



Job Announcement

Rural Climate Initiative Director

The Heartland Fund is seeking a dedicated, creative leader to direct our new Rural Climate Initiative. Top priorities for this position include continuing development and implementation of the Rural Climate Initiative strategy, identifying and working with rural leaders across the country, increasing the funding available for rural climate work and leveraging resources of existing efforts in the climate, economic development and rural advocacy space, supporting a diverse advisory team of top rural field and thought leaders, and communicating program accomplishments and trends to our funders and grantees.

This is an exciting and dynamic job in an emerging nonprofit funding collaborative, with opportunities for advancement and leadership. The successful candidate will be a strategic thinker and excellent communicator with project management experience, campaign skills, experience working on complex policy issues, and a thoughtful approach to relationship management and racial equity issues. We are looking for a self-starter with a knack for strategy and evaluation, and an upbeat team player who shares our vision of connecting leaders and building civic and political infrastructure in rural areas.

Please apply using this link: [Heartland/RDI Rural Climate Initiative Director](#)

About the Organization

The Heartland Fund, part of the **Rural Democracy Initiative**, is a funding collaborative that connects rural leaders with funders to build powerful, permanent civic infrastructure in small towns, small cities and rural areas. We challenge the stereotype of the conservative white rural voter, and instead center racial justice and partner with groups working in rural communities of color, and modeling groundbreaking anti-racist organizing in majority-white communities.

Our coalition of rural innovators and aligned funders is working in 20 states across diverse regions, including Alaska and Montana in the Northwest, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania in the Midwest and Northeast, Arizona in the Southwest, and North Carolina, and Georgia in the Southeast. We support rural people working to transform rural America – and therefore the entire country – for decades to come.

The Rural Climate Initiative is a new cornerstone program of the Heartland Fund.

Why Heartland

Small town, small city and rural voters maintain disproportionate power to shape national politics. The progressive movement was built on a strong coalition of rural farmers and urban laborers. But in recent decades, progressive leadership and funding infrastructure has largely withdrawn from non-metro areas.

At the same time, regressive interests have invested heavily in rural voters. They've built organizing, policy, and communications machines to spread disinformation and ignite fears among rural electorates, promoting their own political agendas to deepen urban-rural divides.

Progressives are winning again in small towns and rural communities.

In 2018 and 2020 it has become clear that with focused organizing progressives **can win** in rural communities: even though rural areas voted overwhelmingly for Trump, rural Democratic gains in the 2018 midterms and 2020 presidential election were actually larger than the gains made in urban and in many suburban areas, and were decisive in the battleground states.

With small, grassroots investments in strategic rural engagement, a motivated coalition comprised largely of rural women, people of color, and younger voters fueled an historic progressive bounce-back in small cities, towns and rural areas.

The Heartland approach

The Heartland Fund is a 501c3 grantmaking and power building organization that, alongside the 501c4 Rural Victory Fund, invests in civic infrastructure in small towns and rural communities.

Building power in these communities is essential to establishing an enduring progressive, multi-racial national majority, and to implementing the policies required for rural and small city communities to have vibrant, thriving futures.

The Rural Climate Initiative

The Rural Climate Initiative (RCI) aims to leverage climate investments in small towns and rural communities to spur sustainable job development that will allow communities to protect what they love about the places where they live, and build communities strong enough for young people to want to make homes there. Through grantmaking, technical assistance, policy advocacy, communications, and organizing, the RCI will address climate change through a

place-based, sustainable job and economic development strategy. The RCI is a multi-year initiative launching in early 2022, building on a six month strategy development process.

The Position

The Rural Climate Initiative (RCI) Director will lead the strategy development and project management for the buildout of this exciting new program, working alongside Sarah Jaynes, the Executive Director of the Rural Democracy Initiative (RDI). The RCI Director will manage a growing staff and consultant team, identify key field partners, set grant making priorities, and share responsibility for fund development and outreach.

RDI is a growing team that takes pride in building an organizational culture rooted in learning, collaboration, equity, and a deep commitment to our mission. We center racial justice and anti-racism throughout all of our work. All staff are expected to provide leadership and vision to advance our mission, vision, and core strategies.

Primary responsibilities include:

Strategy Development and Evaluation: Design and advance strategies to address rural climate change including clean energy projects, regenerative agriculture and forestry, local economic development, clean energy transition and energy efficiency and rural electric cooperatives.

