

RUSHER LOSCAVIO FISHER

NONPROFIT EXECUTIVE SEARCH

CAREER PROSPECTUS

POSITION: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ORGANIZATION: SOUTH OF MARKET CHILD CARE
(SOMMACC) (SAN FRANCISCO)



www.somacc.org

**ORGANIZATION
BACKGROUND:**

SOUTH OF MARKET CHILD CARE was founded in 1970 and will be celebrating next year a half century of distinguished service. Noted for its Reggio Emilia curriculum and its dedication to low income children and families, SOMACC has earned its reputation as a leader in the provision of highest quality early childhood education, and support services to children and families.

SOMACC is one of the very limited number of organizations in this field with a business model dedicated to a socioeconomic classroom mix of subsidized children and private-pay children, reflecting the blighted/gentrifying neighborhoods served, projecting the deeply-felt institutional commitment to social justice, and believing that such a socioeconomic mix of children and families amplifies the value of the educational experience. In its Judith Baker Center, 20% of the class is private-pay; in the Yerba Buena

Center, 50% is private-pay; in the soon-to-be-opened Transbay Center, a 50% private-pay balance is planned. The total number of children served in the first two centers is 132, with an estimated 40-80 children to be added when the third center opens later this year. Pre-school services include children from 2 ½ - 5 years; infant and toddler services include children from 3 months - 2 ½ years. Because of the quality of services and the reputation of SOMACC, the demand for services far exceeds their availability (e.g., more than 200 private-pay families are on the waiting list; City-wide waiting lists for subsidized families are far longer).

SOMACC enjoys the advantage of access to the very best practices in the field of early childhood development and education. Stanford University; the University of California at Berkeley; San Francisco, San Jose and East Bay campuses of the California State University System; and the many independent colleges and universities nearby, incubate a talent pool of dedicated and innovative teaching and clinical professionals who are the greatest asset of the organization. In a field of service where salaries are low and risk of staff turnover always a challenge, exceptional staff dedicate their energy and talent to the children and families of SOMACC, making it as loving, safe, and supportive as it is yeasty and innovative in its services. Because the facilities are provided virtually rent-free in exchange for services, SOMACC is able to dedicate 85% of its budget to personnel salary and benefits. SOMACC staff belong to the American Federation of Teachers and the relationship between union and management is highly collaborative.

SOMACC places a premium on its philosophies of child development and early childhood education. The infant-toddler programs are guided by the Resources for Infant Education (RIE) approach; the pre-schools by the Reggio Emilia approach - both emphasizing the reinforcing power of parental/teacher relationships with children, together with the sense of self and capacity of explorative learning, self-direction, and the natural power of curiosity in children.

There is a considerable body of research and practice since the mid- 20th century in the international early childhood development field supporting this “constructivist” approach. The classroom environment, the relationships between teachers and their children, the pre-service and in-service training of teachers, and the involvement of parents and families are all defined by these philosophies.

As an educational organization serving low income families and children, SOMACC is always challenged with children with special needs, with children who are traumatized, with children with serious mental health issues, and with families that are broken or under serious stress. SOMACC has established its Family Resource Center to serve the families whose children are enrolled in its centers, plus families from throughout the community who seek information, guidance, support, parental education, and referral to other community services. Serving families with children up to 17 years old and providing multilingual support, all free of charge, the South of Market Family Resource Center is an invaluable adjunct to SOMACC and to all San Francisco families.

Retiring Executive Director Noushin Mofakham was a teacher with more than 20 years of experience when founding executive director Judith Baker retired. Embodying the values of SOMACC and expertise in the Reggio Emilia Approach, Noushin won the position as Baker’s successor, and has for many years enhanced and expanded SOMACC’s services and reputation. Noushin leaves a remarkable legacy as she plans her well-earned retirement. Yet, Noushin is the first to underscore the challenges that will create for her successor similar future opportunity for transformation and achievement.

