



Executive Director

The **Elkhorn Slough Foundation** seeks a dynamic, experienced Executive Director to lead its land conservation, restoration, education, and partnership efforts within the Elkhorn Slough watershed and surrounding communities.



Organization Background



Elkhorn Slough Foundation (ESF) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit land trust working to conserve and restore the Elkhorn Slough and its watershed. ESF works in close partnership with the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve (ESNERR) to promote conservation, research, and education, and is headquartered on the State Reserve lands. Located a few miles east of Moss Landing along California's Central Coast, Elkhorn Slough is one of California's largest coastal salt marshes and provides habitat for a fantastic diversity of birds, plants, marine mammals, and fish.

Founded in 1982, ESF is nationally accredited through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. It supports ESNERR through a close collaboration with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and serves as an administrative arm for state and federal funding. Together, this essential partnership has successfully stewarded Elkhorn Slough and grown steadily to protect over 6,500 acres of coastal and upland habitat, farms, and ranches.

As the primary fundraising, administrative, and conservation partner for one of California's last great coastal wetlands, ESF acquires land and conservation easements, restores habitat, protects native species, improves water quality, supports healthy farms and ranches, provides educational opportunities, and nurtures connections between people and nature.



Core Values

Elkhorn Slough Foundation is built on a set of core values that inspire its strategies, policies, decisions, and relationships.

- **Conservation.** We are deeply committed to the conservation of the natural resources of the Elkhorn Slough watershed, our surrounding communities, and the world.
- **Community.** Elkhorn Slough Foundation is part of a larger community. We work with volunteers, students, and families through restoration and educational programs.
- **Stewardship.** We respect the balance between sustainable land use in our working landscape and preservation of wild lands. We collaborate with landowners, growers, businesses, and residents to attain the broadest possible benefit to our natural and human community.
- **Integrity.** We observe the highest level of ethics and professionalism in all our relationships, within our team, with partners, in our land transactions, and with our community.
- **Collegiality.** We aim to maintain a respectful, professional, enjoyable, and productive work environment. We encourage scientific curiosity, open communications, team collaboration in problem solving, and a good sense of humor.

Position Overview

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall leadership and management of the organization and ensures its fiscal health and sustainability. The Executive Director will guide ESF into its next era following the retirement of a long-term leader who has built a strong foundation of partnerships, conservation impact, and fundraising success.



The Executive Director sets ESF's core strategic vision and oversees operations, resource development, and partnerships. The Executive Director is the face, voice, and heart of the organization and ESF's ambassador to local, regional, and national conservation communities, including the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

The Executive Director supervises a six-person management team leading 16 total employees, and works with a 14-member Board of Directors to drive strategic success, grow financial resources, and ensure ESF's commitment to stewardship and community engagement.

ESF is a lively and engaging workplace with a strong organizational culture and people who are committed to Elkhorn Slough's protection and future. The next Executive Director will help maintain this spirit of energy, collegiality, and sense of purpose.



Responsibilities



Executive Leadership and Strategic Vision

- ◆ Develop and implement a compelling vision in line with ESF's strategic plan
- ◆ Provide operational oversight and implement systems to support efficiency and promote collaboration
- ◆ Work effectively with the board and provide leadership on conservation strategy, land trust function, and policy development



Fundraising and Resource Development

- ◆ Oversee all resource development activities
- ◆ Act as ESF's primary spokesperson and brand ambassador
- ◆ Cultivate relationships that lead to long-term opportunities and transformational gifts
- ◆ Maintain a broad, active fundraising network
- ◆ Oversee institutional grant management and reporting



Management and Administration

- ◆ Develop annual fiscal strategies and budgets
- ◆ Oversee the Management Team and support staff development and recruitment
- ◆ Collaborate with the Board of Directors on board growth, management, and governance practices
- ◆ Oversee programming and outreach efforts with communities and Tribal Nations in the Elkhorn Slough watershed area



Partnerships and Collaboration

- ◆ Manage complex partnerships with local, state, and federal government agencies
- ◆ Collaborate with and support ESNERR programs, leadership, and staff
- ◆ Hire and administer grant-funded staff on behalf of ESNERR
- ◆ Manage close partnerships with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- ◆ Represent ESF with varied local groups and multicultural communities



Conservation and Land Trust Management

- ◆ Oversee complex conservation projects
- ◆ Delegate time, resources, and personnel to high-priority conservation initiatives
- ◆ Provide strategic guidance on acquisitions and stewardship activities
- ◆ Oversee management of a network of properties surrounding Elkhorn Slough and habitats throughout the watershed

Requirements and Desired Attributes



ESF seeks a leader with high-level fundraising and relationship skills and a proven ability to navigate complex, changing organizational and mission delivery environments. The ideal candidate will demonstrate values-based leadership, possess an engaging personality, and bring the confidence, humility, and emotional intelligence necessary to work effectively with a talented staff, an engaged board, and essential partners at a pivotal time in ESF's history.

The Executive Director must have expertise in conservation and land trust management. They will be creative and entrepreneurial in achieving ESF's mission and be able to lead complex conservation projects.

The ideal candidate will have outstanding interpersonal and relational skills. The Executive Director must work well with a wide variety of people, including ESF staff and board members, partner staff, volunteers, donors, and community leaders. They must be able to effectively communicate ESF's mission in a manner that inspires trust and engagement.

