



CALIFORNIA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

Salary: \$120,000–\$150,000, commensurate with experience

California’s preservation landscape is vast and varied—from Indigenous heritage sites and mid-century modern icons to Main Street revitalization and climate adaptation in at-risk communities. The California Preservation Foundation (CPF) sits at the center of this work as the statewide voice for historic preservation, uniting advocates, professionals, and communities to protect the places that embody the state’s history, culture, and identity.

Since 1978, CPF has shaped policy, trained thousands of practitioners, and energized the field through high-impact programs like the California Preservation Conference, the Preservation Design Awards, and Doors Open California, a statewide series of behind-the-scenes experiences at historic sites. CPF is also the state and national leader in preservation education, with a library of more than 400 recorded programs that have become a hallmark of its mission. CPF’s policy leadership includes influencing state preservation legislation and sponsoring California’s first historic tax credit, demonstrating our ability to turn ideas into concrete tools for saving historic places.

With more than 20,000 supporters and over 2,000 members across California and the nation, CPF is a leading force in advancing preservation practice, policy, and public awareness—and is poised for significant growth under new leadership. CPF is also future-focused, mentoring the next generation of preservation leaders through scholarships, program-based learning, and real-world project experience embedded in its events and partnerships.

Stepping into the Executive Director role means joining a dynamic, influential organization at a pivotal moment, with extraordinary leverage to influence decisions, elevate diverse stories, and help shape the character of California for decades to come.

Key Responsibilities

Vision and Leadership

The California Preservation Foundation seeks a forward-thinking Executive Director who is committed to expanding the story of preservation and ensuring that CPF’s programs reflect the full range of the state’s people, cultures, and experiences.

- Advance CPF’s mission by positioning historic preservation as essential to California’s environmental sustainability, housing, and economic goals.
- Champion policies that protect and adapt California’s diverse cultural resources while expanding recognition of underrepresented communities and histories.
- Inspire and guide a passionate community of more than 20,000 supporters, including professionals, advocates, students, and partners across California and the nation.
- Elevate CPF’s role as a national thought leader in inclusive, community-centered preservation.

Organizational and Fiscal Management

This leader is a proven administrator with a deep understanding of nonprofit governance and operations, who understands both nonprofit culture and political environments. This individual has experience collaborating and effectively working with the Board of Trustees and values shared leadership and transparent decision-making.

- Oversee operations and a dedicated team (currently two professional staff), fostering growth, collaboration, and leadership development.
- Develop and manage annual budgets, grants, and financial reporting to ensure transparency and fiscal health.
- Cultivate partnerships that expand CPF's capacity through innovative funding strategies, sponsorships, and collaborative programs.

Board Engagement

- Partner with the active Board of Trustees and its committees to shape strategic direction and statewide impact.
- Support governance, committee work, and board development with clarity, responsiveness, and a shared, mission-driven vision.

Advocacy and Public Presence

The ideal candidate is an active member of the California historic preservation community, with meaningful involvement in preservation issues at the local, state, and/or national level. They possess a strong understanding of California's preservation laws, public-sector infrastructure, and policy environment, along with experience advocating for preservation priorities and influencing decision-makers.

- Serve as CPF's public voice—conveying preservation's role in shaping more livable, equitable communities.
- Work closely with policymakers in Sacramento and across California to influence preservation-related legislation, planning, and regulatory frameworks.
- Build relationships with allied organizations, state and national agencies, cultural leaders, and networks to amplify CPF's advocacy reach and reputation.

Programs, Education, and Next-Generation Leadership

The Executive Director brings a deep appreciation for how history, place, and power intersect and understands that preservation efforts are strongest when they engage communities that have not always been centered or represented. They are committed to broadening participation, welcoming new voices, and fostering stronger relationships across California's diverse regions and communities.

- Oversee CPF's flagship events—the California Preservation Conference, Preservation Design Awards, and Doors Open California—and guide a robust calendar of workshops, webinars, and training programs.
- Expand CPF's educational impact by connecting historic preservation to climate resilience, disaster recovery, and cultural inclusion in communities of all sizes.
- Lead CPF's commitment to mentoring emerging leaders by:
 - Integrating student and early-career tracks, volunteer roles, and leadership opportunities into programs and events.
 - Supporting scholarships and financial assistance that reduce barriers to participation.

- Creating avenues for real-world experience through internships, fellowships, and project-based collaborations.
- Ensure programs remain innovative, accessible, and relevant to California’s diverse regions and contexts.

Ideal Candidate

CPF seeks a visionary leader ready to elevate the role of preservation in shaping the future of California and to cultivate the next generation of preservation professionals. The ideal candidate will:

- Live in or be willing to relocate to California and travel regularly throughout the state, including frequent engagement in Sacramento.
- Bring significant experience leading complex initiatives or organizations, ideally within the nonprofit, public, or advocacy sectors.
- Demonstrate success in fundraising, grant development, and partnership cultivation.
- Understand California’s preservation and planning landscape—or be eager and prepared to quickly gain that understanding—and be ready to influence it.
- Value equity, collaboration, and transparency, and work with a wide range of organizations and communities to advance protection of California’s historic built environment.
- Excel as a communicator, inspiring a shared vision among staff, partners, supporters, and emerging leaders.

An advanced degree or equivalent experience in preservation, planning, public policy, public history, architecture, or nonprofit management is desirable.

We welcome all applicants who aspire to meet our vision for an Executive Director and will take the opportunity to grow and expand upon their existing qualifications.

Benefits and Work Environment

CPF currently offers a hybrid work model with in-person collaboration at its Bay Area office approximately one day per week, plus a competitive salary and benefits package (to be detailed by CPF) that includes medical and dental insurance for the employee and enrollment in CalSavers Retirement Savings Program. The Executive Director will have the opportunity to work at the intersection of policy, practice, education, and mentorship—leading a respected organization with a powerful platform and a growing community of supporters.

How to Apply

To apply, please submit a cover letter and résumé to jobs@californiapreservation.org. Application deadline is Thursday, April 30, 2026