

# MORRIS & BERGER

## **Position Description**

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

#### **ASLAN FOUNDATION (Knoxville, Tennessee)**

#### **ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION:**

The Aslan Foundation was established in 1994 by attorney Lindsay Young who had great interest in history, the arts, and nature, especially animals. The Foundation is focused on preserving and enhancing the natural beauty and cultural assets of Knoxville, and enriching quality of life for the people who live there.

Following the founder's death in 2006, the Foundation's corpus has grown to \$90 million and the Foundation's grantmaking has had a significant impact on Knoxville and the surrounding communities. The Aslan Foundation has invested in preserving and restoring historic lands and properties, in creating and restoring recreational spaces, and in protecting animal life.

The four-member Board of Directors comprises three family members and one adviser, each with personal connections to the founder. In recent years, the Aslan Foundation has proactively invested, often without other funding partners, in progressive initiatives that contribute to the quality of life in Knoxville and beyond. The Foundation has invested in:

- Preserving Knoxville's Civil War heritage by purchasing the Fort Stanley and Fort Higley sites with the intention of adding them to the Knoxville Urban Wilderness Corridor. The Foundation has created beautiful walking trails with signage, pointing out the history of the Forts.
- Protecting the scenic, one-hundred acre Loghaven wilderness property from development, by purchasing and caring for the land and existing buildings. The Foundation is currently restoring eight historic log cabins on the property for use as an artist-in-residence program.
- Supporting Friends of the Smokies with a grant ensuring maintenance of mountain hiking trails in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in perpetuity.
- Funding the establishment of the Knoxville Botanical Gardens.
- Providing transformational gifts to the Knoxville Museum of Art, the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra and the Knoxville Opera.
- Providing major ongoing support for the Young-Williams Animal Center, with its innovative approaches to sheltering, adopting and spaying/neutering of animals and public education about animal welfare.

- Supporting select Tennessee animal sanctuaries.

In addition, the Aslan Foundation responds to a limited number of requests for Knoxville-based educational, social welfare, and cultural grant support. Developing innovative efforts in these areas, particularly education, will be a priority for the Foundation in the coming years.

### **THE OPPORTUNITY:**

The role of Executive Director at the Aslan Foundation is both exciting and nuanced. The Foundation is a catalyst for progress, advancing the quality, beauty, livability, and sustainability of the Knoxville community. Its philanthropy does not often follow conventional grantmaking approaches.

In close partnership with the Board, the Executive Director will address several challenges and opportunities:

- Strategically advancing the Foundation's innovative philanthropic approach and its ability to make a real difference.
- Developing appropriate outcome measures to ensure that the Foundation is maximizing the impact of its grantmaking.
- Fostering communication and building bridges with community leaders and other funders, and participating in opportunities that accelerate progress for Knoxville as they fit the Foundation's strategy, while pursuing the Foundation's independent approach to grantmaking.
- Supporting the Foundation's bold, strategic, and innovative grantmaking without neglecting more routine tasks that fall within the Executive Director's purview.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POSITION:**

The responsibilities of the Executive Director (ED) of the Aslan Foundation fall into several mutually reinforcing categories:

- **Leadership.** The ED will structure and manage the work of the Foundation in a manner consistent with Board-approved strategy and priorities and sound philanthropic practices. As a trusted partner to the Board, the ED will engender productive dialogue and communication. He/She will help the Board coalesce around a consistent mission, vision and direction, realize its aspirations, making a significant difference in the lives of Knoxville residents. The ED will create the conditions for strategic, effective decision making and ongoing discovery of ways the Aslan Foundation can have singular impact, collaborating with other nonprofit organizations on projects of mutual interests.

- **Administrative Management.** The ED is responsible for the effective stewardship and oversight of the Foundation’s financial and operating assets, consistent with Board-approved policies and strategies, by ensuring that resources are managed to optimal effect. The Foundation’s investments are managed by outside professionals, but the ED will be directly accountable for the soundness of the Foundation’s operating finances, including its budgets, control and audit functions, and other compliance and regulatory requirements.
- **Project Management.** The Aslan Foundation has undertaken bold and innovative projects, including Loghaven, that require ongoing project management. The ED will provide day-to-day management for current programs and projects.

As future investments are contemplated, the ED will provide ideas, data, financial models, and decision support.

