

Director of Development & Principal Gifts

Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Institute

Location: Hybrid – Seattle Metropolitan Area

Full-time exempt role

Overview

Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Institute (CSAI), a nonprofit, is building the world's first integrated test lab and repository for sustainable aviation fuel, anchored by a partnership with Washington State University and Snohomish County at Paine Field, the heart of Pacific Northwest aerospace. It is a first-of-its-kind institution positioned to shape how SAF is tested, certified, and scaled across the region.

To date, CSAI has raised over \$10,000,000 for the Phase 1 facility with a robust pipeline toward achieving the funding needed for the Phase 2 facility. The Executive Director is personally engaged in donor cultivation and the Board brings established relationships across the aerospace communities. This is a chance to build a development function inside an institution that already has a case and champions.

Position Summary

The Director of Development & Principal Gifts will lead fundraising strategy and execution for the Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Institute (CSAI), building a development function from the ground up to secure foundation support and philanthropic partnerships needed to fund CSAI's research, testing infrastructure, and Phase II facility. Reporting to the Executive Director, the Director will build the systems, relationships, and pipeline required to sustain and grow the Institute's philanthropic funding base.

This role requires both principal gift experience and the ability to build development infrastructure in an early-stage environment. The Director will be expected to combine strategic fundraising planning with donor cultivation and relationship management.

Top First-Year Priorities

- Stand up the fundraising infrastructure including CRM, gift tracking, and a development plan.
- Build a qualified principal- and major-gifts pipeline aligned to the Phase II facility.
- Move the Phase II capital campaign from concept to committed early gifts.

Key Responsibilities

Fundraising Strategy

The Director will develop and lead execution of a comprehensive fundraising strategy for CSAI.

- Develop and execute a multi-year development plan across public grants, foundation philanthropy, corporate giving, and individual major and principal gifts, with clear prioritization across these streams rather than equal effort on all four.
- Align fundraising priorities with CSAI's strategic plan and capital needs, including the Phase II facility.
- Set and track fundraising goals and pipeline metrics, reporting progress to the Executive Director and Board.

Major, Principal Gifts & Capital Campaign

The Director will cultivate and steward relationships with individual donors and philanthropic partners, and lead donor engagement for the Phase II capital campaign.



- Identify, cultivate, and steward relationships with individual donors, family foundations, and corporate philanthropic partners.
- Build a donor pipeline and stewardship program.
- Develop compelling case-for-support materials, narratives, and donor communications that translate CSAI's technical mission into a clear, compelling story.
- Prepare the Executive Director and Board Members for meetings with high-level donors including talking points, approach strategy, and meeting materials.
- Partner with the Executive Director, Board, and Capital Projects Program Manager to coordinate fundraising efforts for the Phase II facility.
- Lead capital campaign planning, timeline, and donor engagement through public launch.

Systems, Team & Board Partnership

The Director will build the infrastructure and Board partnership needed for long-term fundraising success.

- Establish donor CRM, gift tracking, and development reporting systems.
- Equip the Executive Director and Board members to support fundraising asks; staff relevant Board committees as needed.
- Provide regular development reporting to the Executive Director and Board.
- In collaboration with the Operations Director, build systems and processes for gift and grant management appropriate to a growing organization including identifying resources and support required to deliver the development strategy

Qualifications

Essential

- 10+ years of nonprofit development/fundraising experience, with a demonstrated track record securing six- and seven-figure gifts.
- Strong relationship-building skills with foundations, corporate partners, and individual donors.
- Existing relationships with Pacific Northwest foundations, corporate philanthropy programs, or funders.
- Experience building a development function from the ground up in an early-stage or start-up nonprofit environment.
- Excellent written communication skills, with the ability to translate technical climate and aviation content into compelling donor narratives.
- Comfort operating with limited staff and resources in a fast-paced, ambiguous environment.

Desirable

- Experience fundraising for climate, energy, aviation, or scientific research institutions.
- Experience with capital or major project fundraising, ideally for physical facilities or research/lab environments (formal capital campaign leadership a plus).

Compensation and Benefits

A competitive salary, commensurate with experience, targeting \$160,000–\$210,000 annually.

Comprehensive health and retirement benefits.

A flexible, hybrid work environment.

To be considered for this role: Please submit a CV and cover letter to info@cascadiasafinstitute.org with the job title in the subject line.

Start date: open until filled

