Climate Leadership Initiative

Search conducted by:
waldron
The Climate Leadership Initiative (CLI or the Initiative) is a new organization funded and launched by some of the largest donors to climate-focused philanthropy. Its mission is to increase the philanthropic resources dedicated to solving climate change. The Initiative does this by connecting potential donors—whether individuals, families, or established foundations—to peer climate donors, climate experts, and solutions in need of support. We also work with existing climate donors to reach out to their networks and make it simple to learn more about climate solutions and philanthropy. The founding CLI funders include Oak Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, SeaChange Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF). We work closely with Chris Hohn, Nat Simons, Kristian Parker and others to engage new philanthropists, including those with primary philanthropic goals outside of climate but who wish to learn more about this area.

Since CLI does not raise money for itself, the Initiative will work with and across organizational lines in a manner that is focused on impact, but not tied to one way or organization achieving it. This model frees CLI to provide trusted and objective advice for philanthropists. CLI has knowledge of and access to the full suite of existing, cutting-edge work, making it capable of working with donors in ways tailored to their specific interests. CLI will foster new forms of partnership with an array of organizations, including environmental, health, and regional NGOs and other entities capable of executing global climate solutions; facilitate entry for donors who are new to climate-focused philanthropy; and promote learning and sharing among donors.
The Opportunity

The VP and COO (VP) is a newly established role for this start-up organization and will lead all internal functions for CLI. Working with the President to design the structure and operating environment, the VP will hire for key positions, build effective systems, oversee board relations, and manage/facilitate the relationship with CLI’s fiscal sponsor. With the President focusing on external matters, including organizational and donor strategy, donor and public relations, and partnerships, the VP will be a close thought partner in all of these efforts, including playing an external role around coordination and collaboration with a global network of stakeholders as well as with CLI’s Board/Managing Committee.

With multi-year financial commitments and its new President in place, CLI is now accelerating its start-up efforts to establish its global platform and infrastructure. The VP will be instrumental in building the internal functions CLI needs to mobilize its fundraising strategy as well as broadly mapping and coordinating a community of international climate and environmental organizations who will be key partners to CLI in the coming years.

Reporting to the President of CLI, the VP will bring internal leadership and significant management responsibility of the team to this start-up organization, creating international reach with its operating platform, building culture and values in how CLI approaches its work, and coordinating all internal initiatives to help advance the mission. Additional responsibilities include:

• Work in partnership with the President and CLI Board to develop and execute on the strategic priorities for the organization, including identifying the systems and processes that will allow CLI to leverage existing capabilities and eventually scale its work to raise billions for the global climate community.
• Support the CLI team to develop giving opportunities for existing and prospective donors, including partnering with the President to build key relationships with the organizations delivering climate solutions and who will ultimately receive the funding that CLI helps to facilitate.
• Develop and analyze key performance and learning metrics for the organization’s work, including collecting data that will allow for measurement and evaluation of CLI’s progress against its goals in order to iterate on its strategy as needed.
• Lead the Finance, Human Resources, Development Operations, and Technology functions, and corresponding activities being handled by CLI’s fiscal sponsor and other vendors that may be providing outsourcing services (e.g., IT/database, payroll/benefits; accounting). These internal operating functions will further require the VP to:
  • Develop and coordinate the annual operations plan and strategic budgeting process, including ensuring the organization has quick, effective access to financial information.
  • Lead human resources strategy and instill a “coaching and mentor” culture within CLI; build a human resources function that includes professional development, compensation and benefits, employee relations, performance evaluation, and recruitment.
  • Ensure the contracted support for the technology infrastructure needs is scoped and scaled for CLI’s mission.
  • Develop and implement systems for reporting, tracking, and supporting donor generation / donor relations, including systems to support the administrative aspects of proposal preparation and presentations.
Ideal Candidate Profile

The VP position requires an agile, entrepreneurial, and strategic leader who will ideally bring a deep network and understanding of the global climate / environment sector. Experience in highly complex and multi-stakeholder fundraising networks is especially important, including knowing how to operationalize global fundraising strategies. The VP will be skilled at moving initiatives to scale quickly and effectively, and will have a demonstrated track record of independently collaborating and communicating with a diverse set of internal and external partners.

This is truly a unique opportunity to help launch a mission-focused organization with the aim of raising significantly more capital for the climate cause and to ultimately have a meaningful impact on climate change worldwide. CLI is poised for ambitious growth with its new leadership, governing Board, and financial resources ready for deployment. The VP will bring a seasoned, strategic, and impact-oriented mindset with expertise in scaling the operations, people, and processes to support the impact/mission of an organization.

The VP will enable and empower the CLI team to do their best work towards clear, yet evolving goals. This includes building flexible, effective systems and operating infrastructure. Given the start-up nature of the organization and its evolving business plan, CLI seeks a leader who can map the strategic path to build the organization, while remaining open to team input, donor, and potential donor needs.
The successful candidate will be a self-starter and self-disciplined, driven by CLI’s mission and a demonstrated passion for breaking new ground in the fight against climate change. Combined experience in the philanthropic and the NGO sectors is highly desirable. Additional skills include:

- **Results Orientation:** A proven track record of establishing and working towards goals; evidence of the ability to consistently make good decisions through a combination of analysis, wisdom, experience, and judgment; high level business acumen including successful budget management; and problem solving, project management, and creative resourcefulness.
- **Strategic Vision and Agility:** Ability to think strategically, anticipate future consequences and trends, and incorporate them into the organizational plan.
- **Capacity Building:** Ability to effectively scale an organization and its staff capacity, developing a top-notch workforce and the processes that ensure the organization runs smoothly.
- **Leadership and Organization:** Exceptional capacity for managing and leading people; a team builder who has experience in scaling up organizations; ability to connect staff both on an individual level and in large groups; capacity to enforce accountability, develop and empower high performing leaders from the bottom up, lead from the top down, cultivate entrepreneurship, and learn the strengths and weaknesses of the team so as to put them in a position to succeed.
- **Action Orientation:** Enjoys challenges; able to act and react as necessary, even if limited information is available; not afraid to take charge of a situation.
- **General Management:** Comprehensive understanding of finance, systems, and HR; broad experience with the full range of organizational functions and systems, including strategic development and planning, budgeting, business analysis, finance, information systems, human resources, and marketing/communications.

**To Be Considered**

CLI is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified candidates who contribute to this diversity are strongly encouraged to submit their materials for consideration. To be considered, please visit [Waldron’s candidate portal](#) and submit your resume and a cover letter expressing your passion for the mission and fit for the role.

*The search for a Vice President and Chief Operating Officer is being assisted by a team from Waldron:*

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Waldron is honored to work with the Climate Leadership Initiative in the search for their Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. We believe in and support the work of the Climate Leadership Initiative, and we are doing our best to recruit a talented leader who will accelerate this mission. As the consulting partner strategic leaders choose to help attract, engage, and inspire effective leaders, Waldron provides a unique combination of executive search, leadership development, and career transition services across sectors and industries. Our passion is helping people and organizations realize their full potential and increase their impact.