- **Forward Thinking.** Under the direction of the Board, the ED will analyze emerging Knoxville community needs and opportunities. He/She will develop options and related information for the Board’s consideration. The ED will create regular, robust reporting and impact measurement protocols that will track the progress of Foundation investments and monitor emerging issues and opportunities. As appropriate, the ED will be a voice for constructive progress for Knoxville.
- **Community Participation.** As a visible public “face” for the Foundation and its mandate, the ED will be a person of high standards, values and integrity consistent with the Board and the family. The ED will present a collegial and collaborative presence, and will pursue opportunities consistent with the Foundation’s chosen course. The ED will be an advocate for the Foundation’s perspective and philanthropic intent, and yet bring a nuanced understanding of relationships and others’ perspectives.

## **THE LOCATION:**

The Aslan Foundation is located in Knoxville, the third-largest city in Tennessee and a beautiful, fascinating and friendly place to live. Knoxville is home to the University of Tennessee and a short distance from The Great Smoky Mountains National Park. One of the country’s five national labs is in neighboring Oak Ridge. With a downtown situated on the banks of the Tennessee River, Knoxville is replete with history and culture.

Knoxville attractions include numerous cultural offerings, art, live music, unparalleled scenery, and outdoor recreation opportunities. There are greenway trails, rivers, lakes, and streams throughout the city. The nearby Great Smokies are home to the nation’s most visited national park, a hotspot for hikers and nature enthusiasts.

Serving as the hub of East Tennessee since its founding in 1791, Knoxville is headquarters to many companies including Scripp’s Network Interactive, Pilot Corporation, Bush Brothers, and the Tennessee Valley Authority, the nation’s largest public power company.

## **DESIRED TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS:**

The successful candidate will be an inspirational leader with exceptional interpersonal and staff management skills and the ability to connect with all Foundation stakeholders. He/She should be an inspired visionary who, together with the Board, will set a future course for the Foundation. The ED must be an effective communicator and spokesperson as well as an active listener. Strategic thinking and a business orientation must be combined with innovation and creativity. The ideal candidate will be a collaborative, confident, positive, and transparent individual. A high level of integrity, initiative, compassion, and energy is required.

The Executive Director will be a collegial, engaged member of the broader community, but at the same time a person of exceptional diplomatic skills, honesty, personal maturity, and independent thinking.

Additional assets being sought include:

- Respect for the role of the Board, and a natural inclination to invest in the Board/ED relationship.
- A self-motivated, energetic, compelling, and organized individual.
- Maturity and confidence, with low personal ego needs.
- A bridge builder who, as a “face” of the Aslan Foundation, will connect and collaborate while maintaining the course set by the Board.
- A bright, imaginative, educated, and sophisticated but down-to-earth person comfortable providing leadership as well as being a hands-on executive in a small office environment.
- Strong listening and relationship skills, intuition, and emotional intelligence.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- The cultural sensitivity to thrive in the Knoxville community. While the ED need not come from the South, candidates should be comfortable with values, work styles, and lifestyles in the Southeast.
- Ability to thoughtfully steward the Foundation’s assets -- people, ideas, finances, relationships, and reputation.

**CAREER PATH LEADING TO THIS POSITION:**

The ideal candidate will be a compelling leader, ideally with a background in philanthropy, preferably including grantmaking and management roles. Experience in a family foundation would be a plus. Candidates with other compelling experience from the nonprofit and for profit sectors will also be considered. Leadership experience, relationship skills and respect for the role of the Board in place-based family philanthropy are essential. Candidates with CEO experience and those who are prepared to move up into a CEO role will be considered.

The Executive Director must have passion for the mission of the Aslan Foundation. He/She will be personally mature and thoughtful, with the confidence and passion to represent the Foundation and to pursue, at the direction of the Board, innovative, progressive, and impactful philanthropy.

**EDUCATION:**

An advanced degree is preferred.

**COMPENSATION:**

A compensation package commensurate with qualifications and experience will be provided. If needed, relocation assistance is negotiable.

**TO APPLY:**

Please direct inquiries, nominations, and applications, including resume and a letter of interest in confidence to:

Jay V. Berger or Karin Stellar  
Morris & Berger  
500 North Brand Boulevard, Suite 2150  
Glendale, CA 91203  
Telephone 818-507-1234 – Fax 818-507-4770  
[mb@morrisberger.com](mailto:mb@morrisberger.com) or [kstellar@morrisberger.com](mailto:kstellar@morrisberger.com)

*Electronic submission is encouraged*