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Director of Institutional Engagement

Peninsula Open Space Trust seeks a strategic, experienced, relationship-driven Director of Institutional Engagement to lead development efforts with large philanthropic foundations and government agencies. This pivotal role provides leadership and direction to develop multiyear funding strategies, identify opportunities, secure gifts, build and support long-term partnerships, and guide legislative engagement.



Organization Background

Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) is a premier land trust in the San Francisco Bay Area and the nation. Its mission is to protect open space on the Peninsula and in the South Bay for the benefit of all. It works to create a network of protected lands where people and nature connect and thrive. The lands are preserved forever so present and future generations benefit from the careful balance of rural and urban landscapes that make the region extraordinary.

Since its founding in 1977, POST has acquired, restored, and protected over 93,000 acres of permanent open space, farms, and parkland in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz counties. The organization accomplishes this vital work with the support of a \$32M annual operating budget and a staff of approximately 67, while fostering [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) and strong relationships with [local Indigenous groups](#). POST takes a central, catalytic role in conservation projects across the region, bringing together many [partner organizations](#) to ensure that open spaces are permanently protected, benefiting our community, our environment, and our economy.

Core Values

- **Nature connects us all.** We believe that we are part of an interconnected web of life and that diversity of all types creates strength and resilience. In our work, we strive to protect and heal the ecosystems that support our collective well-being.
- **Act today for the long term.** We take action today in ways that support our bold, long-term vision. We accept and balance the tension between the present and the future while staying true to our purpose.
- **Commit to learning and growth.** We are creative, curious, and courageous in our approaches and willing to change course when necessary. We learn from our successes and mistakes.
- **Care about how we work.** We believe all living things should be treated with dignity. We acknowledge the many injustices against people and nature. We are dedicated to strive for equity in our actions.
- **Honor our collective strengths.** We have the most positive impact when we work together toward a shared vision. We catalyze, collaborate, and complement to support the best outcomes for all.

Strategic Vision

[POST's strategy](#) centers on three priorities that shape their work:

- Preserving Biodiversity
- Building Climate Resilience
- Creating Equitable Access

POST's long-range plan provides the financial structure to execute the strategic vision while creating enough flexibility to take advantage of unexpected opportunities that arise. In doing so, POST continues its important work acquiring and securing major key land parcels in the region while expanding nontransactional conservation projects.

POST takes a holistic approach to sustaining the local ecosystem through five focus areas that encompass the community's diverse open space uses:

- [Public Access Program](#)
- [Farmland Program](#)
- [Redwoods Program](#)
- [Wildlife Linkages Program](#)
- [Coyote Valley](#)



Position Overview

The Director of Institutional Engagement provides leadership and direction to identify opportunities, secure gifts, and build long-term partnerships with institutional funders, including large philanthropic foundations and government agencies. The Director works across multiple internal teams and with external partners to engage institutional funders in program delivery and leads grant solicitation and management processes to raise \$5M to \$10M+ per year for POST's programs. The Director oversees POST's involvement in legislation and policymaking, including supporting new sources of state and local funding for land conservation.



Responsibilities

Institutional Fundraising Strategy

- In collaboration with the Vice President of Development and the Vice President of Land Transactions, create multifaceted, multiyear funding strategies and annual goals for institutional fundraising that align with POST's mission, program, and strategic plan objectives.
- Work closely with programmatic staff to understand program priorities and projected funding needs and to identify potential institutional funding sources for POST and its partners.
- Keep abreast of changes that may impact funder priorities, including new sources of public or private funding, policy changes, and trends in grantmaking.
- Develop and lead the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship strategies for institutional donors capable of making six-figure grants, especially California state natural resource agencies and major private foundations.

Legislative Engagement

- Direct and implement POST's state and federal legislative activities, overseeing strategy planning, priority setting, and coordination with the President, Institutional Engagement Officer, and senior staff on high-profile bills, investments in political campaigns and other legislative matters to ensure influence on public funding sources and agencies.
- Advance POST's policy goals and maintain expertise on major issues through networking, thought leadership, and by representing the organization externally, including in legislative proceedings.
- Direct ballot measure strategy, language, and materials and oversee campaign execution in coordination with consultants, the Institutional Engagement Officer, the President, and internal teams.
- Serve as a resource on public policy and funding procedures, regulations, and best practices, including IRS and California Fair Political Practices Commission regulations.
- Track upcoming legislative issues to inform internal planning and maximize organizational effectiveness.

