



Alfred P. Sloan FOUNDATION

Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Program Director

THE SEARCH

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (Sloan), a prominent nonprofit philanthropic organization, seeks an innovative and strategic Program Director to define and build its next programs to support research in science. This is an extraordinary opportunity for a creative scientist to design grant-making programs with the potential to revolutionize fields of study at a foundation known for driving innovative research with widespread impact.

Established in 1934, Sloan was one of the first foundations to support original research in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and economics. The Foundation believes that these fields—and the scholars and practitioners who work in them—are chief drivers of the nation's health and prosperity. It supports a reasoned understanding of these forces of nature and society, which when applied inventively and wisely, can lead to a better world for all. Ongoing programs, for example, currently address topics that range from digital information technology to diversity in STEM, and from economics to the public understanding of science.

This new Program Director will join Sloan at a critical moment. Under the leadership of its new president, Adam Falk, the Foundation is beginning to plan its next set of path-breaking programs aimed to catalyze progress in the physical and life sciences. With a number of the existing science programs winding down, the new Program Director will have significant opportunities and resources to develop new programs and projects. She or he will be charged with identifying areas in which the Foundation's investments in the physical and life sciences can have a distinctive impact and utilizing its resources and network to seed areas of inquiry that will shape the future, in ways that complement, extend, and break new ground relative to ongoing programs and traditions.

As the leader of a core program area, the Program Director will nurture relationships with global leaders and potential grantees across the physical and life sciences to identify areas of high potential impact. The Foundation affords its leadership team a high degree of flexibility in strategy and approach, and its ethos is to fund programs driven by curiosity, discovery, and learning rather than by ideology. By taking a long-term view and keeping a sharp eye for finding

nascent scientific efforts or niches that are overlooked or underfunded, the Foundation has been able to support major breakthroughs time and again. Within this context, the Program Director will develop a strategy for the next wave of scientific programs.

The Program Director will join the tightly-knit senior leadership team of the Foundation, including seven program director colleagues. The directors share a distinctive and highly collaborative approach to grantmaking, working as a team to review proposals from potential grantees in the Foundation's program areas. It is imperative that this individual be broad and intellectually curious and open to the Foundation's work across programs, while also bringing considerable academic rigor to the science programs specifically. The Program Director must be aware of current developments and emerging trends in relevant fields of science and technology, demonstrate a strong appreciation for excellent research, and convey a commitment to spurring innovation through interdisciplinary approaches.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation has enlisted the support of Isaacson, Miller in its search process. Please direct nominations, inquiries, and application materials in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Established by industrialist Alfred P. Sloan Jr., the Foundation is a not-for-profit grantmaking institution that supports high quality, impartial scientific and economic research; fosters a robust, diverse scientific and economic workforce; strengthens public understanding and engagement with science and economics; and promotes the health of scientific and economic institutions. Initially devoted to economic education and research, Sloan's mission expanded in the 1940s and 1950s to include major commitments in medicine (Sloan-Kettering Institute), management (the MIT Sloan School of Management) and basic science (the Sloan Research Fellowships). Historically, much of the Foundation's grantmaking in science has provided support to fields that are either entirely new or where success depends on getting researchers to work together across disciplinary boundaries.

The Foundation holds a continuous and unshakeable commitment to the support of basic research combined with the drive to innovate and find new niches and opportunities to add to the body of scientific knowledge. One of the Foundation's most pressing priorities is to ensure Sloan-funded research meets the highest intellectual standards. The Foundation has launched entire areas of STEM and economics research, advancing the careers of some of the most prominent scientists and economists in the world. Sloan was an early champion and supporter of neuroscience, cognitive science, computational biology, behavioral economics, and evolutionary molecular biology. Today's programs, such as the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, continue to support large-scale scientific efforts that yield ground-breaking insights.

Over the years, the Foundation has honed a well-defined approach to grantmaking. It has a long tradition of partnering with outside experts to identify new directions and major programmatic initiatives that will yield effective, consequential results. With a firm commitment to research for the sake of inquiry, the Foundation builds programs with clearly defined time horizons that are motivated by and target important questions in fundamental areas of research. It also supports

infrastructure-enabling programs, in particular within its program in Digital Information Technology, that are non-research based and cut across the scientific and economic enterprise.

At the same time, the Foundation has always experimented with ways of raising the public's understanding of complicated economic and scientific issues. Sloan has a profound commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and its interest in fostering educational equality is evident in its programming going back to the 1950s. Today, all of Sloan's grantees are expected to engage diverse teams of faculty, students, and postdocs in their research. All potential grantees must submit, as part of the grant application process, an Attention to Diversity statement that details how projects will be structured to encourage diversity and inclusion of traditionally underrepresented groups in research teams, conference panels, advisory boards, and project management. Program directors are also encouraged to seek opportunities for making grants specifically to enhance diversity in the fields in which they work. Recent Foundation grants, for example, have supported the creation of diversity fellowship programs in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, the Deep Carbon Observatory, and the Energy and Environment program.

Located in the iconic Rockefeller Center in New York City, the Foundation is home to 32 staff spread across seven programs as well as operations. The average yearly spending on grants is approximately \$80 million. In 2017 the Foundation approved approximately 360 grants. Foundation grantmaking represented both continuing investments in longstanding priorities like the Sloan Research Fellowships, and support for increasing diversity and inclusion in STEM fields.

