



# Position Specification

Sonoma Land Trust

Executive Director

February 19, 2019

# Position Specification

Ref: Executive Director  
Sonoma Land Trust

## Our Client

Sonoma Land Trust (SLT) is a non-profit organization that protects, restores, and connects people to the land of Sonoma County. For more than 40 years, they have worked to ensure that their land, waterways, and diverse wildlife habitats are preserved for generations to come. Their work depends on a broad network of partnerships and the support of individuals who believe fully in their mission. SLT's vision has proven to resonate with the people and places of the region. Since 1976, SLT has protected more than 50,000 acres of beautiful, productive, and environmentally significant land in and around stunning Sonoma County. SLT brings tremendous brand recognition and community support as it enters an exciting time, booming with several new acquisitions, community programs, and funding opportunities.

Sonoma Land Trust's mission is to protect the scenic, natural, agricultural, and open landscapes of Sonoma County for the benefit of the community and future generations. It does this by:

- Developing long-term land protection strategies;
- Promoting private and public funding for land conservation;
- Acquiring land and conservation easements;
- Practicing stewardship, including the restoration of conservation properties; and
- Promoting a sense of place and a land ethic through activities, education and outreach.

Located fifty-five miles north of San Francisco, Sonoma County spans more than one million acres, boasting some of the earth's most beautiful and diverse landscapes. Towering redwoods that sprang to life during the Roman Empire still stand; the coastline features rugged bluffs and serene beaches fed by the historic Russian River; its inland valleys and small towns have inspired extraordinary creativity from the likes of Jack London, Tom Waits, and others. At the County's southern tip is the San Francisco Bay, part of the largest estuary on the west coast and a resource that connects us with all the other counties that comprise the San Francisco Bay Area.

With such diverse topography and microclimates, Sonoma County is at the core of a region globally recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, supporting 20 species that occur nowhere else on earth, as well as more common iconic species, including black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, golden eagle, salmon and steelhead. The Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor stretches from Sonoma Mountain, east across the valley floor, to the



crest of the Mayacamas Mountains, and this protected corridor provides animals with an important bridge between larger blocks of habitat.

Agriculturally, the region produces some of the world's finest wines, artisanal cheeses, and embraces a pride in its farm-to-table culture that spans hundreds of farms, dairies, ranches, and orchards.

There are many reasons why more than 2000 individuals, businesses, foundations, partners, and landowners support this work: it all starts with a love of the land. Like most of the Bay Area, Sonoma County is working to find the balance between increased growth and opportunity, and protection of rural areas, open spaces, and wild lands. With our changing climate, Sonoma Land Trust leads and listens when it comes to planning for and mitigating the impacts on the environment. Working with key allies, the Land Trust is revitalizing its land conservation efforts through creative partnerships, messaging, and projects as well as adhering to a long history of success in traditional landscape conservation.

Sonoma Land Trust has an operating budget of \$6.4 million and is funded largely by contributions from its over 2,000-person membership base. It has a dedicated staff of 36 people along with a 20-person board of directors.

Currently in the fifth year of a five-year plan, the new Executive Director will build and execute on their current plan that includes a new emphasis on community engagement programming for traditionally underserved populations, and lead SLT in shaping its next strategic plan.

For more information on Sonoma Land Trust, please visit: <https://sonomalandtrust.org/>.

## **The Role**

The Sonoma Land Trust is seeking an innovative and dynamic Executive Director to build on the successes of the past and shape its strategic vision for the future. The Executive Director will lead the organization to connect people to nature, expand public support, enrich communities, and further the mission of land conservation in Sonoma County. This individual will demonstrate an authentic passion for SLT's mission and an unquestioning belief in the importance of conservation as vital to the diverse population of Sonoma County and to the broader ecological health of the region.

This individual is responsible for all aspects of the Sonoma Land Trust's organizational health including individual fundraising, operations, acquisitions, stewardship, and community engagement programs, and building collaborative relationships with local, regional, and national partners. S/he will lead the Board and the staff through the development and implementation of the next strategic plan, which will continue the Trust's commitment to conservation and communities.

Sonoma Land Trust is in the early stages of a major comprehensive fundraising campaign, the largest in its history. The next Executive Director will oversee the success of this campaign which is focused on land acquisition, land stewardship, and community engagement. As SLT's chief fundraiser, the Executive

Director will be deeply involved in the ongoing cultivation of major donors and key funders. S/he will also work closely with the development team to increase and diversify the organization's funding base.

