



Development Coordinator

Full-Time | Chicago, Illinois

Description

Merit School of Music seeks a full-time Development Coordinator to support its holistic fundraising and donor engagement efforts. This is an ideal early-career opportunity for a highly organized, detail-oriented professional who thrives in a fast-paced environment and is eager to grow within a mission-driven nonprofit. The Development Coordinator will contribute to fundraising campaigns, donor communications, special events, alumni engagement, and scholarship stewardship, playing a key role in advancing Merit's fundraising goals. This collaborative position also works closely with colleagues in Marketing and Student Services to support cross-departmental initiatives. A passion for music and a strong commitment to Merit's mission of providing accessible music education for all are essential.

Organizational Overview

Merit School of Music is a community music school located in Chicago's West Loop. Our primary goals are to help young people transform their lives and experience personal growth through music by providing access to sustained participation. For over 45 years, we have been home to a diverse community of talented young musicians, serving as a springboard for achieving their full musical and personal potential. Our 130+ passionate and experienced teaching artists provide access to high-quality music education, engaging over 3,000 students annually at our downtown location, Merit Near North and South Shore Branches, and in 25+ area schools and community centers across Chicagoland. Merit's current annual operating budget is \$8.6 million, with \$4.5 million comprised of contributed revenue.

Our students, who reflect the socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of Chicago, have the rare opportunity to learn together, dream together, teach each other, and broaden their horizons as they build inspiring lives through music. Merit develops musicians and provides young people with the tools they need to excel in life, with virtually 100 percent of our graduates going on to conservatory or college.

Merit School of Music is dedicated to creating a world where historically underrepresented groups can access high-quality music education. Simultaneously, Merit is continually working towards becoming an organization that truly reflects the city's demographics and the students we serve. Merit is committed to being an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and anti-racist organization, continually examining our efforts in this area.

Learn more about Merit at www.meritmusic.org.

The Development Department also supports fundraising efforts for the Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative (CMPI), a unique collaborative organization in which Merit serves as the lead partner. The mission of the CMPI is to identify and develop gifted and motivated orchestral students from underrepresented backgrounds for acceptance into top-tier conservatory, college, or university classical music programs in preparation for careers as professional musicians. Merit acts as CMPI's fiscal sponsor and, therefore, manages all aspects of its contributed revenue goals (approximately \$750,000 annually). Learn more about CMPI at www.chicagopathways.org.

Reporting Relationship

The Development Coordinator reports to the **Director of Development Operations**.

Job Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Development Coordinator include, but are not limited to:

Fundraising Campaigns & Development Communications - approx. 25%

- Craft persuasive content (including written, video, and other creative communication vehicles) to engage and activate Merit's donor base, in partnership with team members.
- Manage logistical aspects of direct mail and electronic appeals via Merit's content management system (HubSpot)
- Help secure gifts for annual fundraising events by working with peer fundraisers to identify prospects
- Prepare and submit funding applications to participating corporate partners, as appropriate.
- Collaborate with the Donor Database Manager to create and proofread mailing and stewardship contact lists
- Utilize Raiser's Edge/NXT to track donor and cultivation activity and goals and report results as requested.

Donor Engagement, Stewardship, and Alumni Support - approx. 25%

- Collaborate with team members to cultivate donors and engage them in support of Merit and CMPI's missions through their philanthropy; support activities to build Merit's individual donor base through direct solicitation and stewardship.
- Create donor-facing content for newsletters, social media, and reports, in collaboration with the Marketing team.
- Design and execute creative initiatives to grow and engage the alumni community through regular communications, alumni events, and fundraising campaigns.
- Collect content and draft elements of proposals, gift agreements, reports, and other written materials in coordination with Development leadership.
- Support Merit's Associate Board through activities such as:
 - Coordinating career development workshops for Merit students
 - Attending and participating in committee and full Associate Board meetings
 - Managing the Associate Board roster and logistics of new member elections and onboarding,
 - Creating meeting agendas, editing meeting minutes, managing the Associate Board annual calendar, etc.

