

Griffith Observatory Foundation Executive Director

The Board seeks a proven fundraising relationship builder to drive donor solicitations and to engage the separate Observatory and Foundation teams in collaborative outreach to individual, business and foundation donors.

The Foundation has three objectives:

- ***Secure financial support to Griffith Observatory programs and operations, and for upgrades to facilities, technology & infrastructure;***
- ***Expand global access to Griffith Observatory science education and public astronomy programs & assets through on-line and in-person experiences;***
- ***Increase the Foundation's operating resilience and ability to sustainably fund Observatory priorities through endowment and partnership initiatives.***

[Griffith Observatory](#) was founded to make astronomy accessible to the public by the namesake benefactor Griffith J. Griffith. Griffith donated over 3,000 acres to the City of Los Angeles for the Observatory and Park, and the Observatory opened in 1935. Its location 1,134 feet above sea level provides a stunning overview of Los Angeles, and it is the world's most visited public observatory with over 1.6 million visitors annually. The City of Los Angeles owns, operates and largely funds the Observatory and staff through the Department of Recreation and Parks. Most Griffith Observatory programs are free to the general public.

Dedication to free public access means Griffith Observatory has limited ability to fund needed facility and infrastructure upgrades, extra staff, and new programs not explicitly authorized through the annual City of Los Angeles budgeting process. By 1978 it became evident that this could be addressed through a "friends of" fund- and friend-raising nonprofit organization.

[Griffith Observatory Foundation](#) was chartered as the "Friends Of The Observatory" (there is still reference to FOTO on the web) by Debra and Harold Griffith, grandson of the observatory benefactor, the current Observatory Director Dr. E. C. Krupp, and a group of dedicated supporters. The Foundation works closely with Observatory staff, but as a separately chartered nonprofit it raises funds for various purposes and programs. Observatory and Foundation staff work in unison to advance Griffith Observatory interests and have a strong culture of collaboration.

BASIC FUNCTION

Reporting to the 20-member [Griffith Observatory Foundation Board](#) through its President and Executive Committee, the Executive Director is the Foundation's chief fundraiser and senior staff leader. The Foundation funds 12 full-time equivalent staff. Three are permanently assigned to Observatory functions, and nine are assigned to Foundation fundraising, marketing, event management and finance functions. The Executive Director has a hands-on, direct solicitation role that targets, qualifies, approaches, solicits, orchestrates higher levels of donor commitment and celebrates donors.

The Executive Director will continue to build the Foundation's brand, help to recruit board members able to support its fundraising efforts, and work with the Observatory Director and staff to shape fundraising initiatives, priorities and events that maximize contributed income.

The Executive Director's success will be measured in terms of dollars raised from individual, foundation and business donors to support Griffith Observatory.

ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Executive Director will have the following ongoing responsibilities:

GOALS, STRATEGY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Work with Observatory and Foundation teams to translate the 2022 – 2028 Strategic Plan into concrete projects that route charitable gifts to defined priorities, including annual, capital and endowment funds.
- Lead the board and staff in annual planning and budgeting for fundraising initiatives; assign team roles and responsibilities for driving results; engage Observatory staff in support of fundraising initiatives; develop partnerships that advance the interests of the Observatory; with Observatory leaders develop, fund and advocate for innovative mission-related programming.
- Develop and implement meaningful metrics of progress toward objectives defined in the 2022 – 2028 Strategic Plan at the individual and team levels, and create reporting mechanisms for internal, executive and board review and monitoring.

