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## AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

### POSITION SPECIFICATIONS

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#### CLIENT

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The **American Alpine Club (AAC or “The Club”)** is a national grassroots, non-profit (501(c) 3) organization dedicated to supporting climbers and healthy climbing landscapes. Founded in 1902, the **AAC** offers an inclusive voice to represent and support the climbing community. **The Club**, based in Golden, CO, promotes and preserves the climbing way of life by sharing authoritative climbing resources, promoting conservation through advocacy and leadership, and providing a welcoming and inclusive community for climbers.

**The Club** brings together thousands of individual climbers who, together, form a community of climbing ambassadors that brings positive attention to the sport of climbing and responsible use and conservation to climbing terrain throughout the world. This community of **AAC** members, now totaling in excess of 25,000, includes representatives from every state, crag and climbing gym across the country.

#### **Education and Community**

The **AAC** produces and disseminates authoritative climbing information for current and future climbers and provides opportunities for climbers to connect with and learn from each other. Whether you’re new to climbing or have been at it for decades, the **AAC** is your single best climbing education and connecting resource. The **AAC** offers educational clinics and publishes two authoritative climbing annuals (*the American Alpine Journal* and *Accidents in North American Climbing*) focused on the governing principles and safety standards associated with climbing. **The Club** also offers volunteer resources in training and instructor certification and maintains the world’s leading climbing library and country’s leading mountaineering museum.

To promote community, **the Club** is organized through regional sections across the country and has 75 separate chapter organizations. Sections and chapters can work separately, and collectively, to connect climbers by organizing social functions, planning climbing outings, funding local grants, and gathering for service projects at their local climbing areas, and more.

### **Policy and Advocacy**

A key component of **the Club's** mission is to advocate and lead the advancement of climbers' interests and to promote conservation. The **ACC** serves as the leader in national climbing policy issues for climbing enthusiasts. Much of **the Club's** current political advocacy focuses on critical issues facing climbers and outdoor recreation nationally, such as keeping public lands pristine, wild, and open to human-powered recreation. High on this list of concerns is climate change. Data collected from over 5,000 climbers in the **AAC's** Annual Climbers' survey found that 94% of climbers believe climate change poses a serious risk to climbing and outdoor recreation venues. Such risk directly impacts climbers and climbing. In partnership with the Access Fund, **the Club** has coordinated the annual "Climb the Hill" lobbying event in Washington, D.C., organized "Hill to Crag" events that get elected officials out to climb in threatened areas, and led coalitions, including the Alpine 5 and the Climbing Alliance. **The Club's** policy department continues to expand its expertise by researching and publishing policy briefs annually.

### **Lodging Facilities**

In 1970, the **AAC** developed its first lodging facility. Now, the **AAC** network includes six lodging venues, plus the headquarters location in Golden. Annually, over 10,000 individuals make use of these facilities. In addition, **Club** members enjoy access to a worldwide network of lodging options. Members receive discounts at a wide-array of partner facilities, including at hut systems operated by the Alpine Club of Canada.

### **Mission/Vision/Audience/Core Values**

**The Club** has adopted the following mission, vision, audience and core values:

- **Mission:** *To share and support our passion for climbing and respect for the places we climb.*
- **Vision:** *A united community of competent climbers and healthy climbing landscapes.*
- **Audience:** *Everyone who loves climbing.*
- **Core Values:**
  - *Authoritative climbing information, knowledge and resources benefit and inspire us and future generations.*
  - *Advocacy and leadership advance our climbing interests and promote conservation.*
  - *Community and competency strengthen and embolden us to push our limits.*

### **The Future**

As the sport of climbing grows in popularity nationwide, **the Club** has seen tremendous growth and interest. Today there are over 35 million climbers worldwide and an estimated 7.7 million in the United States alone. As such, **the Club's** membership continues to expand year over year and, in 2020, sport climbing made its debut as an Olympic sport.

Notable among **the Club's** recent accomplishments are the following:

- ✓ Educating over 3,000 members annually at “Craggin’ Classic” events across the country.
- ✓ Releasing the inaugural “State of Climbing Report”, a comprehensive and quantitative look at the American climbing community and its impact, in partnership with a dozen other climbing organizations.
- ✓ Awarding \$150,000 in annual grants to fund scientific research expeditions, improve infrastructure at climbing areas across the country, and pursue projects that better the climbing community and climbing landscapes, and
- ✓ Gathering sixty professional climbers and advocates on Capitol Hill in partnership with the Access Fund for **the Club's** fourth annual “Climb the Hill” event to lobby for climbing landscapes and action on climate change threats.

