



Position Specification

Electronic Frontier Foundation
Executive Director

Our Client

The Electronic Frontier Foundation is the leading nonprofit organization defending civil liberties in the digital world. Founded in 1990, EFF champions user privacy, free expression, and innovation through impact litigation, policy analysis, grassroots activism, and technology development.

EFF's mission is to ensure that technology supports freedom, justice, and innovation for all people of the world. Even in the fledgling days of the Internet, EFF understood that protecting access to technology was central to advancing freedom for all. In the years that followed, EFF used their fiercely independent voice to clear the way for open-source software, encryption, security research, file sharing tools, and a world of emerging technologies.

Today, EFF uses the unique expertise of leading technologists, activists, and attorneys in their efforts to defend free speech online, fight illegal surveillance, advocate for users and innovators, and support freedom-enhancing technologies. EFF has become a leading voice in online rights debates and has forged a vast network of concerned members and partner organizations spanning the globe. The organization's work has also empowered hundreds of thousands of individuals through their Action Center, an online organizing tool. EFF plays a critical role as an expert organization, advising policymakers and educating the press and the public through comprehensive analysis, educational guides, activist workshops, and more.

The Role

EFF stands at a pivotal moment in its history. As the landscape of digital rights rapidly evolves and debates over AI permeate society, EFF seeks a visionary, strategic, and collaborative Executive Director to guide the organization through its next phase, bringing new ideas while building on past successes. Based in San Francisco, and reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will serve as the chief executive officer and senior-most strategist, leader and advocate for EFF's mission, values and operations.

This Executive Director will have responsibility over all administrative, financial, development and programmatic activities at EFF. They will build upon the EFF's 35 years of groundbreaking work, engage in the evolving landscape of artificial intelligence—its opportunities, risks, and implications—and help shape how EFF shows up in this critical global conversation. The new ED will lead a dedicated team of legal, technical, and advocacy professionals, steward EFF's strong organizational culture, and ensure long-term organizational sustainability and impact.

Key responsibilities include:

Strategic Leadership & Vision

- Partner with the Board and staff to define and advance a courageous, forward-looking strategic vision for EFF.
- Lead the development, prioritization, and execution of a comprehensive strategic plan that balances proactive agenda-setting with responsive action.
- Ensure clarity of mission and purpose, aligning organizational priorities and resources for maximum impact.

External Engagement & Influence

- Serve as a compelling, credible public voice for EFF's mission and work, amplifying the expertise of staff and engaging diverse audiences including media, policymakers, and the broader public.
- Build and nurture partnerships and coalitions across the technology, legal, advocacy, and philanthropic sectors.

Financial Sustainability & Fundraising

- Serve as a visible and effective fundraiser, stewarding relationships with individual donors, foundations, and key supporters.
- Develop and implement strategies to diversify and grow EFF's revenue streams, including membership, grassroots, institutional, and major gifts.
- Ensure financial discipline, transparency, and sustainability in partnership with the Board and executive team.

Organizational Culture & People Leadership

- Foster a positive, inclusive, high-performing, and accountable culture that honors EFF's activist DNA while supporting professional growth.
- Partner with unionized staff and maintain a collaborative, constructive relationship with the staff union.

Governance & Operations

- Ensure effective collaboration and alignment with the Board of Directors.
- Oversee operations, compliance, and risk management, ensuring organizational resilience and adaptability.
- Model transparency, integrity, and ethical leadership in all aspects of decision-making.

Candidate Profile

The next Executive Director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation will be a bold, visionary leader committed to defending civil liberties in the digital world and ensuring that technology supports democracy, freedom, and human rights. The ED will lead with courage, vision, personal integrity, and a deep understanding of EFF's unique role at the intersection of law and technology. They will be an excellent communicator who can be a compelling, credible public voice for EFF.

