



Position Specification

Marin Agricultural Land Trust

Chief Executive Officer

Private and Confidential

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Our Client

Having established itself as a national model as the first farmland trust in the nation, Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) was founded in 1980 by Ellen Straus and Phyllis Faber — and a broad coalition of ranchers, environmentalists, and community leaders — to protect the future of farming in Marin County from mounting pressures for development. MALT’s co-founders, Ellen Straus and Phyllis Faber, came together in their desire to protect the land, preserve West Marin’s agricultural community and promote local food. Across the country, we lose a staggering 175 acres of farmland every hour. In Marin however, they’re writing a different story of protecting farmland forever. To date, MALT has protected more than 54,000 acres of Marin farmland, forever. MALT’s model of using conservation easements to prevent development has been replicated to save family farms all over the country.

MALT’s mission is to permanently protect Marin’s agricultural land for agricultural use, and their vision for Marin County is a thriving agricultural community in a healthy and diverse natural environment. Protecting farmland with agricultural conservation easements extinguishes development rights, forever ensuring that the land will remain unmarred by residential estates and pavement. Farmland protection at MALT does much more than that.

MALT’s board is committed to operating with integrity, following policies that are consistent with best practices for land trusts as defined by the Land Trust Alliance. They recognize the challenges of protecting farmland in an agricultural community as small as West Marin’s, and they have ethical safeguards built into their practices and policies to prevent conflicts of interest. The board has also charted a path for MALT’s future work, which will include advancing MALT’s 2019 strategic plan, creating a Next Generation task force to explore MALT’s role in supporting new farmers and ranchers, and supporting a diversity committee who will help the board and staff evaluates its make-up and programs with an eye to equity and inclusion.

MALT conservation easements often allow farmers and ranchers to invest in their businesses in a way that would not otherwise be possible. MALT dedicates staff time and organizational funding to their landowners, helping them tackle the many challenges of land stewardship and make their rangeland more resilient to drought through smart grazing practices and carefully planned water distribution systems, both of which bolster perennial grasses, sequester carbon and help the soil retain more water. This work is as good for the livestock and a landowner’s bottom line as it is for the planet.

Finally, when MALT protects farms and ranches, they protect critical habitat and important watersheds too, which landowners, with support from MALT staff, work tirelessly to preserve year after year. They appreciate everything their farmers do for farming, the foodshed, native flora and fauna, the precious waterways and the land.

For more information on MALT please visit: <https://malt.org/>

The Role

This moment marks an exciting time in MALT's history as they seek to find an innovative and inspiring leader who will drive on the cutting edge of farmland conservation. Reporting directly to the Board, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MALT will build on the successes of MALT and continue moving the organization and the community forward. MALT seeks an innovative and dynamic leader, that will lead the organization to enrich the farming communities, expand public support, and be an advocate for the mission of land conservation and local food in Marin County. The successful candidate will think creatively about the capabilities of a land trust and lead the organization to adopt new and evolved practices.

This proven executive, with previous experience in the Non-Profit or Private sector, will need to be action oriented in executing a compelling vision for MALT's future. They must implement MALT's new strategic plan that advances their model to provide tools and resources to the future generations of landowners, farmers and the broader community.

This individual is responsible for all aspects of the MALT's organizational health including fundraising, setting strategy, stewardship, and community engagement programs, and building collaborative relationships with local, regional, and national partners.

The CEO will bring a sophisticated approach to the structuring of land protection transactions, and as MALT's chief fundraiser, the CEO will also significantly leverage private philanthropy to further the impact of land trust. They will be deeply involved in the ongoing cultivation of refined donors and key funders and will work closely with the development team to increase and diversify the organization's funding base.

The CEO will build strong relationships with key partners in Marin County and the State of California as well as the broader national land conservation community. A superb storyteller and advocate for MALT's mission, they will prioritize the use of marketing and communications to continue to raise the profile of and engagement with MALT amongst the full diversity of Marin County's communities.

The CEO needs to be the chief ambassador, internally and externally, for its community conservation initiatives. MALT offers a wide variety of activities, education, and outreach aimed at engaging audiences as diverse as the lands and communities it represents. The new leader must be a champion for the range of socioeconomic constituents in the county and have a vision of equity and inclusion.

The successful candidate will lead with respect, compassion, and appreciation for the efforts and diverse perspectives of every individual that MALT employs, partners with, and reaches out to. They will bring a forward-thinking mindset and promote a collaborative and supportive working environment that fosters trust and teamwork among the operations, conservation, stewardship, development and communications teams.

Candidate Profile

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we highlight the following:

Setting Strategy and Innovation

- Creative and innovative approach to achieving MALT's mission.
- MALT is seeking a leader with a demonstrated passion for and commitment to land conservation.
- An entrepreneurial and collaborative method to bringing fresh ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the industry.
- A strong analytical mind and the ability to assess strategic and operational alternatives by seeking and analyzing data from a variety of sources to support decision-making.
- The ability to effectively ensure organizational stability by balancing the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of capacity, and to lead the development of realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and successful.
- An understanding of the most current approaches to land conservation and stewardship is preferred. Is a continuous learner, approaches learning with an open mindset – always remaining open to and interested in new ways to further MALT's mission.

Building Authentic Relationships, Consensus, and Community Support

- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence; an outstanding communicator able to represent MALT effectively and authentically to diverse audiences.
- An ability to inspire trust and connection with others through influence and active drive to achieve success.
- Demonstrated achievement as a fundraiser who enthusiastically embraces the responsibility of engaging the full range of MALT's supporters from major donors, to foundation and government funders, to loyal supporters.
- Experienced in developing productive partnerships with peers in local and state government, nonprofit, philanthropic, and private sectors.

Leading Teams

- Exhibited personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; sensitive to and effective at operating in an environment with a wide range of constituent communities.
- Operates with a clear focus on organizational goals amid multiple competing risks and demands, and a capacity to prioritize effectively to deliver results.
- Proactively engages and supports workplace dialogue around diversity topics resulting in a reinforcement of employee values and inclusive behaviors.
- The ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others. Supportive of and respects the expertise of staff.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement and positivity; open to feedback and self-improvement.

Governance

- Able to develop and sustain productive relationships with board members.
- A consensus builder, able to successfully drive groups to agreement and align diverse stakeholders with organizational goals.

Personal Characteristics

- Energetic, charismatic, and engaging.
- Collaborative.
- A person of integrity who inspires trust and respect.
- Calm and cool under pressure.
- Approachable and warm.
- Enjoys playing a public role in service to an organizational mission.

Contact

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