



A vibrant community of environmental leaders

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title: Executive Director

Hours: Full-time (32 hours per week)

Reports to: Board of Trustees

Location: Remote, open to candidates residing in the U.S. or U.S. Territories.¹

Annual Salary Range: \$115,000–\$128,900, commensurate with experience.²

Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) of the Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation (Switzer Foundation) cultivates the next generation of environmental change-makers, mobilizes a diverse set of leaders from all disciplines, and builds a network that promotes integrated solutions to environmental problems. With one foot rooted in vision and the other in implementation, the ED collaborates with a small and talented staff to manage programs that include awarding academic fellowships and project grants, sponsoring professional and leadership development activities, and fostering a growing national network of Switzer Fellows, other environmental practitioners, and organizations.

In addition to cultivating and stewarding the Switzer Network as a force driving positive environmental change for the benefit of natural and human communities, the ED leads with relational intelligence and genuine care for the people who make achieving the mission possible — staff, fellows, and board members. This leader actively shapes and protects a culture committed to excellence and integrity, equity and inclusion in practice, and the kind of collaborative environment where both people and ideas can thrive.

The environmental community is navigating a period of headwinds—political, financial, and cultural. For the Switzer Foundation, this moment calls for clarity of purpose and steadiness of leadership. We are seeking an Executive Director who leads with conviction and optimism, who can hold space for the anxieties of a community under pressure while keeping that community oriented toward the future and what's possible. The ideal candidate brings both the vision to chart a credible path forward and the relationship depth to sustain the trust of fellows, staff, and partners along the way.

¹ Availability is required during contiguous U.S. business hours (Eastern-Pacific)

² This range reflects 80% of full-time equivalent pay, consistent with Switzer Foundation's standard 32-hour work week. The top of this range reflects the FY27 compensation scale, pending Board approval.

Organization

The Switzer Foundation is a results-driven family foundation that invests in individuals and organizations that drive positive environmental change. Through our core program, the Switzer Fellowship, and related grants, the foundation identifies and nurtures environmental leaders who have the ability and determination to make a significant positive impact and supports initiatives that will have direct and measurable results to improve environmental quality and advance social equity. The Executive Director is the chief steward responsible for ensuring that this community continues to grow, to collaborate, and to matter.

The foundation also sponsors professional development and networking activities for the Switzer Network, comprised of nearly 800 Switzer Fellows who are leaders in the nonprofit, public policy, philanthropic, academic and government sectors working to solve today's environmental challenges. For more information, see www.switzernetwork.org.

We are looking for a leader who is:

A Strategic Visionary - You see around corners. You connect today's work to tomorrow's organizational health, and you can translate that thinking into a picture of the future that moves staff, board, and community to act. You lead with both direction and clarity.

Rooted in Mission and Culture - The mission isn't only your job description, it's your organizational compass. You make decisions through a mission-first lens, even when that's inconvenient, and you understand that culture is the organization's operating system, needing to be actively cultivated and protected.

A Board Partner - You have supported boards that championed you and the organization. You understand the difference between governance and management, and you hold that line with confidence. You invest in your board's capacity because a strong board makes your work possible, and you keep them fully informed, including on the hard things.

An Exceptional People Leader - You have built or managed teams that are values-driven, results-oriented, and collaborative. You lead with genuine care for the people you work with, instead of only for the outcomes they produce. You create conditions where people can do their best work, while maintaining a sustainable work-life balance.

A Person of Integrity - You do what you say, and when you are wrong, you say so, clearly and without deflection. You set the ethical tone for the whole organization through your behavior, and you hold yourself to the same standard you hold others.

Emotionally Intelligent and Regulated - You are self-aware and steady under pressure. You read rooms accurately, respond to people as they are rather than as they should be, and manage your own internal state in a way that stabilizes the people around you. You lead hard conversations with care and candor.

A Steward of the Endowment - You are financially fluent, you understand not just how to read a balance sheet, but how to think about an endowment as a mission tool. You partner effectively with investment committees and advisors, and you understand the relationship between endowment health and programmatic ambition.

A Committed Equity Practitioner - Equity shows up in your actual decisions: who you hire, how you compensate, what programs you prioritize, and whose voices you center. You are committed to equity as a practice, as well as a value, and you have the track record to demonstrate it.

