



Search Conducted By



Photo by Ian Shive

Executive Director

Columbia Land Trust seeks a collaborative and strategic Executive Director to lead its mission of conserving and caring for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships.



Organization Overview

Founded in 1990, the nonprofit Columbia Land Trust has been working in the greater Columbia River region to conserve signature landscapes and vital habitats. To date, Columbia Land Trust has conserved more than 64,000 acres across a service region that spans two states and follows the lower Columbia River for 230 miles, stretching from The Dalles to the Pacific Ocean through several diverse ecoregions.

Columbia Land Trust is dedicated to conserving and caring for the vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships. The organization builds and maintains strong relationships, sets ambitious long-term goals, and works well with a broad range of partners while practicing thoughtful land management.

Columbia Land Trust is an accredited nonprofit based in Vancouver, Washington, and operating across Oregon and Washington. The organization is currently in the final stretch of a major capital campaign that reflects its ambitious approach to conservation in the region. Overall, Columbia Land Trust has transitioned from the mindset and scale of a startup to that of a more mature, strategic organization that is planning for its next stage of growth. The next Executive Director will help lead this phase with vision, trust, and genuine partnership.

Nature has no single hero. It has all of us.



Position Overview and Responsibilities

The Executive Director will provide organizational leadership by guiding strategy, supporting a talented and empowered staff, nurturing strong board relations, stewarding donor and community relationships, and serving as the primary public face and voice of Columbia Land Trust across the Columbia River region and beyond.

The position calls for a leader who genuinely trusts the expertise of the people around them: someone who understands that the directors and staff at Columbia Land Trust have deep, hard-won knowledge, and who sees their own role as guiding and supporting that team rather than overriding it. Columbia Land Trust has built a culture of trust and autonomy that staff deeply value. The next Executive Director will honor and strengthen that culture.

The incoming leader will arrive with a clear vision for the organization, the ability to articulate it compellingly to diverse audiences, and the humility to let that vision be shaped by staff, community, and partners. They will be comfortable navigating a donor and constituent base that spans the full political spectrum, and will understand that conservation in this region requires building bridges across communities, not just within them.

The Executive Director will embrace a critical moment: the final phase of a significant capital campaign that will require someone who can step in as a trusted, relationship-anchored community leader and close it with confidence and creativity.

Keep the Pacific Northwest thriving.



Responsibilities



Strategic Leadership and Vision

- ★ Collaborate with staff and the Board of Directors to develop, refine, and implement long-term strategic plans and annual work plans that reflect the organization's mission and values.
- ★ Provide clear, visionary leadership while honoring the organization's collaborative culture.
- ★ Translate strategic goals into achievable objectives in genuine partnership with staff, board, and community.
- ★ Bring a long-term orientation to steering Columbia Land Trust toward its next phase of organizational maturity.
- ★ Ensure that programs and activities are developed, executed, and evaluated to maximize mission impact.
- ★ Participate with the Land Trust Alliance, Washington Association of Land Trusts, Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts, and peer organizations on policy, accreditation, and issues of shared interest.



Business Acumen

- ★ Captain a high-performing team by delegating effectively, developing internal leadership, and scaling organizational infrastructure to match growth.
- ★ Lead with financial savvy, intelligence, and strategic foresight in managing a diversified revenue portfolio, including the ability to assess risk and develop contingency plans in response to shifting government funding landscapes and an evolving regulatory environment.
- ★ Cultivate and steward relationships across a broad constituent ecosystem, including major donors, institutional funders, government partners, and community leaders spanning both urban and rural constituencies.
- ★ Communicate with clarity and confidence as the public face of the organization, engaging diverse audiences ranging from major donors and external partners to board members and staff with equal credibility and presence.
- ★ Strategically identify and pursue opportunities across sectors to expand the circle of Columbia Land Trust supporters and build coalitions that advance organizational priorities in a complex and often politically charged operating environment.



