**Communications Director**

**Surdna Foundation**   
**New York,** **New York**

The Surdna Foundation, a New York City-based family foundation, seeks a Communications Director to lead all internal and external communications activities of the Foundation.

**The Surdna Foundation Overview**

Created by John E. Andrus in 1917, the Surdna Foundation has assets of approximately $800 million and an annual grantmaking budget of $33 million. The Foundation has a staff of 25, based in its Midtown Manhattan offices. Governed by a Board of Directors that includes fourth and fifth generation family members, the longstanding values of the Andrus family – practicality, modesty, excellence and an appreciation for serving those in need – underlie all of the Surdna Foundation's work. The Surdna Foundation seeks to foster just and sustainable communities in the United States – communities guided by principles of social justice and distinguished by healthy and sustainable environments, strong local economies and thriving cultures.

The Surdna Foundation has three grantmaking areas: Strong Local Economies, Sustainable Environments and Thriving Cultures. The Foundation provides grant support for efforts at the national, state, metropolitan and local levels throughout the United States. It invests in the exchange of ideas across networks of people, institutions and places with the intent of seeding innovative projects, programs and policies and bringing them to scale across the country. The Foundation seeks grantmaking opportunities that include balanced efforts to: demonstrate the effectiveness of specific, targeted projects, practices and models; advocate for and implement federal, state and local public policies; and empower, mobilize and develop leadership and civic participation in communities and agencies. The Foundation recognizes its programmatic interests are interrelated and is committed to working cross-programmatically.

The Foundation recently embarked on an exciting effort to refine its mission and priorities. Among its new goals, the Foundation seeks to clearly articulate its new strategies and approach to collaboration. It is embracing its role as a learning organization – consistently assessing the result of work it supports, gathering important learning and sharing these lessons. It plans to use communication more effectively in support of its strategies. Above all, the Foundation seeks to have a greater impact in fostering strong local economies, sustainable environments and thriving cultures. To achieve these ambitious goals, the Foundation has created three new program officer positions and this communications director position to strengthen the capacity of its program team. This is an important period of change for Surdna and an exciting time to join the Foundation.

**Position Summary**

In this newly created role, the Communications Director will develop and implement communications strategies aimed at amplifying and advancing the Foundation's funding priorities and social change ambitions. S/he will increase Surdna's communications capacity thereby enabling the Foundation to better inform, engage and influence priority audiences and allow Surdna to use its voice more strategically.

The Director will report to the Senior Director for Programs and Strategies and will work closely with the President, Program Directors, Office of Grants Management and Systems, Program Officers, and Program Associates.

**Primary Job Responsibilities**

The Communications Director will be expected to:

* Implement communications activities (speech writing, presentations, blog posts, social media posts, messaging documents, etc.) and support the communications work of Surdna staff (review presentations and written documents; prepare staff for media interviews; support grantee outreach, etc.);
* Improve internal communication by developing and formalizing tools to help Surdna foster internal collaboration and keep staff and board informed of Foundation activities and decisions;
* Work closely with grantees to strengthen their communications capacity and support their outreach activities to ensure they support the Foundation's overall theory of change;
* Work closely with Surdna's senior management team to review proposals and grants that include significant communications activities;
* Clarify the Surdna brand and ensure it is applied consistently across all Foundation communications;
* Develop and implement short- and long-term communications plans to support Surdna's priorities and strengthen the voice and footprint of Surdna's leadership and grantmaking with target audiences, including other funders, partners, affinity groups, policymakers and grantees;
* Work with program staff on the development and implementation of program-specific communications plans;
* Amplify Surdna's policy and advocacy work through strategic communications on behalf of program directors and across programs;
* Assess new communications opportunities and vehicles and determine which are most effective to pursue to support the overall work of the Foundation or specific grantmaking efforts, including thought leadership and knowledge sharing

**Ideal Experience and Personal Qualities**

The Communications Director will have the following experience and qualities:

* A minimum of seven years of professional communications experience, ideally gained in the nonprofit or philanthropic space, with a strong track record developing and executing comprehensive, short- and long-term strategic communication plans to guide overall organizational efforts;
* Passion for and demonstrated commitment to Surdna's core mission and values;
* Outstanding written communications skills
* Outstanding oral communication skills, with the presence, credibility and skills to develop and sustain a broad range of relationships; highly developed listening skills;
* A track record as an energetic, flexible, self-starting team player;
* A direct, honest, and respectful approach to problem solving, with the ability to foster collaboration and contribute to a strong sense of community among staff and board;
* Experience devising and implementing effective strategies for the use of a variety of social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, e-newsletters, etc.);
* Ability to thrive when working under deadlines; strong project, time, and budget management skills; and the ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously without sacrificing attention to detail.
* Familiarity with a fast-paced, entrepreneurial environment and a willingness to share in both “big picture” thinking and administrative tasks.
* Experience working with diverse communities across race, class, ethnic, political and geographic boundaries;
* Experience developing and managing budgets for communications activities;
* A Bachelor's degree or equivalent; an advanced degree is preferred.

**First Year's Priorities**

During the first year of employment, the Communications Director will be expected to:

* Thoroughly immerse herself/himself in the Surdna Foundation – its mission, philosophy, programs, staff, grantees, structure and operations, finances, constituencies, organizational culture and values, theory of change and potential;
* Develop and leverage relationships with key internal and external stakeholders in order to bring forth their best ideas to inform the development of a comprehensive communications plan;
* Begin to build the capacity of Surdna staff and grantees to use communications strategically to increase the impact and tell the stories of their work;
* Demonstrate and increase the use of social media channels to reach the Foundation's priority audiences.

To learn more about the Surdna Foundation, please visit[**www.surdna.org**](http://www.surdna.org/).