Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

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About the Organization

The Energy Foundation’s nonprofit mission is to serve the public interest by building a strong clean energy economy. The foundation supports education and analysis to promote pragmatic, non-partisan policy solutions that advance renewable energy and energy efficiency, building markets for clean energy technology and opening doors to greater innovation and productivity—growing the economy with dramatically less pollution.

For more than 25 years, Energy Foundation has supported grantees to help educate policymakers and the general public about the health and economic benefits of a clean energy economy. Grantees include business, health, labor, environmental, faith, equity, free-market, and consumer groups, as well as policy experts, military organizations, think tanks, and universities.

Energy Foundation’s comprehensive approach advances energy efficiency and renewable energy in the power, transportation, and buildings sectors. Working together, our Policy and Public Engagement programs focus on developing innovative policies and campaigns to help propel clean energy development in these sectors, while our Strategic Communications Program develops powerful narrative and communications strategies designed to build support for our work regionally and nationwide. Our States and Regions Team is a cross-disciplinary team of policy, communications, and campaign experts dedicated to advancing strong state and regional climate and clean energy policies.

Energy Foundation’s founding office is in San Francisco, CA, with additional offices in Raleigh, NC; Chicago, IL; Washington, DC; and Las Vegas, NV. To learn more about EF, visit www.ef.org.
The Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) will join EF at an exciting time in the foundation’s strategic evolution. The organization is energized by its new CEO, Jason Mark, stepping into the role after more than a decade of serving EF in an executive leadership capacity. Over a year into a major strategy refresh and rapid geographic expansion, the organization is poised to advance a number of key operational initiatives to be led by the COO, including a broad assessment of internal systems, processes, and communication that will help EF continue to scale its strategies and impact. EF also has recently decided to strengthen its commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work with the COO playing a central role in helping the organization meet its goals. The COO reports directly to the CEO and is a member of EF’s Management Team. The COO also is secretary and treasurer of the board.

As leader of the Operations team, the COO will oversee Finance, Human Resources, Grants Management, and IT/Knowledge Management, ensuring proper staffing, efficient operations, and the establishment and implementation of accurate systems and departmental goals and objectives. The COO will prioritize developing the leaders of these functions as a team and individually, along with providing support to them in order to build organization-wide adoption of the policies, processes, and systems that serve all of EF’s work. This includes being responsible for organizational risk management and facilitation of work processes between the Operations, Program, and Strategic Partnerships teams.

Serving as a creative collaborator with the CEO and Management Team, the COO will provide leadership in establishing and implementing organization-wide priorities, including running management team meetings; oversight of the annual budget process; and helping to foster and operationalize the foundation’s cultural values: Learning, Service, Ownership, and Accountability. The COO will partner with the CEO to set the calendar and agenda for Board of Directors meetings, taking a lead role in Board presentations regarding operational objectives and progress. The COO directly supports the Board Audit Committee in partnership with the Senior Director of Finance.
The Opportunity

Key Priorities

*Internal Operations and Organizational Development*

The COO provides a strong day-to-day leadership presence for all staff, with a priority on creating systems and effective processes to bridge departmental and regional operations as well as improve communication and coordination among the different teams and offices. The COO also leads the development of the organization-wide management system and culture.

*Organizational Leadership*

As a member of the Management Team, the COO will collaborate with the CEO and Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, on major organizational decisions affecting staffing, budgets, and culture. Additionally, this position will play an important role in building new or evolved platforms of partnership and engagement with the Board of Directors to continue leveraging this important asset and further promote effective governance.

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

Operating with broad support throughout the organization, the COO works with the Management Team and newly appointed Director of DEI to champion the ongoing development and implementation of a DEI program for the advancement of the cultural and programmatic success of EF.

*China Services Agreement*

The China Sustainable Energy Program, now known as EF China, was initiated as an EF program in 1999 with funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. In 2019, EF China is becoming a legally separate entity, yet will maintain a strategic and operational relationship with EF. The COO will have primary responsibility for liaising with the COO of EF China to ensure effective implementation and management of the Services Agreement between EF and EF China.

Courtesy Dennis Schroeder/NREL
The Ideal Candidate

EF seeks a COO with the talent to hold a picture of an organization as a whole system and for facilitating internal stakeholders to mutual agreement, understanding, and appreciation of each other’s roles in fulfilling the foundation’s overall mission. With a management style that works with and through others, the COO facilitates lateral connections to streamline communication and encourage trust-building among peers. With an adaptive, confident, and engaging personality, the COO will be politically astute and have a successful track record delivering impact.

A collaborative problem-solver who facilitates toward alignment, the ideal candidate will bring an acute understanding of how innovation and impact are achieved in a growing organization. The ambitious and important work of EF requires entrepreneurial and daring contributors who will be tenacious in the pursuit of the organization’s goals. Success includes meeting the needs of both Program and Operations stakeholders while establishing processes and systems that improve the quality and effectiveness of work. In this way, the COO will bring rigor and discipline to operations by emphasizing the organizational and individual benefits of shared agreements and practices.

This position requires a self-reliant, results-oriented executive with strategic decision-making, leadership, and operational management experience within a dynamic environment. The ideal candidate will be excited by opportunities to bring about efficiency gains in systems and processes, and who can focus on human-centered design solutions that align with what’s best for the organization’s culture and methods. EF is a complex, multi-site, and multi-cultural organization, and the new COO must have a track record of success within a similar context developing and monitoring systems to foster operational excellence.

Functional expertise required for success in this role spans human resources and organizational development, finance, and systems. Broad experience with a full range of business functions is essential, including strategic development and planning, budgeting, business analysis, finance, information systems, human resources, and strategic communications. Some understanding of grants management in a philanthropic context is helpful, but not required.

The COO must bring strong organizational development and management expertise to the organization, working across all departments to strengthen EF’s culture and management skill. Demonstrated experience in management systems and organizational change will be key to success.

The COO must possess high emotional intelligence along with the ability to identify and bridge gaps, connecting dots where others may not always see them. The COO regularly interfaces with staff at all levels, senior management, and the Board of Directors. As such, candidates must successfully deploy a full range of communication skills adapted to these audiences, including exceptional listening skills, persuasive and effective written and verbal communication, and exceptional interpersonal and presentation skills.

The COO will have had meaningful experience leading or participating in DEI initiatives. Cross-cultural communications skills are a strong plus, and international operational experience is helpful.

The COO does not need to have experience in the climate and energy sectors, but must have a meaningful personal connection to the pursuit of climate solutions and a commitment to EF’s mission and values.
Minimum Qualifications

Candidates must have a minimum of 15 years of professional experience, including significant general management experience, with a special focus on building systems in growing entities with high performing teams. Applicable operational leadership experience ideally includes some combination of the following: philanthropic or nonprofit organizations, private sector, government, and/or social enterprises.

Outstanding written and verbal communication skills are essential since this position will be required to move seamlessly across a diverse national and international network of constituencies. The COO must be open to traveling domestically and internationally as needed.

To Be Considered

Energy Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified candidates are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. To be considered, please go to 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 Chief Operating Officer is being assisted by a team from Waldron:

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Waldron is honored to work with Energy Foundation in the search for a Senior Vice President & Chief Operating Officer. We believe in and support the work of Energy Foundation, 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.