

## Who are you?

A **curious, creative, driven partnerships-building professional** with

- experience **catylising an ecosystem** (including government actors) **into action for a societal cause**; and
- a strong track record of leading functions & managing teams **in complexity**;
- who is a **strategic operator** and **systems doer-and-thinker**

## Who is SmartStart Early Learning?

SmartStart is a *successful national network* of NGOs & partners realising **quality, affordable early learning for all 3-5-year olds, inclusively** — through *scaling a network of, and building a platform for, providers; achieving specific ecosystem transformations* with governments and partners; and “*evangelising*” for early learning as a *priority societal cause*.

## Opportunity! Initially advertised to SmartStart Hub Exco

Job title	<b>PARTNERSHIPS HEAD (AT THE NETWORK HUB)</b>
Nature of time commitment	<b>Full-time</b>
Modality & Location	<b>Hybrid</b> (office: 25 Griswold Rd Saxonwold Joburg)
Nature of contract	<b>Indefinite</b>
Duration & Timeframe	<b>ASAP</b>
Job grade (Paterson framework)	<b>D Upper</b>
Remuneration	<b>R1-1.5mpa</b> negotiable depending on profile <b>plus</b> eligibility for <b>5-15% performance bonus</b> determined annually

### Child Safeguarding Policy

Any and all applicants must adhere with the SmartStart Child Safeguarding Policy which has been developed in line with the International Standards for Child Safeguarding which provide a benchmark for organisations working with children.

In terms of this Policy, SmartStart will not employ anyone whose name is on the National Child Protection Register or who has been convicted of a criminal offence involving a child.

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 SmartStart South Africa

 SmartStart South Africa

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## Partnerships Head

### Job Description

#### Purpose

The Partnerships Head will lead SmartStart's **building the ecosystem of *partnerships* needed to realise population-scale early learning** (beyond fundraising)

The Partnerships Head is responsible for heading the Partnerships department *collaboratively with other departments for synergies across the Hub Network*

The Partnerships Head is jointly responsible – with the rest of Exco – for *collaboratively leading the SmartStart Hub Network of partners* in:

- Co-developing and *realising SmartStart's strategy*
- *Creating the conditions* for the Hub & network to succeed

#### Location in Hub organisation (and network)

- Line Manager: **Chief “Ecosystem” Officer** (Network Hub)
- Job grade (Paterson framework): **D Upper**
- Manages: Partnerships team; *roles to be determined w. appointee*

**SmartStart** is collaboratively realising **quality, affordable early learning for *all 3-5 year olds, inclusively***, ie. **1 million children annually by 2030** — focused on the two-thirds of children from the 40% of households receiving least income. SmartStart pursues this through **scaling a network** of, and **building a platform** for, **providers**; achieving **specific ecosystem transformations with governments and partners**; and **“evangelising”** for **early learning as a priority societal cause**.

SmartStart has extended **quality access** to, and demonstrated **on-track early learning outcomes** for, **excluded children**; established a trusted network serving **80,000+ children weekly** (~10,000 practitioners supported by 14 partner organisations); constructed key parts of a **platform for population-scale**; and supported development of government's **first national early learning strategy**. This yields **momentum** among **social investors** as SmartStart **scales** in SA — and beyond.

SmartStart has succeeded so far through, and will continue evolving to societal scale by:

#### A. Orienting towards social assets and innovating

- Seeing the multitude of **un(der)employed women** (mostly) and leveraging the **contributions in kind** of those engaged in childcare (time, venues, food) by **setting them up and supporting them as effective early learning practitioners**
- Leveraging the power – **social capital** – of relationships between people
- Seeing and reinforcing the opportunity of **micro-(social-)enterprise amid informality**
- Leveraging **established NGOs'** distributed **know-how and connections** (in early learning and





