



Vice President, External Affairs and Strategic Communications

Tides

THE SEARCH

Tides, a nonprofit and philanthropic organization dedicated to advancing social justice, seeks a strategic, experienced, and mission-driven leader to serve as its next Vice President for External Affairs and Strategic Communications.

At a pivotal moment for the organization and the broader social sector, Tides is strengthening its executive leadership capacity to more effectively tell its story, engage stakeholders, and navigate an increasingly complex and contested external environment. This role reflects a deliberate elevation of external affairs and communications as a distinct function driven by strategic expertise. The Vice President will join the executive team at Tides and will work to shape the organization's narrative, strengthen its public positioning, and ensure that Tides engages effectively with key audiences and internal and external stakeholders.

ABOUT TIDES

Tides is a family of nonprofit and philanthropic organizations that provide integrated services to partners advancing social change through philanthropic advising, fiscal sponsorship, grantmaking, impact investing, and capacity-building support. Guided by a commitment to justice, equity, and community power, Tides works in deep partnership with movement leaders, nonprofits, foundations, corporations, and donors to shift resources and decision-making authority to communities historically excluded from power.

Tides is a social justice intermediary organization that is best known for operating Tides Foundation and Tides Center. Tides Foundation is a philanthropic organization that raises, manages, and utilizes donor advised funds, corporate giving, and foundation funding to award grants to social justice oriented nonprofit organizations that operate in the United States and abroad. Tides Center utilizes a fiscal sponsorship model to build the capacity of new and emerging mission aligned nonprofit organizations that are advancing among other issues, democracy, immigration, and environmental justice. In both instances, Tides Foundation and Tides Center work tirelessly to build power in historically marginalized communities across the U.S. and abroad.

Tides Network is Tides' "parent" organization, employing the 150+ staff who provide core services to the other Tides entities and partners. In all, Tides is home to approximately 800 employees.

As the organization looks ahead, Tides is focused on strengthening its positioning as the leading intermediary in social justice philanthropy that is connecting "doers and donors," expanding its reach, and deepening its impact in a rapidly evolving and often challenging external landscape.

For more information, visit: <https://www.tides.org/>

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and serving as a member of the executive team, the Vice President for External Affairs and Strategic Communications is responsible for shaping and advancing Tides' external voice, public positioning, and narrative. The Vice President owns the organization's external voice; brand, market, and sector positioning strategy; narrative strategy; external affairs; executive communications; crisis response; and external stakeholder engagement, which includes, but is not limited to, relationships with national and regional media, philanthropic partners, fiscal sponsorship peers, policy allies, and movement-aligned organizations, cultivated and maintained in service of the organization's communications and narrative goals.

The Vice President is responsible for protecting and advancing the Tides reputation and brand, building audience and constituent engagement, aligning marketing and communications with fundraising and programmatic strategy, and ensuring the organization speaks with clarity, courage, and discipline in a contested environment. The Vice President will work across Tides to ensure alignment between institutional priorities and external messaging, partnering with colleagues to translate programmatic work, partnerships, and impact into compelling, coherent narratives.

The Vice President will oversee a marketing and communications team currently comprising four full-time staff and will lead both the strategic direction of the function and the evolution of its structure, resourcing, and operating model in support of Tides' work.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Shape and Lead Tides' Narrative in a Complex Environment

- Develop and execute an integrated communications and external affairs strategy aligned with organizational goals, theory of change, and financial sustainability plan.
- Serve as principal counsel to the CEO and Executive Team on public positioning, message discipline, crisis response, and sequencing of public statements.
- Advise the Executive Team and Board of Directors on reputational risk and narrative exposure.
- Own Tides' brand architecture, persona, voice, and narrative frame across all external channels and audiences.
- Drive Tides' narrative proactively in the broader social sector landscape.

- Monitor and track how mission-related issues are being framed, weaponized, or reshaped across media, political, and cultural spaces.
- Exercise disciplined judgment on when to lead public conversation, when to amplify coalition partners, and when strategic restraint better serves the mission.