Core Responsibilities

Leadership

- Sets and translates strategic vision into action, connecting decisions to long-range organizational health, providing thought leadership and operational oversight from conception through execution, and leading strategic planning and program evaluation to direct resources where they matter most.
- Owns culture as the foundation's operating system—actively shaping and protecting it, and embedding equity into real decisions: hiring, compensation, and program design.
- Leads with integrity and represents the foundation well, setting the ethical tone through consistent behavior with board, staff, fellows, and community, and serving as the face of the foundation to key partners inside and out.
- Manages and mentors with intention, supporting staff's self-identified growth goals, coaching fellows, and cultivating a collaborative environment.
- Models a learning mindset, openly naming their own growth areas and reflecting with staff to build a culture where learning and leadership go hand in hand.

Administration

- Develops financial plans, ensures sound financial controls, files the annual tax return, and supports a full external audit (typically every third fiscal year)
- Develops and manages the annual operating budget, monitoring the spending rate and maintaining an efficient ratio of administrative costs to grant and program spending
- Works with accountants, attorneys, and other professional advisors to ensure that operations and practices are consistent with foundation policies and the law
- Recruits, retains, and cultivates staff with genuine investment in their wellbeing and professional growth, not just their output. Manages values-aligned staff benefits and employment policies; selects and evaluates external consultants; creates new positions and makes new hires as necessary.

Governance

- Serves as the board's primary strategic partner—keeping trustees well-informed and well-equipped, clear on the line between governance and management, and cultivating a strong, bounded relationship built on shared opportunities and challenges.

- Carries out the board's annual objectives with the Executive Committee, assisting the Chair on agendas, work plans, and timelines. Serves as staff for all standing and ad-hoc committees, handling scheduling, materials, minutes, and facilitation.
- Stewards the foundation's financial health, partnering with the Investment Committee to align endowment assets with mission and market returns, and overseeing financial reporting with the board during audit years.
- Builds the board's long-term governance capacity, working with the Nominations Committee to identify, recruit, and nominate prospective trustees.
- Maintains the foundation's policies and partners with the Fellows Advisory Committee to keep the board and staff grounded in fellow input on strategy, programs, and activities.

Program

- Supports all aspects of Switzer Fellowship selection process, including development of application guidelines, outreach, proposal review, interviews, awards, and reporting in collaboration with program staff
- Works with the Program Manager to plan and host fall and spring Switzer Fellows retreats, trainings, cohort-building activities, and other fellowship-year programming
- Ensures the effective implementation of all grant programs, including setting an annual grants budget and proposal cycle, contributing to review of concept letters and proposals, preparation of funding recommendations, and reporting
- Enhances Switzer Network engagement by convening a variety of virtual and in-person networking events and trainings in collaboration with Switzer Fellows and program staff
- Supports Switzer Fellows with mentoring, career coaching, nominations, introductions, referrals, grant or event ideas, and other needs as required.

Communications

- Develops annual communications plan and communications metrics in collaboration with program staff
- Maintains and enhances communication among the Switzer Network via the listserv, Switzer Network News, and newsletters, amplifying stories about Switzer Fellows and their work via the website, social media channels, press releases, and the annual report
- Supports opportunities for Switzer Fellows to improve their skills to communicate effectively and engage equitably with communities, policy makers, and the media
- Serves as a primary point of contact for the foundation, including trustees, fellows, consultants, colleagues, media, and others.

Qualifications and Requirements

Requirement

- A minimum of five years of senior leadership experience

Demonstrated Competencies

- Experience working with and supporting a governing body, such as a board of directors or a senior leadership team, with a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management
- Track record of mission-driven leadership, implementing strategies that reflect both organizational values and equity commitments, with evidence of mission-first decision-making under pressure
- Strong financial stewardship experience, including budget management and familiarity with endowment or investment management in a foundation or similar organization
- Excellence in organizational management with the ability to develop and lead small but high-performing teams to accomplish strategic objectives
- Track record of transparent, accountable leadership, including owning hard decisions and communicating them directly to board, staff, and key partners
- Commitment to environmental and social justice, and fluency in equity and inclusion as a practice, with experience embedding equity into hiring, program design, and/or organizational culture

Desired Qualifications

- Focus on environmental leadership or conservation, including fellowship program administration and experience leading and coaching staff
- Experience that supports an understanding of fellows' academic context, such as a graduate degree, university experience, or work with another academic fellowship program or scholarship program

The Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation is committed to equal opportunity employment and does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, age, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental ability, medical condition, pregnancy, genetic information, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other status protected under federal, state, or local law.

We are committed to building a team that reflects the communities and fellows it serves. All are welcome and encouraged to apply, and we actively encourage applications from candidates who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color; those who were first-generation college students or from underrepresented institutions; and candidates from disciplines beyond traditional environmental disciplines.