- local development amid informality) **as well as their energy to co-create**
- Organising and growing as a **network of networks** co-creating the future
- **“Making the abundant effective”** (especially underemployed women) **“and the scarce irrelevant”** *as obstacles to scale now* (eg. dedicated buildings and formal qualifications)

#### **B. Building a platform — that enables people’s adapting-with-integrity to contexts**

- Realising an **end-to-end value chain of services for setting up and supporting early learning practitioners** running quality, affordable programmes as micro-enterprises (from recruitment through ongoing quality assurance & improvement and registration — and beyond)
- Building **open-access “infrastructure”** incl. a **programme** with demonstrated child outcomes comprising practices supported by tools and processes that enable exponentially more people & role-players to “do” quality early learning daily
- Integrating **technology to enable scale and accelerate exponentially at limited cost**
- **Connecting** children and parents with practitioners and mediating between people’s diverse (informal) **local socio-economic contexts and state regulatory procedures, budgets, and policies** (formal bureaucracies)
- Establishing a national early learning network as a **strategic and operational partner to governments in policy and practice** (from quality access at scale enabled by apt resource flows to regulatory compliance and monitoring, learning and responding)
- Reinforcing **people’s distributed agency and resources** to adapt and problem-solve

#### **C. Practising systems doing-and-thinking — and learning throughout**

- **“Evangelising”** for early learning as a **priority societal cause** — to exponentially grow demand, expectations, and contributions (effort, venues, nutrition, funds, advocacy)
- Together **transforming legislation, policy, regulations,** and norms & standards to remove inept restrictions; enhance resource flows; enable self-reinforcing progress
- Demonstrating early learning an **employment stimulus opportunity** and avenue for **women’s economic empowerment** — so connecting to wider investor interests beyond education
- **Leveraging exponentially increasing inter-national resources** by inspiring investors and offering them opportunity to jointly achieve more than the sum of their funds
- Achieving multiplier effects by **creating conditions for, influencing, and “orchestrating” collective action**
- Evolving by innovatively integrating **“doers”, “payers”, model(s), tech, policy, and collective action** (the six aspects of scale identified by Mulago, considered in SmartStart’s context)

SmartStart has a three-sided agenda for scaling exponentially towards early learning for all

#### **1. Scaling exponentially via distributed agency, integrated tech, innovation, and partnerships**

- **Hub network partners’ driving scale regionally** – including recruiting local organisations to the network – through distributed agency enabled by deepening partnerships and co-creation





- Evolving the platform by **innovating in quality improvement & assurance** and thoroughly **integrating tech & tech-enabled services** and **strategic information for targeted actions**
- **Enhancing thinking-and-doing** / sense-making & action-taking / **learning loops *distributed-ly***
- **Realising apt legislation, policy, strategy and budgets in practice** by building strong operating **partnerships with provincial education depts and metros-municipalities** — including re:
  - venues, funding flows, apt regulation, registration, and monitoring-and-responding for practitioners — through coordination across government functions and other role-players
- **Exponentially expanding venues, nutrition, and micro-enterprise support** as key conditions for early learning by catalysing and connecting partnerships between diverse actors

## 2. Advancing early learning for all as priority societal cause to accelerate & sustain scale

- **Multiplying action for and contributions to the societal cause of early learning** for all by “evangelising” effectively: ie. building a movement by leveraging social network influence
- **Increasing state funding** (sources): consolidating Jobs Fund; and leveraging results-based finance w. Education Outcomes Fund towards wider contracting with SmartStart as platform
- **Securing complementary big-picture investors** to fund further exponential growth

## 3. Extending into 2-3 Southern African countries

- Developing **insights from South Africa** and sharpening **adaptability-to-contexts w. integrity**
- Securing **select regional governments’ buy-in** and building strategic partnerships

