



Vice President

The Founders seek an experienced operational leader to manage Astera's infrastructure, including: budgeting, accounting & controls; human resources; facilities; IT (internal & outwardly facing); legal, tax and compliance matters; and marketing, communications, community & partner relations and special events.

The Vice President's team will support Division Teams composed of scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, policy experts, and others who speed development of innovative solutions to complex challenges.

Astera Institute was founded by Jed McCaleb and Seemay Chou, who committed \$3 billion in philanthropic assets to build a new kind of research organization that operates outside the constraints of markets or academia. Their mission is to pursue transformative scientific and technological work that traditional systems cannot easily support, with initiatives that include rethinking AI architectures inspired by natural intelligence, and advancing neuroscience, biology, materials, and energy.

Astera is itself an experiment in how research organizations can move faster, take smarter risks, and create lasting public good. The Founders and their Division Leads believe that the best way to solve underexplored problems is to build things: to prototype, test, learn in the open, change rapidly as data and new ideas develop, and build again. The organization will rapidly expand from a headcount of 30 to more than 100, and within five years could have as many as 250 people working onsite and remotely. Current facilities encompass 10,000 sq ft of space with a separate sublease of an offsite wet lab; future facilities could grow to approximately 50,000 sq ft, with onsite program and administrative offices, an event space, wet lab and vivarium.

Supporting Astera's teams will be an Operations Team managed by this Vice President, who will have a coordinating, infrastructure delivery and customer serving relationship with Division Leads. The administrative unit will initially have five staff (expected to grow to 10) and various subcontractors whose relationships with Astera might shift as the organization evolves. In addition to managing Astera's financial and operating infrastructure, this Vice President works closely with the Founders and Division Leads to oversee the Residency Program for innovators. The organization's endowment is \$2.5 billion with plans to annually deploy at least 5% of the endowment.

The Vice President will collaborate with others on the team to architect and then manage an appropriately scaled, flexible, functionally robust, agile and user-responsive financial & operating infrastructure.

This Vice President must be comfortable with ambiguity, aligned to the Founders' sensibility, highly collaborative, growth oriented, practical, and be strongly oriented towards transparency and open communication in service to mission.

BASIC FUNCTION

Astera's headquarters is in Emeryville just east of San Francisco, and the Vice President will largely work from there. This is not a traditional administrator of a family office, or manager of a shared services entity or holding company. The Founders are redefining what a philanthropic engine can be by deploying their significant philanthropic capacity within their lifetimes in ways that change the trajectory of science, technology, and society. The Vice President will collaborate with the Founders and Division Leads to prototype an organizational approach that builds, experiments and operates in a range of technical areas, with infrastructure shaped especially to enable rapid movement from concept to experimentation to impact at scale. Astera Institute will combine attributes of a philanthropic enterprise, experimental laboratory and practical business that rolls out products, services and solutions.

This role offers the chance to work with world-class leaders across life sciences, biotechnology, AI, neuroscience, energy, and manufacturing. Just as Division Leads shape their initiatives and share lessons learned with others, the Vice President will shape an environment that facilitates and speeds discovery while sharing lessons that inform national strategy in various areas of endeavor, influence policy, and shape how future philanthropies work. In other words, the person in this role will help design and scale an organization built to drive meaningful change while making its methods transparent. In the process, Astera will redefine how philanthropy can deliver "the future, faster."

The Vice President will have responsibility for the following areas:

FINANCIAL MODELING, ACCOUNTING, IMPACT AND CONTROLS

- Provide expertise in all financial matters and actively manage financial risk, including: analysis of financial, tax and regulatory implications of pending decisions; leading the annual financial planning and budgeting process; and developing financial models for new programs and investments as they move from ideation to implementation.
- Lead all: financial accounting (GL/AP/PO/AR); project accounting; treasury functions (inc. managing cash, banking relationships, etc.); review, improve and manage existing (and establish new) finance systems, workflows and controls to ensure the integrity of financial information as the organization scales (currently Quickbooks is used for accounting, Ramp is used for expense tracking).
- Work with the Founders, the Head of Strategic Investments and outside consultants to assure efficient use of capital in ways that advance Astera's mission, including by generating earned income to be reinvested back into Astera's endowment and projects. Mechanisms might include: recoverable grants; forgivable, low and zero interest rate loans; equity and equity-like positions that advance Astera's endowment and philanthropic purpose; tax instruments and structured incentives that engage for-profit partners in support of Astera's charitable aims; leveraged use of Astera's endowment and its market credibility to guarantee loans in exchange for equity that strengthens the endowment; and other creative approaches.
- Oversee all tax matters; compliance; audits; monthly and annual general accounting close; and all contracts and financial relationships with vendors, partners and contractors that provide services to Astera or for whom Astera provides services.
- Provide accurate and timely information on the organization's financial status to the Founders and Program Leads; complete quarterly and annual tax filings, as required; understand and ensure adherence to IRS regulations surrounding nonprofit organizations and income classification.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Working with the Founders and Division Leads, develop and frequently update an overarching People Plan for staffing all areas of Astera, with reference to the thinking of the Founders and the needs of Division Leads.
- Oversee all recruiting, onboarding, annual performance reviews, and the staff exit process; provide coaching and support for valuable individuals with skills gaps; maintain appropriately scaled and lean HRIS (currently Gusto), payroll, applicant tracking (currently Ashby) and other systems.
- Maintain HR processes and handbooks; create and document employment agreements, compensation standards, benefit plans (including health insurance, which will be administered by this office), standards of conduct, etc., and periodically review and update such; ensure that all personnel sign required employment documentation and maintain accurate records.
- Develop and deliver orientation programs for new personnel, including training on systems, infrastructure and workflows; provide other personnel development programs and education as needed;
- Assure compliance with all labor laws and regulations, and coordinate legal matters related to human resources and personnel, working with legal counsel as needed.