The **AAC** is governed by an 18-member **Board of Directors** from across the country. The Board maintains a committee structure that includes: the Executive Committee; the Policy Committee; the Fund Development Committee; the Membership Committee; and, an Investment Committee.

**The Club** maintains a wide array of outdoor recreation, conservation, outdoor apparel and equipment, as well as other corporate sponsorship relationships.

To learn more about **AAC**, please visit their website at [www.americanalpineclub.org](http://www.americanalpineclub.org)

## **THE OPPORTUNITY**

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The **Chief Executive Officer** will report directly to and work closely with an engaged and dedicated Board of Directors. The **CEO** is charged with driving the strategic direction for the **AAC**, strengthening existing programs and partnerships, and sustainably developing the **AAC's** human capital, operations and financial practices internally. The **CEO** will assume overall responsibility for the operational excellence of **the Club**.

This represents a rare opportunity to lead a historic organization into the future by leveraging a talented staff, committed volunteers and strong reputation. Externally, the **CEO** will be an influential voice for the climbing community and embody the **AAC's** strong commitment to climbing and conservation. This leader will build on the **AAC's** strong reputation and record of accomplishments, continuing to elevate the organization as the premier membership organization for climbers. As such, the **CEO** will work closely with donors, elected officials, members, volunteers, other climbing organizations, and our sponsors to evaluate and deliver on the needs of the climbing community.

Internally, the **CEO** will provide impactful leadership to **AAC** while maintaining excellence in the content and delivery of **AAC's** programming and services, ensuring **the Club** continues to adapt and innovate. The **CEO** will oversee the day-to-day operations of the Golden headquarters and be a highly capable manager who is excited to partner with the **AAC's** smart and committed staff and be a presence among **the Club's** expansive volunteer and regional networks. This leader will thoughtfully contribute to the vision for a multicultural and inclusive organization and advance strategies to achieve those goals.

The **CEO** will partner closely with the Board and communicate effectively to the Board with all information needed to make informed decisions.

The **CEO** will lead a senior leadership team of four and a total staff complement of 45. The four direct reports to the **CEO** the Chief Programs Officer, the Chief Advancement Officer, the Chief Operations & Finance Officer, and the Chief Marketing Officer. The **CEO** will oversee an annual operating budget of approximately \$4.5 million.

**While not all-inclusive, essential job functions include:**

**Strategic Leadership and Execution**

- Set priorities decisively, assure accountability, and responsibly allocate resources to achieve desired results.
- Implement and maintain best-in-class management practices and build the infrastructure required to ensure consistency of high performance and stability.
- Ensure that all **AAC** financial standards, operating policies, and programmatic goals are met.

**Organizational Management and Leadership**

- Provide inspirational and motivational leadership for extraordinarily passionate, committed, and skilled staff members. Foster a culture of openness, transparency, and collaboration.
- Manage day-to-day operations, including setting financial and programmatic goals, analyzing results and taking corrective action in close collaboration with staff and the Board.
- Analyze facility, technology and workplace design needs and administer resources to ensure a comfortable and productive workspace for **AAC** staff.

**Ambassador and Spokesperson for Climbers**

- Engage with elected officials and lobby for policies in support of conserving public lands and climbing areas.
- Act as a spokesperson for the climbing community, exhibiting a passion and excitement for all things climbing.
- Cultivate collaborative relationships with partner organizations in the climbing, outdoor, and recreation space

**Fundraising and Membership Growth**

- Along with development staff and the Board's Fund Development Committee, deepen and foster strong relationships with **AAC's** existing funders; oversee capital campaigns, cultivate major gifts, and steward **AAC's** most significant current and potential donors.
- Leverage the growing popularity of climbing to attract new members and encourage current members to maintain active engagement with **the Club**.

**Partnership with the Board of Directors**

- Partner closely with an active Board of Directors to drive strategic vision, leverage its experience and expertise, and thoughtfully grow and evolve the Board as **the Club** continues to move forward.
- Design and implement clear expectations, in partnership with the Board, for its contributions to the governance and success of the organization.

## THE PERSON

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**The Club** seeks an experienced organizational leader with a passion for climbing and preserving recreational spaces. The successful candidate will bring a deep understanding of and connection to the climbing community, its history and the impact that its growing popularity will have for years to come. The **CEO** must identify as a climber at heart; regardless of ability or resume, the successful candidate will bring a genuine love for the sport and its community.

