



Human Rights Funders Network



PROTEUS FUND

Executive Director
New York, NY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) is an internationally recognized non-profit committed to connecting human rights grantmakers and philanthropists to advance human rights. As a global network of almost 450 institutions that engages over 1,800 individuals, HRFN regularly convenes colleague human rights donors to share insights, strategies, and learnings, as well as mobilize resources for human rights. Looking to strengthen its network, leverage its membership, and plan for continued impact and innovation in human rights philanthropy, HRFN seeks a seasoned leader, strategist, and coalition builder to serve as its next Executive Director (ED).

With an expansive membership base that includes member organizations from all over the globe, HRFN is uniquely and strategically poised towards moving philanthropy towards effectively resourcing human rights work and movements globally. In light of growing threats to human rights, the rise of populism, and recent pushback on philanthropy, HRFN's mission is more urgent than ever. HRFN's annual conference, working groups, and research initiatives have served as strategic opportunities for productive dialogue and collaboration around these issues for HRFN's peer-led network of nearly 450 institutions. The new Executive Director will lead HRFN in the creation of innovative strategies and program design that empower and equip members to respond effectively to these challenges. Where necessary, the new ED will seek ways to enhance the relevance of these programmatic elements, as well as identify opportunities for new program offerings and initiatives.

HRFN is uniquely positioned to define its role and deepen its impact in the human rights philanthropy space. The new Executive Director will work with staff and Steering Committee to craft and execute an organizational agenda that builds on its strong network and reputation, generates new opportunities for HRFN to drive national and global conversations around human rights, and positions HRFN as a key thought leader in the space. S/he/they will help to shape a future-facing vision for the organization that aligns with HRFN's mission and [theory of change](#), staff leadership and capacity, and the collective needs of its members. This exciting opportunity calls for an inspirational thought leader and manager with an exceptional combination of qualities, skills, and experiences, including: a sophisticated understanding of human rights movements and international philanthropy; expertise and experience in creating and implementing innovative strategies, programs, and organizational infrastructure; proven partnership building skills and creative thinking around how to tap into new opportunities; a track record of effective vision-setting and investment-building among diverse stakeholders; and a demonstrated commitment to strengthening a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion.

This search is being conducted with assistance from Tamar Datan, Hallie Dietsch, and Yuniya Khan of the national search firm [NPAG](#). For more information and instructions for submitting applications and nominations, please reference the final section of this document.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Human Rights Funders Network (HRFN) is a global network of 1,800 human rights grantmakers and philanthropists in over 70 countries working collaboratively to advance human rights through effective philanthropy. Founded in 1994 by a small group of human rights grantmakers who wanted to build a platform from which to share insights, strategies, and learnings, HRFN has since grown into a vibrant global community of funders who learn from each other, grapple with challenges, and leverage resources for human rights. HRFN takes great pride in being a peer-led network for human rights grantmakers by human rights grantmakers.

HRFN's membership has grown significantly in recent years, particularly among funders operating in the Global South and East. With 95 dues-paying member institutions, and more than 350 additional grantmaking institutions engaging in its activities and opportunities, HRFN makes it possible for funders from across the globe to gain full access to tools, resources, conferences, and a network of potential partners. Through HRFN, members gain the opportunity to engage with human rights activists, movements, and funders, and explore new approaches to sustain a global human rights movement under threat.

Today, HRFN's activities encompass a range of programmatic offerings, including an annual conference that creates a space for member organizations to collaborate, engage, and learn from one another. Online webinars offer an opportunity to examine emerging issues and trends, and strategize around them. Working groups centered around specific issues and regions allow members to engage in strategic problem-solving and collective advocacy. In addition, HRFN provides access to information and research tools which funders can use to inform and guide their grantmaking around the world. Current initiatives also include the Principles Project, a collaboration with members to identify and articulate the human rights principles which should guide human rights grantmaking.

All of HRFN's activities lead toward the ultimate goal of ensuring that philanthropy is effectively resourcing human rights work and movements.

HRFN currently operates under a fiscal sponsorship agreement with Proteus Fund, which provides support for financial systems, human resources, and operational tasks. A New York-based staff of four works closely with the Steering Committee – volunteers from HRFN's membership who assist with oversight, guidance, and direction – to lead and execute the programmatic work and ensure the smooth functioning of the organization. In addition, member-led advisory committees design gatherings, lead working groups, and guide research initiatives.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Building on the foundation of twenty-five years of service and collaboration, the new Executive Director will lead HRFN into a new era of growth and transformation with support from the Steering Committee, dedicated staff, and an engaged cohort of members. This is a rare opportunity to harness the strength of a global network meeting a critical need for services and advocacy, and foster its ongoing growth and impact.

