



Vice President, Philanthropic Advising

Climate Lead

San Francisco, California

THE SEARCH

Amidst this decisive decade in the battle against climate change, Climate Lead seeks an enterprising and seasoned vice president, philanthropic advising (VP) to mobilize and accelerate high-impact climate philanthropy. The VP joins at a critical moment of growth as Climate Lead embarks on an ambitious strategic plan to help facilitate a significant increase in philanthropic contributions to the climate sector over the next five years. In support of these efforts, Climate Lead is significantly investing in the growth of its staff, resulting in the creation of this career defining player-coach leadership opportunity. Leading by example, the VP will oversee, grow, and elevate a high-performing team while also personally engaging with new ultra-high-net-worth philanthropists to make influential contributions to urgently address the climate crisis.

Since its formal inception in 2019, Climate Lead has empowered philanthropic leaders everywhere to take immediate and far-reaching climate action, catalyzing more than \$4 billion into high-impact climate solutions and bringing over 100 new donors to climate. By serving as an impartial guide, Climate Lead equips new climate philanthropists with the information and insights they need to drive transformative solutions. Climate Lead cuts through the complexity by curating roadmaps, in partnership with a diverse network of experts, to help philanthropists make a bold impact on climate from day one. For those attracted to a dynamic start-up venture focused on mission-driven work, this is an unparalleled opportunity for a dedicated, ambitious, and skilled development professional to contribute to an important global effort addressing the climate crisis and facilitate meaningful impact on our planet's most pressing challenge.

Reporting to the executive vice president (EVP), who leads the philanthropy team, the VP will divide their time approximately evenly between advising philanthropists as a trusted guide and people management of a high-performing team. Advising responsibilities include directly engaging ultra-high-net-worth individuals and families, providing strategic guidance to foster transformative and scalable climate philanthropy. Concurrently, the VP will manage and support a team of four senior philanthropy advisors (SPAs) and a manager, helping them to achieve ambitious goals while fostering growth, collaboration, and innovation. Climate Lead supports a sophisticated global ecosystem to move billions into climate in the coming years. To be successful, the VP must understand how donors operate at this level of giving, how

to build authentic relationships with them, and how to spur them into action with the speed and scale this issue requires through engagement, learning, listening, and counseling. Experience in principal gifts level development or sophisticated and outcome-oriented donor advising is critical for this role.

The VP must also bring extensive team management experience and sophisticated coaching and mentoring skills for senior-level colleagues. Fostering growth and development within the team is essential, as is providing guidance and support to help each team member achieve success in their roles. With a collaborative disposition and exceptional change management skills, the VP will help ensure the team effectively executes on ambitious goals and objectives. While direct experience in climate philanthropy is not required, the successful candidate must demonstrate a compelling passion for supporting climate action and recognize that Climate Lead's collective environmental impact on our planet takes precedence over individual goals.

Climate Lead has retained Rachel Ellenport of the national executive search firm Isaacson, Miller to conduct this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT CLIMATE LEAD

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, leaders from Climate Lead's [founding funders](#) and key partners recognized that addressing the climate crisis at a level corresponding to the urgent threat would require more quick, at-scale philanthropic investments to lead transformational change. As a result, [Climate Lead](#), formerly known as Climate Leadership Initiative, was formed in 2019 to empower philanthropic leaders everywhere to take immediate and far-reaching climate action. As an impartial and trusted guide, Climate Lead equips new climate philanthropists with the resources and guidance they need to drive transformative solutions. In 2024 alone, Climate Lead moved \$930 million into high-impact climate solutions.

Climate Lead Services and Advantage

Climate lead provides specialized services to help new climate philanthropists give with confidence and make influential, game-changing contributions to address the climate crisis. These include:

- **One-on-one advising:** Climate Lead provides a clear, comprehensive framework for climate action that deepens learning and informs philanthropic decision-making. Advisors' guidance is tailored to philanthropists' needs and interests, with climate impact always at the forefront.
- **Curated portfolios of solutions that have been vetted for impact:** Climate Lead curates customized portfolios of climate solutions with proven climate impact based on donor interests and goals. Climate Lead advisors do not advocate for any single organization or theory of change, but seek to find a diverse array of philanthropic opportunities that address funding needs across the ecosystem.

- **Connections to a diverse, global network of climate experts and peer philanthropists:** Climate Lead staff forge deep connections to the wider climate community of advisors, field-partners, and peers. The organization's global network of experts advise Climate Lead staff on climate priorities that are evidence-based, scalable, and equitable. [Peer philanthropists](#) also share insights from their own journeys, inspiring new-to-climate donors to be bold from the outset.
- **Learning events and resources:** The guidance Climate Lead provides to philanthropists is free, customized, and focused on advancing high-impact solutions that ensure a healthy and equitable future for all. Various resources produced by Climate Lead may be found [here](#).

