

POSITION: ESPERA Program Advisor with Focus on Small Business Development

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CONTACTS:

Katherine Wojtan, Executive Director, St. Paul MN USA / katherine@maryspence.org

Gilda Larios, ESPERA Facilitator, Mexico City, Mexico / gildalarios@yahoo.com.mx

Contact either Katherine or Gilda with questions. Send resumes and cover letter to Katherine.

Resumes and cover letters can be submitted in English or Spanish, an English version is helpful to the process.

BACKGROUND

Mary's Pence

Mary's Pence is a faith based feminist organization inspired by Catholic Social Teachings. Believing we are each called to make the world a better place, we support women in the Americas through both social and economic development. Our annual budget is approximately \$500,000, and 80% of our support comes from individual donors. Mary's Pence has a staff of 6, 4 in the US and 3 in Latin America, including this open position. The ESPERA Small Business Development Advisor works closely with the ESPERA staff and the Executive Director, other staff and board members, and the women of ESPERA groups. Learn more about Mary's Pence at www.maryspence.org and review a copy of our annual report at <http://www.maryspence.org/about-us-funding-and-financials.html>. See a video about our ESPERA Program at www.maryspence.org/espera-funds.html.

ESPERA Program (Economic Systems Providing Equitable Resources for All)

ESPERA provides seed-money to women-led collaborative networks to create community lending programs. Women own and manage the funds, and benefit from their use and growth. We visit the groups 3-4 times a year and provide encouragement, financial support for group needs such as a stipend for a local coordinator, and support for empowerment, leadership and business skills.

We work with existing groups of women with a mission and purpose in the local community. For our groups, it is not just about the loan money, it is about women's voice in their communities. We want to support the groups' work and development holistically.

One of our values is mutuality. Mary's Pence partners with groups as they develop their ESPERA program. Each group creates their processes based on local group needs. It is very important to us that each group has a participative process, where leaders and participants in the ESPERA program each have a voice in how the program is run.

The ESPERA program was started 9 years ago. We began with partnerships with 3 groups; we have grown to 7 groups in 5 countries.

- We currently have groups in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua.

- Groups range in size – the smallest has 16 women, the largest has 250 women.
- The total in the loan pools is over \$125,000. Over \$500,000 in loans have been made, to over 1000 women.
- Some of the groups have started a saving program; \$9,000 in savings has been achieved.
- Interest on the loans has amounted to over \$60,000; groups either reinvest it in the loan pool, or use it to pay administrative costs and the stipend of a local administrator of the fund.

The women participants are involved in a variety of businesses including agriculture (crops and livestock), retail, prepared foods, and artisan crafts. Businesses may involve one woman, several women or women and family members. The majority of women have some primary education, but the groups include women with no schooling and women with college degrees.

Small Business Focus of ESPERA

We seek a skilled and experienced person to help us shape this new initiative. Our approach for increasing business skills needs to be multipronged – including training, ongoing coaching, sharing best practices for small businesses and model businesses, and developing markets and addressing market issues. Metrics will be important for understanding our impact.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Responsibilities

- a) Support the growth of women-owned small businesses in small and rural communities**
 - Provide or develop a business methodology and tools appropriate for women of ESPERA. This should include business basics like planning, administration, understanding your market, cash flow, quality, etc.
 - Coach individual businesses on core business competencies.
 - Use tools and training to teach women basic business practices for small, rural and agricultural businesses.
 - Include values and principles of cooperation, common good, stewardship of the environment, and solidarity into discussions effective businesses, to maintain a balance between community values and individual economic security.
- b) Support development of women’s cooperatives and collaborative**
 - Provide, develop or source techniques, tools and methodology to develop and run small collaborative enterprises.
- c) Train the trainer: Develop skills in ESPERA networks to support the growth of women-owned small businesses**
 - Accomplish this skills development through training, experiential learning, coaching and shadowing of individual loan participants and network leaders.
- d) Document processes and create consistent content to support women’s businesses**
 - Create techniques and tools that can be used by local leaders to train and coach individuals and businesses.

e) Evaluation and metrics

- Create and implement methodology for collecting data to measure progress, including metrics to help local women's groups and Mary's Pence staff evaluate progress.

f) Coordinate and collaborate with all stakeholders

- Create collaboration across ESPERA groups including groups in different countries, to share learning and tools useful to rural women and small businesses.
- Work as a team with all ESPERA staff – to plan and coordinate work, to shape the program, and to learn and share with each other.
- Sharing stories, etc., with Mary's Pence staff for use with donors.
- Identify in-country experts to collaborate and/or contract with on technical or legal issues.

Education

- Bachelor's degree in business or economic development or equivalent experience.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge and work experience related to principles and practices of small businesses
- Experience with project planning, implementation and evaluation
- Experience working with women with varying life experiences and education levels, including low-income rural women with little education.
- Ability to coach and motivate individuals and groups
- Ability to plan and facilitate group discussions
- Good written communication
- Leadership development and organizing, empowerment of women

Characteristics

- From Central America or Mexico, preferred
- Bilingual Spanish- English required, English proficiency level for communication with staff and board.
- Demonstrated passion for women's empowerment and economic development
- Demonstrates Mary's Pence values of participation, mutuality, sustainability, integration and stewardship
- Ability to work as a team with Mary's Pence staff and local ESPERA groups

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND COMPENSATION

Work Environment

- Up to 75% travel, in Central America, Mexico and United States
- Full-time position with flexible hours.
- The individual hired for this role will ideally be from the Mesoamerica region, and will work from home in the region when not traveling.
- The ESPERA staff works as a team, working closely together and with the Executive Director.
- Position reports to Executive Director.

Compensation

- Commensurate with experience, annual contract renegotiated each year. Benefits negotiable.