Attributes

- Integrity, drive, and a positive attitude
- Clarity and authenticity when communicating ESF's mission, activities, and impact
- A partnership-first approach that values collaboration and relationships
- Leadership with a high degree of emotional intelligence and self-awareness
- Ability to find common ground through a diplomatic, solutions-oriented approach
- Entrepreneurial resourcefulness
- Excellent communication skills and the ability to connect with various and multicultural audiences
- Proactive decision making with a willingness to change course
- Comfort in outdoor settings in all types of weather and physical conditions



Executive Leadership and Strategic Vision

- ✦ Passion for ESF's mission
- ✦ Familiarity with nonprofit governance and a proven ability to work effectively with a board
- ✦ Ability to build trust and navigate change with board, staff, partners, and other constituencies
- ✦ Able to navigate strategic changes to grasp emerging opportunities



Fundraising and Resource Development

- ✦ Demonstrated track record of fundraising success for mission-focused organizations
- ✦ Demonstrated history of identifying and establishing new revenue streams and opportunities
- ✦ A high level of financial literacy, including experience with budgets and annual nonprofit fiscal management



Management and Administration

- ✦ Capacity to lead a nonprofit organization of comparable scale and complexity
- ✦ Experience leading and mobilizing high-performing teams
- ✦ History of operational oversight, systems thinking, and collaborative leadership



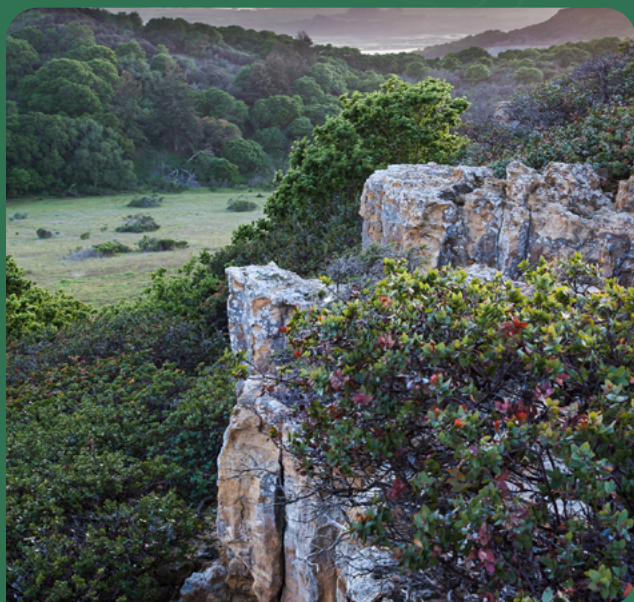
Partnerships and Collaboration

- ✦ Experience navigating the complexities of state and federal agency partnerships, including advocating for and administering funds from a wide variety of sources on behalf of ESNERR partners
- ✦ The ESNERR partnership requires flexibility, creative problem solving, and a strong dedication to collaboration rooted in the needs of all partners
- ✦ Experience with political advocacy



Conservation and Land Trust Management

- ✦ History of involvement with land transactions similar to the current ESF portfolio
- ✦ Experience with land trusts and associated organizations
- ✦ Awareness of the regional conservation history and current conservation landscape in coastal California
- ✦ Experience with environmental education or educating on conservation topics in community settings
- ✦ Experience in communicating science-related conservation topics to technical and non-technical audiences



Compensation

This is a full-time, exempt, benefit-eligible position. The anticipated annual salary range for this position is \$185,000–\$225,000, commensurate with experience. The range provided is an estimate and will be evaluated on an individual basis, taking into consideration the candidate's knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, and education.

Benefits include:

- ◆ Health insurance coverage (92% employer contribution for employee)
- ◆ Dental and vision insurance coverage (100% employer contribution for employee)
- ◆ 10 days paid time off annually, scaling with tenure
- ◆ Five days paid sick leave annually
- ◆ 403(b) retirement plan (5% employer contribution after one year and employee begins contributing)
- ◆ Life insurance coverage
- ◆ Paid holidays, Bereavement, and Jury Duty leave
- ◆ ESF-managed housing is a potential option through negotiation

Location and Requirements

The Executive Director works from Elkhorn Slough Foundation's headquarters in Moss Landing, CA.

The position requires the ability to be on-site on a regular basis. Travel will be required to manage partnerships and organizational needs across the region. Occasional night and weekend work will be required in coordination with program and operational needs.

Start Date

Spring 2026

To Apply

Visit potrerogroup.com/elkhorn to apply.

While the position will remain open until filled, we encourage interested candidates to apply by **January 23, 2026** for priority consideration.

Additional Information

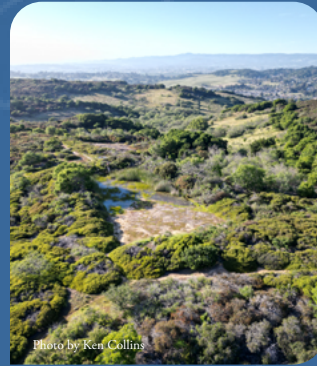
For more information about Elkhorn Slough Foundation, visit elkhornslough.org.

For additional information regarding this opportunity, please contact:

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Elkhorn Slough Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Elkhorn Slough Foundation (ESF) is an equal opportunity employer. ESF prohibits discrimination and harassment against employees, applicants, volunteers, and unpaid interns based on their actual or perceived protected characteristics, which include, but are not limited to: race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex and gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, sexual orientation, military status, and reproductive health decision making. ESF does not retaliate or discriminate against applicants or employees who request a reasonable accommodation for reasons related to disability or religion.



Potrero Group is honored to coordinate this search on behalf of Elkhorn Slough Foundation. 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, please visit PotreroGroup.com.