Climate Lead guides donors toward urgent and high-impact climate giving. The organization's approach provides:

- **Specialized expertise:** Translating credible and current insights from a global, diverse network of climate experts and leaders to help philanthropists deepen their climate learning and make informed choices that create tangible impact.
- **Trusted and impartial advice:** Offering services free of charge, prioritizing philanthropic leaders' interests and climate impact above all.
- **Networked community:** Connecting philanthropists to a built-in global community of advisors, field partners, climate funders, and other luminaries who are interested in maximizing impact through partnership and collective action.
- **Tailored support:** Meeting philanthropists where they are and providing holistic support along every step of their climate journeys.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, PHILANTHROPIC ADVISING

Reporting to the EVP, the VP will expertly balance responsibilities between advising ultra-high-net-worth individuals to mobilize significant climate-focused philanthropy and leading a team of senior philanthropy advisors (SPAs) and a manager. This unique opportunity requires deep expertise in and a demonstrated track record of high-level donor engagement, resulting in transformational philanthropy, along with strong leadership, coaching, and team development capabilities. Importantly, the successful candidate will embody and promote Climate Lead's core values of care, collaboration, courage, growth mindset, integrity, and purpose.

MAJOR FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Philanthropic Advising (50%)

The work of philanthropic advising is focused on three primary goals:

1. Proactively draw in new philanthropists to climate

- Proactively develop strategies to engage philanthropists new to climate, including through peer volunteers, influencers, and curated events and experiences.

2. Serve as a trusted guide for philanthropists new to climate

- Deeply understand the interests, influencers, and decision-making of philanthropists new to climate and design the impactful steps and strategies that will help them give and scale their giving. This could include support for climate learning, help in setting goals and values, processes to choose their priorities once they understand what is important for climate, portfolio development, and more.
- Partner with the Global Climate Strategies and Communications teams to create products translated for philanthropists new to climate, including thematic landscapes, presentations, tailored portfolio recommendations, vetted solution briefs, and more.
- Speed philanthropists' climate journeys through curated connections with peer philanthropists, which can include strategically choosing the right peer connections, briefing participants for maximum impact, and facilitating peer-to-peer engagements for maximum impact and follow-up.

3. Support experienced peer volunteers

- Staff several experienced climate philanthropists in their principal-to-principal engagement with peers as “ambassadors” for climate, akin to campaign volunteer engagement in a development organization.

Leadership, Management, and Mentoring (50%)

The philanthropic advising work above is also the work of all SPAs at Climate Lead. This position also adds the following responsibilities:

- As a leader within the Philanthropy team, partner with peers to model leadership and management best practices, and champion a positive, high-performing team environment. Embed Climate Lead's values and working norms into team meetings, retreats, systems, processes, and practices. Model a collaborative work environment both within and outside the direct report team that promotes results, innovation, and teamwork.
- Mentor direct reports to set and achieve ambitious goals, in line with Climate Lead priorities. Monitor and evaluate progress, adjusting strategies as needed to ensure success.

- Review and define SPA donor engagement strategies, ensuring alignment with Climate Lead's goals and best practices. Support effective projection setting and track to results against annual and five-year goals. Troubleshoot challenges and offer strategic input and guidance as needed.
- Drive continuous improvement, encouraging innovation and a result-oriented mindset.
- Develop and implement effective coaching strategies to invest in talent. To foster professional growth and skill development, provide consistent feedback, reviews, training, and thought partnership.
- Coordinate team resources and efforts as well as cross-functional collaboration with other Climate Lead teams to maximize donor impact and team efficiency.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Success Criteria

Additional success factors for the VP include:

- **Advisory orientation:** Enjoys working in both a consultative and action-oriented environment, using strategy, persuasion, and influencing skills to mobilize philanthropists and networks. Demonstrated agility and flexibility in ambiguous or changing circumstances. Appreciates the iterative process for evaluating and scaling climate strategies and solutions. A diligent learner around outcomes and results.
- **Team leadership and management:** Effective management and development of a team comprising advisors and/or senior fundraising professionals. Knowledge of how to lead through organizational growth and demonstrated use of change management tactics. A natural coach and mentor who knows how to use their experience and wisdom to lift up others in their work.
- **Agility:** Highly adaptable and flexible, and embraces a culture that requires responsiveness and elasticity in the operating environment.
- **Driving results:** Translates priorities into operational reality; aligns communication, accountabilities, resource capabilities, internal processes to ensure efforts yield results; a solid project manager who is organized and clear with work plans and goals, including tracking priorities and progress. Capable of being both a strategic contributor and hands-on implementer.
- **Embrace collaborative teams:** Brings a genuine respect for the power of collaboration, working in a participatory way across the organization and through Climate Lead's extensive

global networks to achieve shared goals. A demonstrated track record of being an excellent collaborator on high performing and matrixed teams.

