Democracy, Rights, and Governance Director

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About The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Founded in 1964 by David and Lucile Packard, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (the Foundation) is a family philanthropy dedicated to supporting leaders and organizations around the world working to invest in children and families, protect and restore the natural world, and create just and inclusive societies. For more than six decades, the Foundation has advanced scientific innovation, championed reproductive health and rights, conserved and restored our natural world, and invested in the well-being of children and families. The Foundation's goals are to:

Build Just Societies: support a strong civil society and inclusive institutions and governance to build just and equitable societies for all people.

Protect and Restore Our Natural World: champion bold climate solutions, an ocean that sustains us, and scientific innovation and discovery to secure the health and future of people and planet.

Invest in Families and Communities: prioritize the importance of children having a healthy start and promoting resilient and vibrant communities where children and families thrive, so they have the power to shape their lives.

To achieve lasting change, the Foundation also strives to address root causes of longstanding problems, including building a thriving, resilient U.S. democracy; advancing racial justice in the United States and gender equity globally; and supporting a strong civil society around the globe.

Inclusive collaboration is the heart of the Foundation's approach, with the belief that actively listening to and learning from people with a wide range of views is the best way to create solutions that match the scale and urgency of the challenges we face. The Foundation is dedicated to supporting community-based solutions shaped by the knowledge and experience of the people whose lives are most affected and informed by data, recognizing that meaningful solutions require patience, urgency, and supporting the conditions for transformational change. The Foundation is committed to addressing complex issues over the long term while making tangible progress today.

The Foundation's Vision, Mission and Values are as follows:
Vision: A just and equitable world where both people and nature flourish.
Mission: We work with people and communities to create enduring solutions for just societies and a healthy, resilient natural world.
Values: Equity, Integrity, Belief in Individual Leadership, Thinking Big, Respect, and Effectiveness.

Democracy, Rights, and Governance Overview

The Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) Initiative advances a thriving, resilient democracy that meets the needs of a politically, racially, and religiously diverse America. The strategy supports a broad portfolio of grantees and partners working to address the root causes of strain within the current democratic system and to build a more representative democracy that can effectively serve all Americans, both now and in the future.

The Initiative has three key focus areas, including: strengthening civic culture; improving the federal government's ability to respond to people's needs and solve complex societal challenges; and developing a long-term, optimistic vision for democracy in a rapidly changing world.

The Opportunity

Reporting to the Vice President, Just Societies, the Democracy, Rights, and Governance Initiative Director leads the development, execution, and evolution of the DRG grantmaking strategy. The Director oversees a grantmaking team consisting of a Program Officer and a Program Associate, providing strategic leadership, team management, and portfolio oversight.

Develop & Oversee the Initiative. Leading the evolution of the Democracy, Rights, and Governance Initiative, the Director will assess emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges to ensure resources are aligned with strategic goals. They will build on existing grantmaking efforts, incorporate perspectives from Foundation leadership, Trustees, and colleagues, and guide a portfolio that reflects the Foundation's mission, values, and theory of change. The Director will also foster stronger integration between the Democracy, Rights, and Governance Initiative and other Foundation priorities, identifying opportunities for collaboration across initiatives and helping colleagues understand the intersections between democracy, racial justice, civic participation, civil society, and broader systems change efforts.

Grantmaking & Grantee Partnership Management. As the strategic lead for the Initiative's grantmaking, the Director will oversee the portfolio, budget, and operations while ensuring investments advance the Foundation's objectives. Success in this role requires building strong, trusted relationships with grantee partners and serving as a thought partner throughout the grantmaking process. Working closely with the Evaluation and Learning Officer, the Director will use data and insights to assess progress and continuously strengthen the DRG Initiative's impact – assessing the effectiveness of current investments, synthesizing evidence from the field, and using learning to refine strategy, inform resource allocation, and strengthen impact over time.

Field & Foundation Leadership. Serving as a visible representative of the Foundation, the Director will engage leaders across the nonprofit, public, academic, media, and private sectors to advance the Initiative's goals. They will cultivate strategic partnerships, identify opportunities for collaboration, and contribute to the broader democracy field through writing, convening, public engagement, and thought leadership. Internally will serve as a thought partner and trusted advisor across the Foundation, helping colleagues, leadership, and trustees navigate emerging democracy issues and understand their implications across programmatic areas.

