SOLANO LAND TRUST

Search Conducted By

POTRERO GROUP

photo credit: T. Muehleisen

Chief Operating Officer

Solano Land Trust seeks its first Chief Operating Officer to provide operational and human resources leadership, financial stewardship, and fundraising oversight to fortify the organization's internal systems and prepare the land trust for its next chapter of conservation impact in Solano County.

photo credit: T. Muehleisen

Organization Overview

Solano Land Trust was founded in 1986 as the Solano County Farmlands and Open Space Foundation as a result of open space advocates, land developers, and a municipal government working together to benefit the whole community. This unusual collaborative genesis created the structure for a board of directors that reflects all sides of land-use issues united in the mission to preserve the agricultural legacy and natural landscapes of Solano County and enhance people's relationship to the land. Solano Land Trust has permanently protected over 25,000 acres of natural areas and agricultural lands.

Mission

To inspire a love of the land and preserve it for people, food, and the natural environment.

Values

Solano Land Trust is committed to balancing its work to benefit the entire community, today and for future generations. They recognize that land and people are inextricably linked and have been for thousands of years, and that protecting land means addressing the environmental challenges that affect both the land and the people who depend on it. The land trust also acknowledges that it cannot meet its forever promise in a way that is meaningful to people throughout the community without intentional and sustained attention to the community and the organizational integrity necessary to carry its mission forward.

Land Acknowledgment

As Solano Land Trust honors the relationship of people to the lands and waters of Solano County, they wish to acknowledge the Indigenous people who lived here and whose ancestors are still living here.

photo credit: B. Turner

Position Overview

The Chief Operating Officer is a newly created senior leadership role reporting directly to the CEO. This is an exciting opportunity to build, strengthen, and lead the internal functions of a well-respected, growing land trust at a pivotal moment in its organizational evolution.

The COO will serve as the day-to-day operational leader of the organization with broad oversight of human resources, finances, fundraising, and communications. They will be a trusted thought partner to the CEO and the Chief Programs Officer and a collaborative leadership presence for staff. This position supervises two direct reports, the Development Director and the Administrative Manager, while leading cross-departmental coordination and supporting the well-being and performance of staff across the organization. The COO will establish and maintain administrative policies and drive operational efficiencies, translating the organization's vision into effective systems and processes that enable the land trust's mission-driven work to thrive.

The ideal candidate brings deep nonprofit management experience, strong financial acumen, a track record of building effective organizational systems, a commitment to evaluation of efforts to maximize efficiency and impact, a working knowledge of fundraising strategy, and the emotional intelligence to lead and develop a talented team. They are as comfortable reviewing a budget or a grant report as they are coaching a staff member or refining a donor communication strategy. They lead with humility and initiative, and bring genuine commitment to land conservation and community stewardship.

Responsibilities

Operations and Administration

- Provide organizational and staff leadership as the internal operational anchor, building the systems, infrastructure, and culture needed to carry the mission forward
- Support the CEO, Chief Programs Officer, and board as a thought partner and implementer and adapt plans as the organization grows and the external context evolves
- Translate the strategic framework into operational priorities, staff accountabilities, and measurable milestones
- Lead cross-departmental coordination and staff integration, ensuring teams work cohesively toward shared goals
- Develop and maintain organizational policies, systems, and tools that support strategy implementation and evaluation, drive continual improvement, and ensure compliance with applicable laws, accreditation standards, and nonprofit best practices
- Oversee engagement with and reporting to the board and functional committees, including the Executive, Governance, and Finance and Investment Committees, and support the board in meeting its governance responsibilities
- Lead organizational risk management, ensuring the land trust is appropriately protected and compliant across all operational areas

People and Culture

- Serve as a steady, trusted presence for staff, modeling transparency, building trust, and fostering an inclusive, values-aligned culture
- Partner with the CEO to align organizational structure with strategic priorities, clarify roles and responsibilities, and foster effective cross-departmental coordination
- Set clear standards and systems for staff accountability practices, performance management, and professional development
- Oversee staff recruitment and onboarding, and lead employee retention, ensuring the land trust attracts and develops mission-driven talent
- Lead compensation structure and oversee benefits administration and personnel policies in compliance with California employment law and accreditation standards
- Partner with HR consultants, contractors, and employment attorneys as needed to navigate employment needs