These challenges include:

- SOMACC’s current budget is \$3.6 million and expected to exceed \$4 million in the near future when the third center, in collaboration with Mercy Housing,

will open in the Transbay Terminal area. The cost of private child care and pre-school, like the cost of independent school or college tuition, can be prohibitive for a middle income family, and certainly so for families with more than one child. While this expenditure is a high priority for most parents, this approximately one-third portion of the annual operating budget is vulnerable to changes in employment, economic cycles, and cost-of-living. Tuition increases periodically will make SOMACC even more expensive for private-pay families. Though there has always been a considerable waiting list for private-pay families, SOMACC is determined to make its services as affordable as feasible to a socio-economically diverse parent community. Astute management of revenue and expenses is a *sine qua non* for new leadership.

- SOMACC's budget includes about \$1.2 million from the City and \$700,000 from the State, targeting the educational and family support needs of low income children and their families. Not all government funding streams are predictable and secure from year to year, and many of them are likely to decline over time. SOMACC enjoys an exceptional reputation with government funders at every level, is valued as a premier provider of services to children from families who are unemployed, homeless, the working poor, etc., and is likely to remain an invaluable service provider to this population. Yet, organizational excellence is all about leadership, and government support, like support from parents and donors, will always be vulnerable to lapses in effective leadership.
- SOMACC's budget includes an aggregate of about \$500,000 in grants from the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund. The Fund has been supporting and investing in SOMACC as a dedicated angel funder of the organization, but funding conditions change in many ways over time, and both funders and organizations champion the value of diversifying grant, contract, and contributed income support. SOMACC's

foundation supporters are limited in number, virtually no support is being solicited from the generous South-of-Market corporate community, and only an inconsequential amount of contributed income is being received from individual donations. While child care and pre-school organizations are almost never able to supplement their budgets by contributed income, SOMACC's location and its high quality services to at-risk families and children can undoubtedly attract more charitable support than in the past. The next leader of SOMACC must be an influential embodiment of SOMACC values and expertise as have been Judith Baker and Noushin Mofakham, a powerful voice for the children and families served, and a highly visible face to generous individuals and organizations that value the impacts SOMACC makes on the lives of San Francisco children and their families.

- Even though SOMACC staff salaries are market rate for similar organizations, hourly rates are so low as to make it nearly impossible for an employee who is a single head of household to support a family in San Francisco. As a result, economic pressure is inescapable, challenging all efforts to maintain morale and continuity in staffing. To exacerbate these challenges, minimum wage rates and cost of living are likely to continue upward in San Francisco, creating significant pressure for salary increases in an organization where 85% of budget is already dedicated to personnel costs. That these are pressures being felt throughout San Francisco and in other parts of the United States makes the challenges to the present business model no less daunting.
- Another example of a future that will require effective SOMACC leadership is the trend toward the provision of "preschool for all." In 1921, with the introduction of public kindergartens, the private kindergartens across the U.S. moved their focus to younger children at the pre-school level. In not very many years, an analogous process could move the

final year of preschool into the public schools. Though unlikely because of its costliness to government, the implications for today's private preschools would be significant. Many of today's preschools do not have infant toddler programs. In the case of SOMACC, a natural shift would be to expand current infant-toddler programs to replace displacement from the second year of preschool by the public schools. Not so easily done, however, because infant-toddler programs require higher staff-to-student ratios, different spaces, and usually even though higher tuition. While SOMACC is positioned well to adapt to these trends, the challenges of such changes will not be inconsiderable to a future leader.

- Finally, and importantly, SOMACC's expansion in the past from one to two centers, then the opening of the Family Resource Center, and then the planned opening in late 2019 of the Transbay Child Center, while building quality services and remaining financially healthy, demonstrates an organizational capacity for deliberate growth. A thoughtful governing Board believes that the tenure of the next executive director could evidence a visionary and entrepreneurial response to the great unmet demands among both private-pay and low income families for quality early childhood care and education. The Board believes that the location of SOMACC, its history, and its mission positions SOMACC for expansion, without compromise of quality of service or financial viability.