FUNDRAISING

- Carry a personal portfolio of annual, capital and endowment prospects, setting goals and serving as an example for the team.
- Work with members of the board, Observatory staff and others in identifying, cultivating, and soliciting different individual, foundation, business donors and other external sponsors; establish consistent donor cultivation and stewardship workflows and progress tracking; orchestrate outreach to different kinds of donors through events, social media and mass mailings, direct solicitations, grant proposals, sponsorships, co-op fundraising with partners, planned giving solicitations, etc.
- Monitor progress toward goals; share expertise on the different philanthropic tactics and approaches needed to secure gifts from individual philanthropists (high net worth donors, major donors, and annual fund donors), institutional and family foundations and businesses.
- Systematically leverage diverse communication and marketing channels to build awareness among prospective donors and keep current donors informed, including through newsletters, impact reports, direct response (mail, email, and social media) and events.
- Manage day-to-day fundraising solicitations.

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

- Advance the Griffith Observatory brand with residents and visitors to Los Angeles through different types of in-person and online outreach, speaking engagements, events and advocacy that increases the embrace of the Observatory's vision, elevates its reputation and drives audience attendance; grow the organization's digital presence, including through mobile apps, online gaming, social media and other tech that can connect Griffith Observatory to a global audience.
- Engage current constituents and those that do not yet consider themselves to be part of the Griffith Observatory family; align all online and in-person messaging, logos,

websites, social media posts and other elements in support of the organization's identity; position the Observatory as a top-of-mind, unique, not to be missed, repeat experience; study the shifting audience and visitor landscape, employing concrete metrics to highlight strengths and improve on weaknesses related to in-person and on-line visitor engagement;

- Advance Observatory interests with key leaders in public education, Los Angeles city and county government, and with other scientific and educational institutions nationally and internationally.
- Publicly and actively advocate for how Griffith Observatory advances knowledge of science and astronomy; in close coordination with the Observatory Director, serve as a public and media spokesperson for the organization when appropriate.

MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEMS

- Hire, manage, motivate, and develop a creative, focused, and high-performing team; ensure that they have the tools to do their best work; encourage cross-functional collaboration and cohesion between Observatory and Foundation staff; promote a culture where new ideas are embraced; provide the team with opportunities to learn and grow.
- Develop a business culture and daily workflow that prioritizes in-person donor meetings, direct solicitations, and the practical work of raising money; develop metrics and a culture that makes it clear that raising annual and endowment funds are jobs 1, 2 and 3 for the Foundation; implement donor solicitation tracking and reporting systems and infrastructure that is lean, cost efficient and highly functional.
- Develop and oversee the Foundation's revenue and expense budget; manage consultant, vendor and partner relationships.

BOARD RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Provide primary staff leadership to the Foundation's Board, in the process assuring that the Board is proactively updated on all staff activities.
- Attend board meetings; support and promote the work of individual members of the board in fundraising, board recruitment and cultivating outstanding volunteer leaders.

QUALIFICATIONS and EXPERIENCE

The Executive Director will be an entrepreneurial, big-picture thinking, roll-up-your-sleeves leader, with demonstrated expertise in each of the areas identified above. In addition, the successful candidate will have a background which includes:

- Senior-level managerial, operational and financial experience in areas that intersect with the mission of Griffith Observatory Foundation; the ability to understand the science of astronomy and the challenges of advancing scientific knowledge; an appreciation of how people of different ages and backgrounds acquire knowledge through institutions like Griffith Observatory.
- Highly accomplished fundraising experience achieved through being comfortable in the role of seeking and asking for individual and major gifts and grants; being adept at developing institutional partnerships to advance the mission.

**Griffith Observatory Foundation
Executive Director**

- A track record of managing aggressive top-line growth in funding and revenue while being a team builder; a leader who understands the subtleties of motivating, directing and retaining a diverse group of personalities with different work styles; fortitude and grace under pressure.
- Experience in leveraging existing technologies to maximize online presence and optimize innovation, magnify impact and improve fundraising efforts.
- Strong communication skills, both in writing and orally, who can translate Griffith Observatory Foundation's mission and programs into fundraising initiatives that garner financial support through an ability to build constructive working relationships characterized by a high level of acceptance, cooperation, and mutual respect.
- A sense of humor and perspective.

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