The ideal candidate will have business acumen and organizational leadership stemming from experience in top or near-top leadership of an organization or business. He/she will be a creative collaborator with a track record of setting and driving the success of an organization's mission and strategic plan, as such will understand the confluence between vision and execution. The **CEO** will ideally have an understanding of local and national policies affecting the climbing community and will bring the political and interpersonal acumen needed to engage with elected officials and advocate for progressive conservation efforts.

A preference will certainly be given to candidates that have experience leading an organization where membership and volunteers are key constituents. He/she will have a background in driving sustainable growth of an organization or company. In addition, the successful candidate will bring hands on experience driving operational excellence and an understanding of how to implement best practices in operations, human resources, and finance. Partnering with and reporting to the Board of Directors, the successful candidate will be able to drive strategic and tactical planning processes collaboratively.

A skilled communicator and relationship builder, the **CEO** will possess humility and be genuinely invested in building a strong rapport with staff, donors, volunteers, policymakers, and partner organizations. The successful candidate will have demonstrated experience meeting ambitious growth goals, specifically overseeing capital campaigns and securing large gifts from a range of funders.

Based in Golden, the **CEO** will be a natural leader with the capacity to foster a culture of transparency and accountability. He/she will be committed to developing all levels of staff through ensuring there are structures in place for growth and learning and will be purposeful about creating a culture centered around the values of equity, inclusion and diversity. A creative problem solver, the **CEO** will work collaboratively with the team and be able to listen and evaluate to make and build support for decisions.

- An undergraduate degree, while not required, is strongly preferred. An advanced degree will distinguish the most attractive candidates.
- Significant (ideally 10 or more years) of progressively responsible leadership experience driving operational and programmatic excellence, with at least five years

in a senior executive capacity. Experience in a membership driven organization that relies to a significant extent on volunteers is preferred.

- Demonstrated experience with refining organizational processes in the spirit of continuous process improvement.
- Gravitas to serve as an ambassador for the climbing community and to interface with key external stakeholders to include elected officials and policymakers.
- Proven ability to develop and manage a significant organizational budget.
- Demonstrated staff management and development experience; a strong record of effective and inclusive team building.
- Proven ability to cultivate trust-based relationships with donors, partners, grantors and other funding and sponsorship partners.
- Previous working with and for a board of directors is a plus.
- A commitment to an inclusive culture that is predicated on equity and diversity.
- A genuine and demonstrated passion for climbing and the climbing community.
- A passionate personal alignment with the vision and mission of **AAC**.

### **PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

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- An energetic, hands-on, confident but down-to-earth leader who embodies **AAC's** core values.
- An inspirational leader; proven ability to support the leadership team and diverse groups of staff members to reach organizational goals.
- Results-oriented and driven to move things forward; strives toward continuous improvement and measurement against goals.
- A “people person” who is compassionate, operates with humility and effectively integrates into the **AAC** and climbing community culture and environment, rapidly gaining the trust and respect of colleagues and team members throughout, even as he/she simultaneously drives change and operational process improvements.
- A relationship builder who is able to develop strong relationships with elected officials and policymakers, external partners and stakeholders.
- Oral and written communication abilities – strong presentation skills; persuasive and articulate; diplomatic and open style; a good listener; credible.
- Impeccable ethics and highest integrity.
- A proactive leader; intellectually curious; regularly investigates and brings new ideas to the organization, especially with regard to operational best practices and staff leadership; skilled in critical and creative thinking to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to issues.

### **COMPENSATION**

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**The Club** will offer the successful candidate a competitive base salary targeted to be in the \$170,000 to \$180,000 range, dependent on experience and qualifications. The **AAC** also offers employees immediately eligibility for medical, dental, and vision insurance coverage with 100% of the premium for the employee paid. **The Club** also offers a 403(b) retirement plan with company match. Other benefits include a wellness program, an employer-funded HRA up to the first \$1000 of eligible expenses, a FSA, professional purchase programs, life planning services, Life and AD&D insurance coverage, and a generous PTO policy.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

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EFL Associates, an executive search firm, is assisting the **AAC** with this important search. All calls and inquiries should be made through the search firm representatives listed below. Referrals and applications will be held in confidence. Review of applications will begin immediately and will continue until the position is filled.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION**

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Our client and EFL Associates firmly support the principle and philosophy of equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, disability, veteran status or any other protected category pursuant to applicable federal, state or local law.

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