



Principal, K-12 Practice
Afton Partners LLC
Remote

THE SEARCH

Afton Partners LLC (Afton), an impact-driven consultancy working across the cradle-to-career spectrum, seeks a strategic, entrepreneurial, and collaborative Principal to lead and grow its K-12 education practice. This is a defining opportunity for an established education expert with experience at the highest levels of K-12 systems leadership and a track record of establishing vision and strategy, influencing and mobilizing, and delivering results. The Principal will build and shape Afton's future strategy, market position, and long-term impact across the K-12 sector nationwide.

Afton Partners was founded in 2011, and its mission is to create more opportunities, better outcomes, and brighter futures for all. Afton helps leaders put public dollars to work strategically toward excellent outcomes, build coherent state and local systems centered on families and learners, and close opportunity gaps starting from the earliest years. The firm is unique in its ability to design and influence systems change at scale, driving results for students with clarity in *how* financial and other resources are deployed to achieve these results. At a time defined by fiscal pressure, enrollment volatility, policy shifts, expanding school choice, and rising expectations for outcomes, education systems that move outcomes are investing in evidence-based strategies, intentionally allocating resources to match them, and following through on implementation. As of 2026, Afton has partnered with over 150 counties, cities, schools, districts, and state leaders in 40 states and territories, including recent engagements with the Maryland Accountability and Implementation Board, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the national Strategic Funding and Finance Center.

The Principal will be the most senior member of Afton's K-12 practice, responsible for shaping the firm's K-12 strategy and growth, building the firm's presence and influence in the most important K-12 movements in the United States, establishing its work to support high-stakes system decisions for complex education challenges, and mobilizing the team toward excellence in client delivery. The successful candidate will be a recognized leader with proven impact and strong relationships across and extensive knowledge of federal, state, and local K-12 contexts (including policies, programs, and systems). They will have specific expertise in systems-level complexity and change, including matters related to governance,

funding, and cultivating high-quality systems, as well as experience making difficult, high-stakes decisions and leading large-scale improvement efforts with measurable results.

The ideal candidate will be an innovative and resourceful self-starter; creative, committed, and energized by complexity, a problem-solver by nature, and eager to apply their deep experience across the K-12 landscape in a consulting and senior advisor capacity. They will be enthusiastic about strategic business development and employ a relational approach to working with clients and the Afton team. They will bring leadership skills that enable Afton's K-12 team to continue to thrive, promoting a culture of trust and shared ownership in which team members feel supported, speak up, and do rigorous, honest, human-centered work.

ABOUT AFTON PARTNERS

Afton is built to help tackle the most pressing and complex societal challenges. In its early years, the firm's focus centered on education funding policy and financial sustainability. As its work progressed, it recognized the interconnectedness of education with child care, early education, higher education, and workforce development, and experienced the power of meaningfully engaging communities in public policy and practice solutions. From 2019 to 2021, Afton expanded its services into early care and education and workforce development, while also broadening its service solutions to include community engagement, facilitation, research, and government systems improvement. The firm currently has a team of 30, including six in its K-12 practice.

Afton's clients include state and local government agencies, public school systems, non-profits, civic associations, and philanthropies. Some of Afton's most impactful recent work includes:

- Developed studies for the District of Columbia's Deputy Mayor of Education that helped shape school funding reforms, including increased funding for at-risk students and students with disabilities.
- Supporting the creation and sustainability of an Educational Service Agency for NOLA Public Schools (New Orleans) that could support the diverse needs of students with disabilities, giving NOLA Public Schools a financially grounded blueprint for design and implementation.
- Partnering with the Illinois State Board of Education to support its new Comparable Wage Index, a regionalization tool used in the state's Evidence-Based Funding school finance formula, and its new Adversity Index, which measures student exposure to trauma.
- Facilitating a multi-state community of practice for several state education leaders as part of the national [Strategic Funding and Finance Center](#).

To support its clients, Afton conducts constituent engagement, designs strategic policies and programs, and provides research and analysis. The firm's context-sensitive methods enable it to co-design system-wide structural improvements, develop funding and management strategies, and equip leaders to allocate

resources strategically to serve their communities. Afton understands that meaningful change requires more than bold innovation and actionable strategies, which is why the firm provides a full lifecycle of services, walking with clients from ideation to implementation across all service areas. The firm operates at the intersection of strategy (what systems are trying to achieve), resources (how dollars are allocated and governed), and implementation (how decisions show up in schools and classrooms).

The following are Afton's core values:

- Prioritize justice. We recognize the impact of historical injustice and inequity, particularly for people of color, and are committed to prioritizing justice. We take on public sector initiatives that have the potential to identify and rectify racial and social opportunity gaps in our country.
- Act with integrity. We hold ourselves accountable to high standards and work diligently on behalf of our clients and the people they serve. We are honest, positive, and proactive in our pursuit of solutions and meaningful change.
- Collaborate inclusively. We work together with our colleagues, clients, and constituents in ways that value diverse perspectives, opinions, and ideas. We work humbly and believe answers exist in the communities being served; it is our job to support our public sector partners in uplifting them.
- Center human experience. We focus on the human experience in our interactions and in our considerations of public sector solutions. We know the potential for our work to dramatically alter human lives. We therefore seek to deeply understand the lived experiences of those most likely to be impacted by our work.
- Be well. We value work-life balance and provide space for our colleagues and clients to bring their whole selves to work. We support each other, uplift each other, and have fun along the way.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE K-12 PRINCIPAL

In coordination with their colleagues at Afton, the Principal will:

Define, articulate, and implement Afton's K-12 education strategy.

