own experiences or those of others you trust. Since there are few, if any, search firms that focus only on Measurement Director searches, you will need to do a thorough job of learning about their experience and expertise. (See “[A Guide to Engaging an Executive Search Firm](#)” for more on how to evaluate a search firm.)

### What do you ask?

The precise questions you ask during an interview will depend on what you are trying to achieve with the role. But here are some of our favorite questions based on executive searches we’ve done for measurement directors:

- Could you briefly share why you are interested in this role?
- What would be your approach to learning about our program work and performance measurement strategy?
- In your experience, what are the top two challenges of doing performance measurement in our field? How would you overcome them?
- Who do you think is particularly good at performance measurement in our field and why?
- Please describe a situation where you performed a quantitative analysis to answer a particular question of interest for an organization.
- What components of performance measurement do you find most interesting or exciting?
- Please describe your best illustration of how you’ve used measurement findings to influence the strategic direction of a program or initiative.
- Based on what you’ve read about our organization, what are two or three ways you think we need to improve our performance measurement?

- Please describe your experience working directly with staff members to help them use data to improve their work.
- Could you share an example of a report or article you've written, a presentation you've given, or another example of sharing knowledge? What was the topic and how did what you shared influence the audience? Could you provide a copy after the interview?
- What needs to be in place organizationally and culturally for you to be able to do your work effectively? Where was this most true in your career so far?
- Tell me about a situation where you thrived in an environment that was *(describe your work environment to test the candidate's cultural fit)*.

Since Measurement Directors need to have a full range of skill sets, you need to search for your first in a different way. Be sure that your leadership team broadens the role to include both hard and soft skills (data and analytic skills as well as change and knowledge management, and strategic experience). Also consider a diverse set of candidates, looking beyond evaluators and academics and considering those with strategy or program backgrounds who possess strong cultural competence and change management experience. And, as we suggested earlier with our interview questions, interviews should test a candidate's experience in working directly with staff to use measurement to influence the strategic direction of a program or initiative. Over time, organizational measurement priorities may evolve, but hiring your first Measurement Director with the above in mind will give your organization a solid footing from which to engage in performance measurement and management that helps you improve your organization's impact.