



CELEBRATING **30** YEARS

Agricultural Stewardship Association

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

The Agricultural Stewardship Association (ASA) seeks a dynamic, strategic Executive Director to lead and oversee its efforts to protect working farms and forests, connect people to the land, and promote a vibrant future for agriculture and forestry in Washington and Rensselaer counties in upstate New York.

ABOUT ASA:

ASA is an acclaimed, community-based, non-profit accredited land trust founded in 1990 by a small group of farmers. Located in the Upper Hudson Valley, ASA works in a region flanked to the West by the Hudson River and to the East by the Berkshire Taconic and Green Mountains (of Vermont). Agriculture is a vibrant part of the area's rural character and economy, and an important contributor to the food shed serving the 60 million people who live within a five-hour drive of ASA's focal area. ASA's goal is to protect enough land to make sure farming and forestry will always be a core part of our region's future. ASA combines the use of land conservation tools with programming to accomplish its mission.

ASA has partnered with landowners to permanently conserve over 24,000 acres of working lands through the purchase and donation of conservation easements in Washington and Rensselaer counties, and expects to protect an additional 6,000 acres of high quality, diverse farm and forest lands by the end of 2022. To connect people to the land, ASA facilitates educational and outreach programs, ranging from hosting workshops on topics such as regenerative agriculture, forest management and safe logging practices to facilitating farm photography camps for urban youth. ASA curates an annual *Landscapes for Landsake* Art Exhibition that showcases the thriving artistic community inspired by the area's landscapes that draws over 2,000 people to one of the region's largest cultural events.

To ensure that high quality farmland continues to be available to the next generation, ASA actively participates in American Farmland Trust's *Hudson Valley Farmlink Network* and *Farmland for a New Generation New York* program. ASA is not only a trusted resource for the area's diverse agricultural and forestry communities but also an active and highly respected partner with community, government and other leaders to advance broader local planning initiatives.

ASA is led by a dedicated, engaged, and diversely experienced Board of 15 directors. It benefits from an enthusiastic volunteer base and enjoys widespread support among local communities as well as donors from New York City and beyond. ASA hired its first Executive Director in 2003. Working with the board and under her exceptional leadership, ASA has built out the organization and earned a reputation for excellence in land conservation and the community. The Land Trust Alliance's *Land Trust Excellence Program* designated ASA as 'high potential'. ASA maintains a collegial, collaborative and stable work environment for its seven dynamic employees. Its annual operating budget is approximately \$800,000. ASA has assets worth close to \$3 million. Since 1990, ASA has



Protecting Our Community's Working Landscape of Farms and Forests

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successfully secured \$31 million in farmland protection funding from public and private sources. Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices are used as the overarching guide in all ASA leadership and management activities.

ASA is growing and poised for the future. ASA recently completed a successful *Forever Farmland Campaign* enabling conservation of 11,170 acres on 48 farms, by raising \$17.9 million largely through government grants as well as from individuals and conservation organizations. Land here remains relatively affordable to conserve as compared to areas further downstate, notwithstanding increased interest in the area because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, ASA purchased its first property: the 140-acre *Cambridge Community Forest* which will serve as a demonstration site for sustainable forestry management and expand recreational and educational opportunities. ASA recently developed a five-year strategic plan (for 2020-2025) incorporating a greater emphasis on community conservation, climate resiliency, farm viability, land access and inclusiveness. As part of this plan, ASA will embark on development of a new Conservation Plan reflecting these goals.

ASA is well positioned to build on its success and excellent reputation in land conservation and community engagement to influence continued farm and forest viability and resilience in the face of climate and global economic change.

POSITION SUMMARY

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director (ED) is responsible for advancing ASA's mission and defining and implementing strategic and operational plans. The ED is responsible for programmatic, fiduciary, and administrative leadership and management of the organization consistent with ASA's policies, and for directing ASA's day-to-day activities related to fundraising, land protection and management, finance, outreach, communications/marketing, organizational culture and staff development. The ED serves as the primary ambassador representing ASA to landowners, farmers, donors, government agencies, non-profits and the public to collaboratively advance ASA's mission.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Specifically, the Executive Director:

Strategically Leads

Works with the Board to develop a shared vision for ASA's future that builds upon ASA's success and addresses future challenges and opportunities. Addresses community needs with vision and imagination, initiating long-range strategic and operational planning. Works with Board and staff to develop/update and implement strategic and annual plans in a climate of learning, adaptation, and teamwork. Refines ASA's priorities and programs to adapt to changing conservation circumstances locally and across the country. Inspires trust and confidence both internally and within the community by articulating ASA's vision and motivating others to help implement ASA's goals.

Serves as a policy and thought leader locally as well as state-wide and nationally, serving on relevant committees and ensuring ASA is well represented within the agricultural, land conservation and nonprofit communities.

Engages Communities

Positions ASA as a respected, valued, collaborative organization locally, regionally and nationally. Serves as a high-profile ambassador and advocate for its mission and work by joining key community associations, giving speeches and building collaborations with appropriate partners including other conservation organizations. Enhances community support by articulating ASA's work and vision in a compelling and persuasive manner. Oversees the development of high-functioning communications and marketing programs to connect with different audiences and integrate successfully with the organization's fundraising, community engagement and leadership goals.