- Craft a bold vision for Afton's role in improving K-12 systems across the nation. Expand the firm's K-12 portfolio's reach and impact to additional states and localities. Leverage existing Afton assets to support this strategy.
- Build presence and influence in the most important K-12 strategy conversations in the United States. Represent Afton in thought leadership, field initiatives, convenings, and conferences.
- Maintain the K-12 portfolio's strategic alignment with Afton's broader vision and strategy.

Act as a trusted field partner in solving system-wide challenges across the K-12 landscape.

- Build and deepen relationships with state chiefs and agency leaders, district superintendents and leadership teams, governors' education leaders, and the funders and partners supporting this work around the country.
- Anticipate policy and regulatory trends and position Afton as a proactive and strategic partner.
- Earn the trust of client partners in ways that extend client contracts and solidify Afton's industry reputation.

Bridge strategy, resources, implementation, and outcomes.

- Support high-stakes client decisions for complex challenges such as enrollment and absenteeism, school/district consolidation, special education delivery models, career pathways, instructional improvement, and school choice/hybrid delivery.
- Work with states and localities to evolve governance, funding, and oversight structures so that education systems are more coherent across sectors, more responsive to families and learners, and better positioned to deliver high-quality outcomes sustainably.
- Help leaders move from policy intent to real-world execution by translating state priorities into district action, strengthening the connection between academic strategy and budget, and building processes for better trade-off decisions.

Engage in strategic business development and serve on Afton's leadership team.

- Contribute to Afton's overall vision, strategy, and goal attainment.
- Manage the practice's profit and loss, execute a bold business development strategy for the K-12 practice, and build a robust client base.
- Lead major client accounts, ensuring exceptional client satisfaction and delivery of improved student outcomes. Recognize and convert opportunities to support clients with adjacent work and/or projects.

Manage and set the vision, priorities, and standards for the K-12 team.

- Oversee and support the team members leading K-12 engagements, in alignment with Afton's values and performance frameworks. Coach and develop engagement leaders, build leadership capacity within the practice, and consistently model Afton's values.
- Ensure work is consistently excellent, reflects the exemplary collaboration and shared insights of the project teams, and leads to exciting and innovative client impact.
- Build capacity within the team to codify practices, expertise, and tools to support team development and expand the breadth of projects the team pursues.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no individual will possess every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications, professional experiences, and personal attributes:

- A minimum of 15 years of relevant work experience in a senior executive leadership role in public education, education policy, and/or management consulting. Deep knowledge of K-12 policy, funding, and systems.
- Previous experience as a state education chief or deputy chief, senior leader in a governor's education office, superintendent or deputy superintendent in a large and complex district, or a comparable systems-level leadership role strongly preferred.
- Track record of building authentic, mutually beneficial relationships with racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse communities.
- Experience guiding education systems through meaningful transformation, while navigating budgetary pressures and heightened stakes.
- Business development or related relationship-building experience, including with philanthropy, with the ability to manage the K-12 practice's profit and loss, growth targets, and resource allocation.
- A strong focus on goals and results, including a track record of meeting or exceeding goals with a strong sense of responsibility and accountability for outcomes.
- Research and analytical skills, including the ability to distill large amounts of information and to focus quickly on the essence of an issue.
- A systems view of issues and opportunities; expertise in planning strategically and offering innovative solutions to challenging problems.
- Inspirational leadership with strong listening skills and values alignment. Experience managing through layers and coaching senior leaders and high-performing teams, particularly in a professional services context.
- Record of success as a people-centered leader who recognizes and relies on staff expertise; believes good ideas can come from anywhere; and motivates, engages, and inspires individuals and teams. Expertise in recruiting and retaining top talent.
- Nuanced and respected communicator, with the ability to inspire confidence and action across diverse audiences. Good humor, a service orientation, and a diplomatic and low-ego approach to working with others.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The base salary for the position is \$300,000, with additional compensation available through successful business development. This is a full-time, remote position with geographic flexibility in the United States, requiring up to 20 percent travel, and offering competitive benefits, including health insurance, paid time off, and 401(k) with company match.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Nominations, inquiries, and applications, including resumes/CVs with cover letters that address the opportunities and challenges outlined above, should be submitted to the search team via the hyperlink below. Screening of applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. If you require reasonable accommodation to complete an application, interview, or otherwise participate in the candidate selection process, we welcome you to submit an inquiry to the team.

Katie Rockman, Tatiana Oberkoetter, and Maria Connor
Isaacson, Miller

Afton Partners Principal, K-12 Practice

Afton Partners is an Equal Opportunity Employer and a Drug-Free Workplace. A full list of physical, mental and cognitive demands is available upon request. Candidates must be able to accomplish core tasks with or without reasonable accommodation. No visa sponsorship is available for this position. The above information has been designed to indicate the general nature and level of work performed by employees within this classification. It is not designed to contain or be interpreted as a comprehensive inventory of all duties, responsibilities and qualifications required of employees assigned to this job.

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