

Who is SmartStart Early Learning (RF) NPC?

SmartStart is a *successful national network* of NGOs & partners realising **quality, affordable early learning for all 3-5 year olds** — through *scaling a network of providers, and achieving specific ecosystem transformations* with governments and partners.

Opportunity!

Job title	Communications Manager
Nature of time commitment	Full-time
Modality & Location	Hybrid (office: 26 Griswold Rd Saxonwold Joburg)
Nature of contract	Indefinite
Duration & Timeframe	ASAP from 2 October 2023 onwards

Child Safeguarding Policy

Any and all applicants must adhere with the SmartStart Child Safeguarding Policy which has been developed in line with the International Standards for Child Safeguarding which provide a benchmark for organisations working with children.

In terms of this Policy, SmartStart will not employ anyone whose name is on the National Child Protection Register or who has been convicted of a criminal offence involving a child.

SmartStart Early Learning NPC

Registration No: 2015/075926/08

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Directors: C Furness-Symms (Chair), DB Harrison, N Galombik & G Matlhape (CEO)

Communications Manager

Job Specification

Purpose

The Communications Manager is responsible for developing and realising communication that contributes to SmartStart's success through information, engagement, and influence which enrich SmartStart's brand and mobilise people and resources. This should be informed by the Comms Manager's monitoring the early learning and wider ECD environment for opportunities.

The Communications Manager is responsible for crafting compelling messages, managing internal and external communications, building productive media relations, and enabling judgments about the effects of SmartStart's communication.

The ideal candidate should have exceptional writing and interpersonal skills, a strategic mindset, and a deep understanding of effective communication practices.

Location in organisation

- Line Manager: **Brand & Communications Lead**
- Job grade (Paterson framework): **D Lower**

Key Responsibilities

Monitor early learning and wider ECD news, policy developments, and research to identify opportunities and/or issues for consideration and potential communication or other responses

Develop, realise, and innovate effective, contextual communication approaches

- Develop communication plans for Information, engagement and influence across contexts and modes in service of SmartStart's success — mindful of all key stakeholders, constituencies and audiences incl. children, franchisees, practitioners, parents, staff, partners, and the public
- Amplify the voices of the SmartStart network incl. by guiding and supporting the SmartStart network to communicate more effectively

Craft compelling communications

- Write clear, concise, informative, engaging, and influential communications and other content for distinct stakeholders, constituencies, and audiences across channels and platforms while maintaining consistent brand voice and tone. This includes inter alia press releases, articles, speeches, newsletters, organisational reports, and website copy

Manage internal and external communications

- Guide and oversee all internal communication channels incl. FundaApp, newsletters, and email updates, to keep staff, partners and practitioners informed and engaged.
- Manage external communications to maintain a valuable brand image — incl. media relations, crisis communication, and public relations activities.

Build productive media relations

- Cultivate relationships with journalists, media entities, and influencers to promote positive, valuable (informative, engaging, influential) coverage of the early learning sector in general and the SmartStart network in particular (incl. franchisors and other partners)
- Pitch stories and coordinate interviews
- Prepare spokespersons for media engagements
- Monitor relevant media coverage and respond to media inquiries promptly

Maintain brand consistency and advance the brand

- Ensure that all communications enhance the SmartStart brand, informed by brand guidelines
- Maintain professional integrity individually and for SmartStart's brand
- Collaborate with marketing, programme and advocacy, and/or other functions to create engaging and effective communication collateral and brand assets

Monitor and analyse communication effectiveness

- Track the effects of communication initiatives using appropriate metrics and analytics as well as qualitative feedback
- Judge and enable judgments about the effects of communications informed by data and feedback
- Report on communications and recommend improvements

Manage crisis and/or other time-sensitive communications

- Develop crisis communication plans and protocols to effectively respond to, act within, mitigate, and influence key reputational and other risks
- Act as a spokesperson during crises and manage internal and external communication flow in challenging situations

Scan, learn from, and explore communications developments

- Stay up to date with changing communication trends, technologies, techniques, and practices
- Ongoingly explore potential improvements and/or innovations
- Respond or adapt appropriately

Person Specification

Qualifications & Experience

- Degree in communications, public Relations, journalism, or other relevant degree
 - Advantageous: relevant master's degree
- Min. 5 years' experience as a communications manager or similar realising effective communications in a development / social / non-profit context developing

Abilities, Skills, and Attributes

- Excellent, evidenced written and verbal communication skills across constituencies and platforms
- Experience in media relations incl. cultivating relationships with journalists, managing press releases, and organising media events
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build effective relationships with stakeholders at all levels
- Proficiency across multiple communication tools and platforms incl. social media management, content management systems, and relevant analytics tools
- Ability to see the big picture and attend to details rigorously
- Strong management skills including prioritising between and managing across multiple demands
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced environment
- Strong problem-solving capability
- Familiarity with crisis communication practices and reputation management techniques
- Advantageous: creativity re visual design and branding
- Advantageous: familiarity with industry-specific terminology and regulations