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POSITION DESCRIPTION
SCIENCE PROGRAM OFFICER
HEISING-SIMONS FOUNDATION

San Francisco Bay Area, CA – March 29, 2024

About the Foundation

The [Heising-Simons Foundation](#) and the Heising-Simons Action Fund, its affiliated 501(c)(4) organization, is a family foundation based in Los Altos and San Francisco, California. The Foundation works with its many partners to advance sustainable solutions in climate and clean energy, enable groundbreaking research in science, enhance the education of our youngest learners, and support human rights for all people.

The Foundation's grantmaking is guided by the values of humility, courage, justice, opportunity, sustainability, innovation, relationships, and integrity. Since its first grant in 2008, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1 billion across over 3,800 grants. In 2023, the Foundation's Science Program made 121 awards totaling more than \$37 million.

The Opportunity

The [Heising-Simons Foundation](#) is seeking a Science Program Officer who will help manage the Foundation's science grantmaking. The Science Program Officer (PO) is a strategic and collaborative individual who has demonstrated experience in and a commitment and passion for advancing scientific research. As part of the Science team, the PO helps shape and administer the Foundation's Science portfolio. The PO explores new grantmaking areas, works with prospective and existing grantees, monitors grant progress, and provides information, analyses, and recommendations to the team and the Foundation. The Science team is currently staffed by two program associates, two program officers, and the program director. The Science program will award \$30 million in grants in 2024.

The Science program primarily supports research in astronomy and cosmology, fundamental physics, and climate change science, as well as science communication and efforts to increase the participation of traditionally underrepresented populations in these areas. For this opening, education, training, and work experience in climate change science or fundamental physics is especially valued but not required. The successful program officer candidate might work on grants in any of these areas. This is an opportunity to learn about many fields and sub-fields within the physical sciences and grantmaking. Candidates are not expected to have experience in all areas listed in the job posting.

The ideal candidate will have 1) a Ph.D. or Master's degree in a climate change science-related discipline (e.g., atmospheric science, earth system modeling, paleoclimatology, geochemistry, or similar field) or a physical science (e.g., physics, astronomy, cosmology); 2) at least 3 years of relevant post-degree work experience for a PhD or at least 5 years for a Master's degree; 3) experience with a research group or scientific research initiative in an academic, business, non-profit, or government setting; 4) a strong interest in a breadth of scientific disciplines and the ability to synthesize information and ideas across a diverse landscape of scientific issues; 5) excellent research, project management, communication, and interpersonal skills; and 6) the ability to work both independently and as part of a small (six-person) team. Applicants must be currently and legally authorized to work in the United States.

Primary Responsibilities

Grantmaking and Management

- Oversee a grants portfolio and budget focused on the physical sciences and in alignment with Science Program and Foundation Board strategies.
- Source diverse and innovative research topics through scientific roundtables, literature and field reviews, technical conferences, site visits, and community input.
- Solicit proposals from potential grantees and analyze and summarize proposals for review and approval.
- Structure grant term, payment, and reporting timelines and maintain up to date records through grant termination.
- Monitor grant progress by reviewing progress reports, as well as staying in-contact with grantees and responding to issues as needed.
- Provide non-financial support to grantees, including advice concerning capacity building, fund development, project activities, and evaluation.
- Work with the Foundation's communications team to broaden the impact of the program's grant making.

Team Responsibilities

- Participate in the strategic planning process to set the direction of the Science Program and develop plans to implement and evaluate it.
- Provide regular feedback to colleagues and supervisor both informally and as a part of annual review processes.
- Prepare materials for internal and external briefings as needed.
- Support colleagues during high workload times like scientific roundtables, in-person reviews or gatherings, site visits, advisory board meetings, and programmatic deadlines.
- Assist with the onboarding and training of new team members.

Learning and Networking

- Keep informed of current research, trends, and issues in the physical sciences,

particularly those involving astronomy, cosmology, fundamental physics, and climate change science.

- Stay abreast of the federal and philanthropic funding landscape for the physical sciences.
- Develop and maintain trusted relationships with key contacts in the physical sciences (e.g., program officers at federal agencies and private foundations; former and current grantees; scientists at universities and government labs; deans and department chairs.)
- Represent the Foundation's science program to external audiences.