External Affairs

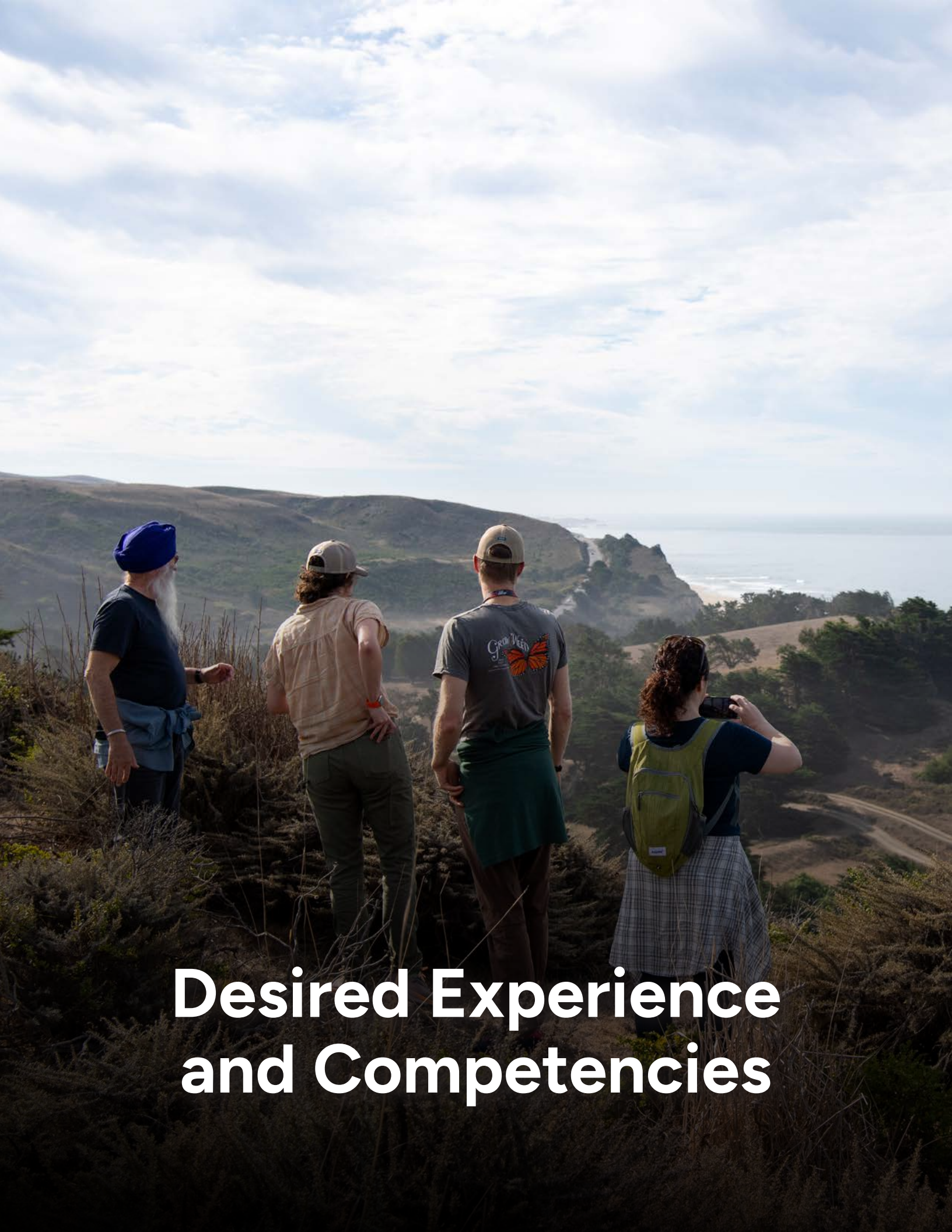
- Stay informed about POST projects and goals to identify funding and policy opportunities, and to communicate effectively with funders and policymakers.
- Collaborate with partners to develop and implement funding strategies for joint projects and manage cross-departmental and partner coordination to ensure high-quality communications with funders. Offer funding strategy and grant writing support to partners when needed.
- Broaden and strengthen POST's relationships with institutional funders, including government agencies and foundation leadership and staff with grant-making responsibilities.
- Ensure funders are aware of POST's priorities, anticipated needs, and alignment with funder objectives.
- Cultivate relationships with local, state, and federal legislators and their staff.
- Communicate the organization's position on legislative and policy matters internally and externally. Review public comment letters and other policy communications on behalf of POST.
- Collaborate with external partners and constituents to gather input, build community buy-in, and position ballot measures for successful passage.