## Key Responsibilities

### Leading the SmartStart Hub and Network of Partners in collaboratively:

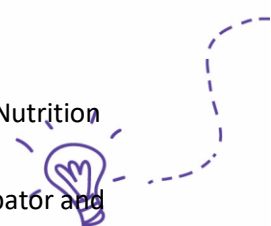
- **Building and catalysing an ecosystem for exponentially extending early learning to all, inclusively, by 2030** ([example](#))
  - Realising strategic operating partnerships with municipalities (coordinated across functions); provincial departments of education; and state employment initiatives (led by the Presidency) — *enabled by realising policies and right-sized regulations in practice*
  - Catalysing and connecting partnerships between diverse actors yielding exponential growth in key early learning enablers: programme venues; nutrition for children; and key micro-enterprise support
- **Establishing early learning as a societal priority — especially in popular practices**
  - Persuading exponentially more role-players (and people) that what they do matters in realising early learning for all, inclusively, by 2030
  - Reinforcing collective efforts towards quality early learning for all through feedback loops that make early learning progress & benefits widely visible





## Heading the function building, catalysing, and strengthening partnerships in service of the above

- **Realising national strategy, policies, and appropriate regulations *in practice*** through strategic **operating partnerships between SmartStart Hub network partners** (NGOs; together with the portfolio managed by the Chief Platform Operating Officer) **and:**
  - 1. municipalities**, especially re
    - early learning programme registration and entailed regulations including (but not limited to):
      - environmental health & safety as well as fire
      - zoning and land use as well as building plans
      - informality more broadly (if/as relevant)
    - prioritising, planning and provisioning for quality, inclusive early learning for all in integrated development plans (IDPs) and budgets, incl.
      - *coordination* across municipal functions to achieve this
  - 2. provincial departments of education**, especially re
    - early learning programme registration: ie. norms and standards in practice
    - reliable, accountable, and efficient subsidy flows to practitioners
    - appropriate, practical, effective quality assurance and support (QAS) at scale (w. Programme Design and Operations departments) per QAS system being developed by government in the context of staffing & capacity constraints
    - prioritising, planning and provisioning for quality, inclusive early learning for all in strategic and performance plans and budgets
      - *coordination* across provincial education functional to achieve this
  - 3. the (national) department of basic education** — by collaborating with SmartStart’s Strategy & Policy Associate seconded into the DBE as a senior technical adviser, especially re:
    - realising the DBE’s 2030 [Strategy for ECD Programmes](#) ([video](#))
    - SmartStart’s involvement in
      - the DBE’s [mass registration drive](#) for ECD programmes
      - the ECD Outcomes Fund
      - the red tape reduction initiative re ECD
  - 4. state employment initiatives** (led by the Presidency) in support of ECD Employment Stimulus (part of the Presidential Employment Initiative)
  - 5. government departments of the economic cluster: Small Business Development and Trade, Industry & Competition** (and any similar) to advance support for early learning practitioners as micro-(social-)enterprise operators and/or entrepreneurs
- **Catalysing and connecting partnerships between diverse actors yielding exponential growth in key early learning enablers:**
  - programme **venues**
  - **nutrition** for children (incl. but not limited to potential extension of the National School Nutrition Programme to ECD)
  - key **micro-(social-)enterprise support**, incl. with but not limited to [IMBE](#) Enterprise Incubator and relevant government departments





- **Co-building a movement for early learning as a societal cause** by building and/or deepening **common cause with other role-players with relevant concerns and/or causes**, incl. but not limited to
  - Basic education: especially early-grade reading, literacy & numeracy
  - Gender justice; (social) employment and micro-(social-)enterprise; social justice
- Iteratively **exploring, researching, and networking** in pursuit of, potential partners (with the 'Policy, Advocacy & Research' and Development departments)
  - Investigating potential partners that are:
    - Straightforward / conventional, ie. focused on early learning: affordability, quality etc; gender and care work; micro-(social-)enterprise and social employment
    - Surprising / unconventional partners
- **Communicating** about SmartStart (representing, narrating etc) as a successful, ambitious, innovative, and **open network of partners** building an ecosystem and platform for early learning for all
  - Managing communications for information, engagement, and/or influence as appropriate
- **Responding** appropriately to unexpected opportunities to pursue potentially productive partnerships

