
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Open Land Trust

Beaufort, South Carolina

The Open Land Trust (OLT) seeks an experienced and community-minded Executive Director to lead South Carolina's first and oldest land trust into its next chapter of conservation impact across the southern Lowcountry.

About the Open Land Trust

Founded in 1971, the Open Land Trust is South Carolina's first and oldest land trust. For more than five decades, we have worked alongside landowners, communities, conservation partners, and local governments to protect the places that define the southern Lowcountry and ensure they remain part of this region for generations to come.

Our mission is simple and enduring: to protect and conserve Lowcountry land, forever. What began with three community members taking a leap of faith to protect Beaufort's waterfront bluff has grown into one of the region's leading conservation organizations. Today, the Open Land Trust has permanently protected more than 38,000 acres across seven counties through 118 conservation easements and 49 fee-owned properties. Our work spans working farms and forests, salt marshes and wetlands, military compatibility lands, wildlife habitat, community greenspaces, historic landscapes, and places that preserve the cultural heritage and rural character of the Lowcountry.

The Open Land Trust is more than a typical land trust. We are a trusted community partner, known for bringing people together around a shared belief that some places are worth fighting for and protecting forever. Whether conserving a family farm, expanding public access to nature, supporting working lands, or helping communities shape their own future, we approach every project with collaboration, integrity, and a long-term commitment to stewardship.

Accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, the Open Land Trust is based in Beaufort, South Carolina, and is guided by a dedicated professional staff and a committed 15-member volunteer Board of Directors.

To learn more, visit www.openlandtrust.org.

Position Overview

The Executive Director serves as OLT's chief executive and is responsible for overseeing the organization's strategic leadership, operations and organizational culture, financial oversight, fundraising and outreach, community programs and advocacy, and community presence throughout the southern Lowcountry and beyond. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director leads a small, capable staff and works closely with the Board to ensure the land trust continues to build on its current successes through partnerships, collaborations, shared vision,

and teamwork. The Executive Director, as the face of the organization, interacts with landowners, donors, elected officials, and partner organizations to advance OLT's conservation mission.

This is an opportunity for a thoughtful, relationship-oriented leader to build on over five decades of conservation success, deepen OLT's connection to the communities it serves, and guide the organization through its next phase of growth all while honoring the trust, culture, and legacy that OLT has fostered.

Key Responsibilities

Executive Leadership

- Serve as chief executive of the organization, providing vision, strategic direction, and day-to-day leadership in partnership with the Board of Directors.
- Lead the implementation of OLT's current strategic plan, ensuring alignment between mission, strategy, values, and operations. Ensures the land trust stays current on local, regional, and national conservation and community engagement trends.
- Serve as the primary liaison to the Board, providing timely and accurate information to support Board decision-making and supporting Board development, recruitment, and engagement.
- Support the effective functioning of Board committees, ensuring they are well informed, purposefully engaged, and equipped with the resources needed to advance OLT's work.
- Cultivate OLT's close-knit, supportive staff culture, one built on teamwork, mutual respect, competitive benefits and wages, and investment in each team member's professional growth while continuing to raise the bar on performance and impact.

Operations & Financial Management

- Oversee day-to-day organizational operations, including staffing, administration, office systems, and records management.
- Work with the Treasurer and Finance Committee, in partnership with staff, to develop the annual operating budget and operating plan for Board approval and oversee its implementation.
- Ensure accurate financial reporting, monitor cash flow and financial performance, and ensure a satisfactory annual audit and timely filing of Form 990.
- Supervise, mentor, and evaluate staff, ensuring appropriate organizational structure, work planning, and resource allocation to maximize existing and future staff capacity. Responsible for Human Resource responsibilities.
- Ensure compliance with organizational policies, applicable laws and regulations, and Land Trust Alliance Standards and Practices.

Community Engagement & Outreach

- Serve as a visible and trusted representative of OLT to landowners, donors, members, partners, and the broader Lowcountry community.

