

Position Announcement

Date	23 January 2014
Position Title	Program Officer for the African Rift Valley
Department(s)	Grantmaking – African Rift Valley Program
Reports to	Director of Grantmaking
Location	TBD, potentially Nairobi, Kenya.
US FLSA Status	Exempt

The Christensen Fund

The Christensen Fund (www.christensenfund.org) is a sixty-year old foundation in Northern California with a long history of funding internationally in the arts, environmental conservation, and education. Since 2002, the foundation has focused its mission around biocultural diversity (the intersection of people, landscape, culture and ecology). Grant programs mostly support local initiatives in selected priority regions around the world, which have unique heritage and are likely to play an important role for sustaining planetary diversity. Our regions currently include the African Rift Valley from Ethiopia to Northern Kenya, Central Asia, Melanesia, the US Southwest, Northwest Mexico, The San Francisco Bay Area and Northern Australia (transitioning). Complementing grant making in the regions, Christensen seeks to build knowledge and practice worldwide around its mission focus through its Global Program.

Christensen's grantmaking worldwide finds much opportunity for innovation and long term thinking to back dedicated people, creative thinkers, unusual institutions and social movements. With our focus on development strategies rooted in support for the local stewards and guardians of place, culture and environment, Christensen makes grants to community-based organizations, local and international NGOs, universities, arts and cultural centers and groups, local governments, museums, and other institutions around the themes of Sustaining Socio-ecological Resilience, Sustaining Foodways and Livelihoods, Celebrating and Revitalizing Cultural Expression, and Promoting Knowledge Systems & Biocultural Education.

The successful candidate will be joining a foundation with a unique institutional culture that deeply values diversity and creativity.

The Position

The Program Officer for the African Rift Valley (ARV) is an existing position that will open up at The Christensen Fund on June 30th, 2014. Dr. Wolde Gossa Tadesse, the founding Program Officer for the ARV region, has developed a significant and impactful portfolio of grantees working around biocultural diversity issues over the last ten years in the prioritized areas of Southwestern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya. Based on an outcome oriented regional strategy, most of our funding in Northern Kenya and SW Ethiopia is now channeled to community associations and grass roots NGOs through indigenous-led intermediary organizations who work towards development strategies rooted in the heritage of their agricultural and pastoral landscapes and cultures. We are also supporting festivals, education, and work with local universities, governments and others around landscape-level approaches to local development. We are not trying to “preserve” cultures or nature, but instead to back approaches to progress adaptive to

local realities and values that can integrate a future for the unique richness of economies, lifeways, landscapes, foodways and biodiversity. Funding is concentrated within three primary landscapes:

- 1) The Rift Valley of Ethiopia encompassing the southwest highlands, and the eastern, central and western rift,
- 2) The Pastoral Southern Lowlands of Ethiopia and
- 3) The Desert Mosaic of Northern Kenya.

Supporting grantmaking around regional exchange and networking, and linkages to global grantmaking and other regional efforts rounds out the portfolio.

The new Program Officer is expected to build on current directions within this maturing portfolio helping partners work towards increased institutional sustainability, enhancing biocultural and landscape based livelihoods, increasing collaboration with other donors and linking effectively with national policy level efforts in the region while potentially developing new directions in response to evolving needs and opportunities. For this hire we seek a visionary with imagination and energy to support practical results on the ground. S/he will be passionate about diversity and environmental and indigenous issues, with a particular talent for understanding how to connect new ideas, traditional stewardship and funding institutions. S/he will be a networker and team player, seeking allies everywhere while listening to local people. At this stage in the progress of the portfolio we are particularly seeking a person who can grow and diversify support with governments, civil society and other funders for development approaches that build upon local livelihoods, agro-ecological approaches, cultural assets and resource management systems.

Position Responsibilities

The Program Officer (PO) for African Rift Valley, reporting to the Director of Grantmaking and working in a Grantmaking team with a Grants Associate/Specialist and in-region consultants (as appropriate), manages the portfolio of grantees working in African Rift Valley pursuant to the current regional strategy. Duties of the Program Officer for African Rift Valley include but are not limited to:

Grantmaking

The Program Officer will be responsible for:

- Building on past years of grantmaking and the lessons learned within a mature portfolio, bringing energy and vision to implementing existing grant making strategies and developing new ideas to increase the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes for the region and articulating them to potential grantees and other stakeholders;
- Developing and recommending grant proposals for approval, overseeing application declinations, and reviewing and evaluating grantee narrative and financial reports, working collaboratively in Grantmaking team and with other colleagues in Grants Administration;
- Actively seeking and managing co-funding by collaborating with other Christensen staff, partnering foundations and other institutions to craft, finance and implement grantmaking;
- Partnering (as appropriate) with grantees to advance their institutional development and program achievement, and participating in their events;
- Helping grantees and other relevant organizations network and learn from each other locally, across the region and internationally;
- Articulating expected portfolio outcomes within priority landscapes and themes, planning for their monitoring, measurement, lessons sharing, storytelling and celebration;
- Continuing to evolve and refine grantmaking strategy for the region, summarizing learning and new directions through annual plan memos;

- Developing and implementing an explicit plan for enhancing grantee communications capacity and contributions to building the field of biocultural diversity.