Special Events and Community Engagement - approx. 25%

- Support the planning and execution of annual fundraising events (i.e., Merit's annual Gala, Play On, CMPI's Opening Doors, etc.), and performance-centered donor engagement events.
- Manage event logistics including invitations, solicitations, RSVPs, scheduling, vendor coordination, and day-of execution.
- Participate in on- and off-site recruitment-related events such as Open Houses, farmer's market booths, neighborhood gatherings, etc. These events require occasional weekend availability with plenty of advance notice.
- Manage and coordinate merchandise inventory and sales at Merit and community events.

Development Operations and Scholarships - approx. 25%

- Provide administrative support to advance Development goals, including preparing donor acknowledgments, data coordination, and gift entry support.
- Ensure high-quality donor service through timely communication and personalized stewardship.
- Crosstrain on gift processing and donor data with the Donor Database Manager.
- Assist in maintaining Development-related website content.
- Support coordination of student scholarships and awards, including working with Student Services, Program, and Finance teams.
- Draft donor reports and recognition materials related to scholarship recipients.

Other duties may be assigned as needed in support of the Development team.

Required Skills, Attributes, and Qualifications

Strong Organizational Skills

- Exceptional attention to detail and a high level of follow-through
- Ability to manage multiple projects and deadlines with light supervision
- Experience planning events or managing multi-step projects from start to finish

Technical Proficiency

- Fluency in MS Office (Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, Excel), Google Drive, and Canva or similar design tools
- Familiarity with iWave or other donor research tools, HubSpot or similar CRMs, and Elementor or other website-building software is a plus
- Comfort learning and using new digital platforms, including content management and donor research systems.

Communication & Relationship Building

- Strong written communication skills to draft compelling donor content
- Effective interpersonal skills to engage with donors, staff, board members, and community partners
- A warm, collaborative style with the ability to build trust across diverse audiences

Mission Alignment and Initiative

- A strong commitment to the missions of Merit and CMPI, especially increasing access to music education
- A self-starter mindset with curiosity, humility, and a desire to grow professionally
- Willingness to work a flexible schedule, including occasional evenings and weekends (with plenty of advance notice)

Adaptability and Teamwork

- Comfortable working independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced environment
- Open to creative problem-solving and supporting a variety of cross-functional projects
- Flexible, positive attitude with a willingness to pitch in wherever needed

Educational and Experiential Requirements

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience
- Experience with fundraising, arts, or education is a plus
- Experience working in a professional office setting is preferred

Schedule

- This is a full-time, overtime-exempt position.
- Please plan to work in person at Merit at least two to three days per week; additional in-person work is welcome and occasionally required for events and meetings. Partial work-from-home schedules can be flexible and coordinated with the Director of Development Operations.
- The successful candidate should have a flexible schedule to attend evening and weekend events/concerts/meetings as necessary (and with plenty of advance notice).

Compensation & Benefits

Merit offers a comprehensive employee benefits package, including the following items:

- Compensation is commensurate with experience and based on a yearly starting salary of \$48,000.
- You will be eligible to participate in Merit's employee benefits package on the first of the month following 30 days of employment.
- Merit offers a robust healthcare package, including BCBS medical (HMO and PPO options), Delta Dental (HMO and PPO), employee-paid EyeMed vision care, and voluntary life insurance coverage.
- One day of paid time off (PTO) earned each month in the first year (increases each anniversary) and seven paid holidays in addition to a paid winter break (approximately one week).
- 401(k) eligibility begins on the first day of the new calendar quarter following one year of employment.

Further information on Merit's benefits package and employee policies is available on request.

To apply, please upload your resume detailing your relevant experience and qualifications for this role [using this link](#). Applications will be accepted through Thursday, August 17, 2025. Materials should be compatible with Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF. Applicants will receive confirmation of receipt of their materials through Airtable and further guidance and updates about the hiring process by email, with interviews provided for finalists.

ALAANA/BIPOC people, trans and gender-nonconforming people, and women are encouraged to apply.

For more information about the Merit School of Music, please visit www.meritmusic.org.

Merit School of Music is committed to enhancing the diversity of our musical community, recognizing that by providing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment for our students, we are preparing them for personal and professional success in an increasingly multicultural and global society. The Merit community recognizes that it has a responsibility for creating and sustaining a learning and working environment where difference is valued, and where equity and inclusion are practiced.