Innocence Project

Director of Post-Conviction Litigation

New York, New York

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## About Innocence Project

The Innocence Project fights to free the innocent, to prevent wrongful convictions, and for fair, compassionate, and equitable systems of justice for everyone. This critical work is guided by science and grounded in antiracism.

Since its founding in 1992 by Barry C. Scheck and Peter J. Neufeld, the Innocence Project has grown into a national and international leader in criminal legal system reform. Thanks to the Innocence Project’s transformative work, DNA testing and analysis has become vital to exonerating innocent people and driving criminal justice reform. Nearly thirty years later, in addition to exonerating people who are wrongfully convicted of crimes they did not commit, the Innocence Project continues to leverage the expertise and passion of staff to fight to redress systemic issues through strategic litigation, policy reform, and education.

Under a new senior leadership team, the Innocence Project builds on its powerful history as it looks toward the launch of an exciting and innovative strategic plan in 2021. In coming years, the Innocence Project seeks to:

* Embed antiracism principles in all aspects of the organization and make explicit connections between racial justice and wrongful conviction.
* Advance scientific scrutiny for reliability and accuracy, and embed consideration of ethical, legal, social, and racial justice implications in forensic disciplines, investigative techniques, and application of algorithm and artificial intelligence for criminal legal system decision-making.
* Free and support the innocent, prevent future wrongful convictions, win high-impact exoneration/strategic litigation cases and policy campaigns, and provide trauma-informed social services.
* Increase internal and external collaborations, including with Innocence Network partners, to amplify mission impact.

This ambitious plan will leverage the strength of the organization’s tremendously talented 105-person staff that brings together attorneys and paralegals alongside skilled professionals in social work, policy, communications, development, and finance. The diverse staff is united in its deep commitment to the mission of the Innocence Project and passion for ending the injustices of our criminal legal systems.

For more information on the Innocence Project, please visit its [website.](https://innocenceproject.org/)

## The Opportunity

The Director of Post-Conviction Litigation (PCL) has the opportunity to oversee one of the Innocence Project’s core goals—freeing the innocent—by managing a team of attorneys, paralegals, fellows and/or interns who represent individuals whose innocence can be proven through, inter alia, either post-conviction DNA testing or the development of other new evidence that strongly supports innocence. As the head of the PCL Department, the Director is responsible for the overall management and supervision of the 15-person team (which presently includes ten attorneys, four of whom are two-year fellows, and five paralegals) and which seeks to grow further over upcoming years.

In this capacity, the Director of Post-Conviction Litigation is responsible for:

* Defining, driving, and implementing departmental strategy and goals.
* Working collaboratively with peers (including the Directors of Intake, Strategic Litigation, Policy, Social Work, and Science and Research) and the Directors of Development and Communications as well as other members of the Senior Leadership Team to advance organizational strategy and goals.
* Exercising departmental and organizational leadership by effectively managing department staff so that they are aligned, focused, motivated, and high-performing; by nurturing their professional growth; and by providing constructive feedback.
* Providing ongoing oversight of case acceptances, case investigation and litigation, and case closures to ensure outstanding client representation, adherence to rules of professional responsibility, and orderly case management.
* Promoting a culture of data integrity by overseeing timely and accurate data collection and record-keeping.
* Reporting on departmental progress.
* Modeling the Innocence Project’s leadership values, including around fostering an inclusive and respectful workplace, and encouraging the same from staff.

The PCL Director also does limited work coordinating amicus support on important exoneration-related issues in other cases nationally. To support PCL work, the Innocence Project runs a clinical program in partnership with Cardozo Law School (the “Clinic”). The Clinic is overseen by the Director of Special Litigation, supervised by a PCL staff attorney, and co-taught by several PCL staff attorneys. Eighteen law students participate in the Clinic annually.

The PCL Director will report directly to the Chief Program Strategy Officer. The PCL Director will work collaboratively with the Director of Special Litigation and Senior Litigation Counsel—both of whom are members of the PCL Team, but are not direct reports of the PCL Director—who provide thought-partnership, advice, and institutional insight.

This position is a full-time role, based in New York City. At the moment of this posting, the Innocence Project staff members are working remotely, with the option to utilize the office as desired. The organization will seek a return to its primarily in-office culture, although with flexibility for hybrid in office/remote schedules, upon continued improvement and progress of Covid-19.

The Director of Post-Conviction Litigation will oversee the following core responsibilities:

### Manage the Post-Conviction Litigation Practice and Serve as an Organizational Leader

* Hire, train, and develop attorneys, paralegals, administrative staff and, when appropriate, fellows and interns; support staff attorneys providing high-quality legal representation in potential and actual innocence cases; provide ongoing supervision including docket management, legal strategy, reviewing and editing of legal filings, and ongoing skills development.
* Provide oversight and supervision to PCL senior staff attorneys and staff attorneys to ensure excellence in the provision of all client services; provide timely and productive feedback, inclusive but not limited to regular performance reviews; structure and guide professional development.
* Collaborate with the Intake Department to identify and review new cases and ensure efficient transition of cases from Intake staff to PCL attorneys; collaborate with the Science and Research Department to facilitate comprehensive and accurate data collection and adherence to case closing protocols.
* Revise and refine screening criteria for cases accepted for representation, as necessary.

