Senior Mediator & Program Director

**Team:** Practice Group  
**Reports to:** Heather Lair, Partner  
**FLSA Status:** Exempt  
**Salary Grade:** 25  
**Location:** Washington, D.C. (greater metro region)

### Primary Objective of Position

The Senior Mediator and Program Director (Program Director) is highly skilled in designing and managing collaborative processes to address complex and controversial issues. This position leads and manages multi-stakeholder projects that build understanding and drive action through collaboration. The Program Director leads sensitive and multifaceted projects independently and assumes increasing responsibility for organizational leadership. The work of the Program Director may vary depending on the project scope of work and team membership. They serve as project director on the majority of their projects, but on larger projects, they may manage a workstream or co-lead alongside another senior colleague.

The successful candidate will have experience working effectively with the U.S. Congress and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Specific experience working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is desirable. A track record of establishing and maintaining trusted relationships with diverse stakeholders working on federal level food and agriculture policy issues is essential.

All Meridian positions require individuals to be self-starters with exceptionally strong written and verbal communication skills, a high level of organization, and attention to detail. Working at Meridian requires the ability to excel in a team environment and juggle multiple deadlines and project teams.

### Essential Areas of Accountability

- **Lead and manage complex projects:** Manage complex projects with sensitive clients, and/or multiple funding and reporting mechanisms, largely independently. Work closely with team members to track project activities against timelines and interface with clients and participants on progress and any needed course corrections. Create and nurture a collaborative team dynamic. Skillfully address conflict and challenges with clients and within project teams. Provide strategic advice and direction to help optimize effectiveness, efficiency, and desired outcomes.

- **Lead project strategy and process design:** Provide strategic advice and direction to clients and project teams to optimize outcomes and impacts. Design effective meetings and collaborative processes using a wide range of process types (consensus building and...
coalitions, strategic planning efforts, collective impact multi-year initiatives, workshops, etc.). Consider stakeholder engagement and power dynamics in keeping with Meridian’s Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles.

- **Facilitate effective meetings**: Provide expert facilitation for complex and potentially controversial discussions and topics. Artfully facilitate groups of any size and complexity, including meetings of senior- and director-level participants. Support meaningful engagement within complex—and, at times, controversial—discussions and topics using techniques that integrate interpersonal and group dynamics, as well as issues of power, inclusion, and equity.

- **Direct the development of meeting products and outputs**: Supervise and finalize meeting summaries, guiding principles, consensus policy recommendations, reports, and other products. Ensure that these materials support collaboration, consensus building, and implementation activities.

- **Lead project development**: Maintain professional relationships and networks that lead to new project work. Work with current partners to deepen and extend current projects. Lead or contribute to proposals that advance project development. Actively engage as a thought partner with colleagues around Meridian’s substantive focus areas, organizational goals, and potential future project work. Demonstrate a track record of developing new work for themself and other staff.

- **Manage project finances**: Manage complex project budgets and subcontracts in close coordination with the Finance Team. Supervise all aspects of sound project financial management, including adjusting project staffing and workplans to ensure that a project meets its milestones and is financially on track.

- **Manage project teams**: Supervise and coordinate efforts for project teams in a way that supports a healthy, results-oriented team culture. Contribute to a culture of open communication and collaboration by balancing a sense of urgency with empathy and humility. In addition to providing direct supervision, coach and mentor junior project staff.

## Knowledge and Skills Required

- A leader with expertise in food and agriculture including sustainability and/or regenerative agriculture and a proven track record in managing large, complex programs involving diverse partners.

- Significant experience working effectively with government stakeholders, including the U.S. Congress, USDA, and/or NRCS.

- 15+ years or more experience in the field of third-party facilitation/mediation or related experience with partnerships, multi-stakeholder initiatives, and other collaborative problem solving.

- Politically savvy with significant experience managing political dimensions of projects, including: identifying political opportunities and risks, navigating politically sensitive issues, and managing political relationships and coalitions.
• A relevant advanced college degree or equivalent professional experience (e.g., agricultural sciences, environmental sciences, climate science, politics, or sustainable development); minimum of a bachelor's degree required.
• Demonstrated expertise in managing complex projects – from inception and resource coordination to final project delivery and close out – including budgets and contracts.
• Has a well-developed network of clients, partners, and other relationships beneficial to project portfolio and the ability to build and maintain trusted relationships with clients and other stakeholders.
• Demonstrated commitment justice, equity, diversity, inclusion (JEDI); ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds with humility, ease, and enthusiasm.
• Demonstrated management and interpersonal skills for supporting junior staff and fostering their professional growth; self-identification as a consummate team player.
• Excellent written and oral communication skills, including effective communication across an array of audiences, accurate and efficient information synthesis, strong attention to detail, and the ability to ask skillful questions that guide project work.
• A high degree of proficiency with Microsoft 365 tools, including but not limited to: Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, OneNote, and SharePoint.
• Fluency in English; professional fluency in a foreign language is highly valued.

Additional Requirements

• Required to attend to business related to projects outside of normal working hours, due to the location and nature of the project.
• Required to travel domestically or internationally dependent upon project needs.
• Must be able to conduct themselves in a courteous and professional manner at all times.