Manages the Organization

Fosters a collaborative, engaged, learning and trusting organizational culture, responsive to community needs. Sets high standards of quality for all ASA programs, services and operations. Ensures ASA's organizational and conservation practices and policies meet or exceed the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices as well as those of "best in class" NYS nonprofits. Delegates responsibility for managing and supervising various ASA programs, activities, and functions. Engages regularly with staff to plan, coordinate and evaluate ASA programs and activities. Hires, motivates, manages, empowers and evaluates staff, promoting their professional development. Fosters effective teamwork, communication, and high levels of professionalism and morale. Oversees compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, contractual obligations and donor restrictions. Holds responsibility for the stewardship of ASA's offices, equipment, fee-owned properties and other assets.

Advances Fundraising and Ensures Financial Integrity

Works closely with the Board and staff to ensure ASA's financial well-being and assess the current and future financial resources needed to realize ASA's mission and fund its programs. Develops and oversees systems appropriate to a nonprofit of ASA's scale and impact including managing ASA's finances, ensuring fiscal responsibility and continued growth to support program expansion. Develops budgets, oversees revenues and expenditures, facilitates annual audits and preparation of IRS filings, and maintains internal controls and financial discipline.

Serves as the chief fundraising officer on staff. Works with the Board and staff to actively develop and implement fundraising strategies and plans using best practices to meet ASA's goals. Collaborates with the Board and staff to nurture and retain existing funding sources while identifying new sources to increase the overall funding base. Devotes substantial time to cultivating and soliciting major and planned gifts from individual donors, generating new sources of revenue from foundations, government agencies and businesses, and maximizing funding opportunities through collaboration with partners.

Partners with the Board of Directors

Serves as a partner with the Board. Ensures that Board members have the support and information needed to assess, plan and build upon ASA's success, address future challenges and opportunities, and position ASA as a strong community and national leader. Updates the Board on progress in carrying out ASA's strategic direction and annual programs. Participates in Board recruitment, training and mentoring. Collaboratively supports the work of Board committees.

QUALIFICATIONS:

While no one person will embody all the qualities enumerated below, the ideal ED will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

Skills and Experience

- A minimum of seven (7) years of successful, high-level senior project management experience as an executive or senior manager in a collaborative working environment. Direct experience with strategic planning and growing an organization, fundraising and with community engagement.
- An extensive background or experience in land conservation, particularly involving farms and forestry.
- Seasoned leadership skills demonstrating a strong and inclusive work ethic, combined with solid strategic thinking and an ability to manage multiple priorities and programs, while leading in a manner that empowers and engenders respect, teamwork and collaboration from a dedicated staff.
- Inspirational and proven people manager with a minimum of three (3) years management/supervisory experience.

- Experience working with, developing, and engaging a volunteer board, and related community committees, and leveraging their talents and time, as well as the ability to see the potential for partnerships with other community and corporate leaders.
- A proven track record in fundraising, donor cultivation, new revenue generation, grant writing/tracking, and funder relations.
- Strong fiscal management and budgeting skills.
- Exceptional oral, written, listening, and interpersonal communications skills.
- Bachelor of Arts or Science.

Personal Abilities and Attributes

- Demonstrated ability to learn quickly and adapt to changing circumstances. A problem solver who can address difficult situations with poise, diplomacy, compassion, and rigor.
- Ability to develop and implement a vision and strategy that can move an organization forward while being able to communicate the vision to inspire others.
- Ability to be a team builder, a creative but structured thinker, and a thoughtful listener.
- Good instincts and judgment related to fostering respect for, and from, the people who work with the land. Empathy for and understanding of agriculture and forestry or land conservation.
- Transparent, approachable and equitable as well as motivational and supportive.
- Highly motivated, energetic, savvy, capable of humility and demonstrating a good sense of humor.
- An unwavering passion for and commitment to land conservation in partnership with landowners and communities and to developing multigenerational relationships to the land and the organization.
- A commitment to organizational diversity and inclusion. The ability to model this internally as well as being a dynamic and compelling ambassador to all audiences including landowners, staff, donors, board members, urban audiences and government officials, among others.
- A willingness to work periodic weeknights and weekends for community or board meetings; fundraising or land protection efforts; and an occasional overnight for conferences, trainings, or outreach (compensation or flex time to be provided for weekend work).

Physical Requirements

Work Environment: Approximately 50% indoor office work and 50% meeting with donors and constituents (on farms and in other rural and urban settings). Office work is primarily sitting at a desk, on the phone, with a computer or in meetings. Most travel is within the Capital District Region with occasional travel beyond for meetings, conferences and trainings. ASA is committed to providing access, equal opportunity and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disability in employment, its programs and operations.

Compensation: Salary commensurate with experience. Generous benefits package provided.

To Apply: Please send a cover letter and resume to board@agstewardship.org by January 19, 2021.

Target Start Date: Mid-2021

Equal employment opportunity and having a diverse staff are fundamental principles of the Agricultural Stewardship Association, where employment and promotional opportunities are based on individual capabilities and qualifications without regard to race, color, religion, gender, pregnancy, sexual orientation preference, age, national origin, marital status, citizenship, disability veteran status or any other protected characteristics as established under law.