Regional Staff Management

The Program Officer will work with the Christensen management team to evaluate and plan for local staffing needs in the program region. S/he will work with the appropriate staff to determine job descriptions, recruitment, and on-boarding of any consultants or employees as appropriate. S/he will supervise any in-region resources for the program region and will be responsible for budgeting, authorizing, and reviewing their expenses and their work.

Regional Financial Oversight

The Program Officer will work with Finance and other areas of the organization as appropriate to develop and manage the operational budget for African Rift Valley Program area. S/he will work with the Director of Grantmaking, the Grants Administration team and others in the allocation of the grant budget for the program area.

General and Institutional

The Program Officer's ongoing general and institutional responsibilities include:

- Maintaining close knowledge of the ideas, issues and institutions in their field of responsibility, and of the circumstances of communities, landscapes and biodiversity across regions of concern in the African Rift Valley;
- Continuing to cultivate and maintain relationships with government authorities at multiple levels, other donors, policy makers, the private sector and other constituencies to heighten awareness and engagement in relevant mission related issues;
- Sharing his/her expertise and imagination to work collaboratively with other Christensen staff in pursuit of the organization's overall programming and mission, including contributing to strategic planning, learning efforts, grantee exchanges and other connections;
- Presenting grantmaking learning around outcomes, grantmaking progress, proposed grants, and other briefings to the Christensen Board of Trustees;
- Traveling to Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Rift, Northern Kenya and other parts of the program region as required for effective program management. Travelling to the Christensen head office in the United States on a regular basis and to other countries from time to time to visit other regions and to represent Christensen at international conferences (Travel in the course of performing his/her job responsibilities may be up to 25% of time); and
- Such other duties as are consistent with the position.

Traits and Qualifications

The staff of The Christensen Fund comprises a diverse and lively-minded team who work with energy and humor to make a difference in a deeply troubled world.

The following are required characteristics for this position:

- Deep knowledge of the landscapes and cultures of the African Rift Valley, particularly Southwest Ethiopia and Northern Kenya;
- Deep understanding of the connections between biological and cultural diversity, and a delight in thinking in integrated ways;

- Familiarity with the history and complexities of program region and the experiences of communities with handling change, as well as with the institutions, associations and research groups working to support their efforts;
- Successful experience linking community organizations and processes to state, national, regional and global processes, institutions and policies;
- Proven track record of building the capacity of local organizations;
- An ability to travel around the region and to seek out, listen to, understand and respect applicants, grantees and other stakeholders and work in support of their passions and dreams;
- Superior written and oral communication skills in English, an ability to work in Amharic and/or Swahili, and likely one or more local languages of the region;
- Well-organized and self-sufficient, IT-savvy, and able to manage time and work under pressure; and
- A demonstrated ability and inclination to work as part of a team.

Applicants should possess:

- A graduate degree (or equivalent experience) in an environmental or social science field, along with knowledge of bio-cultural diversity, agro-ecology, stewardship, livelihoods, landscape, resilience, and the issues of tribal peoples; and
- Demonstrated commitment to the visions and struggles of peoples of the African Rift Valley to secure their development, cultural integrity and environmental heritage.

The successful candidate is likely to have experience in:

- Participatory research and advocacy combined with practical engagement in supporting local environmental and cultural initiatives;
- Prior work involving putting ideas and creativity to work in support of maintaining diversity, revitalizing communities, ecologies and local economies; and
- Prior employment in a grantmaking foundation or non-profit organization, or experience partnering with such entities.

Terms of Employment

We envision this position to be based in the program region (potentially Kenya) with an initial orientation period at our San Francisco main office. The initial term for this position will be a three year contract, with relocation assistance. It is hoped that the new Program Officer can join by mid-year 2014. An excellent salary and benefits package commensurate with qualifications and experience will be provided.

Christensen Program Officers are encouraged to maintain active intellectual and creative engagement in the development of their fields of specialty, in particular as these advance Christensen's mission and strategies and its grantee communities.

To Apply

Please submit a resume (CV) and cover letter outlining your relevant experience, financial requirements, and why you are interested in working in this position with The Christensen Fund to programresumes@christensenfund.org by 15 March 2014. Please indicate ARV PO on the subject line. Review of credentials will begin immediately. Principals only. No phone calls please.

The Christensen Fund is an Equal Opportunity Employer.