



## **Position Description: Managing Director**

### **THE CIRCUMSTANCE**

Seventy years ago Baltimore schools and neighborhoods were racially segregated but socially diverse, creating an extended network of support for struggling families.<sup>1</sup> With both white and middle-class black families fleeing to the suburbs from 1950-2000, however, the city's landscape is now polarized by both race and class.<sup>2</sup> Nearly one in four Baltimore residents lives in poverty and many young people experience the consequences of social isolation and schooling in ailing communities – chronic absenteeism, course failure, and an increased risk of school dropout.<sup>3</sup> Poor educational outcomes limit subsequent lifetime opportunities and lead to disparities in public health, crime, and other indicators. Furthermore, social isolation has doubled in America in the past two decades, causing a broader public health phenomenon where people of all races and classes are faced with higher stress levels and a host of mental and physiological side effects. COVID-19 has laid bare and further exacerbated these trends. Thread believes that building relationships across lines of difference can break down these walls of separation, leading to improved and equitable educational, economic and health outcomes and a new social fabric where everyone can thrive.

### **THE THREAD COMMUNITY MODEL**

At the core of Thread is our young people. Thread enrolls students who are academically performing in the bottom 25% of their 9th grade class and attend one of Thread's six partner high schools. Thread commits to every young person we enroll for 10 years and never gives up on them. The intended objectives for our students in their first four years are to complete high school and identify a post-high school pathway: entrepreneurship, straight to workforce, a certification program, or two- or four-year college degree. Critical mile markers during this time within the *Thread Community Model* include school attendance, credit completion, and summer school enrollment and/or employment. Within their last six years, the intended objectives are for young people to be engaged in their chosen post-high school pathway and demonstrate self-efficacy to attain their goals throughout life.

Each Thread student is matched with up to four caring adults to form a Thread Family that represents a diverse cross-section of Baltimore – from university students to small business owners, empty nesters, and retirees. Volunteers work with trained volunteer coaches on how to connect with their young people, their families, and fellow volunteers to deploy the *Thread Engagement Process* of connecting, setting goals, identifying and removing barriers, and achieving goals. The Thread Family provides individualized support to students and their families in the form of personal goal-setting; rides to school and/or work; tutoring; coaching around Thread's norms; self-advocacy in school, work, health and legal systems; applying to jobs; and much more. Thread complements this individualized support and coaching with programs, including after-school tutoring, trips outside of Baltimore, and community service outings where young people and caring adults hone their skills, explore their passions, practice setting goals, and learn how to apply these lessons in the world. To ensure efficient and effective barrier identification and removal, we connect Thread Families with community collaborators who provide pro-bono resources & services in the legal, health, and employment sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> Manning Thomas, J., & Ritzdorf, M. (1997). *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>2</sup> Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396.

<sup>3</sup> Kilar, S. (2012, September 20). Baltimore's poverty rate unchanged at 1 in 4 residents. *Baltimore Sun*, Features.

## THE OUTCOMES

Historically, high school freshmen with GPAs below 1.0 graduate at a rate of 6% in Baltimore. Despite having an average incoming GPA of 0.79, Thread's students outperform their peers, with 65% graduating in four years. Our overall graduation rates are even higher with 79% graduating within six years of starting high school and 62% completing a two- or four-year degree or certification. Thread's unprecedented impact and story have been shared in the *New York Times*, *Forbes* and *Baltimore Sun* features as well as in speeches at the White House, Aspen Ideas Festival and the Smithsonian. However, it is the distillation of Thread's *how* - our ability to concretize and codify a process for building relationships across lines of difference, and in turn create a diverse community rooted in belonging and affirmation - that have resulted in in-depth features in David Brooks' *The Second Mountain* and Tim Shriver and Tom Rosshirt's *The Call to Unite*.

To support this process at scale, Thread has created, deployed, and refined a mobile app and curriculum to drive repeatable behaviors that result in replicable outcomes. The result is a multi-cultural, multi-identity community rooted in belonging and affirmation where our young people thrive.

## THE ETHOS

The Thread community is hard and smart-working, collaborative, curious, passionate, gritty, and resilient. We meet people where they are and go all in with care, compassion, and empathy. We believe small acts make a big difference. We trust each other to be sincere, reliable and competent.