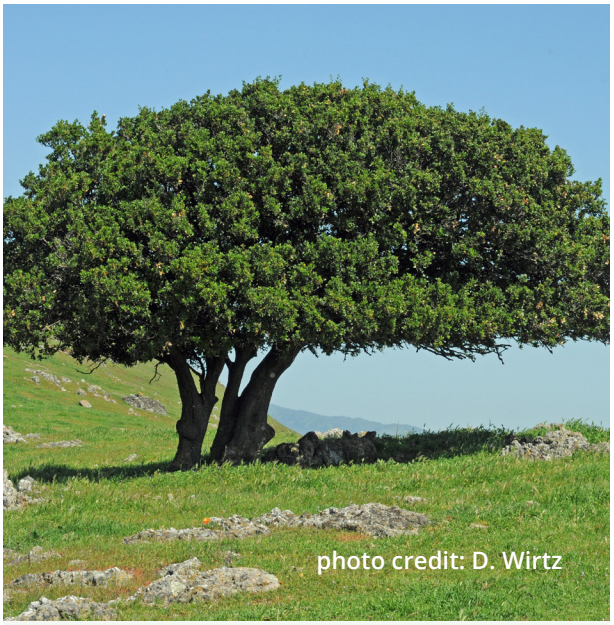
photo credit: D. Wirtz

Finance

- Lead the budget development and resource prioritization process in alignment with the organization's strategic framework
- Manage diverse revenue streams including earned and contractual income, endowments, and philanthropic grants and gifts
- Oversee day-to-day financial management, including forecasting, reporting, and cash flow, in partnership with staff and external accountants
- Provide regular financial updates to the Board of Directors and the Finance and Investment Committee
- Lead audit coordination and oversee internal controls, financial policies, and accounting operations in compliance with GAAP standards

photo credit M. Steward

Development and Communications

- Champion a culture of philanthropy across the organization, ensuring all staff understand and contribute to the organization's resource development goals
- Serve as a partner to the CEO and Development Director to support fundraising strategy and set development priorities to build organizational financial resilience
- Provide active oversight of organizational fundraising, including major gifts, foundation and government grants, membership programs, annual appeals, and planned giving
- Partner closely with the Development Director to strengthen systems and execution to grow a pipeline of engaged donors and community support
- Oversee the communications strategy and marketing, ensuring the land trust's voice, brand, and storytelling communicate its work transparently and reflect the ambition and community-centeredness of the strategic framework
- Support external relations, public awareness efforts, and community engagement processes that deepen the land trust's profile, strengthen partnerships, increase support, and advance conservation goals

photo credit: N. Braddock

Desired Experience and Competencies

Operations and Administration

- Demonstrated executive experience managing and mentoring professional teams in an organization of similar size and scope
- Demonstrated success in formalizing organizational processes, building operational infrastructure, and improving cross-functional coordination
- Detail-oriented and systematic thinker with experience translating high-level organizational goals into practical, measurable work plans and staff accountabilities
- Experience managing contracts, vendor relationships, technology systems, facilities, and compliance
- Familiarity with Land Trust Alliance Accreditation is beneficial

Operations and Administration

- Experience building and managing inclusive, values-aligned team cultures that support retention and growth
- High emotional intelligence with the ability to build trust across diverse staff and constituents
- Skill at creating clear accountability structures while providing the support that staff need to succeed
- Experience managing through organizational evolution and ambiguity with steadiness and transparency
- Working knowledge of California employment law, benefits administration, and compensation structures

Finance

- Experience managing nonprofit finances, including budget development, financial reporting, audit oversight, and revenue management
- Skill at maintaining internal controls, analyzing financial projections, and developing reserve strategies that support long-term organizational sustainability
- Ability to clearly synthesize and translate complex financial data into high-level, actionable insights for staff, leadership, and the board

Development and Communications

- Broad understanding of nonprofit fundraising strategy across individual giving, foundation grants, government funding, earned income, and planned giving
- Experience overseeing or closely partnering on development operations, donor stewardship systems, and fundraising campaigns
- Ability to support and elevate a communications function that engages the community, cultivates donors, evaluates impact, and advances the mission
- Strong written communication skills and comfort reviewing and editing donor-facing materials, grant narratives, and public communications

Desired Attributes

- Authentic alignment with the land trust's mission to protect land and connect community to the natural and agricultural landscapes of Solano County
- Background in environmental, agricultural, or natural resources nonprofit sectors is desirable
- Collaborative leadership style that builds trust with the CEO, staff, board, and external partners
- Comfort operating as both a strategic thought partner and a hands-on implementer
- Humility, initiative, and a commitment to continuous learning and organizational improvement

photo credit: J. Knippenberg

Compensation

This is a full-time, exempt, benefit-eligible position. The anticipated annual salary range for this position is $110,000–$125,000, commensurate with experience, plus bonus potential.

Solano Land Trust provides a portion of the employee's health, dental, and vision insurance, matches up to 3% of the employee's contribution toward their 403(b) retirement account, and offers eleven paid holidays and four weeks of vacation per year.

