POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

PRESIDENT
Liberty Prairie Foundation

http://libertyprairie.org

The Liberty Prairie Foundation seeks a President to guide the Board and Staff in completing and implementing a strategic re-visioning and planning process to define the next generation of conservation and regeneration work. This extraordinary inflection point for the organization requires an entrepreneurial and spirited leader who can take the Foundation to the next level of impact.

Organization

History

The Liberty Prairie Foundation (Foundation) is a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation located at Prairie Crossing, a nationally-known conservation community in Grayslake, Illinois --- just 40 miles northwest of Chicago and 50 miles south of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Vicky and George Ranney, co-developers of the Prairie Crossing community, established the Foundation in 1993 to help facilitate the ten guiding principles of the community, to develop and enhance the surrounding Liberty Prairie Reserve and maintain and operate Prairie Crossing Farm.

Prairie Crossing consists of some 400 energy-efficient homes set in extensive open space protected by conservation easements and laced with 10 miles of trails. It features an innovative natural storm water system based on restored prairies, wetlands, and a 22-acre man-made lake, which is also used for swimming, fishing and boating. There are two Prairie Crossing rail stations that connect the community with Chicago’s Union Station, O'Hare and other suburbs, reducing the need for commuting by car and therefore automobile emissions. The Prairie Crossing Charter School is a thriving, free public K-8 school centered upon learning from the environment.

From its establishment, the Foundation has been closely knit into the life of the community. For several decades it oversaw the management of the Prairie Crossing Homeowner Association’s natural areas. It developed the Liberty Prairie Reserve, over 5000 acres surrounding Prairie Crossing, by working with local governments and private landowners to preserve farmland, woodlands and wetlands from development. It initiated a wetland mitigation bank on Libertyville Township Open Space District land east of Prairie Crossing; that project provided income to create an underpass under Route 45 for a public regional trail through the Reserve. The Foundation also
negotiated with the Waste Management landfill adjacent to Prairie Crossing to clean up its operations and to design the site so that, when completed in a few years, it can be an open space asset for Lake County.

Over several decades the Foundation has monitored and participated in the environmental design of a proposed state highway whose right-of-way runs next to Prairie Crossing. Now stopped by the state, the issue has become how to best use the right-of-way in the future.

The Foundation currently manages weekend events at the Byron Colby Barn, a restored 1885 timber-frame dairy barn which serves as the Prairie Crossing Community Center. In the future, the Foundation will retain free use of this beautiful event center four times each year, allowing for conferences, events, and other public outreach.

Importantly, the Foundation owns and manages the 94-acre organic Prairie Crossing Farm, which produces healthy food, trains new farmers and young adults, and aims to revitalize the soil and increase carbon absorption. Through its Farm Business Development Center (FBDC) and other educational programming, the Foundation has given new farmers the space and resources needed to start and grow sustainable farm businesses. Beginning farmers can lease organically certified land and get advice and mentoring from more experienced farmers. To date, over 20 new farmers have used the opportunity to test and launch their farm business ideas.

Over time, the Prairie Crossing Farm has given the Foundation the ability to address opportunities and challenges in the Chicago region’s local food movement. The Farm provides a home for entrepreneurial farm families who contribute to the life of the community. The latest farm business anchor is the Prairie Wind Family Farm, which provides over 215 CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares of vegetables, fruits and eggs weekly to residents of Prairie Crossing and the region and also operates a farm store. Not only is it a successful farm business, it is on the forefront of the movement for regenerative agriculture and has recently planted a five-acre perennial food forest.

Aware that in an increasingly suburban and urban region young people lack exposure to sustainable farming and nutrition knowledge, the Foundation launched Prairie Farm Corps. This youth training program has employed diverse high school youth each summer the past 12 years to farm organically, to learn to cook, and to develop life and business skills. The Foundation has seen transformative change in many participating students, both in their consciousness about food and in their personal confidence. Fee-for-service programs with local schools have followed.

Since 2014 the Foundation has worked on land access in the region, helping sustainable food farmers find land and helping farmland owners find farmers who share their stewardship values. The most prominent element of this work is the Northeast Illinois FarmLink website. The Foundation has also been encouraging public farmland owners to shift their farmland management to more regenerative approaches. For example, the Foundation is helping the McHenry County Conservation District move its 6,000-acre farmland management system toward a more data-driven, soil-health focused approach. Thanks to our connection work, bison will soon graze at the District’s largest conservation area that will mix ecological restoration and local food
production.

Today, the Liberty Prairie Foundation is recognized as a leader in developing and supporting enterprises that build and strengthen our local food system while enhancing the natural landscape. True to the roots in Prairie Crossing, the Foundation desires to promote the integration of healthy ecosystems and the vibrant human communities they serve.

The Foundation is currently governed by a founder-led Board of 6 people. The Foundation has 4 full-time, 3 part-time and 5-7 seasonal staff with an $870K annual budget. The Foundation does not currently have a President. Two staff members are serving as Co-Executive Directors.