### Serve as an Organizational Leader and Partner to Colleagues

* Collaborate, as necessary, with the Innocence Project’s Strategic Litigation Department, including co-counseled cases, on occasion, and on matters relevant to both departments.
* Coordinate with the Policy Department, as necessary, to ensure that advocates have appropriate intel to support their federal and state advocacy agendas and campaigns.
* Coordinate with the Social Work Department to advance holistic client support.
* Establish and oversee departmental budget; provide regular reports to Executive Director, Chief Finance Officer, Chief Program Strategy Officer and, as necessary, Board of Directors.
* Exercise exceptional discretion and judgment.

### Serve as a Thought Leader on Innocence Issues & Exonerations

* Represent the Innocence Project at conferences, in the media, and other external education venues.
* Serve on national, state, and local commissions.
* Manage relationships with members of the Innocence Network and other relevant organizations.

## Candidate Profile

The Director of Post-Conviction Litigation will be enthusiastic about bringing skills, experience, and dedication to building the abilities and expertise of their team. Their management prowess will be matched only by their knowledge of post-conviction litigation, and of the systemic reform issues that are core to the Innocence Project’s mission.

### Key competencies include:

* Track record in criminal legal system reform, public interest lawyering, trial law, and/or appellate law. Top candidates will have experience with innocence claims, post-conviction work, including habeas litigation, and DNA testing.
* Management experience with outstanding ability to communicate with, teach and learn from, and guide a diverse and multidisciplinary staff in a collaborative and fast-paced setting. Stellar interpersonal skills will be a core requirement.
* Demonstrated commitment to the Innocence Project’s values of diversity, equity, and inclusion with a desire to contribute to building the organization’s antiracist lens.
* Demonstrated commitment to creating and sustaining a cooperative and productive work environment, utilizing project management and people management skills.
* Collaborative management style and demonstrated commitment to the value and power of teams and staff collegiality.
* Client-centered approach to legal representation.
* Superior writing and editing skills, including drafting and editing complex briefs.
* Interest in a role that prioritizes departmental management and leadership over litigation. (Note: The Director of Post-Conviction Litigation may serve as co-counsel to staff attorneys or as a strategic advisor on cases but would independently litigate at most a small docket of cases, so as to allow for time needed to effectively manage the team.)

### The following qualifications are required:

* Attorney with active New York license (or with plans to seek New York Bar admission) and trial and/or appellate experience in criminal law required, with strong record of post-conviction litigation expertise and a highly sophisticated understanding of the criminal legal system.
* Skilled manager with experience supervising lawyers and non-legal staff in a criminal practice and with experience managing budgets and reporting.

## Compensation & Benefits

The salary range for this position begins at approximately $180,000, commensurate with experience.

The Innocence Project offers an excellent benefits package, including fully paid health, dental, and vision insurance, Flexible Spending Account, 401k plan with company-match. While the office is currently remote in consideration of the ongoing pandemic, once commuting into the office (located in downtown Manhattan, New York) becomes viable again, the Innocence Project will also offer company-paid transportation benefits.

## Contact

Koya Partners, the executive search firm that specializes in mission-driven search, has been exclusively retained for this engagement. Melissa Madzel and Shelby Woods of Koya Partners are leading the search. To express interest in this role please submit your materials [here](https://talent-profile.diversifiedsearchgroup.com/search/A4D23DDC-4843-4C40-98F0-A866D144B3BE), or email InnocenceProject\_Director\_PCL@koyapartners.com. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

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The Innocence Project considers the diversity of its workforce to be vital to our organization’s success in meeting its mission. We strongly encourage applicants from all cultures, races, educational backgrounds, life experiences, socio-economic classes, sexual orientations, age, gender, and physical abilities to apply. Individuals with personal connections to the criminal legal system are strongly encouraged to apply.

As an Equal Opportunity Employer, it is our policy not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status, predisposing genetic characteristics, actual or perceived domestic violence victim status, unemployment status, caregiver status, or any other category protected by law.

## About Koya Partners

Koya Partners, a part of Diversified Search Group, is a leading executive search and strategic advising firm dedicated to connecting exceptionally talented people with mission-driven clients. Our founding philosophy—The Right Person in the Right Place Can Change the World—guides our work as we partner with nonprofits & NGOs, institutions of higher education, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

Koya is an equal opportunity employer fully committed to creating an environment and team that represents a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, styles, and experiences. We encourage all to apply because we believe a diversity of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone. Koya does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, military status, veteran status, genetic information, gender identity, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law.

For more information about Koya Partners, visit [www.koyapartners.com](http://www.koyapartners.com/).