- Collaborate with consultants to design strategy for moving rural climate outcomes initially in 8 states across 3 regions, in partnership with dozens of grantees.
- Establish success benchmarks and evaluation process to measure the progress toward goals for both the RCI and grantees.
- Create an annual work plan associated with the RCI strategy, and manage the staff and consultant team toward meeting shared goals.

Fund Development: Partner with RDI Executive Director and Development Manager to cultivate and steward relationships to support a \$5M - \$10M+ program and grant making budget.

- Lead 1:1 funder outreach, site visits, and other funder engagement.
- Write grant proposals and reports for our foundation funders.

Thought Leadership: Be an ambassador for Rural Climate Initiative's work

- Represent RCI externally to further relationships with a variety of decision makers and stakeholders
- Present RCI vision and strategy on calls and webinars, conferences, and convenings of peer funders and rural practitioners. Incorporate feedback into RDI plan.
- Support recruitment and onboarding of the advisory committee. Manage planning, materials and facilitation for advisory committee convenings.

Grant Management: Design grant making strategy, and lead outreach to prospective and existing grantees and partners.

- Create a grant making plan, prepare grant dockets, review grant reports and proposals. Identify metrics to assess impacts and opportunities.

- Conduct regular informal check-ins and occasional site visits; elevate needs and opportunities identified by grantees to executive director and steering committee.

Communications: Play a leading role to create, develop and strengthen RCI's communication in support of organizational objectives and program priorities.

- Gather impact stories, photos, quotes, and anecdotes from grantees and partners and work with the communications team to create compelling written content for our funders, broader network and the media.
- Manage communications team toward narrative and message development, and internal and external communications goals.

Compensation and Job Design

This is a permanent, full time staff position. The organization is virtual, and the Rural Climate Initiative Director will be a remote position. As COVID allows, the position will require occasional travel across the United States. Expected compensation will be based on skills and experience, with an approximate salary range of \$110,000 - \$125,000 per year. Our comprehensive benefits package includes employer-paid health, dental, and vision insurance, 6% employer match on 401k contributions, pre-tax transportation benefits, and paid holidays, vacation, sick, and volunteer time off.

Qualifications

The Heartland Fund is seeking an experienced leader who is excited to work in an entrepreneurial, fast paced, and creative environment. The person should exhibit a high degree of professionalism, initiative, and independence while also being collaborative and team focused. Specifically, the successful candidate will be able to demonstrate:

Minimum:

- 5+ years of project management experience in a non-profit, campaign and/or foundation setting with a proven track record of working on a wide variety of complex projects with varied deadlines and deliverables
- Demonstrated understanding of civic engagement and / or political strategy
- Strong commitment to racial justice and fluency with anti-racist practices
- Demonstrated personal or professional connection to and passion for our rural mission
- At least a year of formal or lived experience working on climate, economic development, or agricultural issues
- Strong relationship management skills with diverse constituencies
- Strong storytelling skills, with an ability to clearly communicate the importance and impact of an organization's mission both verbally and in writing

Desired:

- Aptitude for fundraising and an ability to build relationships and present with confidence to funding partners
- Experience in the philanthropic sector and with grant making
- Lived experience in rural America

To Apply

Priority deadline January 14th, 2022. Applications will be reviewed and considered on a rolling basis with interviews anticipated to start mid-January. Desired start date March 1, 2022

Please apply by submitting your resume and cover letter to this link: [Heartland/RDI Rural Climate Initiative Director](#). In your cover letter, please describe how your experience, skills, and interests align with this position and the Rural Climate Initiative's mission and phase of growth.

The Heartland Fund is a project of Windward Fund, a 501(c)(3) public charity that incubates new and innovative public-interest projects and grant-making programs. Windward Fund is an equal opportunity employer. People of color, LGBTQ people, and women are strongly encouraged to apply. We believe that a diverse workforce and inclusive workplace culture enhances our ability to fulfill our mission. Employment and promotional opportunities are based upon individual capabilities and qualifications without regard to race, color, religion, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, disability, veteran status or any other protected characteristic as established under law.

For More Information

Questions regarding this opportunity are welcomed and can be directed to Shin Shin Hsia at admin@rural-democracy.org.