



Vice President of Advancement



**ORGANIZATION:** First Descents  
**POSITION:** Vice President of Advancement  
**REPORTS TO:** Chief Executive Officer  
**LOCATION:** Remote/hybrid; Denver, CO preferred  
**TRAVEL:** As necessary to meet goals (up to 50% of time initially)  
**INFORMATION:** [firstdescents.org](http://firstdescents.org)  
**TO APPLY:** Please send cover letter and resume as one PDF to [FirstDescentsAdv@pbrsearch.com](mailto:FirstDescentsAdv@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 vice president of advancement is a key member of the senior leadership team and the strategic architect of FD's fundraising efforts. Working in partnership with the CEO and board of directors, the VP is responsible for providing an inspiring vision for the organization's overall fundraising strategy, strengthening and expanding donor engagement, driving long-term financial sustainability, and fostering a culture of philanthropy across the organization. The VP will lead a high-performing team of fundraising professionals—currently five employees—and will cultivate a culture of excellence, drive strategic revenue growth, and build a resilient, sustainable, integrated development enterprise.

The ideal candidate is a dynamic frontline fundraiser with a proven track record of securing major gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations and leading successful campaigns; a strategic leader who is energized to elevate FD's fundraising goals; and an inspirational communicator who can galvanize board members, donors, and the wider community to build awareness and inspire philanthropic support for FD's programs and future growth.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Strategic Fundraising**

- Lead and implement a best-in-class fundraising strategy that aligns with FD's strategic plan, strengthens its philanthropic pipeline, and ensures financial sustainability.
- Develop a clear, long-term vision for development, ensuring that fundraising efforts prioritize relationship-building and align with FD's mission.
- Establish performance metrics and ambitious annual revenue goals for the fundraising team, monitor results, and adjust tactics as necessary to ensure positive outcomes.
- Encourage cross-departmental collaboration, ensuring alignment between development, programs, operations, and finance to maximize fundraising success and institutional impact.

### **Board and Donor Engagement**

- Serve as a key ambassador for First Descents; build and maintain high-touch relationships with existing and prospective donors.
- Build authentic relationships with the board and broader donor community with a goal of increasing engagement and growing revenue.

- Ensure that all staff engaged in fundraising have the training and support necessary to appropriately identify, cultivate, solicit, and steward FD contributors.
- Attend programs as needed to engage with current and prospective donors.
- Working closely with the CEO, manage a portfolio of high-value prospects and relationships to cultivate, solicit, and close contributions.

### **Team Leadership and Operations**

- Lead and inspire a team of five development professionals, ensuring their activities are aligned with overall departmental and organizational goals.
- Evolve the department's structure and ways of working as needed to reach ambitious goals.
- Intentionally build the skills and abilities of the development team in key areas; ensure they have the tools, training, support and professional development to be effective in their roles; and foster a culture of collaboration so that each area of fundraising amplifies and leverages the work of others on the team.
- Ensure the proper technology, systems, and processes are in place to support development activities.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Experience**

- 10+ years of fundraising experience with a track record of successfully growing revenue
- Proven experience successfully leading development teams raising funds from a variety of sources
- Experience overseeing the implementation of fundraising systems and structures with a goal of developing a team and operation that is effective, efficient, and maximizes current and creates new funding opportunities
- Experience as a front-line fundraiser with verifiable success securing transformational major gifts

### **Personal Attributes**

- A natural relationship-builder who can galvanize board members, donors, and staff around FD's mission and fundraising goals
- A goal-oriented, can-do attitude, with a commitment to developing and mentoring teams, building a culture of trust, collaboration, and high performance
- Strategic thinker with strong development operations experience, ensuring best-in-class systems and long-term fundraising sustainability
- A creative approach to problem-solving and an entrepreneurial and strategic mindset, with the skills and experience necessary to build upon existing systems and create new ones as needed to broaden and improve the development function
- A strong commitment to furthering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in all forms
- Superior interpersonal skills and a high level of self-awareness, with a proven ability to successfully engage with a variety of audiences
- Passion for the mission and values of FD; a belief in the transformational nature of outdoor adventure

## **COMPENSATION**

- Anticipated salary is \$170K – \$185K, 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.*