

Executive Director for the School of Activism

Background

The Bertha Foundation is looking to establish and fund a new school of activism to provide an opportunity for structured and reflective learning to complement the organisational experience of social justice activists. It will be based in Cape Town, South Africa. Once established, the school will be independent, with its own governing board. The school aims to attract those engaged in struggles to advance justice and equality, mainly in poor and marginalised communities. While seeking to integrate theory and practice, the school will build courses in political economy, struggle case studies, strategies and tactics, community organising and practical skills. It will also seek to support active movements, and to be a place where contemporary struggles can be reflected upon and shared. All of this will require clear principles, a highly cohesive staff with a shared vision, a mastery over their subject matter, and a passion for social justice. The right director will be critical to this all.

Job Description

An Executive Director, accountable to the Board, and supported by an experienced Operations Manager, will head the School. The Executive Director will have the following responsibilities, amongst others:

- Prepare a detailed plan for first three years of the school, which will be presented to the school's board for feedback and finalisation.
- Recruit and lead a small but exceptional diverse staff with experience in practical struggle, community organising and leadership development and training.
- Build a cohesive staff team that keeps abreast of developments in theory and practice and contract additional expertise when needed.
- Reach agreed understandings on content, obligations and expectations with potential learners and institutions.
- Lead the process of curriculum design, materials development, and the structuring of seminars and courses. Introduce innovative pedagogical techniques and ensure language accessibility. Initiate the first trainings and symposia, and introduce refinements based on these.
- Establish a sound system of corporate governance with regular and appropriate reporting to the Board and the seeking of necessary approvals
- Build meaningful relationships with movements and other training institutions.
- Represent the school publicly
- Grow the school as a learning institution, with an entrenched ethos of social justice, commitment to practical struggle and lifelong learning.

Qualifications and Qualities

The Executive Director must have an exceptionally strong command of the theoretical and practical questions with which the school is engaged, and must be a very strong manager, able to build a first-class institution under the guidance of the board. She or he would require:

- A Masters-level Degree or equivalent experience.
- A strong knowledge of political economy, history, social theory, and educational theory and practice.
- Substantial experience of grassroots organising, community-based struggles, and/or progressive social movements or campaigns. Experience in creative advocacy campaigns and legal advocacy also desirable.
- Experience in leading and managing people, finances, and material resources. Experience in building and sustaining collaborative collective work.
- Experience in designing and implementing education or training processes that build the capacity of activists and communities to understand social phenomena like inequality, injustice and class formation, to develop and implement effective strategies, and to take meaningful, effective and responsible action.
- Enthusiasm for, and experience in building the knowledge, confidence and leadership-capacity of young people.
- Ability to build consensus and coalitions whilst acknowledging where ideas are contested and experiences diverge.