Community Engagement and Partnerships

- ✦ Lead Columbia Land Trust's staff and board to be ambassadors across the Columbia River region: connecting with landowners, community members, local and state officials, tribal partners, rural communities, and the broader public.
- ✦ Sustain and deepen the organization's partnerships with Indigenous tribal nations, including the Yakama Nation, Chinook Indian Nation, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and other tribal partners across Oregon and Washington.
- ✦ Ensure organizational culture and programming actively welcome volunteers and community participation.
- ✦ Oversee outreach, communications, and events that build connections across a diverse and geographically expansive region.
- ✦ Demonstrate deep awareness of the rural communities where much of this conservation work takes place and lead with authenticity and cultural competency in those spaces.

Board Relations

- ✦ Collaborate and lead with the board in setting the strategic vision for the Land Trust.
- ✦ Keep board members informed of Columbia Land Trust activities and provide organizational support to officers and committees.
- ✦ Engage the board in strategic conversations in a way that engages collaboration, listens to perspectives, and maintains efficient and clear decision making.
- ✦ Serve as liaison between board and staff, ensuring productive and trusting relationships across the organization.



Fundraising Management

- ✦ Lead fundraising and development efforts by sharing Columbia Land Trust's story and building genuine relationships with donors across the political and demographic spectrum.
- ✦ Steward and complete the organization's active capital campaign, bringing demonstrated credibility and trust with donors, community members, partners, and landowners to the final phase of this major effort.
- ✦ Work alongside the Board of Directors and development staff to implement fundraising strategies, including major gifts, campaign giving, planned giving, and grants.
- ✦ Cultivate deep, long-term relationships with donors rooted in shared investment in the health and vitality of the Columbia River region.
- ✦ Leverage strong existing connections in the Washington and Oregon philanthropic and conservation funding landscape, and actively build new ones.

Organizational Growth and Management

- ✦ Ensure financial compliance, strong practices, and fiscal responsibility, including budgeting, annual audit, and tax filings.
- ✦ Recruit, develop, and support staff, conducting evaluations, providing coaching, and fostering high morale and a sense of shared ownership.
- ✦ Maintain administrative and communication systems that support efficient, mission-aligned operations.
- ✦ Oversee compliance with all applicable legal, regulatory, and Land Trust Alliance standards and practices requirements, including accreditation.

Committed to people, plants, and wildlife.



Desired Experience and Competencies

Columbia Land Trust seeks an inspiring, grounded leader who approaches conservation with deep respect for the science, the politics, and the people involved. The ideal candidate demonstrates strong leadership in thoughtfully guiding organizational growth while developing staff capacity and maintaining momentum. They bring strategic vision and a results-driven mindset to optimize resources, enhance performance, and deliver measurable conservation outcomes. They have strong ties to the Washington and Oregon communities and philanthropic landscape, or experience in a similar region, and a demonstrated commitment to working with, elevating, and genuinely learning from communities that have historically been marginalized in conservation spaces.

Executive Capacity

- ✦ Visionary and entrepreneurial thinker capable of organizational transformation and acceleration, moving fluidly between long-term vision and immediate operational detail without losing sight of either.
- ✦ Comfortable operating in conditions of uncertainty, with the ability to make sound decisions with incomplete information and course-correct without losing momentum.
- ✦ Track record of building productive relationships with government agencies, elected officials, and regulatory bodies at local, state, and federal levels.
- ✦ Comfortable with the legal and compliance landscape relevant to land trusts, including conservation easements, accreditation standards, and transaction due diligence.
- ✦ Experience in stewarding an organization through periods of transition in leadership, funding, or strategic direction while maintaining staff stability and donor confidence.
- ✦ Proven ability to lead organizational change thoughtfully, balancing the urgency of growth with preserving institutional culture and staff trust.
- ✦ Skilled at analyzing and making decisions based on complex financial and operational information and translating it into accessible narratives for audiences with varying levels of financial literacy.