Elevate Brand Positioning and Public Presence

- Oversee content strategy spanning earned media, owned channels, executive thought leadership, annual reports, and Tides publications.
- Lead integrated marketing strategy across brand, digital, email, social, advertising, and campaign channels to build awareness, engagement, and action among target audiences.
- Set and manage marketing/engagement growth goals and KPIs, including digital reach, audience growth, and supporter acquisition, that build Tides' brand visibility and public presence, translating results into conversion metrics in partnership with Business Development.
- Oversee Tides' website, digital properties, and marketing technology stack; ensure data-informed decision-making and appropriate investment in analytics, CRM, and automation tools.
- Direct brand and creative development, including visual identity, design systems, and campaign creative, working with in-house staff and agency partners.

Partner Across the Organization to Align Strategy and Messaging

- Partner with Tides Foundation, Tides Center, and Business Development leadership to lead public-facing campaigns, mobilization moments, and integrated marketing calendars.
- Partner with the Chief Programs Officer to align communications with fundraising strategy, donor stewardship, and major-gift engagement.
- Partner with Tides Foundation, Tides Center, and Business Development to co-develop donor-facing content that demonstrates impact, addresses current-moment concerns, and reinforces the case for sustained and expanded investment.
- Support Board communications, including board meeting preparation, board-facing updates, and ambassadorship materials.
- Partner with the Executive Team, the People Team, and Internal Communications staff to ensure external positioning and internal messaging are coordinated, particularly ahead of significant announcements, crises, and politically sensitive external statements.
- Lead and maintain a shared messaging architecture so talking points, positioning documents, and narrative frames are consistent across staff-facing and public-facing channels.

Enhance and Modernize the Communications Function

- Lead, develop, and retain a high-performing marketing and external communications team; coach direct reports and cultivate strength within the function.
- Manage the marketing and external communications budget, including agency, consultant, platform, production, and paid media spend.
- In partnership with the Chief People Officer, co-lead Tides' internal communications team, integrating internal and external communications strategies and messaging as applicable.
- Select, manage, and hold accountable external agency and vendor partners; build a trusted "extended team" model that scales capacity without permanent headcount.

- Establish KPIs and reporting cadence across marketing performance, external communications, reputation health, earned media impact, and audience growth.

Strengthen Media and External Relationships

- Lead proactive national media strategy, cultivating relationships with reporters, editors, and opinion leaders across mainstream, movement, and ideologically diverse outlets.
- Direct executive visibility strategy, including speaking engagements, op-ed placement, broadcast appearances, and conference presence.
- Prepare the CEO and designated spokespeople for high-stakes interviews and public-facing events.
- Build and maintain relationships with peer national organizations, state and regional affiliates, philanthropic intermediaries, and sector communications networks.
- Represent Tides in sector-wide narrative coordination, shared-research efforts, and joint response on issues where collective voice amplifies impact.
- Serve as a public representative of Tides at select conferences, convenings, and sector events.

Build Crisis Response and Reputation Management Capacity

- Partner with the Chief Legal and Compliance Officer to manage the intersection of communications with regulatory, legal, financial, and investigative risk.
- Own organizational crisis communications planning, playbook maintenance, and live response.
- Coordinate with Executive Team and Senior Leaders during incidents, whether internal or external.
- Maintain a pre-approved response architecture for attack vectors so the organization can move with speed when required.

As an executive leader, the Vice President must execute duties and responsibilities while embracing and exhibiting Tides' core competencies:

- Leading Self:
 - Self-awareness
 - JEDI practice
 - Continuous learning
 - Project management
- Leading People
 - Building trusting relationships
 - Team leadership
 - Decision making
 - Developing teammates
- Leading Results
 - Strategic planning
 - Change leadership
 - Driving outcomes

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will demonstrate, through ideas, words, and actions, a deep and sustained commitment to Tides' mission and [JEDI](#) values. This calls for grounding their work in an equity-centered approach that advances justice, builds transformative partnerships, centers community power and agency, and fosters trust through accountability and service.