Foundation-wide Responsibilities

- Understand the Foundation's history, values, and current funding initiatives.
- Understand the philanthropic sector, as well as the structure and dynamics unique to a family foundation.
- Participate in and contribute to Foundation-wide collaborations, training sessions, and internal culture building.

Requirements

- Ph.D. or Master's degree in a climate change science-related discipline (e.g., atmospheric science, earth system modeling, paleoclimatology, geochemistry, or similar fields) or physical science (e.g., physics, astronomy, cosmology).
- At least 3 years of relevant post-degree work experience are required for a Ph.D., and at least 5 years are required for a Master's degree.
- Experience with a research group or scientific research initiative in an academic, business, non-profit, or government setting.
- A strong interest in a breadth of scientific disciplines and the ability to synthesize information and ideas across a diverse landscape of scientific issues.
- An understanding of the research enterprise in major research universities and institutions in the U.S.
- Demonstrated initiative and the ability to plan and think strategically about program design and implementation, manage large projects and budgets, set realistic goals and objectives, and effectively balance multiple priorities.
- Excellent project management, time management, research, writing, and communication skills, including an ability to synthesize material and to identify major opportunities in a specific area.
- Demonstrated strong interpersonal skills, with an ability to develop productive relationships with colleagues, grantees, stakeholders, and others in an ongoing and multifaceted partnership.
- Ability to work independently and to be self-motivated.
- An understanding of (or willingness to learn) how foundations function and of the grantmaking process.
- The personal presence to represent the Foundation in diverse forums and establish and maintain organizational relationships.

- An ability to effectively cope with change, shift gears comfortably, and act without having the total picture in the face of ambiguity.
- The personal motivation to embody the Foundation's values and support the Foundation's mission, vision, and goals.
- Ability and willingness to quickly learn and use new systems of technology, such as Microsoft Office applications, Salesforce, Zoom, and Box.
- Ability to travel locally and nationally (up to ~20%) to achieve the goals of the Science Program and the Foundation.
- A sense of humor, commitment to teamwork, and a positive work environment.

Location

This full-time (37.5 hours per week) exempt position is based in the San Francisco Bay Area and reports to the Science Program Director. The successful candidate must live in, or be willing to relocate to, the San Francisco Bay Area. Currently, the Foundation has a flexible hybrid approach to work, allowing staff to work from home or the office while maintaining a regular in-person cadence for community building, learning, collaboration, and direction setting. The Science team meets in the Foundation's Los Altos office several times per month and as needed to accomplish the team's objectives. Applicants must be currently and legally authorized to work in the United States.

Compensation and Benefits

The starting salary range for candidates is \$130,000 to \$175,000 per year, depending on experience.

We offer a comprehensive employee benefits package that includes employer-paid medical, dental, and vision insurance for employees and dependents, long-term disability, business travel and life insurance, flexible spending accounts for medical and child care expenses, a 401(k) plan (with a 2:1 match for employee contributions of up to 8%), commuting assistance, an employee assistance program (EAP), mental health counseling, tuition reimbursement, and a generous professional development budget, matching gifts, fitness reimbursements, fertility and adoption assistance, and identity theft protection. In addition, we allow flexible schedules.

Heising-Simons Foundation Commitment to Equal Opportunity

The Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes a diverse pool of applicants. Foundation policy prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, military service, legally protected medical condition, reproductive health decisions, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Reasonable accommodation will be made so that qualified applicants with disabilities may participate in the application process. Please advise in writing of special needs at the time of application.

Our success depends on our ability to build teams that include people with different experiences and expertise who can challenge each other's assumptions with new viewpoints and bring different perspectives to the team. We encourage women, people of color, formerly incarcerated individuals, immigrants, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and others with diverse perspectives and experiences to apply.

To Apply

Martha Montag Brown & Associates, LLC has been retained to conduct this search. Interested and qualified candidates should apply by emailing a resume, targeted cover letter, and salary requirements (based on the stated compensation range for the position) to search@marthamontagbrown.com. All correspondence will remain confidential.