Associate Executive Director / Program Manager

Reports To: Executive Director

Position Type: Part-time, approximately 20 hours per week

Compensation: $30 per hour

Work Arrangement: Flexible schedule combining remote work, in-person meetings, field activities, and community engagement.

Travel: Periodic travel throughout the Cherokee National Forest and surrounding communities is required.

Organization Overview

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest (FOCNF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the Cherokee National Forest. Through volunteer engagement, community events, conservation initiatives, and strategic partnerships, FOCNF supports recreation infrastructure, conservation education, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and cultural resource preservation.

FOCNF is a growing organization that works closely with the USDA Forest Service and other partners throughout East Tennessee. FOCNF has a working Board of Directors whose members are actively involved in planning and implementing the organization's programs and initiatives.

Position Summary

The Associate Executive Director / Program Manager will provide professional staff capacity to help FOCNF strengthen and expand its programs, organizational systems, partnerships, and community presence.

Working collaboratively with the Executive Director, Board members, Forest Service personnel, volunteers, and partners, this individual will help plan, coordinate, and implement programs and projects while strengthening the systems and relationships necessary for FOCNF's continued growth and long-term sustainability.

This is a hands-on position requiring someone comfortable moving between program and administrative work, community and partner engagement, communications, and activities in the field. The successful candidate will have considerable opportunity to help shape the programs, systems, and partnerships of a growing conservation organization.

Key Responsibilities

Programs & Projects

- Work collaboratively with the Executive Director, Board members, Forest Service personnel, volunteers, and partners to plan, coordinate, and implement FOCNF programs and projects.
- Lead or co-lead volunteer projects, conservation education activities, community events, project planning, and other field-based initiatives.
- Develop and maintain work plans, schedules, budgets, and other tools necessary to keep projects organized and on track.

- Monitor accomplishments and outcomes and help communicate results to the Board, partners, and other stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen existing programs and develop new initiatives consistent with FOCNF's mission and capacity.

Organizational Capacity & Operations

- Evaluate existing organizational systems and help develop practical improvements to procedures, workflows, project management, recordkeeping, and other operations.
- Help translate organizational priorities into achievable work plans, timelines, and measurable outcomes.
- Assist with grant administration, reporting, budgeting, financial tracking, and other organizational requirements in coordination with the Executive Director, Board, and Treasurer.
- Support Board and committee activities and help coordinate work involving Board members, volunteers, partners, and the Forest Service.
- Help identify and implement opportunities to strengthen FOCNF's long-term organizational and financial sustainability.

Partnerships & Community Engagement

- Build and maintain relationships with foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, community leaders, public agencies, and other current and prospective partners.
- Represent FOCNF at meetings, festivals, community gatherings, partner events, and other activities that increase awareness and understanding of the organization and its mission.
- Communicate FOCNF's accomplishments, priorities, programs, and goals to partners and the public.
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, partnership, sponsorship, and other forms of organizational support.
- Help strengthen FOCNF's network and position the organization for future opportunities.

Communications & Outreach

- Help develop and implement FOCNF's digital outreach efforts, including social media and other online communications, to increase public awareness, engagement, and participation in the organization's programs and activities.
- Create or coordinate content for social media, newsletters, the FOCNF website, and other communications.
- Help identify and tell stories that increase public understanding of FOCNF, its work, and the Cherokee National Forest.

Travel & Field Activities

The position requires periodic travel from the employee's normal place of work to locations throughout the Cherokee National Forest and surrounding communities for meetings, project planning and implementation, volunteer activities, conservation education programs, festivals, partner engagement, and other FOCNF business.

Some work will occur outdoors in typical national forest settings, and periodic evening or weekend participation will be necessary. FOCNF will provide a budget for authorized work-related travel.

Qualifications

FOCNF recognizes that strong candidates may bring relevant skills and experience through a variety of professional, educational, nonprofit, volunteer, and community-based pathways. **We do not expect candidates to have experience in every area described below and encourage applicants who believe their background and skills would enable them to succeed in this position.**

- A bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and relevant experience.
- Strong organizational and project management skills, including the ability to manage multiple priorities and follow projects through completion.
- Strong written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills.
- The ability to establish productive professional relationships and work collaboratively with Board members, volunteers, agency personnel, community partners, and other stakeholders.
- The ability to work independently, exercise sound judgment, take initiative, and identify practical solutions.
- Comfort using contemporary office technology and the ability to learn organizational software and systems.
- Ability and willingness to travel throughout the Cherokee National Forest and surrounding communities and participate periodically in evening and weekend activities.

Experience or familiarity in one or more of the following areas would be beneficial:

Nonprofit management; program or project coordination; organizational operations; public lands or conservation; volunteer or community engagement; partnership development; grant administration; communications and outreach; social media and digital content development.

What We Are Looking For

FOCNF is seeking a mission-focused, collaborative, and resourceful individual who enjoys both developing ideas and helping put them into action. The successful candidate will be organized and self-directed, comfortable building relationships and representing the organization publicly, and willing to move between planning and administration, communications, community engagement, and hands-on field activities.

Position Characteristics

- Meaningful professional work supporting the Cherokee National Forest and surrounding communities.
- Opportunity to help shape the programs, systems, partnerships, and future direction of a growing conservation nonprofit.
- Considerable opportunity for initiative, creativity, and professional autonomy.
- Flexible part-time schedule averaging approximately 20 hours per week, with remote work when appropriate.
- Work-related travel supported through an organizational travel budget.
- Compensation of $30 per hour.

Funding & Future of the Position

This position is initially funded for one year through a capacity-building grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission. FOCNF intends to use this investment to strengthen organizational capacity,

expand programs, improve systems, and develop partnerships and resources that support continued organizational growth.

Continuation beyond the initial grant-funded period will depend upon organizational needs and the availability of future funding and is not guaranteed.

Application Process

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and resume describing their interest in the position and the experience and skills they would bring to Friends of the Cherokee National Forest.

Mark Healey, Executive Director
Email: mark@focnf.org

Applications are due on or before November 6, 2026.

Friends of the Cherokee National Forest is an equal opportunity employer. FOCNF does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.