Mission Commitment and Depth

- ✦ A leader driven by mission rather than personal recognition, one who empowers others and celebrates team success.
- ✦ Genuine, abiding commitment to land conservation and the mission of protecting vital lands, waters, and wildlife through science-based stewardship.
- ✦ Understanding of the intersections of conservation, agriculture, forestry, tribal sovereignty, rural economies, and community well-being.
- ✦ Appreciation for the political and economic complexity of land conservation: an understanding that land is power, that land ownership carries significant meaning, and that this context shapes everything about how and with whom this work happens.
- ✦ Experience working with Indigenous communities in Oregon and Washington, ideally including ongoing relationships with specific tribal nations; tribal membership would be an extraordinary asset.
- ✦ Comfortable and effective in rural communities, with an awareness of how to communicate and build trust in those settings.
- ✦ Skilled at navigating a politically diverse donor and constituent base with honesty and respect.

Organizational Leadership and Culture

- ✦ Deeply collaborative and lateral in their leadership orientation: someone who actively elevates the expertise of long-tenured, highly skilled staff and ensures that expertise guides organizational decisions.
- ✦ Warm, personable, and genuinely curious about people, skilled at building connections with diverse constituencies from longtime supporters to people who have never heard of Columbia Land Trust.
- ✦ Strong team-builder who nurtures a culture of trust, collaboration, kindness, and mutual respect.
- ✦ Ability to arrive with openness and spend meaningful time listening and learning from staff before making major changes.
- ✦ Deep commitment to working with leaders and communities from nondominant backgrounds: not just awareness of identity, but demonstrated self-directed learning and hands-on experience working alongside people from marginalized communities.

Fundraising and Donor Partnership

- ✦ Comfortable and skilled in fundraising as an act of relationship-building and community investment, not a transactional obligation.
- ✦ Proven experience in development, including major gifts and capital campaign fundraising.
- ✦ A storyteller who approaches donors with genuine gratitude and the ability to convey the ecological, cultural, and human stakes of conservation.
- ✦ Strong existing connections in the Washington and Oregon philanthropic communities, particularly among conservation funders and individual major donors.
- ✦ Experience with grant oversight and management, institutional funding, and diversified revenue strategies.



Compensation

This is a full-time, exempt, benefit-eligible position. The anticipated annual salary range is \$195,000–\$215,000, commensurate with experience.

Columbia Land Trust offers comprehensive benefits, including:

- 100% Health care coverage for employee
- 100% Dental coverage for employee
- Up to 5% 401K matching
- \$50,000 Life Insurance policy
- Four weeks of vacation accrual at time of hire with graduated increases based on years of service

Location and Requirements

The Executive Director will work in a hybrid arrangement based at Columbia Land Trust's offices in Vancouver, Washington, with regular travel throughout the Columbia River region. There are two satellite offices: Astoria, OR, and White Salmon, WA. The position requires consistent in-person presence to build and sustain strong relationships with staff, board members, landowners, community partners, tribal nations, and donors. Occasional evening and weekend availability will be required for events, community programs, and organizational activities.

To Apply

Please visit potrerogroup.com/clt and select “Apply Here.”

Applications should include a resume and a cover letter describing your qualifications that match the position criteria and what you will bring to the role.

Interested candidates should apply by **July 13** for priority consideration.



Additional Information

More information on Columbia Land Trust can be found at columbialandtrust.org/

For additional information regarding this opportunity, please contact:

Daniel Student

Managing Director and Search

Lead at Potrero Group, at

dstudent@potrerogroup.com.



.....

Columbia Land Trust is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate in its selection of candidates for employment based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex or sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, military service, family medical history, legal source of income, gender identity, political affiliation, or family leave obligations.

.....



Potrero Group is honored to coordinate this search on behalf of the Columbia Land Trust. We support innovative leaders and organizations making a difference in the world with strategic planning, facilitation, organizational development, and board and executive search services. We are committed to equitable and inclusive practices in all of our work.

To join our mailing list or for more information visit:

PotreroGroup.com