- **Communication skills:** Articulate, persuasive, and able to tailor communication styles to suit diverse audiences. Excels in both written and verbal communication, ensuring clarity and understanding in every interaction. An active listener and empathetic, able to build strong relationships and foster collaboration through their sophistication in communication.
- **People intelligence and inspiration:** Considers multiple points of view with ease and encourages constructive, balanced discussions to drive innovation and progress, while simultaneously being able to hold onto the bigger picture. Sophisticated understanding of what motivates someone and how to build solutions that are inspiring and responsive to their needs. Invites candor and a temperament that deploys a sensitive touch in teasing out points of disagreement.
- **Climate sector experience, ideally:** Direct experience working in climate-focused organizations is a plus, but not required.

Required Experience

The VP will possess many, if not most, of the following skills and abilities:

- Progressive leadership experience in principal gift level development roles, ultra-high-net-worth philanthropic advising, or similar positions, either through 20-plus years of experience or through demonstrated success leading senior advisory teams in complex, dynamic, and scaling environments.
- Demonstrated success managing teams of senior development professionals or advisors, with a proven ability to motivate and develop high-performing teams.
- Strategic thinking, problem-solving, independent learning, and project management skills, with a focus on results and accountability.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

This position is based in Climate Lead's headquarters in San Francisco, California. Staff in the San Francisco Bay Area currently work in the office Tuesday through Thursday each week and typically work from home the other days. Domestic travel of approximately 20 percent is required, with less frequent international travel.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated compensation range for this position is \$300,000 to \$400,000. Climate Lead offers a competitive total rewards package, enabling its talented staff to prioritize health and well-being. Climate Lead's benefits package prioritizes caring for staff's diverse needs, including rich plan offerings and a generous retirement contribution. The compensation package is driven by market data, reviewed annually, and structured to attract and retain expert talent while prioritizing collaboration.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website below, or directly to Rachel Ellenport at rellenport@imsearch.com. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/climate-lead/vice-president-philanthropic-advising>

Rachel Ellenport, Partner
Nicole Poe, Managing Associate
Rebecca Lyons, Search Coordinator

Climate Lead values diversity and always treats all employees and job applicants based on merit, qualifications, competence, and talent. Climate Lead does not discriminate on the basis of or traits historically associated with race, color, religion, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, veteran and/or military status, domestic violence victim status, political affiliation, and any other status protected by state or federal law.

ADDENDUM

Leadership and Governance

Jennifer Kitt, President

Jennifer Kitt is president of Climate Lead, where she leads the organization as it builds a model to harness philanthropists' interest, passion, and generosity to increase philanthropic funding for the most profound challenge of our time. As an advisor to donors, head of the leadership team, and a trusted strategic partner for organizations working to address the climate crisis, she is focused on building a community to bring new donors into the climate space to fund promising, far-reaching solutions.

Jennifer brings more than 20 years of experience working with philanthropists, corporations, and foundations to fund high-impact causes. She also has decades of experience in community building, philanthropic collaboration, and complex problem solving.

Prior to joining Climate Lead, Jennifer was the chief development officer for Stanford University's Medical Center, Stanford's largest fundraising team with more than 140 staff focused on serving both the School of Medicine and the Stanford Health Care clinical system. At Stanford, Jennifer worked closely with distinguished faculty and university leaders, trustees, and members of the Stanford Medicine boards. She helped grow fundraising during her more than seven years there from \$150 million to more than \$300 million annually for fundamental research, clinical research, and research and clinical buildings, including the new Stanford Hospital.

Before Stanford, Jennifer served in senior management roles at the University of California, Berkeley, including leading development programs for parents, reunions, and campaign regions. Prior to working in higher education, she was a senior attorney for IBM, where she learned to think strategically, solve complex problems, and build partnerships even in tough negotiations. Jennifer earned JD and bachelor's degrees at Georgetown University.

Robynn Steffen, Executive Vice President, Philanthropy

Robynn Steffen is the executive vice president, philanthropy at Climate Lead, and a member of the leadership team, where she has played a leading role in building an organization that empowers philanthropic leaders to take immediate and far-reaching climate action. Robynn also leads the team that serves as trusted guides to philanthropists new to climate.

Robynn brings more than 20 years of experience in solving complex challenges through strategic philanthropy, policy, partnerships, and impact investments. Before joining Climate Lead, Robynn led Omidyar Network's work to accelerate the growth of the global impact investing movement. In that role, she frequently advised principals, family offices, and foundations on deploying philanthropic and investment capital to achieve their impact goals.

Before Omidyar Network, Robynn worked at the White House, the Clinton Global Initiative, and as the founding executive director of a start-up nonprofit. At each, she dedicated her work to low-income communities around the globe, the same communities we now know will be among the first and worst hit by climate change. Robynn received a JD from Yale Law School and holds bachelor's and master's degrees in political science from Yale University.