They will have an established track record with a forward-looking vision for emerging technologies and digital issues — especially AI—and guide EFF's role at the intersection of innovation, civil liberties, and digital rights. They will bring a deep commitment to digital rights and civil liberties, with a track record of impact in digital rights, technology policy, or a closely related field. The ED will be a proven leader in a complex, mission-driven organization of comparable scale, with experience managing multidisciplinary teams and budgets. Ideally, this is an individual who has run an organization of similar stature and importance and/or demonstrated relevant leadership in an analogous capacity; the setting is less important, and EFF recognizes that highly qualified individuals can come from a variety of settings including nonprofit, legal, governmental, academic and private sector settings. A law degree is not required but EFF's next ED will supervise legal decision-making and will understand impact litigation, legislative advocacy, and the advantages and challenges of this vital EFF work.

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

Strategic Vision: Success in this role will require nimble, innovative leadership. The ED will steward efforts to engage a broad range of communities in the opportunities and threats stemming from digital technology. To reach these goals, the next ED will spearhead new initiatives and directions for EFF while keeping EFF's values and mission front and center. They will have the capacity to lead the organization and Board in setting EFF's vision and implementing its strategic plan. This leader must operate as a collaborative influencer, who listens first and acts second.

Communications & Storytelling: The ED will lead with courage and clarity, not just within EFF but in public conversations about digital rights. The ED will be a thought-leader, educating the world about how to understand and influence the relationships between technology, rights, power, and justice—connecting everyone's concerns about the future to EFF's mission, message, and programs. EFF's new ED will be comfortable working with a wide range of experts, including attorneys, technologists, and activists, both inside EFF and in the wider world. They will know how to engage

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with stakeholders like members, major donors, and lawmakers. The ED will be an enthusiastic and authentic participant in shaping public discourse and influencing policy, including activities like challenging media appearances, writing op-eds, and maintaining a vital social media presence.

Fundraising: EFF's leader will have the ability to sustain and grow the organization's financial support. They will bring demonstrated success in fundraising across multiple channels (grassroots, institutional, major gifts), and in engaging donors and partners. The successful candidate will build upon the organization's current funding base to increase and diversify financial support and bring demonstrated experience in cultivating new and innovative revenue streams. If from outside of the nonprofit sector, candidates will have a demonstrated track record of building partnerships that lead to sustainable revenue generation. This leader must also have a familiarity with budgeting and business planning.

Organizational Leadership: The new Executive Director will be a seasoned executive, eager to commit to ongoing excellence. The ED must have experience in managing managers and developing the next generation of digital rights leaders. The new ED should lead with empathy and humor, fostering a convivial work culture of trust, respect, and accountability. They will be skilled at communicating the vision of the organization across the teams and inspiring collective and individual actions towards the organization's goals and objectives. Experience working with or within unionized environments and a commitment to collaborative, bottom-up leadership is helpful. The ED will have a low-ego, collaborative style with a commitment to transparency, feedback, and continuous improvement. Ultimately, they will be comfortable leading through ambiguity, nimbly navigating through complex situations, and managing through change, and leading nimbly through complex situations.

Compensation

The estimated compensation package for this position is approximately \$350K-\$425K, although the salary and total compensation of the finalist selected for this role will be determined based on various factors, including, but not limited to, scope of role, level of experience and stature in the industry, accomplishments, internal equity, budget, and subject to Fair Market Value evaluation. The compensation range listed is a good faith determination of potential base compensation as a component of the total compensation for the role at the time of this job advertisement and may be modified in the future. Relocation assistance is available for candidates moving to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Location

This position is based in San Francisco, California at the EFF offices. The role will involve regular travel.

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively engaged to lead this search. Interested candidates are invited to visit the Russell Reynolds Engage platform to apply and submit their materials, [accessible through this URL](#). Candidates will first be asked to register and create a profile. From the home page, navigate to "Job Post", click "Apply for Position", and enter the following career code: **2509-034NA** to submit a resume and cover letter for consideration.

All nominations are welcome at eff@russellreynolds.com. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.