

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING FOR KIDS
Flexible – Metropolitan Denver, Colorado
[Environmental Learning for Kids](#)



The Aspen Leadership Group is proud to partner with Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) in the search for an Executive Director.

The Executive Director will lead ELK and serve as its primary representative in the community. In partnership with the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will plan, develop, and implement policies and objectives that further ELK's mission. The Executive Director will maximize the effectiveness and impact of the organization through oversight of all department heads, utilizing an entrepreneurial approach to ensure the success of the organization, both financially and programmatically.

ELK cultivates a passion in science, leadership, and service in a diverse community of learners. ELK serves more than 5,000 underserved urban youth (ages 5-25) each year through year-round intensive programs and in-school/after-school programs in Denver, Adams, and Arapahoe Counties. ELK works directly with local schools, teachers, and community groups by providing a wide variety of outreach activities. Students attend day-long field activities that provide them with an opportunity to grow as individuals and to enjoy the natural world in an educational, adventurous manner.

ELK also assists young people in developing internal values from which they and their community will benefit. Through leadership development, meaningful mentorship, and long-term relationships, ELK helps students to become educated, active participants in their communities. ELK has established strong partnerships with community-based programs, foundations, government agencies, and individual donors, that have ensured sustainability for the organization.

ELK reaches out to students who have been traditionally overlooked and under-encouraged in science and science-related careers, including youth of color and females. ELK opens new doors of opportunity by engaging and mentoring youth through science education and leadership development programs that provide a real-life context for learning. Youth experience Colorado's natural world, increase their academic science skills, become involved in their neighborhoods, and get exposure to careers in the field of natural resources. They grow into stewards and engaged citizens, while cultivating strong educational values to ensure high school and college graduation.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director will report to the Board of Directors, chaired by Ryan Nichols.

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We are at an exciting phase of our Environmental Learning for Kids journey as we celebrate 25 years of success in 2021. This success is something that a new Executive Director will be able to adopt and grow; the possibilities are truly endless. With a highly engaged Board and Staff, the organization is excited and ready for this next chapter and will be ready to support the new Executive Director in this endeavor.

In addition to growing existing success and relationships, ELK will be breaking ground on a brand-new outdoor education community center in the Montbello neighborhood in June. This \$7 million capital project has been years in the making. Through the center and the adjacent open space, ELK will be “home” and able to provide more science education and experiential learning than ever to the community. The new Executive Director will be able to help guide this growth and the overall growth of the organization.

–Laurie Troge, Board of Directors

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Environmental Learning for Kids is an organization that is built on diversity, equity, and inclusion – it is part of ELK's vision for a better world and the values that it practices every day. ELK's Executive Director will be required to model and champion access for all regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or any other component of identity; embrace the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) of the organization to tell ELK's story, share the organization's impact, and expand the reach of programming; lead and oversee continued review and improvement of ELK's programming and workplace with a DEI lens to foster a truly inclusive community; and demonstrate an understanding and growth mindset towards identity intersectionality and how to bring community together through mutual appreciation and respect.

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Financial Performance and Viability

The Executive Director will

- develop the resources and relationships that ensure the financial health of the organization;
- be responsible for the fiscal integrity of ELK, including submission to the Board of Directors of a proposed annual budget and monthly financial statements which accurately reflect the financial condition of the organization;
- be responsible for fiscal management that anticipates operating within the approved budget, and ensures maximum resource utilization and maintenance of the organization in a positive financial position;
- be responsible for fundraising and the development of other resources necessary to support ELK's mission; and
- direct all efforts to secure outside funding for the program including securing of grants, establishing partnerships, local marketing and work with corporations, individual donors, government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels, earned income, and other opportunities to obtain funding for long-term sustainability of all ELK operations.

Governance

The Executive Director will

- lead ELK in a manner that supports and guides the organization’s mission as defined by the Board of Directors; and
- communicate effectively with the Board of Directors and provide, in a timely and accurate manner, all information necessary for the Board of Directors to function properly and to make informed decisions.

Organization Mission and Strategy

The Executive Director will

- work with the Board of Directors and Staff to ensure that the mission is fulfilled through programs, strategic planning, and community outreach;
- implement ELK’s programs that carry out ELK’s mission, including School-Based Programs, Denver Youth Naturally (DYN), Youth in Natural Resources (YNR), Learning Environmental Activities for Families (LEAF), Urban Rangers and outreach activities including school fairs, and community booths;
- lead strategic planning to ensure that ELK can successfully fulfill its mission into the future; and
- lead the enhancement of ELK’s image by being active and visible in the community and by working closely with other professional, civic, and private organizations.

Organization Operations

The Executive Director will

- oversee and implement appropriate resources to ensure that the operations of the organization enable ELK to achieve its mission;
- oversee the effective administration of ELK’s operations;
- hire and retain competent, qualified, and committed Staff; and
- sign all notes, agreements, and other instruments made and entered into and on behalf of the organization.

LEADERSHIP AND KEY COLLEAGUES



Ryan Nichols
Chair, Board of Directors

Ryan Nichols is the Chair of the Board of Directors and has served on the Board of Directors since April 2018. Ryan was fortunate to have had virtually unbridled access to the natural world during his most formative years, including as a student at an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound charter school in Fort Collins, and he joined the Board of Directors to make sure underserved Denver-based youth are afforded the same invaluable experiences. Ryan is Of Counsel at the law firm of Holland & Hart, LLP in Denver, where he has a corporate transactional practice generally focused on securities compliance, corporate governance, and complex business transactions. In his free time, Ryan spends his time in the Colorado backcountry hiking, fly-fishing, and snowboarding.