People Management & Team Leadership. Through strong leadership and mentorship, the Director will develop a high-performing team and foster a culture of collaboration, innovation, and continuous feedback. They will work closely with peer initiative Directors, Grants Management, and Foundation leadership to strengthen grantmaking practices and support cross-functional success. As a member of the leadership team, the Director will partner with the Vice President to set priorities, address challenges, and drive the Initiative's overall effectiveness.

Desired Qualifications

The ideal candidate will possess the attributes above and many of the following professional abilities and experiences.

Mission and Values Alignment

- Passion for, and belief in the goals and commitments of the Foundation.
- Commitment to strengthening our democracy in a nonpartisan way.
- Demonstrates intellectual humility, curiosity, openness to alternative perspectives, and a willingness to revise assumptions based on evidence and learning.

Knowledge and Experience

- A minimum of 8-10 years of experience working on issues within the democracy, rights, and/or governance spaces. Advanced degree desired in public policy, political science, or a related field or equivalent education or work experience in non-profits and/or organizations related to democracy, rights, and governance.

- Deep knowledge of democracy, governance, civic culture, democratic resilience, polarization, institutional effectiveness, and emerging issues affecting democratic systems, including technology and AI.
- Strong systems-thinking orientation and ability to connect democracy, governance, civic participation, racial justice, economic opportunity, and other complex social systems.
- Demonstrated track record of working effectively across ideologically diverse communities toward common aims of strengthening democratic norms and institutions.

Team, Organizational, and Field Leadership

- Demonstrated track record of excellence in leading and managing people, projects, and teams and comfort with matrixed management structures and processes.
- Experience using evidence and sound judgment to lead strategy, teams, and develop and maintain effective, productive programmatic partnerships.
- Demonstrated people management skills with considerable experience attracting, coaching, developing, evaluating, and retaining professional staff.
- Proven managerial talent in budgeting, staffing, and performance management.
- Recognized credibility within democracy, governance, civic culture, public policy, philanthropy, or related fields, with a demonstrated record of thought leadership through writing, speaking, convening, research, or coalition-building.

Communication and Management

- Skilled communicator with exceptional interpersonal, facilitation, and written and oral communication skills.
- Leader deeply committed to inclusion and creating a workplace that is supportive of difference; success at navigating cross-cultural communication and diverse teams.
- Independent and decisive leader with clarity of thought, who demonstrates initiative, responsiveness, pragmatism, open-mindedness, and thoughtfulness. Displays comfort in admitting what they do not know and asking for input.
- Diplomatic and respectful approach to problem-solving; demonstrated ability to thrive in a team-based and collegial workplace.

Skills and Abilities

- Demonstrated ability to build trust, relationships, and productive partnerships across ideological, political, and sector boundaries.
- Comfort operating amid ambiguity, uncertainty, and evolving political conditions, while exercising sound judgment and strategic discipline; able to lead adaptive strategy implementation, balancing long-term goals with evolving conditions and emerging opportunities.
- Demonstrated experience in strategic planning and the use of data and evidence for decision making.
- Experience in the design and facilitation of meetings and agile internal planning processes.
- Meticulous adherence to compliance, due diligence, and cost-effective processes.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office products (e.g., Outlook, SharePoint, Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and a willingness to learn and become proficient with Foundation systems; administratively self-sufficient.

Compensation and Benefits

The position is full-time. The salary range for this position is $300,000-$315,000 annually. This salary range is an estimate, and the actual salary may vary based on various factors, including without limitation individual education, experience, tenure, certification, skills, and abilities, as well as internal equity and alignment with market data. Offers are based on the candidate's years of experience and our practice of upholding salary equity within the foundation.

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation offers excellent benefits for eligible employees. Current benefits include medical (HMO and HDHPs), dental and vision coverage; 15% employer contribution to employee retirement plan; life insurance, disability insurance, vacation, and sick leave; an adoption benefit; fertility benefit; a financial wellness program; health advocacy services, paid time off to volunteer for nonprofit organizations; matching gifts for employee contributions to tax exempt organizations; commute assistance; and tuition assistance.

To Apply

This search is being led by Rachel Burgoyne and Megan Rossi of the national talent search firm NPAG. We invite applications with resume and cover letter outlining your interest and qualifications via the portal on NPAG's candidate portal.

Hybrid Work Policy

The Packard Foundation's current Hybrid Work Policy is that staff are expected to be in the Los Altos office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week with some additional days required. Some travel is required throughout California and nationally.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The Foundation is an equal employment opportunity employer, which means we recruit, hire, assign, train, promote, compensate, provide benefits, discipline, and discharge (and all the other terms and conditions of employment) based on merit, qualifications, job requirements, and other legitimate business factors.

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