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- Build and sustain strong relationships with landowners, conservation partners, and community stakeholders across OLT's seven-county service area.
 - Serve as OLT's lead spokesperson, sharing media and public-representation responsibilities with staff and the Board, while representing the organization at public events, with elected officials and agency partners, and in regional and national land trust networks.
 - Oversee OLT's communications, including its website, social media, newsletters, and public programs, and advocacy efforts; ensuring the organization's work and impact are clearly and consistently communicated.
 - Expand OLT's storytelling ethos, skills, and presence to ensure a culture of appreciation and community connection, including those who may not see themselves initially as part of our conservation work.

Fundraising & Advancement

- Serve as the organization's chief fundraiser, working in partnership with Board and staff. Presents at fundraising events, small gatherings and one-on-one; prepares outreach materials for presentations as needed.
- Lead the development and successful implementation of an annual fundraising plan to expand individual giving in a manner that reflects our inclusive values, working closely with the Director of Development and the Board.
- Champion a strong culture of appreciation throughout the organization, ensuring donors of all levels, volunteers, landowners, and partners feel genuinely valued and recognized for their role in advancing OLT's mission.
- Cultivate, solicit, and steward relationships with individual donors, foundations, corporations, and government funders.
- Identify and pursue new revenue opportunities, including membership growth, planned giving, and grant funding.

Land Conservation & Stewardship

- Provide strategic oversight and support OLT's land protection program, working with the Director of Conservation to identify, evaluate, structure, and complete conservation easement and fee-simple acquisition projects. Oversee the expansion of regional initiatives and programs to work on landscape-scale and smaller-scale community projects.
- Ensure funding needed for long-term stewardship of OLT's protected properties.
- Help build and nurture relationships with landowners, agency partners, community members, and regional stakeholders to advance priority conservation projects throughout the Lowcountry.

Compliance & Risk Management

- Ensure OLT's ongoing compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as Land Trust Alliance accreditation standards.
- Oversee organizational risk management, including insurance coverage, legal review of conservation transactions, financial commitments, and sound recordkeeping.

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- Maintain ethical, transparent, and accountable practices across all areas of the organization's work.
 - Support the Board in maintaining strong governance and accountability systems.

Key Qualifications

- A genuine passion for conservation and a deep appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the South Carolina Lowcountry
- Senior nonprofit leadership experience, including managing teams, mentoring others, and growing a nonprofit. Ability to seek opportunities with practical implications, apply creative problem-solving, and lead from behind.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, including building an individual giving program and related donor cultivation, relationship management, direct fundraising and major gift development.
- Strong financial management skills, including budgeting, financial oversight, and experience working with a Board Treasurer and/or Finance Committee.
- Experience supervising and developing staff, with a collaborative and empowering leadership style.
- Exceptional interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills, with the ability to serve as a credible public-facing representative of the organization.
- Comfort and skill working with a wide range of stakeholders — landowners, donors, elected officials, agency partners, and community members — across a large, urban and rural service area.
- Familiarity with conservation easements, land trust operations, or real estate transactions is strongly preferred.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree in a related field a plus. Demonstrated learner who is comfortable with changing situations, technology, and systems.

Location & Logistics

The Open Land Trust is based in Beaufort, South Carolina. This is a full-time, exempt position requiring regular in-office presence as well as travel throughout OLT's seven-county service area to meet with landowners, partners, and community members. A valid driver's license and access to a vehicle are required, along with the ability to assist with event and program set-up/break down, and walk and hike protected properties across varied terrain and weather conditions.

Compensation & Benefits

Annual salary range is \$95,000 to \$130,000, commensurate with experience.

OLT offers a health and retirement benefits package designed to support the well-being of its staff.

The Open Land Trust is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified candidates will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter addressed to the search committee describing their interest and qualifications to oltsearchcommittee2026@gmail.com.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. All inquiries and application materials will be handled confidentially.

www.openlandtrust.org