Thread's community is rich and our outcomes are exemplary. At the same time, the road to excellence is peppered with iterative change. We make mistakes often, fail frequently, learn, grow and persist. We build communities of responsibility and have high expectations of young people, volunteers, collaborators, and staff. We believe that each human being has a purpose in life and that individuals living on purpose discover the intersection of their skills, passion, and what the world needs. The path to this intersection, one's "dot," is often simultaneously exhilarating and difficult. Thread creates a safe and challenging space for *all individuals in our community* to find their dots through reflection, feedback, and coaching.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Managing Director position provides an opportunity to join an organization that delivers [nation-leading results](#) by modeling a way of life that values everyone. With its dedicated community members, growing momentum and trusted partnership with the school district, ample resources and history of earnestly stretching, striving for and achieving success, Thread is creating something groundbreaking, poised for growth and ready to meet this moment - when social isolation is touching more of us than ever.

## THE ROLE

Above all, the Managing Director must understand that the essence of Thread lies in creating mutual, bi-directional relationships that reflect the value of our young people and begin to dismantle the narrative of "haves" and "have nots." They will internalize the purpose, live the [core competencies](#) and believe in the strategy of Thread. They will possess the ability to support all community members on their journeys to understand and challenge their biases and push through discomfort to connect deeply across lines of difference.

As a member of Thread's Executive team, this tested leader will work with the community to ensure that Thread's mission is fulfilled through strategic planning, program execution and community outreach involvement. Thread is seeking a galvanizing, adaptive leader and problem solver whose enthusiasm for the work, propensity for listening and valuing of the voice of the collective inspire and invest others. The Managing Director will ensure that Thread's systems, practices, and policies equitably and effectively support its activities and offer supportive leadership to our young people, volunteers and staff, as well as the greater Thread and Baltimore communities. This motivated leader

will grow the Thread community from six to ten Baltimore high schools, while maintaining exemplary outcomes and guiding Thread through our next phase of strategic growth. Specific responsibilities include:

- implementing the *Thread Community Model* using a hub-based engagement approach for high school students and city-wide engagement for post high school students to knit together young people, volunteers and collaborators in thick and sticky relationships that lead to more just outcomes for young people;
- developing and implementing a Baltimore-based, multi-year growth plan to expand to additional high schools and enroll sufficient students, volunteers and collaborators;
- establishing and maintaining relationships with community partners including City Schools, colleges and universities, corporations, and local government; and
- working collaboratively and providing insight and support to the finance and development teams, including budget management

### **THE MANAGING DIRECTOR**

The Managing Director will be a shepherd, a champion and a decisive business strategist, with the heart and mind to connect deeply and the capacity to support healthy, managed growth. They will understand what it means to evolve and strengthen systems and infrastructure to allow Thread to deliver on our mission at our current size and complexity and as we grow. *While no candidate will possess every quality indicated*, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- Demonstrated passion for Thread's mission and commitment to the Baltimore community
- 10+ years of management experience, ideally including three years of senior level leadership experience
- Strategic thinking skills that support the capacity to understand and lead in a complex, dynamic environment that involves negotiating partnership and power sharing
- A decision-making style that is both inclusive and resolute
- A highly relational leadership orientation that inspires commitment, cohesion and a collaborative, high-functioning culture
- Experience supporting leaders to manage and hold their teams accountable to a shared set of goals and outcomes
- Ability to communicate a programmatic vision, operational demands and conditions for success to a diverse audience of stakeholders and drive associated outcomes
- Commitment to giving and receiving low-inference, constructive feedback that reflects a growth mindset and supports accountability and continuous improvement
- Financial management skills, including budget preparation, analysis, decision making and reporting
- Demonstrated experience developing community-centered, trusting, productive working relationships with people from a wide array of backgrounds, in the spirit of partnership and collective impact
- Track record of bringing a racial equity lens and understanding of intersectional identities to the work; demonstrating cultural competence and deep understanding of how systems of oppression have affected and continue to impact our young people and Baltimore City
- Strong analytical skills and experience utilizing qualitative and quantitative data to drive performance
- Superb verbal and written communication skills and strong public speaking capabilities
- Solid organizational abilities, including planning, delegating, program development and task facilitation
- Ability to work cross-functionally
- Bachelor's degree or relevant work experience required

**REPORTING**

The Managing Director will report to the CEO and supervise three directors who support a staff of approximately 20 team members.

**LOCATION**

Baltimore, MD

**COMPENSATION**

Thread provides competitive compensation and an attractive benefits package.

**APPLY**

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. For best consideration please send a cover letter and resume to [leslie@promise54.org](mailto:leslie@promise54.org) by October 15, 2021.

*All qualified applicants regardless of color, race, ancestry, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, citizenship, marital or family status, disability, gender identity or expression, veteran status, actual or presumed belonging to an ethnic group, or any other legally-protected status will be considered. We strive to achieve a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. If you have a disability or special need that requires accommodation, please let us know.*