Vision and Leadership

Working collaboratively with the Steering Committee and staff, the Executive Director will develop, clearly articulate, and implement HRFN's vision to empower human rights funding organizations, building on the current momentum to foster collaboration, share strategies, and strengthen solidarity in the face of growing threats to human rights. Acting as a thought leader, the Executive Director will refine an organization-wide approach to administrative and programmatic fidelity, strengthening current operations and taking advantage of opportunities for improvement and increased efficiency.

Innovation and Program Design

HRFN's annual conference, working groups, research, and webinars have served as opportunities for productive dialogue and collaboration. Moving forward, the Executive Director will lead innovative strategy and program design by identifying opportunities for external engagement, new program offerings, enhanced programming at the annual conference and/or additional in-person and virtual collaborations. The Executive Director will also work closely with staff to advance and support existing program design and member engagement initiatives.

External Engagement and Community Building

Representing HRFN as a leader in efforts to advance human rights internationally, the Executive Director will cultivate relationships and engage peers and other leaders in this field on a global scale, with particular attention paid to stakeholders in the Global South and East. The Executive Director will seek opportunities to engage in discussions and advocacy initiatives that will advance HRFN and its members' goals and missions. She/he/they will facilitate the creation of spaces and opportunities for members to share strategies, insights, and innovative approaches for advancing human rights on a global scale. In addition, the new Executive Director will effectively represent HRFN to its members, the public, the press, philanthropic and advocacy leaders, and other key stakeholders in a way that brings to life the values, vision, and goals of the organization.

Management and Team Building

The Executive Director will demonstrate leadership and self-awareness to build positive relationships with HRFN's uniquely talented and dedicated staff, Steering Committee, and membership. She/he/they will cultivate and foster a strong culture of participatory management, collaboration, learning, and innovation across the organization, rooted in HRFN's human rights values and commitment to advancing human rights work and movements. The Executive Director will nurture the continued growth of HRFN's staff and provide consistent, clear communication to engender trust and promote team morale and transparency.

Governance and Operations Oversight

This individual will lead the creation and definition of a strategic framework for HRFN's activities and goals, including clarification of the roles of staff, Steering Committee, and Proteus Fund. Additionally, the new Executive Director will provide programmatic and operational oversight to HRFN, including but not limited to: existing and future contracts with website, technology, and other consultants; maintaining relationships with and acting as lead point of contact for HRFN's fiscal sponsor and office landlord (Proteus and WeWork, respectively); collaborating closely with Proteus Fund to monitor all elements of HRFN's finances and HR systems.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

While no one candidate will possess all the qualifications listed below, the ideal candidate will embody many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- Demonstrated success in both start-up settings and established organizations; experience creating strategies, programs, infrastructure, and innovation, without a clear or pre-existing template for success, while leading effectively within existing structures.
- Organizational acumen earned through experience leading staff in all facets of operations, from talent and budget management to strategic planning, communications, etc.
- Strong entrepreneurial spirit and demonstrated ability to identify opportunities for growth, solicit feedback and ideas from diverse groups of thought partners, and design innovative strategies to drive change and success.
- An executive leader with broad knowledge and standing in the fields of both human rights advocacy work and philanthropy on a global scale.
- Exceptional cultural competency: flexibility and sensitivity to work effectively in a wide variety of geographic, political, and cultural settings.
- Firsthand experience or deep understanding of developing and implementing robust fund development strategy drawing on both effective grants and a dues management system.
- A deep and authentic connection to advancing human rights advocacy and the global communities affected by social injustice, including the ability to recognize both their abiding power and resiliency, and the complexity of the challenges they face.
- Strong relationship-building skills, and an authentic interest in listening to and learning from others; the ability to establish trust with a diverse set of stakeholders; a commitment to honoring and elevating community expertise and wisdom.
- Experience influencing policy and advocacy efforts, and establishing meaningful collaborations with relevant partners, agencies, and coalitions.
- High emotional intelligence; the ability to effectively command the spotlight, combined with the wisdom to know when to strategically direct it elsewhere and share leadership.
- Effective communication skills, and a compelling personal presence that reflects and embodies HRFN's mission and values.
- Advanced degree preferred or equivalent lived experience that is aligned with HRFN's approach and values.

TO APPLY

This search is being conducted by Tamar Datan, Hallie Dietsch, and Yuniya Khan of the national search firm [NPAG](#). Nominations and applications including a cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, and your resume (in Word or PDF format) should be submitted to: HRFN-ED@nonprofitprofessionals.com. More information about HRFN can be found at www.hrfn.org.

Cultivating a diverse and inclusive team is an essential component of HRFN's commitment to advance equity. Candidates of all backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.