**Moving Forward**

After nearly 30 years of entrepreneurial and diverse work, the Foundation's Board initiated a strategic review. The review and discussions, which are still ongoing, led the Board to affirm two things: 1) to focus the Foundation on the work of the Farm and Reserve as a learning laboratory for sustainable regenerative agriculture and community building; and 2) to hire a full-time seasoned President who will position the organization for the next generation of strategic and focused impact. This would include:

- Sharpening the Foundation’s mission for the Prairie Crossing Farm and Reserve and designing and implementing compelling, high impact and sustainable programs that enhance that mission;
- Assessing the infrastructure of the Foundation (e.g., the land, barn, sheds, and houses at the Farm) in light of programmatic priorities in order to determine their best use and needed maintenance or renovation. This also includes analysing the best use of three parcels of vacant land the Foundation owns near the Prairie Crossing Station Square.
- Structuring and implementing a growth-oriented resource development strategy to ensure finances are in place to meet the priorities and programmatic aspirations for the Farm and Reserve. This includes building the philanthropic and entrepreneurial capacities of the Board and Staff, expanding revenue sources; cultivating new donors and structuring compelling fundraising proposals and materials;
- Ensuring the Foundation has the human resources needed to advance its mission and programmatic priorities; and
- Facilitating the transition from a founder-led to a non-profit Board by introducing and implementing best practices with respect to Board structure and organizational governance.

**Primary Responsibilities**

The President is key to establishing and carrying out a vision and mission for the Foundation and designing programs and services that bring the mission and vision to life. This includes ensuring it has the human and financial resources needed to implement the program priorities. The President’s responsibilities also include supporting and facilitating the Board of Directors in carrying out their governance responsibilities, as well as overseeing all aspects of identifying staff
needs, recruiting staff, and supporting them (including personnel reviews, hiring, compensation, and benefits decisions).

The President oversees all aspects of the organization’s finances, including financial record-keeping, annual audits, and budget development. The President actively manages the creation and implementation of a robust development strategy, including the planning and execution of various fundraising activities, building and maintaining donor relationships, and leveraging the skills of the professional staff to develop new grant projects and programs.

Facilities management is a key responsibility of the President. Ongoing maintenance and decisions regarding capital improvements and land use are everyday activities for the President.

The President serves as spokesperson for the organization and is actively engaged in education and advocacy to promote greater public awareness and engagement in Foundation’s programs and issues related to the Farm and regenerative agriculture.

**Core Competencies:**

**Strategic Leadership and Resource Development**

*Strategic Leadership for Change and Mission Impact*

- Passion for sustainable agriculture as a means to building a regenerative and robust society and resilient environment.
- Experience with strategic planning and change management, which includes:
  - Structuring high impact programs that deliver on the strategic plan and attract funding sources; and
  - Designing and implementing new organizational systems that ensure efficiency, accountability and transparency internally and externally
- Excellent verbal, written, and listening communication skills
- Political skills and ability to incorporate diverse viewpoints and build consensus

**Resource Development**

- Proven track record of raising revenues from earned income streams and fundraising that meets and exceeds growing budget needs -- This includes experience raising funds from government agencies, private foundations and individuals and building and maintaining donor relationships
- Entrepreneurial skills that include the ability to see emerging opportunities to forge high value partnerships with institutions and organizations
- Experience structuring and writing proposals
- Track record of identifying, cultivating and maintaining long term relationships with funders
- Recognized facility for collaborative approaches and building and maintaining alliances that enable in-kind and financial support

**Human Resources - Staff, Board, Allied Organizations and Volunteers**

- Strong staff management skills and experience, especially with regard to interpersonal management and staff motivation
- Demonstrated commitment to a collegial work environment that includes participatory decision-making, support for colleagues to achieve their best, and respect for work-life balance
Experience with building a high performance Board of Directors and supporting their contribution to fundraising

Seasoned skill in cultivating alliances and engaging volunteers with diverse backgrounds and interests to meet organizational goals

Facilities Management and Administration

Experience managing facilities, including overseeing maintenance and equipment needs and hiring vendors

Experience and competence with all aspects of organizational administration, including record keeping, financial management and oversight and accounting

Personal Attributes and Qualifications

Driven to have positive impact on conservation and mission at this critical time

Well-organized and comfortable managing numerous projects while maintaining a collegial work environment

Confident moving from the boardroom to the barnyard -- owns work boots and gloves and enjoys using them in the course of a day

Self reliant with information technology and administrative tasks -- e.g. spreadsheets, Word, powerpoint

Entrepreneurial with a deep intellectual curiosity and ability to recognize and act on opportunities

Positive attitude and high energy

Salary, Benefits and Housing:

The salary range starts at $125K. A generous benefit package, including health benefits, ranges from $25K-$30K, depending on the number of dependents. The Foundation is open to discussing incentives for the new President to live at Prairie Crossing or possibly at the Farm. Salary considerations would be adjusted with arrangements for housing.

Commitment to Diversity:

We are actively seeking to elevate diverse voices and perspectives and are committed to engaging the skills, leadership, and lived expertise of Black, Indigenous and other people of color; LGBTQ and gender nonconforming people; immigrants and people from historically marginalized backgrounds. Liberty Prairie Foundation is an equal opportunity employer; people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ candidates are strongly encouraged to apply. We are committed to building a team that represents a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, cultures, skills, and experiences, knowing that the more inclusive we are, the more successful we will be.

Application Process:

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and interested parties are encouraged to apply early. To apply, send the following to LPFoundationsearch@gmail.com with only YOUR NAME in the subject line: 1) a cover letter that speaks to the applicant’s qualifications relative to the core competencies outlined above and 2) a current resume.

Liberty Prairie Foundation has contracted with SAL Consulting, Inc. to manage this search process. All questions and inquiries can be sent to Sheila Leahy at sal.consulting.inc@gmail.com