Grant Management

- Work closely with programmatic staff to understand funding needs and identify potential funding sources.
- Manage proposal development processes and oversee staff grant writing, ensuring that proposals present competitive projects.
- Ensure appropriate internal review of grant agreements and ensure administrative compliance.
- Oversee grant compliance and reporting, ensuring that grant requirements are fulfilled and reports foster long-term partnerships.

Supervision and Administration

- Build a collaborative, effective, and self-reliant department.
- Manage and support the Institutional Engagement Officer and Senior Manager of Institutional Grants, providing coaching, performance management, and professional development opportunities.
- Oversee the Institutional Engagement Officer and Grants Accountant to ensure accurate accounting of grants in POST's financial, land, and donor databases, and timely, professional communications with funders.
- Define monthly and annual deliverables for staff and consulting grant writers and political consultants, and oversee progress toward outcomes.
- Manage POST's legislative consultants in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., to track and respond to relevant legislative actions, develop new sources of funding, and align funding program implementation with POST's goals.
- Develop and manage POST's external affairs budget.



Desired Experience and Competencies

General Competencies

- Ten years of experience in increasingly responsible positions, including five to seven years of experience preparing and managing institutional grant proposals and reports
- College degree or a combination of work and life experience that provides a comparable level of skill and competence for the role
- Expertise in natural and working lands conservation policy and funding
- Able to work effectively across departments and with senior leadership
- Professional demeanor and good judgment
- Strong problem-solving skills, comfortable with pivoting and adapting, and able to balance multiple priorities in a dynamic environment

Institutional Fundraising Strategy

- Experience developing funding strategies for projects or programs, including long-term strategic planning
- Success securing six-figure grants from government agencies and major foundations
- Strong understanding of California state natural resource funding programs and grantmaking processes
- Ability to analyze funding trends and align strategies with shifting policy and philanthropic priorities
- Experience cultivating and stewarding long-term funder relationships

Legislative Engagement

- Deep understanding of the legislative process at the state and federal levels
- Political acumen and experience developing and advancing policy or legislative strategies related to land or resource conservation
- Demonstrated success managing or contributing to ballot measure campaigns
- Expertise in policy analysis to assess future impact on POST's projects and broader land conservation goals
- Knowledge of public funding procedures, lobbying regulations, and compliance with IRS and California Fair Political Practices Commission rules

Communication and External Affairs

- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills with internal and external audiences
- Ability to represent the organization effectively with funders, policymakers, and community partners
- Skilled at managing complex, significant external partnerships
- Experience developing and maintaining relationships with agency leaders, foundation staff, and legislators
- Skilled at articulating policy positions and providing clear, persuasive public communications
- Experience building community support for policy initiatives or ballot measures



Grant Management

- Able to oversee complex proposal development processes across multiple teams and disciplines
- Experience ensuring grant compliance, reporting accuracy, and timely fulfillment of funder requirements
- Strong organizational and project management skills with attention to detail and deadlines
- Exceptional written communication skills, adept at producing clear, articulate, and persuasive proposals and reports

Supervision and Administration

- Skilled at leading collaborative, high-performing teams and managing and cultivating staff
- Experience managing consultants, setting deliverables, and ensuring accountability for outcomes
- Budget management experience, including forecasting and tracking expenditures



Compensation

This is a full-time, exempt position. The anticipated starting salary for this position is \$145,000–\$175,000, commensurate with experience.

Benefits

POST offers a competitive benefits package to employees, including:

- Full premium for basic medical, dental and vision coverage and a portion of upgraded or dependent plans
- Flex Spending Accounts and a 401(k) plan with employer match after one year of service
- Paid vacation and sick leave
- Caltrain GoPasses, flexible schedules, gym and commuter reimbursements, and a dog-friendly office

Location

This position is based at POST's office in Palo Alto, California. Flexible work is possible, though it will be necessary to be in the office or in the field 3 or 4 days per week. Occasional travel to Sacramento and elsewhere is required for legislative visits and donor meetings. This position may have occasional short periods of long hours to meet deadlines.