Hugo Valdez
Vice Chair, Board of Directors

Hugo Valdez is the Onsite and Offsite Programs Coordinator at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science. His job allows him to create, teach, and assist with coordinating fun and educational experiences for K-8 students. He joined ELK when he was a junior in high school and the opportunity allowed him to further explore his passion for science and the outdoors. His experiences with ELK have led him to find a career in informal education and have the pleasure to work for the National Park Service, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, ELK, the Denver Zoo, and now the Denver Museum of Nature and

Science. He loves spending time in the outdoors camping, hiking, fly-fishing, and wildlife watching. He also loves visiting National Parks and collecting Jr. Ranger badges.



Laurie Troge
Past Chair, Board of Directors

Laurie Troge serves as the Executive Administrative Officer at the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. She is the executive team's liaison to the Chamber of Commerce Board and key stakeholders, manages the administrative functions of the executive office, and oversees an array of company-wide special projects and programs. Laurie joined the operations group at the Chamber in 2011 after seven years in private industry helping a tech startup grow its business as its Director of Operations. Prior to that Laurie taught high school in Boston and New Hampshire. Laurie has a Master's Degree from the University of New Hampshire.

She serves as Vice Chair Denver Public Library Friends Foundation Trustees in addition to her role as the Past Chair of the Board of Directors. Laurie is an alumna of Impact Denver 2012 and works closely with the Leadership Foundation. Laurie enjoys traveling, and has visited more than 30 countries, reading, always trying to up the number of books from the year before, and most of all spending time with her family, husband Sam and 11 year old son Cohen.



Kristina Opre Gray
Director of Corporate Relations & Marketing

Kristina received her Bachelor of Art degree in Political Science from MSU Denver in 2011. She has been a part of the nonprofit sector for over 10 years. She is an alumna of the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps VISTA program and the Hispanic Chamber Foundation's Aspiring Leaders Program, Class of 2017. Kristina spends her free time focused on justice and equity for all of Colorado's youth & families.



Kim Weiss
Associate Director

Kim received her Master of Arts in Environmental Education and Conservation from Rowan University, in Glassboro, New Jersey, in May 2004. Previously, she was an Angler Education Assistant for the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Before moving to Colorado, Kim was a camp director for YMCA Camp Onyahsa in western New York. There she was responsible for directing all programs as well as supervising staff. As a part of her Masters thesis, she developed a year-round environmental education program for Camp Onyahsa. She implemented the program during the summer of 2004.

Kim maintains her First Aid/CPR for the professional rescuer certification.



Ben Gregory
Manager of Finance and Operations

A nonprofit professional for over 23 years, Ben received his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Averett University in Virginia. In 2001, Ben moved to Colorado to continue his life-long passion for exploring the outdoors. As Deputy Director for Colorado Conservation Voters, Ben worked to hold state legislators and the Governor accountable for their policy decisions while growing the political power of the environmental

community. In his free time, Ben enjoys photography, playing bass guitar, and filling his National Parks Passport with stamps.



Christina Hoffman
Major Gifts Manager

Christina is a Denver native who has channeled her passion for social justice over the past 12 years working for nonprofit organizations. Her work has ranged in focus from advocating for the homeless, scholarships for American Indian students, and access to health care in Colorado, and she's now excited to work for an organization that gets kids outside and excited about science and nature. When she isn't studying, she enjoys spending free time cooking, reading, jogging, and exploring the outdoor world with her husband and

young son.

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

ELK seeks an Executive Director with

- a commitment to ELK's mission and a desire to learn more about science and the natural resources of Colorado through ELK's educational programs;
- functional expertise in nonprofit management, fundraising, education, and community development;
- an ability to initiate and build successful partnerships and relationships;
- an ability to problem solve in a wide variety of environments, from business meetings to outdoor field environments;
- excellent oral, written, presentation, and interpersonal skills including an ability to communicate effectively with diverse groups of people and partners;
- excellent organizational and problem-solving skills including an ability to anticipate and plan for needed steps to meet deadlines;

- a high level of professionalism, discretion, and commitment to maintaining confidentiality;
- an ability to develop and nurture positive and productive team relationships with coworkers, Board, and key stakeholder groups; and
- an ability to learn quickly and function effectively in a fast-paced environment.

A bachelor's degree is required for this position as is at least six years of related experience. Experience living and working in Colorado is a plus, as is fluency in English and Spanish.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

Environmental Learning for Kids offers a comprehensive benefits package. The salary range for this position is \$90,000 to \$105,000 annually, based on experience.

LOCATION

ELK is located in the Montbello neighborhood of northeastern Denver; however, the Executive Director can choose to live anywhere within the Metropolitan Denver area.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

All applications must be accompanied by a cover letter and résumé. ***Cover letters should express a commitment to ELK's vision of a world in which all people are caretakers of themselves, each other, and the natural world as well as the responsibilities and qualifications stated in the prospectus.*** Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

To apply for this position, visit:

[Executive Director, Environmental Learning for Kids.](#)

To nominate a candidate, please contact Ashley Buderus:

[ashleybuderus@aspenleadershipgroup.com.](mailto:ashleybuderus@aspenleadershipgroup.com)

All inquiries will be held in confidence.