

Position and Candidate Specification



Chief Executive Officer

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About the Organization

Heising-Simons Foundation

The Heising-Simons Foundation 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.

In 2007, Mark Heising and Liz Simons established the Foundation and were later joined on the Board by their daughter, Caitlin Heising. In 2016, Liz and Mark joined the Giving Pledge, publicly committing the majority of their wealth to philanthropic causes. You can read the letter they wrote about why they joined [here](#).

With the establishment of sister organization [Heising-Simons Action Fund](#), the family and staff see increased capacity to leverage politically what the organization seeks to achieve philanthropically. Ultimately, both organizations are dedicated to ensuring that all people, especially people who have been historically marginalized, have access to urgent human needs: childcare, knowledge, a livable earth, and whole, safe, dignified lives.

The Foundation's Board and staff feel incredibly fortunate to work with and support great leaders and organizations in vital endeavors. In 2021, the Foundation awarded more than \$134.5 million across nearly 450 grants; a comprehensive breakdown of the Foundation's 2021 giving is available on the [HSF grantmaking hub](#). Since its first grant in 2007, the Foundation has awarded more than \$900 million and is on a trajectory to cross the \$1 billion giving threshold in the next year.

Read more about the Foundation's historic [grantmaking](#), yearly [financials](#), and [staff](#) on the Foundation website.

Position Summary

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Heising-Simons Foundation has an outstanding opportunity to impact and improve lives through the power of philanthropy and political impact. Driving change across the impact areas of Education, Science, Human Rights, Climate and Clean Energy, and Community and Opportunity, the CEO will lead the Foundation and the related C4 to achieve the mission of unlocking knowledge, opportunity, and possibilities for all humans. The Heising-Simons Foundation is seeking an experienced leader who embraces the Foundation's legacy and values.

The CEO will work closely with the Heising-Simons Foundation Board and its talented team to generate, assess, and actualize current and future philanthropic priorities while helping to propel the organization to an exciting next chapter of societal engagement and impact. The foundation's new leader will inherit a foundation that has built a strong reputation, a healthy internal culture, and enjoys deep relationships with grantees and partners in the Bay Area, nationally, and internationally. The next CEO will have the opportunity to expand an international network of peers and partners and maximize the foundation's programmatic impact legislatively and philanthropically.

This leadership role is based in San Francisco or Los Altos, California.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to Liz Simons, Chair of the Board
Mark Heising, Vice Chair of the Board
Caitlin Heising, Vice Chair of the Board

Direct reports Chief Operating Officer and Corporate Treasurer
Director of Journalism and Communications and
Corporate Secretary
Executive Assistant to the President and CEO and
Human Resources Specialist

Program Directors:

- Director of Science
- Director of Education
- Director of Climate and Clean Energy
- Director of Human Rights
- Director of Community and Opportunity

Other key relationships Legislative leaders locally and nationally

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Senior executive management leadership

Significant time spent as a senior or leading member of an executive team; demonstrated organizational management accountability, a focus on results, strategy, and implementation, and capacity for critical thinking and creative problem solving.

External relations

Record of representing an organization to a wide range of audiences including policy makers and legislative bodies, in ways that inspire confidence, engagement, and partnerships.

Relationship cultivation

A diplomatic listener and convener, with a proven ability to bridge differences, and elevate diverse interests and perspectives; a low-ego team player.

Evidenced commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging

Strong commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging, with a track record of supporting action and progress in reducing inequities as a leader.

Successful partnering with a Board of Directors or passionate stakeholders

Track record of translating vision to strategy, ideally within a nonprofit or philanthropic setting; particular interest in leaders who have worked with family boards engaged in strategic programmatic areas.

Mission alignment

Evidenced commitment to and passion for the Foundation's impact areas of climate and clean energy, human rights, education, science, and community and opportunity.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Strategic, Visionary Leadership

- Works with the Board of Directors to balance short-term objectives with long-term vision to drive the organization's strategic direction.
- Anticipates and maintains awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing the organization, its grantees, and the philanthropic sector broadly; leads efforts to address and adjust the Foundation's actions and approaches as appropriate.
- Models and drives excellence, impact, and innovation in service of the Foundation's mission.
- Demonstrates intellectual dexterity and curiosity, welcoming the opinions of others; challenges assumptions and conventional wisdom with specific, supported, thought leadership.

Build Relationships, Partnerships, and Influence

- Demonstrates resourcefulness, creativity, and respectful persistence in forging authentic relationships built on demonstrated integrity, mutual respect, and trust.
- Is approachable and accessible, both internally and externally.
- Encourages connection with and appropriately influences a breadth of stakeholders, including staff, community members, philanthropic leaders, national and local foundations, and public officials; navigates political conversations deftly.
- Upholds the highest standards for inclusivity, while prioritizing the Heising-Simons values, strategic priorities, and desired impact.
- Builds and sustains collaborative, mutually beneficial partnerships with external entities across the philanthropic sector and with policymakers.
- Passionately articulates the vision of the Foundation in ways that inspire and engage, expanding and advancing the scope and impact of the Foundation's mission and raising its public profile in relevant circles.

Operational Acumen and People Leadership

- Engages and develops a talented team whose expertise, passion, and professionalism will drive continued expanded impact and influence.
- Creates an inclusive workplace environment that attracts, retains, and develops underrepresented talent for the organization; encourages open communication.
- Builds and ensures operational systems and procedures that drive efficiency, transparency, and philanthropic best-practice, with clearly articulated expectations and measurable goals.
- Delegates strategic objectives to leaders and teams within the organization with clear and explicit intent; building a strong sense of empowerment and shared responsibility across the organization.
- Holds the organization accountable for its commitments, provides clarity, fairness, and constructive feedback, and motivates team members to achieve their goals.

OTHER PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal

High executive energy

Incredible integrity

Empathy

Low-ego leadership style with marked flexibility; comfort with ambiguity

Diplomatic, with proven ability to respect, honor, and bridge differences

APPLICATIONS AND NOMINATIONS

To submit application materials or nominate someone to serve as the next CEO of the Heising-Simons Foundation, please email HeisingSimonsCEO@SpencerStuart.com.