THE ROLE OF THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Reporting to the President, the Program Director will serve as the architect of new programs designed to make a significant impact in the physical and life sciences. She or he will foster and manage key relationships with leaders in science and technology to develop a high quality and rigorous portfolio of grants that is consistent with the history and overall mission of Sloan to have transformative impact. It is expected that the Program Director will bring her or his own informed strategic perspective to building programs, developing several specialized areas of emphasis. The Program Director will have an awareness of emerging trends in science and be able to leverage the expertise of leading authorities on the cutting edge of science. Furthermore, she or he must be able to recognize funding trends, identify gaps, and assess where Sloan's level of resources can make a significant difference.

Depending on the specific strategy, the Program Director may nurture an intellectual movement toward new areas, support large-scale infrastructure development to enable new research studies, or fund multidisciplinary, basic research in the physical and life sciences. Specifically, the Program Director will have the following opportunities:

Set a strategy and expansive scientific agenda for the next era of programming at the Foundation.

The Foundation is poised to develop a new set of programs in science. In the near term, the Program Director, in consultation with the President, will develop the vision for this portfolio.

The Program Director will pursue this strategy initially through research, networking, attending conferences, and engaging with leading scholars around the world to solicit expert advice and input on program development, as well as consulting with colleagues at the Foundation. Over the longer term, they will develop a grant portfolio and grantee relationships that will achieve ambitious program goals, supporting catalytic enterprises and early adopters of emerging research methods. In line with the Foundation's culture of taking informed risks, the Program Director should periodically reconsider and reevaluate the direction and success of the program.

Develop and sustain effective and strategic program management.

The Program Director is responsible for developing proposal ideas and effectively managing the process of inquiry response, proposal review, grant approval, and ongoing grants management and monitoring, as well as program evaluation. The Foundation maintains a lean staff structure, and each Program Director is expected to be hands-on, meticulous, and thorough in the preparation and scrutiny of grant proposals and program evaluations. The Director will act as a shepherd for grantees, working closely with them throughout the process to provide important insight and direction. Program funds must be utilized judiciously, strategically building toward the vision of the programs to maximize impact. The Program Director will need to evaluate and understand the effectiveness of the research it supports by determining the appropriate metrics—whether it is the growth of doctoral students pursuing a field, the impact of publications, or changes in policy or public dialogue—and drawing appropriate insights and conclusions from the outcomes.

Build and nourish interdisciplinary partnerships.

The culture of extensive and trusting collaboration among program directors is unique to Sloan and critical to the strength of the organization. Program directors from a diverse array of disciplines gather weekly to review grant proposals together, each bringing their own disciplinary lens and perspective on effective strategic grantmaking. The Foundation values empirical, rational arguments and benefits from the intellectual curiosity and rigor shared among the team. The new Program Director will join this vibrant culture and is expected to contribute to proposal development across the Foundation, while also remaining open and eager to receive the advice and expertise of colleagues to improve proposal development. The Program Director also will likely want to develop an advisory board that serves as another source of creativity and benchmark for quality.

Support the Foundation goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Foundation has a long and storied commitment of increasing educational opportunity, diversity, and inclusion for members of underrepresented minorities and women in a variety of scientific and technical fields. The Program Director will embrace this charge and support the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion through the science programs. They will make grants within the science program that support the diversity of the scientific and research workforce; they will be mindful of diversity at every step of the grantmaking process; and they will work in ways that promote the inclusion of participants from a variety of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The Sloan Foundation seeks a thoughtful and innovative Program Director who will bring energy and vision to the science program. She or he will demonstrate considerable scholarly, analytical, problem-solving, entrepreneurial, and management skills. The role requires sound judgment and integrity and the ability to analyze novel situations. In addition to impeccable taste about scientific questions and answers, the Program Director should also have a fine sense of institutions and incentives, budgets and trade-offs, negotiations and evaluations, academic policies and practices, etc.

The Foundation is open to a variety of professional backgrounds in candidates and expects that the new Program Director will bring many of the following skills, experiences, and personal qualities, understanding that no single candidate will have all of the ideal qualifications:

- Passion for the sciences, and for the impact that rigorous and impartial research can have on the greater public good;
- Intellectual depth and breadth; innate curiosity; an entrepreneurial spirit;
- Scientific credibility; present or past experience working on strong scientific projects and as a funded researcher; an understanding of science funding mechanisms;
- Excellent scientific taste and judgment and a keen eye for quality;
- A commitment to academic rigor, sound methodology, unbiased analysis, and unrelenting research;
- A strong record of envisioning, designing, and successfully implementing strategic endeavors;
- A natural affinity for relationship building, teamwork, and broad network engagement;
- Deep familiarity with the workings of U.S. universities and other research institutions;
- Both self-assuredness and humility;
- The desire to help others realize success; the willingness and ability to derive intellectual enrichment from the work of others and the creative process of grantmaking;
- Generosity of spirit and an open-minded approach;
- Superior organizational skills, integrity, and ethics;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- A doctoral degree in a field of science or engineering.

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and resumes with cover letters should be sent electronically to the following via www.imsearch.com/6822.

John Muckle, Greg Esposito, and Joanna Cook
Isaacson, Miller
263 Summer Street, Floor 7
Boston, MA 02210
www.imsearch.com/6822