

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS – JOB DESCRIPTION

First Descents (FD), voted to Outside Magazine’s Best Places to Work in 2017, provides life-changing outdoor adventures to young adults (ages 18-39) impacted by cancer. In its 18th year, FD aims to provide nearly 1,300 unique experiences across over 110 programs for those we serve.

Normally, a job description would list a whole bunch of buzzwords to explain the type of person that we are looking for. Thankfully, we’re not going to make you suffer. We are looking for a rock star who can immediately step up in a big way to be our next Director of Programs (DoP). Is it you?

RESPONSIBILITIES:

As a member of FD’s Leadership Team who reports to the Executive Director (ED), you will oversee our entire portfolio of program offerings. As DoP, you will be responsible for establishing, refining, and ensuring the integrity of the First Descents experience at all levels. You will have the skillset and emotional intelligence to build deep, meaningful relationships with all members of the FD Community: participants, volunteers, staff, board members, medical partners, donors, and service providers. You will be a key external face of First Descents at all times, especially within the outdoor and medical communities. You will be called on to present and facilitate strategic discussions with FD’s partners and at appropriate conferences on a regular basis.

THE HEALING POWER OF ADVENTURE: As our Founder has said: “Adventure can and does heal.” We pride ourselves on our uniqueness, creativity, and drive. As DoP, your ability to quickly learn how we do things and thoughtfully expand our program offerings will be paramount. Your success will hinge upon your ability to compassionately connect with the greater FD Community. If you don’t think you can hold true to what we do and simultaneously help us navigate unprecedented growth, read no further – this job isn’t for you.

GROWTH: 20% year-over-year growth is no walk in the park. We are on track to do it in 2018, and we plan to do it again next year (and the year after that)! Your track record of scaling experiences and fine-tuning the right mix of destination and local program offerings will shine in this role. On a daily basis, you will inspire your team to reach new heights through a commitment to community creation, sustainability, and agility.

STRATEGY: Elon Musk can land a SpaceX rocket on a barge in the middle of the ocean. We need someone that will bring that same boldness and innovation to First Descents in order to achieve our vision – to be the global leader in adventure based healing. Your proven success in creating and executing strategic initiatives will allow you to work hand-in-hand with our ED and Leadership Team to further develop our multi-year strategic plan. You will be integral in providing the roadmap for deepening and growing FD’s impact in a sustainable fashion.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: We’ve been at this for nearly two decades – and yet we feel our work has just begun! Our goal is to demonstrate improvement each and every year. As DoP, you will enhance staff trainings, effectively manage the logistics and execution of programs, further define the participant pathway, and inspire a culture of philanthropy. You’ll also work closely with various folks throughout the organization to help build, execute, and maintain a robust measurement and evaluation system. You and the Leadership Team will use these results to better understand the psychological, emotional, and physical elements our participants experience and how these elements can be addressed through FD’s programming.

– MISSION –

First Descents provides life-changing outdoor adventures for young adults impacted by cancer.

TRIBE: Our staff is extremely passionate about what we do - and you are too! As DoP, you will lead a high performing team of Program Managers and Program Coordinators at FDHQ and our Lead Staff and Chefs out in the field. Communication between HQ and field staff isn't a one-and-done thing - it'll be on your checklist from now until forever. As the leader within the Programs Department, you will oversee all recruitment, hiring, training, and career growth for all staff members under your supervision.

OUT LIVING IT: It's our motto and succinctly sums up our core values of adventure, challenge, community, humility, and humor. Saying it's important is an understatement. We live, breathe, and sweat it every day - and as the newest member of our team, you will too!

WHAT YOU BRING TO THE TABLE (AKA: REQUIREMENTS):

- Minimum of 10 years of experience designing and implementing adventure based programming
- Minimum of BA, MA preferred
- Demonstrated success growing and scaling program models
- Strategic vision, objective leadership, and organizational alignment
- Deep understanding and the ability to effectively communicate with key stakeholders within Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology (AYAO), outdoor experiential programming, and other identified medical specialty areas
- Strong personal commitment to and passion for First Descents' mission
- Preferred: Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Certification, NOLS Risk Management Certification, Wilderness First Aid or greater certification, and familiarity with Association of Experiential Education Guidelines

INSIDE DETAILS:

This is a salaried position based at our headquarters in Denver, CO, working typically from 8:30am to 4:30pm on weekdays. You will need to be comfortable working late and on weekends when necessary. Travel is required on a regular basis - one to two trips per month on average. Compensation will be based on experience and qualifications.

We offer competitive health benefits, employer retirement matching, five weeks of PTO, ten holidays, one hooky day (so you won't miss out on that epic powder day), an amazing office environment at [INDUSTRY](#) (with [Uncaged Ergonomics](#) adjustable standing desks, [Fluidstance](#) Levels, ping-pong tables, and dogs in the office), and a trip to one of our [week-long programs](#) each year in order to experience FD's work first-hand, as well as comp days when needed (for those nights and weekends you'll have to put in from time to time).

APPLY:

If you're interested in leading our Programs Team on the exciting adventure of growing our impact in a sustainable way, we want to talk to you.

To get started, write us a great pitch letter and send it to DoP.jobs@firstdescents.org along with your resume. Tell us why you're the perfect Director of Programs for FD and how you think your passion and unique set of skills will help our mission and community thrive.