The successful candidate will bring many of the following qualities and experiences:

- 15 years of relevant experience. 10 years of experience must be in a senior-level leadership capacity;
- Demonstrated experience as principal marketing and communications counsel to a CEO, Executive Director, or equivalent senior principal;
- Proven track record in crisis communications at national scale, including politically or ideologically charged incidents;
- Deep national media relationships with demonstrated placement across mainstream, political, and movement press;
- Demonstrated marketing and brand leadership, including brand strategy, digital marketing, audience growth, and measurable campaign results;
- Experience with mission-driven, advocacy, or politically active organizations (nonprofit, 501(c)(3)/(c)(4), political, or public-interest);
- Demonstrated ability to build and execute narrative strategy, not just message discipline;
- Experience managing lean teams and extended vendor networks under resource constraints;
- Excellent judgment when handling sensitive legal, personnel, and political matters;
- Excellent written and verbal communication, including executive speechwriting and op-ed drafting; and
- Ability to ground all work in a deep commitment to the Tides mission and JEDI values, applying an equity center lens to strategy, practice, and engagement.

Preferred qualifications include:

- Experience at or with organizations that have faced regulatory scrutiny, congressional investigation, or politically-motivated attacks;
- Demonstrated experience communicating for organizations advancing social justice, equity, or systems change, with an understanding of how brand and narrative serve mission driven work;
- Working knowledge of the nonprofit regulatory environment, including 501(c)(3)/(c)(4), lobbying limits, and state charitable registration;
- Experience with coalition or movement communications where multiple organizations coordinate shared narratives;
- Prior experience in newsroom/journalism, political campaign communications, federal or state government affairs, or philanthropic communications; and
- Advanced degree in communications, public policy, or law (not required – experience is preferred over credentials).

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

Tides is committed to providing a competitive compensation package and values pay equity while accounting for factors including location, skills, and relevant experience. Starting salary for this role will fall into one of three ranges, depending on your location:

- National market (most U.S. states): \$191,000 - 238,800
- Moderate market (Chicago, Los Angeles, and Seattle metro areas): \$208,400 - \$260,500
- High market (New York City and San Francisco metro areas): \$229,100 - \$286,400

Please note the above geographic areas are examples and not a complete list. The Tides Talent Acquisition team will confirm each candidate's placement within this structure. Tides offers a generous benefits package including: comprehensive medical, dental and vision insurance, paid time off, life and disability insurances, retirement plan, educational assistance, confidential counseling and life balance resources designed to support the passion, commitment and energy that is vital to Tides team members.

Tides is headquartered in San Francisco, CA, with a hybrid work model that supports remote work from anywhere in the United States. The Vice President must have the ability to travel as required, including but not limited to: Tides' offices in San Francisco, CA and New York, NY; industry convenings; and external partner meetings.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (résumé with cover letter) should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/tides/vice-president-external-affairs-and-strategic-communications>. For best consideration, please apply by **August 10, 2026**. Electronic submission of materials is required.

Cati Mitchell-Crossley, Evan Layne, and Julia Hochner
Isaacson, Miller

Tides is an equal opportunity employer. We strongly encourage applications from women, people of color, and bilingual individuals, as well as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. Applicants shall not be discriminated against because of race, religion, sex, national origin, ethnicity, age, disability, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, color, marital status, or medical condition including acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and AIDS-related conditions. Pursuant to the San Francisco Fair Chance Ordinance, we encourage and will consider for employment qualified applicants with arrest and conviction records.

Reasonable accommodation will be made so that qualified disabled applicants may participate in the application process. If you seek an accommodation, please advise the search team in writing at the time you apply.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Tides. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Tides would supersede any conflicting information in this document.