



NASHVILLE, TN

SALARY
\$130,000-\$140,000

OPPORTUNITY RESEARCH DIRECTOR



THINK *TENNESSEE*

Think*Tennessee* is a nonpartisan, results-oriented think tank that uses research, engagement, and advocacy to build a state where all Tennesseans are civically engaged and economically secure. Working in partnership with state and local leaders, Think*Tennessee* advances data-driven, evidence-based policies that strengthen the voice of voters, better support working families, and move Tennessee forward.

Their model operates through three reinforcing stages. First, they produce nonpartisan research (policy briefs, state-by-state policy comparisons, and dynamic interactive dashboards that feature both state and county data) that gives elected and community leaders a common factual foundation. This matters acutely in Tennessee, where the decline of local news has left three counties with no news source and 63 with only one, according to the Northwestern Local News Initiative. Think*Tennessee* is increasingly playing a trusted role to fill that information gap.

Second, the organization convenes those same leaders across political, geographic, and sectoral lines. Think*Tennessee's* annual Mayors' Roundtables, CEO Roundtables, Civic Leaders Luncheons, and Policy Forum are structured around their high-quality research and creating space to have productive discussions about policy solutions for Tennessee's most pressing challenges.

Third, Think*Tennessee* translates these local discussions into state policy recommendations through intentional education and advocacy with legislative leaders. In just the past few years, their research has informed improvements to Tennessee's voting rights restoration process, an expansion of paid leave for state employees, allowing voluntary zoning incentives for attainable housing, and an update to the LIHTC tax assessment process. Think*Tennessee* helps leaders and communities identify shared challenges and move toward real policy solutions. Most policy organizations either produce research or convene leaders or advocate, while Think*Tennessee* does all three in an integrated way. This is why their work translates into actual legislative outcomes rather than reports that sit on shelves, making them a trusted, credible, and truly effective organization.



LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

ThinkTennessee is seeking a Research Director to lead its research portfolio and serve as one of the organization's principal issue-area experts. Reporting to the President, this role owns the full arc of ThinkTennessee's research — from framing research questions and methodology, through original quantitative and qualitative analysis, to publication-ready findings that shape the organization's policy agenda. The Research Director will work closely with the President, Director of Advocacy & Communications, Policy Director, Director of Strategy & Development, and the board to design and execute research that grounds ThinkTennessee's work in credible, defensible data, and will manage and mentor research team staff, including associates, research assistants, and interns. Beyond the research itself, this person will be a visible voice for ThinkTennessee — writing policy briefs, presenting to policymakers and civic audiences, engaging with media, and representing the organization on coalitions and at conferences across the state.

By the end of year one, success looks like: an updated release of at least one of ThinkTennessee's signature dashboards delivered on schedule; meaningful authorship or co-authorship of multiple reports and briefs; a research team that is clearly managed, mentored, and producing strong work; and a Research Director who has become a recognized, credible voice for ThinkTennessee with policymakers, funders, and media across the state.

QUALIFICATIONS



Required

- At least 8 years of work experience in a relevant field (e.g., public policy, advocacy, academia, economics, or government) with demonstrated increasing responsibility
- Exceptional research and analytical skills, including the ability to conduct high-quality data analysis in R, Stata, SAS, or similar programs
- Strong oral and written communication skills, including data visualization, with the ability to distill conclusions and use text and graphics to communicate them clearly to a wide range of audiences
- Demonstrated managerial skills to lead associates, research assistants, and interns in producing their best work
- Ability to manage and prioritize multiple short- and long-term projects effectively
- Comfort and effectiveness representing an organization publicly, including public speaking, media engagement, and presenting research to non-technical audiences

Preferred

- Advanced degree in public policy, economics, political science, or a related field
- Academic or professional experience in public policy and/or issue expertise
- Familiarity with Tennessee's political and policymaking environment

HOW TO APPLY



Nonprofit Leadership LLC is facilitating this executive search on behalf of ThinkTennessee. Interested candidates should email a resume and cover letter to elle@nonprofit-leadership.com addressing their proudest research project and its impact. Applications are due October 9, 2026, will be reviewed as they are submitted, and early applications are appreciated. ThinkTennessee is an equal opportunity employer.

More information at www.nonprofit-leadership.com/ttdr