The new Executive Director of SOMACC will find a board and staff eager to maintain the high level of service for which the organization is known, and to build upon these services in the future. A values-grounded entrepreneurial leader, dedicated to RIE and Reggio Emilia principles, with a high level of business acumen, will be capable of shaping effective responses to the challenges above, and others – and will cherish this institution-building opportunity.

**REPORTING
RELATIONSHIPS:**

The Executive Director reports to a dedicated 7-member Board of Directors. Direct reports to the Executive Director include the three site managers (Judith Baker, Yerba Buena, Transbay child development centers), the Director of the Family Resource Center, the Finance Director, the Business Manager, the Human Resources Manager, and the Development/Admissions Manager. In a very flat organization below the Executive Director, most of SOMACC staff are direct service providers.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Executive Director embodies SOMACC values -- service to the disadvantaged, dedication to social justice, the potential of every child in his/her unique way to learn, grow and thrive, consistent with RIE and Reggio Emilia approaches to early childhood development. The Executive Director promotes the highest and best aspirations of the children and families served, inspiring with enthusiasm, energy, and vision the Board, staff, funders, community partners, and all others touched by the work of SOMACC. The Executive Director radiates warmth, concern, acceptance, and caring – aware at all times that at the heart of the organization’s best work is the quality of interpersonal relationships. The Executive Director, as the chief executive officer, is responsible for implementing all policy decisions of the Board, and for the management and operation of all programs and services provided by SOMACC. S/he oversees the administrative and fiduciary functions, and is solely responsible for employing and organizing staff to achieve SOMACC’s goals. S/he inspires trust and confidence, is transparent and authentic, and leads staff colleagues and board in a unifying, collaborative style. S/he represents SOMACC to the community, and builds strong relationships with the residents of San Francisco, with leaders at every level of community involvement, with the schools, public officials and government executives, with local media, and, with funders.

Specifically, the Executive Director:

- Creates a happy, healthy, caring, collegial learning community for students, families, staff and Board.
- Helps determine and ensure, in partnership with the governing Board, that the mission, vision and values of SOMACC remain at the forefront of all business decisions, and that SOMACC operates effectively in every respect. Is able to identify and employ metrics of success that will support data-based monitoring of every aspect of program and operations, working closely with management staff to inform Board and staff decision-making.
- Anticipates changing community needs with vision and imagination, is a perceptive student of the educational, developmental, and clinical needs of children, and especially for low-income families, understands how to apply limited resources to the whole-child advancement of such children, is planful in the provision of services and is responsible and accountable for execution of all such plans, demonstrating the ability to translate vision into implementation.
- Works closely with all external government funding sources to maximize support to different child populations served. Works closely with Board members and the community to identify, cultivate, and solicit individuals, foundations, and corporations for charitable gifts in support of the programs and operating costs of SOMACC. Promotes inter-organizational partnerships, like those presently with First Five and Mercy Housing, wherever collaboration can enhance such services. Has the expertise, credibility and gravitas to be a trusted partner to the Board and other volunteers offering their time and expertise, and to win the respect and confidence of caring and sophisticated funders.
- Demonstrates a high level of business acumen. Has the ability to stretch limited resources with a no-job-too-small attitude that encourages hard and dedicated work, inventiveness in execution of program, frugal priority-

setting, efficient effectiveness. Oversees the development and management of budget, oversees revenues and expenditures, monitors cash flow, maintains internal controls and financial discipline, and works closely with the Board to ensure the financial wellbeing of the organization. Remains always sensitive to the financial ramifications and fine balances among services to the poor, affordability to the tuition-paying, the essentials of quality services, and the needs of staff.