#### **Collaboratively Leading the SmartStart Hub & network of partners + Developing Professionally**

- **Co-developing and *realising* SmartStart's strategy**
- **Seeing and sharing the big picture coherently:** co-building & communicating coherence unendingly
- **Creating the conditions** for and facilitating people's thinking *diversely* and doing good work *together*
  - Leading as a learner-and-teacher
- **Practising SmartStart's "purple practices"** for collective success, incl. but not limited to:
  - Behaving trustworthily and building trusting relationships
  - Playing roles across contexts adaptively
  - Co-creating our thinking environment and nurturing our psychological safety
  - Learning curiously (and unlearning to learn)
  - Asking for & giving reasons (account-giving / accountability)
  - Managing by coaching (and asking "How can I help you?")
- **Developing self and systems doing-and-thinking**





## Qualifications and Experience

- Min. **master's degree** or equivalent
- Min. **8 years' relevant & diverse experience** in **complex organisational-systemic contexts** incl.
  - **Min. 4 years in senior role(s) successfully leading functions and managing** teams
- *Advantageous*: fluency in one or more **African languages**

## Specific (incl. technical) Knowledge & Understanding and/or Skills & Abilities

- **Building an ecosystem of partnerships for social change across national / societal scale** or equivalent
- **Adaptability**, incl. flexible thinking and **fast and deep learning**
  - Remaining **open to outcomes**
- Excellent skills in **communication**, including **networking and negotiating**, as well as **presentations and proposals** adaptable across constituencies and contexts
  - Excellent **interpersonal relationship-building** skills
- **Experience in, or familiarity with, early learning and ECD** — or else public education and/or health or equivalent
  - Strong understanding of **public policy and practice**, especially in **local and provincial government**
- **Creativity and risk appetite**

## General Knowledge & Understanding and/or Skills & Abilities

### Behaving & Learning

- Behaving **trustworthily**: being reliable, accepting, open, congruent (ie. integrity)
- **Learning curiously** (incl. learning *how to*)
  - Clear **curiosity** (asking questions, questioning assumptions, doing differently, trying things)
  - Track record of **learning**
  - Openness to & appetite for **feedback**
- **Familiarity** with and **curiosity** about
  - **Societal scale**
  - **Systems** doing-and-thinking
  - **Design thinking & iterative designing**
- **Driving** to succeed
- Commitment to **social justice** internationally
- *Advantageous*: experience in, or familiarity with, early learning, ECD, education, public health, etc

### Relating & Adapting

- Building **trusting relationships**
- Playing **role(s)-across-contexts adaptively**
- **Creating the conditions** for and **facilitating** people's thinking *diversely* and doing good work *together*





- **Co-building & communicating coherence** unendingly
- **Reprioritising continually**

#### Developing Self

- **Acknowledging** one's own relative strengths (& weaknesses)
- Seeing & navigating **rhetoric vs reality**
- **Navigating ambiguity**
- **Coping** with stress caused by the above

#### Developing Systems Doing-and-Thinking

##### **Seeing, synthesising, sense-making and influencing**

- the **big picture / story**
- the relations between **parts & wholes**
- **patterns** across distance and over time
- **feedback loops** (circular causation)
- **boundaries** and working across them appropriately

##### Sophisticated problem-solving, incl. **distinguishing complicated from complex problems & contexts**

- **scan & synthesise** disparate sources of information
- if **complicated: sense-analyse-respond**
- if **complex: probe-sense-respond**

Interested candidates must send a motivation letter highlighting your suitability to the role and an updated CV with contact details of three work-related referees to **MaraisButton & Associates:**

[anelie@maraisbutton.co.za](mailto:anelie@maraisbutton.co.za)

Contact will only be made with shortlisted candidates.