FACILITIES

- Develop facilities plans as required; select and purchase or lease of property; orchestrate buildout and configuration of desired space; ensure that electrical, mechanical, plumbing HVAC, etc. is scaled for future expansion; arrange moves; manage periodic renovations;
- Secure facilities; develop and implement safety standards and protocols (with different levels of access for particular areas) that are tailored to the environments of offices, event spaces, the web lab and the vivarium.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Provide appropriately scaled business and outwardly facing systems for different user categories, ensuring that systems are secure, scalable, useful, easily maintained and cost justified;
- Manage IT contracts with vendors, consultants, outsourcers, etc., ensuring that Astera's intellectual property is accessible to authorized people only in ways authorized by the Founders.

LEGAL, TAX AND COMPLIANCE MATTERS

- In coordination with Astera's outside attorneys, accountants and consultants, oversee all legal, tax and compliance matters, including researching relevant laws and regulations that might affect any aspect of Astera's operations, projects, investments or investors;
- Develop and implement strategies for achieving Founder objectives in ways that comply with legal requirements and mandates.

MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS, COMMUNITY & PARTNER RELATIONS, SPECIAL EVENTS

- Develop branding, messaging, materials, a social media presence, website, text and rich-media elements and other materials, to shape perceptions of Astera in positive ways among scientists, investors in research, academia, other philanthropic organizations, the free-knowledge and open source community, and associated communities of innovators across business, nonprofit and government sectors.

- Produce in-person and online special events, encounters, convenings, webinars, symposia, brainstorming sessions, and other mechanisms that engage partners, deliver value, shape behavior and encourage adoption of Astera concepts.

The above will be documented and can be shared as an open-source model for partners and counterparts interested in adopting the Astera approach to supporting innovators, inventors and projects that change the world.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS AND ATTITUDE

Astera is a long-term bet on humanity's capacity to build better systems for new discoveries that in turn can build a better world. This is an optimistic, driven, no-nonsense team that requires a person with the following qualities:

- A strong, hands-on background managing areas cited in the Basic Function section above, with emphasis on financial and people management; an ability to extract meaning from numbers and make that meaning understandable to people with widely varying degrees of financial knowledge; experience in the nonprofit, tech or business innovation sectors with rapidly growing organizations; prior experience scaling startups, and providing infrastructure and shared services to different projects or business units is desirable;
- Results-oriented, adept at seeing the big-picture, planning, prioritizing, organizing, and following through; a hard worker with a high energy level; emotionally mature with a sense of humor and an ability to maintain balance and perspective with a customer-serving attitude; the ability to navigate different attitudes and styles, and work with international and culturally diverse teams;
- Facility and comfort with technology and the open-source ecosystem; comfortable with frequent re-invention and the ability to not make the perfect the enemy of the good, especially when "the good" is faster, less expensive and more practical;
- Experience in flexibly creating and fine-tuning operations to support a collaborative, creative, forward-thinking environment; a commitment to transparency and open communication;
- An independent and open-minded individual who values and appreciates diversity and the unconventional; who proactively seeks input from various constituencies and has a service orientation, but also has the ability to make tough decisions when necessary;
- Emotionally mature and self-reliant; someone who will thrive working in a small but rapidly growing environment; ability to tolerate a high degree of ambiguity, and to negotiate with people having sharply defined opinions while maintaining positive, respectful relationships;
- The ability to align to the Founders yet provide candid and clear feedback.

COMPENSATION

The salary range for this position is \$300,000 - \$400,000 based on experience.

For more information please contact:

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