

# HEIDI LEAR

Director of Partnerships · Membership Growth & Retention · Minneapolis Community Leader

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Dear Meet Minneapolis Hiring Team,

The Director of Partnership Network role caught my attention because it describes work I was made for. I have spent my career doing exactly this: building partner ecosystems, growing membership programs, and cultivating the kind of long-term relationships that translate into retention, revenue, and real community impact. What makes this role different from anything else on my radar is that the community is Minneapolis, and I have been invested in this city's success long before it became professionally relevant.

My ties to this city's arts and hospitality community are not incidental to my story. They are the foundation of it. I started my career in membership development at the **Southern Theater**, building out their Member Benefits Program and managing their membership database. I later supported donor engagement at the **Ordway Center for the Performing Arts** and co-founded **Button Poetry**, which grew from a local Minneapolis arts collective into the world's most-watched poetry channel with **over 300 million views and approximately 1.5 million subscribers**. These weren't side projects. They were formative professional experiences that taught me how membership organizations actually work and what it takes to keep members invested and engaged.

That community foundation also led to one of the most memorable chapters of my career, and one that brought me directly into the Meet Minneapolis orbit. While serving as US Director of Brand Relationships at **Goodpin**, a collaborative giving platform, I was building a partnership with **Target's Corporate Social Responsibility team**. When Goodpin applied to the **Target-TechStars Innovation Accelerator** in its inaugural year, we were declined. I knew the right person at Target through years of Minneapolis community networking, made the case directly, and got the decision reversed. Together, we designed a **\$20,000 in-store giving pilot** that let customers direct Target's charitable dollars to their chosen nonprofit and optionally match the gift themselves. Target later built that model into **Target Circle's giving program**, which is still running today. The Target Corporate Giving leader wrote about our collaboration in her book, **Sparkle On, Changemaker**, dedicating a full chapter to the work we did together. During that same period I brought a partnership proposal to **Meet Minneapolis** about incorporating community giving into visitor programming, celebrating the city's diverse nonprofit community. The timing wasn't right for a startup-stage platform, but the connection was a natural one, and I have thought about those possibilities ever since.

The past decade in the technology sector has added the operational scale to back all of that up. I built partner marketing and membership engagement programs from scratch at both **Calabrio** and **OpenSesame**, each contributing to million-dollar partner referral pipelines. At Calabrio I led a team across **400+ global partners**, contributing to a **25% increase in partner-driven sales**. At 6sense I launched a **22-city member community program** that drove a **7x improvement in renewal rates**. I know

how to build programs, lead internal teams and build external partnerships, hit revenue targets, and deliver results to leadership and stakeholders. For the level of Director of Partnerships, these skills and experience are table stakes.

What is rarer is someone who can walk into a room with a boutique Minneapolis restaurant and a Fortune 500 sponsor and know instinctively how to serve both relationships. That is a specific skill set, and it is what this role requires and what I know I can deliver. I would be very interested in the opportunity to connect to learn more about the vision for the role and share more about my experience to discover if this is the time to build on the possibilities that started through our initial connection with Goodpin.

Best,

**Heidi Lear**

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