To Apply

Please visit potrerogroup.com/post_inst 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.



Additional Information

To learn more about the Peninsula Open Space Trust,
visit openspacetrust.org.

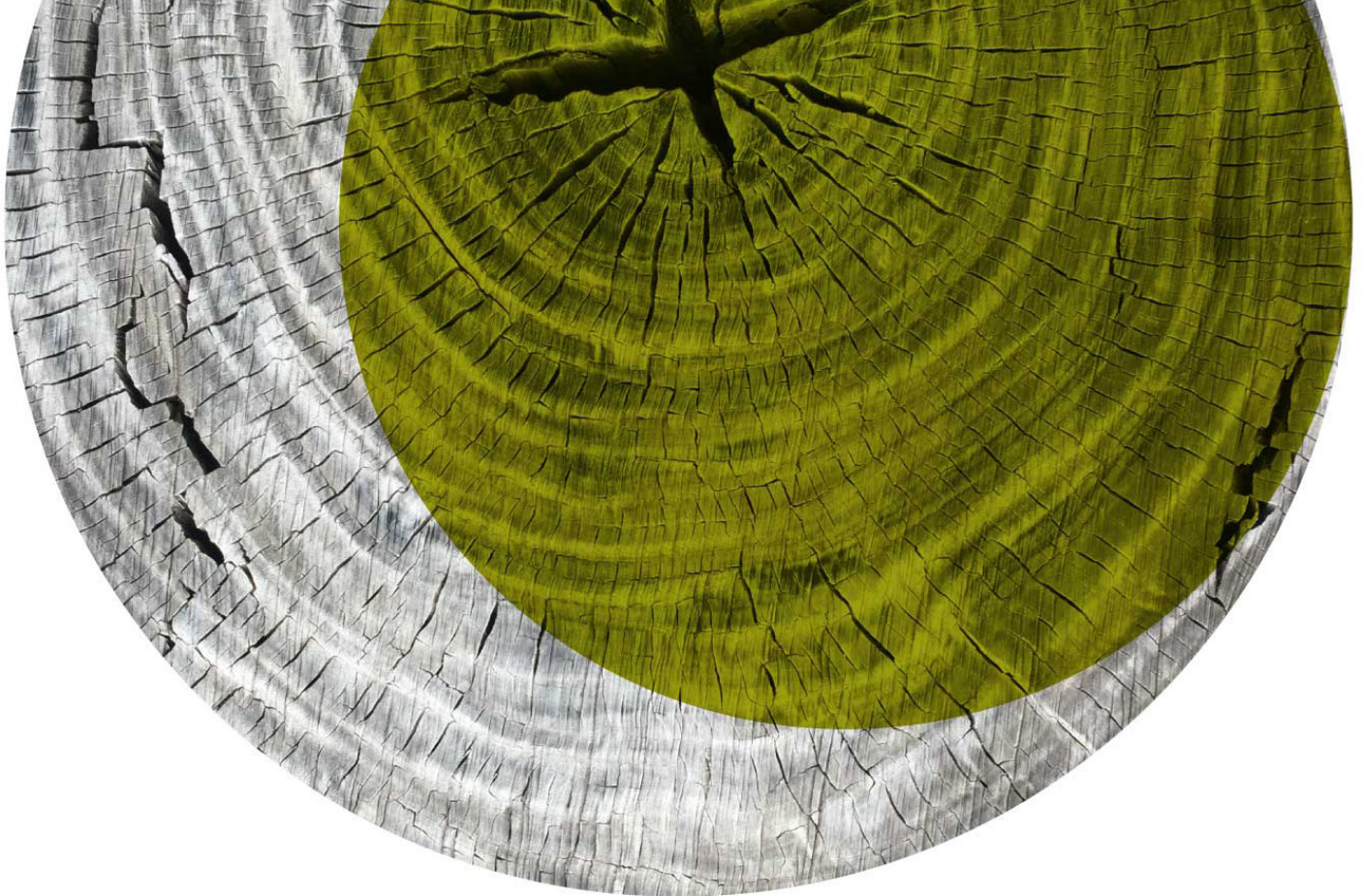
For additional information regarding this opportunity, please contact

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Potrero Group is honored to coordinate this search on behalf of Peninsula Open Space 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.

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