- Values diversity and is highly sensitive and responsive to the needs of multicultural and multilingual staff, community, families, and children.
- Is transparent, trustworthy and open in engaging with all stakeholders. Partners comfortably in a union environment.
- Is an articulate, persuasive, credible, charismatic advocate to parents, donors, and other community stakeholders, government, and the media, promoting SOMACC, Reggio Emilia education, and the importance of early childhood care and development.
- Takes executive responsibility for SOMACC compliance with all applicable non-profit laws, contractual obligations, daycare and preschool licensing, land use and zoning requirements, and funder restrictions, and maintains appropriate internal policies and procedures to ensure such compliance.

**PROFESSIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS:**

The ideal candidate will have:

- Sincere affection for low income children and their families, understanding of their challenges and needs,

and an infectious passion - the proverbial “fire-in-the-belly”- for early childhood education and mental health. Will be committed to RIE and Reggio Emilia principles of curriculum and teacher engagement, promoting the empowerment of children of all ages to master their learning. Multicultural sensitivity, dedication to social justice, and comfort surrounded by diverse stakeholders. Expertise in early child development and dedication to the education of inner-city children, understanding of the clinical needs of children and their families, appreciation of the special needs of traumatized children. Ideally, extensive classroom experience and understanding of such organizations at every level.

- A history of and reputation for uncompromising integrity, inspiring trust in SOMACC, its board, its staff, its relationships with students and families, partnering organizations, funders, the community at large.
- Visionary ability to conceive new, expanded, improved services, both comfort with and ability to strategize and scale, and the capacity to execute on plan.
- Fundraising skills and the ability to recruit and fuel the efforts of volunteers.
- Extensive non-profit and/or philanthropic leadership experience, ability to manage the boundary between executive leadership and a governing board, and a lifelong history of public service.
- Profit and loss experience, a strategic perspective, entrepreneurial ability, and proven leadership, with a broad array of skills transferable to a mid-sized non-profit organization.
- Comfort with information technology and the ability

not only to employ new technologies but to engage internal and external technical expertise to update infrastructure in support of efficient and effective operations.

- Exceptional communication skills, most importantly with a highly evolved capacity for active listening; facility with synthesizing information, and promoting interactive processes eye-to-eye, in groups, before audiences, in writing. Appreciation of the importance to leadership of high visibility to all staff and parents, of frequent presence in classrooms, in meetings, at stakeholder events, projecting an image of total involvement at all levels. Sincere enjoyment of community-wide activities, promoting a high profile of the SOMACC as the face and voice of the organization.
- Ability to identify, recruit, and engage able staff, and to motivate and mentor colleagues. A genuine understanding of and commitment to staff development through internal trainings and external associations. Commitment to high level performance of staff, of accountability by staff, ability to reward quality performance as well as to make difficult personnel decisions when necessary.
- Ability to delegate to staff and to micromanage only when necessary; ability to maintain a healthy executive balance among managing up, managing out, and managing down responsibilities; ease with completing any task, however minor, if the interests of SOMACC are served.
- Flexibility to be accessible and present to all constituencies; the ability to lead from behind or by example; the mature judgment and confidence to follow and to give credit wherever due; the internal strength and humility to inspire respect.

- Persistence, sensitivity, and attention to detail.
- High energy, durability, a healthy sense of humor.

EDUCATION:

Lifelong learning and educational achievement appropriate to the complexity of the position. Ideally, will be qualified or able quickly to qualify with a Child Development Program Director Permit (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing). Advanced degrees in teaching, early childhood education, counseling, child development, management are preferred. Experience as a teacher with Reggio Emilia education a major plus.

COMPENSATION:

Competitive and negotiable, based on experience, up to \$140,000 plus generous benefits.

Robert M. Fisher and Michael Loscavio of Rusher Loscavio Fisher Nonprofit Executive Search (see www.rll.com) are privileged to provide transition management and search counsel to the Board of South of Market Child Care (see www.somacc.org). All discussions with prospects for this position will be treated *with utmost discretion*.

We would be grateful to receive inquiries, expressions of interest, nominations and applications (transmittal and resume) at the following address:

bfisher@rll.com