Location

This position is based at the Solano Land Trust headquarters in Vacaville, California. While hybrid flexibility is considered, the role requires a consistent physical presence at the headquarters. The COO must be available for occasional travel throughout Solano County to work from the Vallejo office, visit protected properties, meet with partners, or attend events, which may be held after hours.

To Apply

Please visit **potrerogroup.com/solano-coo** 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 **April 13, 2026**, for priority consideration.

Start Date

Summer 2026

photo credit: J. Eckerlin

Additional Information

More information on Solano Land Trust can be found at **solanolandtrust.org**

For additional information regarding this opportunity, please contact:

Jena Kuznik
Senior Consultant and Search Lead, at Potrero Group
at **jkuznik@potrerogroup.com**.

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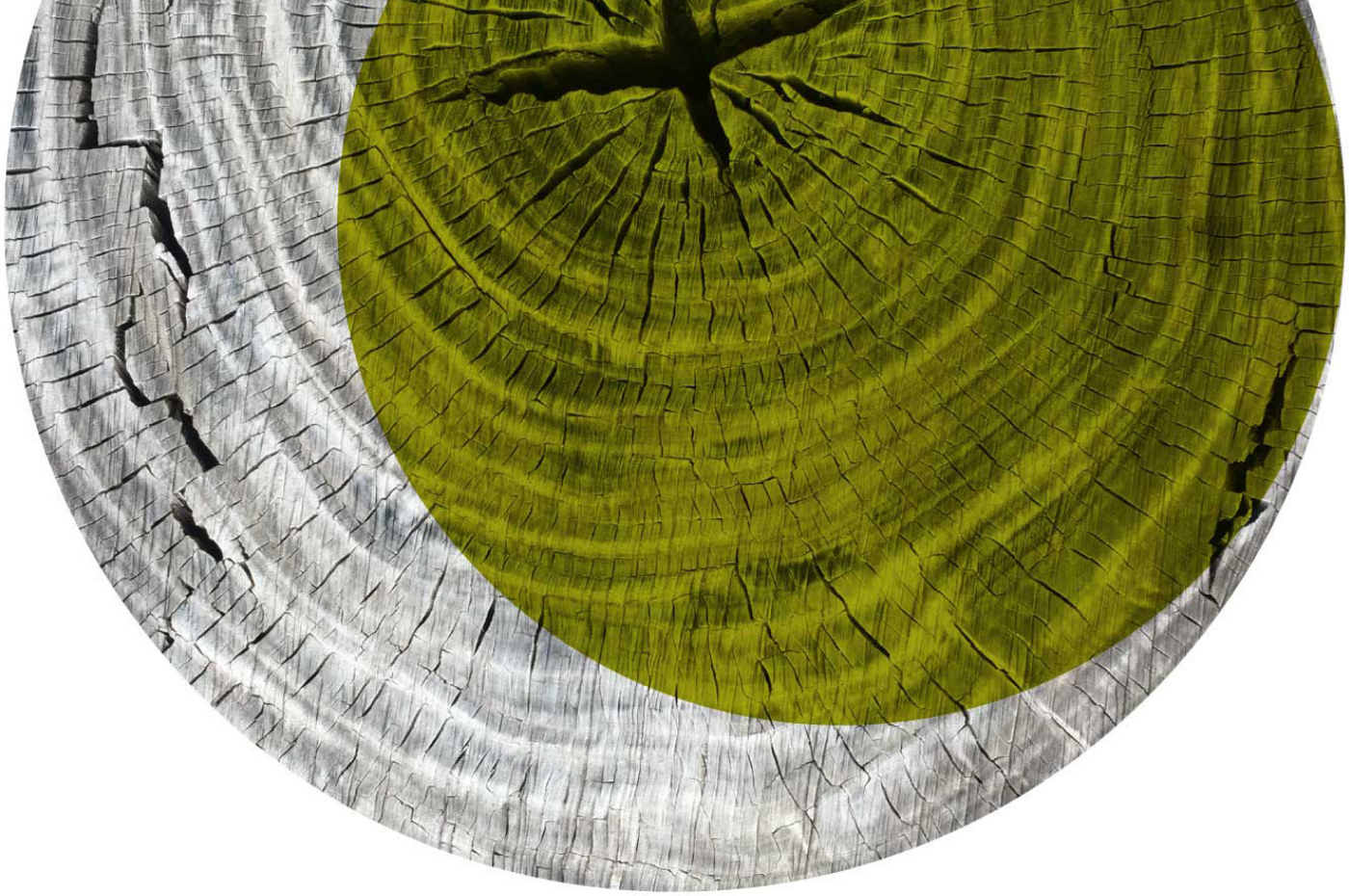
Equity and Inclusion Statement

Solano Land Trust is an equal opportunity employer. Solano Land Trust is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.



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Potrero Group is honored to coordinate this search on behalf of Solano 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.

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