The Executive Director will build strong relationships with key partners in Sonoma County and the State of California as well as the broader national land conservation community. A superb storyteller and advocate for SLT's mission, s/he will prioritize the use of marketing and communications to continue to raise the profile of and engagement with the Trust amongst the full diversity of Sonoma County's communities.

The Executive Director needs to be the chief ambassador, internally and externally, for its community engagement initiatives. It's a significant focus for SLT to include new voices and new approaches in meeting community needs as it strives as a land trust to be a leader for community engagement in Northern California. Sonoma Land Trust offers a wide variety of activities, education, and outreach aimed at engaging audiences as diverse as the lands and communities it represents. The new ED must be a champion for the range of socioeconomic constituents in the county and have a vision of equity and inclusion for the 500,000+ people of Sonoma.

The Executive Director will lead with respect, compassion, and appreciation for the efforts and diverse perspectives of every individual that SLT employs, partners with, and reaches out to. S/he will bring a forward-thinking mindset and promote a collaborative and supportive working environment that fosters trust and teamwork among the acquisitions, stewardship, and community engagement teams.

Sonoma Land Trust has grown rapidly in budget and staff size over the past six years. The next Executive Director will ensure that the organizations systems, processes, and technology are keeping pace with this growth. S/he will provide careful fiscal oversight for SLT's acquisitions and programs and will balance the drive for continued growth and innovation against the need for financial sustainability.

## **Candidate Profile**

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

### **Setting Strategy and Vision**

- The Sonoma Land Trust is seeking a leader with a demonstrated passion for and commitment to land conservation. S/he will bring to the role a strategic mindset coupled with practical experience with the nonprofit, public, and/or business sectors.
- A strong analytical mind and the ability to assess strategic and operational alternatives by seeking and analyzing data from a variety of sources to support decisions.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the industry.

- The ability to effectively ensure organizational stability by balancing the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of capacity, and to create realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and successful.
- An understanding of the most current approaches to land conservation and protection is preferred. Is a continuous learner – always remaining open to and interested in new ways to further SLT’s mission.

**Fundraising**

- Demonstrated success as a fundraiser who enthusiastically embraces the responsibility of engaging the full range of SLT’s supporters from major donors, to foundation and government funders, to loyal members.
- A natural relationship builder who builds lasting connections and approaches doing so with genuine interest in and respect for and interest in the philanthropic goals of donors.
- Possesses an understanding of the systems and processes required to support all fundraising activities. Previous experience with capital or comprehensive campaigns preferred.

**Governance**

- Able to develop productive relationships with board members.
- A consensus builder, able to successfully drive groups to agreement and align diverse stakeholders with organizational goals.

**Leading Teams**

- Operates with a clear focus on organizational goals amid multiple competing risks and demands, and a capacity to prioritize effectively to deliver results.
- Proactively engages and supports workplace dialogue around diversity topics resulting in a reinforcement of employee values and inclusive behaviors.
- The ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others. Supportive of and respects the expertise of staff.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of his/her own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement; open to feedback and self-improvement.

**Relationships and Influence**

- Demonstrated personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; sensitive to and effective at operating in an environment with a wide range of constituent communities.

- 
- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence; an outstanding communicator able to represent SLT effectively and authentically to diverse audiences.
  - An ability to inspire trust and connection with others through influence, the passion of his/her beliefs, and active drive.
  - Encourages others to share the spotlight, and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
  - Experienced in developing productive partnerships with peers in the government, nonprofit, philanthropic, and private sectors.

**Personal Characteristics**

- Energetic, charismatic, and engaging.
- Collaborative.
- A person of integrity who inspires trust and respect.
- Calm and cool under pressure.
- Approachable and warm.
- Enjoys playing a public role in service to an organizational mission.

Sonoma Land Trust welcomes people of all backgrounds, identities, and beliefs to join in achieving their mission to protect the land forever. SLT strives to build a diverse and inclusive culture of mutual respect, equal treatment and the opportunity to succeed.

**Contact**

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search and prospective candidates are invited to contact Russell Reynolds Associates directly. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential. To apply for the role or submit a nomination, please reach out to [SLTExecutiveDirector@russellreynolds.com](mailto:SLTExecutiveDirector@russellreynolds.com). All applications should include a resume and statement of interest.

Trevor Hooper  
Russell Reynolds Associates  
101 California Street  
Suite 4200  
San Francisco, CA 94111-5867

Laurie Nash  
Russell Reynolds Associates  
101 California Street  
Suite 4200  
San Francisco, CA 94111-5867