



## **Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation**

### **Executive Director**

### **Position Description**

The Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation has a clear and simple mission —to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Contra Costa County, California. Established in 1989, the Foundation focuses on strengthening the nonprofit community's capacity through grantmaking in support of programmatic, operating and capital needs in three broad program areas, Children and Families, Education, and Visual and Performing Arts. The Lesher Foundation also invests in the development of the national philanthropic sector and actively supports nonprofit leadership development across Contra Costa County. The Foundation is widely recognized as a trusted leader among nonprofit, government and philanthropic organizations in Contra Costa County and across the region.

As a private funder focused exclusively on impact within the county, the role of the Executive Director (ED) and the Foundation occupy an important place in the fabric of philanthropic support and regional leadership. The new Executive Director will continue the current programmatic focus while leading and executing key operations of the Foundation. The ED will support the Lesher family, specifically the Board of Directors, by informing their philanthropy with knowledge of nonprofit organizations and local issues as well as understanding of philanthropic best practices. Working together with a small staff (currently two program officers) the ED will be both a strong community asset and hands-on grant maker providing the steady, informed leadership that has defined the Foundation's style for the last three decades.

Today, the second and third generations of the founding members of the Lesher family oversee the Foundation. Supported in their grantmaking by staff, the Foundation stewards approximately \$4 - 5 million annually in grants flowing from a \$90 million-dollar portfolio.

#### **POSITION SUMMARY**

The ED reports to the Board of Directors and holds responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the Foundation as well as shaping the future of the organization through vision, values, leadership, and strategy. The ED is the primary face of the Foundation and is an important conduit of information about the health and effectiveness of its nonprofit partners, the needs within various regions of Contra Costa County, and is an expert in good philanthropic practice. By participation and engagement in discussions of issues, policy, and capacity, the ED will assess and respond to opportunities to provide funding to strengthen nonprofit partners in keeping with the Foundation's strong commitment to supporting a more vibrant local community.

The ED must be able to cultivate, build, and maintain strong and authentic relationships with a wide range of partners and community leaders including nonprofit executives, agency, government and elected leaders as well as other funders. A deep understanding of applied philanthropy, seasoned

nonprofit leadership, a deep willingness to learn from partners and to inspire creative solutions will serve the ED well in this role. Significantly honed communication skills including public speaking, written communications, knowledge of public relations, and social and traditional media skills will be beneficial in building the visibility of the Foundation. Integrity and deep commitment to the vision and values of the Founders and a good sense of humor will be important for the role.

Additionally, the ED will lead, inspire, and support the Board of Directors and the Lesher family in their philanthropic work, communicating so that each member is heard, valued, and understands their part in the Foundation's work. Success requires understanding of the dynamics of family foundations, ability to honor the history and vision of the Founders, and a willingness to adapt to and embrace the varied communication styles, interests, and personalities within the family.

### **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND**

Contra Costa County is a large, diverse county located east of San Francisco Bay. It covers over 800 square miles and is home to over one million residents. The county has pockets of significant wealth as well as urban and rural poverty. Challenges here are many and varied and include food insecurity, a significant lack of affordable housing and persistently unacceptable high school drop-out rates in some areas.

### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### Leadership; Community and Family Engagement

- Create and maintain strong relationships with nonprofit organizations and community leaders throughout the region to understand and articulate evolving needs in the county and region;
- Work closely with the Board Chair to understand and advance appropriate board governance; maintain clear lines of communication and provide well-defined opportunities for board engagement;
- Be a respected leader representing the Foundation locally, regionally, and nationally, and demonstrate the ability to partner across racial, economic, ethnic, and geographic differences with authenticity;
- Maintain a high level of knowledge on issues and regulation applicable to charitable giving (accounting, legal, investment, etc.);
- Represent the Foundation in the community at large; at public and private events, grantee events, public hearings, panels, and various other engagements in the region, including board service for other community nonprofits or philanthropic organizations.

#### Grantmaking and Related Activities

- With program staff, evaluate Letters of Intent, grant applications and conduct due diligence, including interviews, site visits, and review of budgets and financial information. Prepare summaries and make recommendations to the Board concerning grant proposals;
- Research and keep abreast of issues, trends, exemplary programs, and best practices nationally as well as locally in the Foundation's major program areas;

- Monitor grantee performance by reviewing and summarizing grantee reports, maintaining positive relationships with grantees, following up with grantees as needed to obtain necessary information, providing technical assistance, and engaging in evaluation and problem-solving.

#### Administration

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the Foundation including overseeing grant administration and operations and ensure compliance with all policies as well as legal and contractual obligations;
- Oversee budgeting, investments, the annual financial audit, tax filings, and maintenance of correct and complete records required for the healthy operation of the Foundation;
- Work with the Board and investment advisors to ensure that the Foundation's investments and financial management are effective and appropriately aligned with the Foundation's vision and mission;
- Work closely with a highly qualified and motivated professional staff; foster open communications and a collaborative spirit;
- Arrange and attend board meetings and activities including preparing facilities and agenda; oversee materials development; implement board directives; communicate with the Board between meetings;
- Lead the Board in its strategic planning and establishes objectives based on goals and budget considerations agreed upon by the Board;

#### **EXPERIENCE**

A successful ED candidate will likely have:

- Significant experience with a grantmaking foundation and/or broad experience leading a well-respected nonprofit;
- Familiarity with Contra Costa County's nonprofit landscape;
- Experience as the face of an organization; well-developed interpersonal skills; superb oral and written communication skills; the ability to listen and present ideas clearly and persuasively to diverse audiences;
- Ability to accurately assess nonprofit leadership, operational, and financial capacity and perform other due diligence required;
- Experience in strong financial and organizational management; knowledge of financial instruments, rules, regulations, and standards for family foundations;
- Evidence of developing and implementing strategy by being a strategic thinker, planner, and executor with an inclusive operating style that encourages engagement;
- A history of strong collaboration and actively seeking strategic partnerships;
- Excellent analytical ability including the ability to summarize complex issues clearly and concisely and to develop and convey cogent recommendations;

- Bachelor's degree at a minimum, advanced degree and/or relevant professional experience preferred.

#### **KEY QUALIFICATIONS**

- Has sound judgment, tact, humility, and discretion required to work effectively with the Board of Directors, other funders, thought-leaders, grant applicants and current grantees;
- High emotional intelligence with a good sense of humor, someone who is at ease in many places and with all people; able to interact with diverse communities with inclusivity, grace, and confidence;
- A good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input from many sources and able to bring others together, building consensus, and creating cohesive and well-supported plans;
- Strong work ethic coupled with an enthusiastic and optimistic approach to one's work.

The Leshner Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees. If you are interested in this opportunity, please submit a cover letter and résumé to [resume@lesherfoundation.org](mailto:resume@lesherfoundation.org). The deadline for applications is October 5, 2020. For additional details about the Foundation, please visit our website at [www.lesherfoundation.org](http://www.lesherfoundation.org).