



Chief Executive Officer

ORGANIZATION: First Descents
POSITION: Chief Executive Officer
REPORTS TO: Board of Directors
LOCATION: Remote/hybrid; Denver, CO preferred
TRAVEL: As necessary to meet goals and engage in programs (up to 50% of time initially)
INFORMATION: firstdescents.org
TO APPLY: Please send cover letter and resume as one PDF to FirstDescentsCEO@pbrsearch.com with title format “Last Name First Name – Letter Resume” and complete the Voluntary Self Identification [form](#). This will assist us in improving our hiring practices and ensuring equal opportunities. Participation is voluntary and will not affect your candidacy in any way.

BACKGROUND

First Descents (FD) is a recognized leader in outdoor experiential programming. Through outdoor adventures, skills development, and local adventure communities, FD improves the long-term survivorship of young adults impacted by cancer and other serious health conditions. FD participants experience free outdoor adventure programs that empower them to climb, paddle, and surf beyond their diagnosis, reclaim their lives, and connect with others doing the same. Programs are open to any young adults 18 to 40 diagnosed with cancer or MS. To learn more about First Descents watch this CNN HEROES [video](#).

POSITION

The next executive director will have the exciting opportunity to chart the course for this dynamic, 25-year-old organization. Born out of a passionate vision and sustained through a commitment to and care for the people FD serves, the organization is now poised to enter a next phase of growth and evolution. This is a chance to shape FD’s future with bold ideas, strategic leadership, effective fundraising, and top-notch execution.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership

- Collaborate with staff, board members, and partners to shape the future of First Descents, leading the development of the organization’s next strategic plan and setting bold goals for impact in the US and beyond.
- Guide a talented senior team across advancement, programs, and operations, ensuring that First Descents’ resources are deployed effectively in support of the organization’s priorities and ambitions.
- Serve as a powerful communicator of First Descents’ vision, helping internal and external stakeholders understand the organization’s goals and how their work and partnership contribute to achieving them.
- Establish clear, ambitious, and measurable goals that keep First Descents at the forefront of outdoor experiential programming for young adults faced with a life-changing medical diagnosis.

Team Leadership

- Be an inspiring and accessible leader who motivates staff to perform at the highest level, fosters collaboration and communication across departments, and invests in the professional growth of senior leaders. Ensure that everyone understands how their role contributes to advancing the organization’s mission.
- Work with senior leadership to ensure that the First Descents continues to build a positive, collaborative, and supportive culture that attracts and retains staff, provides opportunities for professional development, and has robust HR practices.
- Nurture an integrated and inclusive work culture rooted in open communication and a shared sense of purpose.

Fundraising and External Relations

- In collaboration with the VP of advancement, serve as a primary fundraiser for the organization; be a compelling and engaging spokesperson and advocate with the ability to succinctly and clearly explain First Descents' approach and outcomes to broad audiences.
- Work with the VP of advancement and the board of directors to ensure that First Descents is maximizing its revenue potential by identifying and cultivating new donors and stewarding and upgrading existing ones across all revenue streams.
- Identify and develop productive partnerships that increase the organization's reach, enhance its reputation, and provide new opportunities for programming.
- Continue to expand recognition and awareness of First Descents nationally and globally as a leader in the field; travel as needed in order to meet with donors, partners, other stakeholders and represent the organization in the media, at conferences, on panels and in other appropriate venues.

Board Relations

- Work closely with an engaged and active board to determine and evaluate the strategic direction for First Descents.
- Develop strong relationships with each board member, ensuring their contribution to First Descents is aligned with their interests and the organization's needs.
- Partner with the current board to attract, engage, and retain board members who can help the organization realize its mission and vision.
- Ensure board members have meaningful ways to participate in the evolution of the organization, contributing their wealth, wisdom, and/or work as appropriate.

Financial and Operational Leadership

- Provide strategic direction in operations to ensure overall operational/financial health and sustainability.
- Collaborate with senior team members to ensure that First Descents' operations and finances are aligned with best practices and the goals of the strategic plan.
- Partner with the CFO to develop plans and financial projections to guide decision-making and ensure the organization evolves in alignment with available resources.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Proven executive leadership experience with a strong record of setting and achieving ambitious, outcomes-oriented goals in partnership with an engaged board and dedicated staff; experience guiding an organization through growth or transformation strongly preferred
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, particularly securing major gifts from individuals and institutional funders
- Experience overseeing and managing complex budgets, revenue streams, and organizational resources
- Skilled in representing an organization locally, regionally, and nationally, and in building strategic partnerships with individuals, peer organizations, corporations, and government agencies
- Background in a relevant nonprofit field (e.g., healthcare, wellness, disease advocacy, adventure); exceptional corporate leaders with deep nonprofit board experience will also be considered
- Deep commitment to the mission and values of First Descents and a belief in the transformational nature of outdoor adventure
- Experienced and effective people leader with a collaborative management style that inspires and empowers a high-performing team
- Strategic thinker who can operate at a visionary level while remaining closely connected to day-to-day operations and team dynamics

- Excellent communicator, able to articulate organizational impact clearly and persuasively to diverse audiences in both written and verbal formats
- High emotional intelligence, with the ability to build authentic relationships and engage thoughtfully with staff, board members, partners, funders, and community members

COMPENSATION

- Anticipated salary is \$250K - \$275K, commensurate with qualifications and experience
- Comprehensive benefits package, including medical and dental insurance, retirement contribution match, parental leave, professional development and generous paid time off

Frequently cited statistics show that women and people from underrepresented groups apply to jobs only if they think they meet 100% of the criteria. If you meet many but not all the criteria and feel you may be a good fit for the role, First Descents encourages you to apply.

First Descents is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, national origin, ethnic origin, citizenship status, disability, race, religion, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law in its employment policies. First Descents will provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities.