

GoodCitizen

Chief Development Officer

Activate Global

Location: SF Bay Area or New York City Preferred
Houston, Boston, or Washington, DC will be considered

About Activate Global

Activate Global empowers scientists and engineers to transform groundbreaking research into market-ready solutions that tackle critical global challenges.

Founded in 2015, Activate partners with leading funders and research institutions to deliver the prestigious Activate Fellowship, a transformative two-year program offering scientists funding, mentorship, technical resources, community connections, and dedicated time to launch their ventures.

The Activate Fellowship offers Fellows an annual living stipend of \$100,000, along with travel allowances, health insurance, and relocation support, enabling them to focus exclusively on their entrepreneurial projects.

Since its inception, Activate has supported 249 Fellows, who have launched 197 pioneering companies, collectively raising more than \$4 billion in follow-on funding. These startups have generated over 2,800 U.S. based jobs and have defined entirely new market categories, demonstrating the profound impact and success of Activate's unique model.

Among them are Twelve, a carbon transformation company that converts captured carbon dioxide into valuable chemicals, fuels, and other essential products; Antora Energy, a thermal energy storage company working to unlock zero-emissions industrial energy; and Fervo Energy, an energy company striving to attain carbon-free geothermal power.

By transforming scientists and engineers into these high-impact entrepreneurs, Activate is building a better, brighter future for everyone.

Learn more about Activate [here](#).

The Opportunity

The Chief Development Officer (CDO) will serve as a key member of the executive leadership team, reporting directly to the CEO and playing a strategic role in driving Activate's growth. This pivotal leader will be responsible for diversifying funding streams, with a primary focus on expanding support from family offices and institutional donors, while overseeing a team that secures significant federal and state government funding.

The CDO will help shape Activate's internal culture of philanthropy by serving as a strategic advisor to the CEO and board while coaching the development team to further develop their fundraising strengths. Given Activate's lean development team, the Chief Development Officer must bring a proactive, hands-on approach to lead generation and donor cultivation, effectively balancing strategic oversight with direct engagement in donor relationships.

The Chief Development Officer will provide strategic direction on securing multi-year, multi-million-dollar funding commitments for Activate's Fellowship Program, as well as new strategic initiatives beyond the fellowship with long term impact potential for the organization. They will work closely with the CEO to pinpoint potential donors and cultivate relationships that can lead to substantial contributions, ensuring maximum return on investment.

Leading and managing a team of at least 6 development professionals, the Chief Development Officer will manage all aspects of the Development function at Activate. They will inspire high-performance standards and leverage their leadership skills to recruit, train, and mentor new team members.

Key Responsibilities

The Chief Development Officer will have primary responsibility for evolving and implementing a comprehensive fundraising strategy that engages existing donors and builds new relationships, growing Activate's **annual budget** from approximately \$35 million to over **\$50 million annually within the next three years**. They will lead the development team in executing targeted fundraising efforts aligned with Activate's mission and long-term objectives.

This role is both strategic and hands-on, requiring a leader who is equally comfortable mapping long-term fundraising strategy as well as directly executing the day-to-day work of donor cultivation, reviewing revenue projections, representing donor requirements during selection process for fellows, and managing the sponsor matching process for fellowship awards.

Resource Mobilization

- Develop and execute a visionary fundraising strategy in alignment with Activate's mission and goals, leveraging innovative approaches to secure substantial contributions and diversify funding sources. Directly manage and maintain relationships with government sponsors and philanthropic funders.
- Tailor a comprehensive, multi-year fundraising strategy, delineating specific identification, solicitation, and cultivation approaches for various donor segments, including federal and state government, family offices, foundations, and high-net-worth individuals.
- Spearhead efforts to secure seven figure gifts through strategic negotiations and creative tactics, ensuring Activate's financial sustainability, growth, and the advancement of its impactful mission.
- Lead efforts to rapidly expand Activate's network within family offices and institutional donors, leveraging personal and professional relationships to generate new philanthropic leads.
- Work with government relations firm to navigate shifts in federal and state funding environments, leveraging expertise in government budget cycles, legislative processes, and bipartisan relationship-building to effectively position Activate and secure sustained government funding.

- Collaborate closely with the Finance team on revenue forecasting, donor pipeline modeling, and budgeting processes to inform development strategies and resource allocation.

Team Management & Leadership

- Champion, mentor, and build a high-performing team of development professionals, empowering them to excel in every facet of fundraising, from identifying lucrative opportunities to forging lasting donor relationships. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, create an inclusive and supportive work environment to drive the team towards building a world-class fundraising unit, while providing strategic guidance and oversight to elevate their individual portfolios.
- Collaborate closely with the Fellowship, Strategic Initiatives and Brand Teams to align on proposal messaging and positioning, ensuring proposals effectively reflect Activate's programmatic priorities and resonate clearly with donor interests.
- Actively participate in fellow selection meetings and processes and lead efforts to match fellows with aligned donors across philanthropy and government.
- Effectively manage and coordinate an internal government relations and philanthropy team, and external government relations consultants to refine systems and processes, aligning with government funding strategies to maximize funding potential.
- Serve as a strategic partner and advisor to the CEO, board, and executive leadership team, providing thoughtful guidance, support, and structure to enhance their effectiveness in cultivating donor relationships and securing funding, while fostering a shared culture of philanthropy.

Thought Leadership

- Take ownership of shaping Activate's compelling narrative from a donor-engagement perspective, translating Fellows' scientific breakthroughs and entrepreneurial potential into clear, persuasive messaging that motivates family offices, foundations, government funders, and key donor audiences to invest.
- Deliver expert insights and perspectives at industry conferences, forums, and high-level donor gatherings to elevate Activate's visibility and reputation within philanthropic and government communities, while effectively representing Activate's mission, impact, and thought leadership externally.

Ideal Candidate

The ideal Chief Development Officer for Activate is a visionary and values-driven fundraiser with deep expertise in both philanthropy and government funding. They bring an established, extensive network within family offices, high-net-worth communities, and major philanthropic institutions. Leveraging these networks immediately, they have a proven ability to secure substantial, multi-year commitments and rapidly expand funding pipelines.

This strategic and execution-oriented leader possesses the unique ability to communicate the transformative potential of Activate's Fellows in ways that inspire family offices and government

stakeholders to commit meaningful resources. Ideally, this candidate has experience navigating funding through government agencies as well as philanthropy in order to support Activate's program and development staff in executing on its government funding strategy at the federal and state levels, positioning Activate to capitalize on emerging opportunities and maintain steady financial support.

The ideal candidate also has a successful track record building and leading high-performing fundraising teams. They lead with clarity, collaboration, and inspiration, fostering a robust internal culture of philanthropy and proactively engaging the CEO and board as strategic fundraising partners. Their exceptional communication skills and credible external presence enable them to effectively represent Activate at industry conferences and donor forums, elevating the organization's profile and attracting new resources to support Activate's mission and sustained growth. They are energized by rolling up their sleeves to solve problems, manage relationships, and ensure day-to-day operations run smoothly and effectively.

Qualifications

Required:

- Minimum of 15 years of senior fundraising leadership experience, with a proven track record securing multi-million-dollar gifts from family offices, high-net-worth individuals, and major philanthropic institutions.
- Exposure to federal and state government funding, including understanding budget cycles, legislative processes, and bipartisan dynamics.
- Successful experience managing, coaching, and building high-performing and empowered fundraising teams, with a track record of developing a robust internal fundraising culture.
- Proven ability to effectively partner with CEOs, executive leaders, and boards to enhance their fundraising effectiveness.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with experience serving as a compelling external representative at high-level donor meetings, events, and industry forums.
- Proven ability to thrive in fast-paced, entrepreneurial environments requiring hands-on lead generation and donor relationship management.

Preferred:

- Existing strong network and established relationships within family offices and institutional foundations as well high-net-worth communities.
- Experience in or deep familiarity with organizations supporting scientific innovation, entrepreneurship, climate solutions, or related fields.

Compensation, Benefits, and Location

The starting range for this role's base salary begins at \$250,000. This is a full-time position offering generous and comprehensive benefits.

While this role is primarily remote, candidates **should be located within commuting distance** of an Activate office.

Preferred locations include the **Bay Area or New York City**.

Consideration will also be given to candidates based in **Houston, Boston, or Washington, DC**.

This role may require up to 30% travel.

Activate's EEO Statement

We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating a welcoming workplace for all employees. All applicants will be considered for employment without attention to age, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, veteran, or disability status. We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on any of these characteristics. Activate Global, Inc. is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

To Be Considered

Please submit your resume expressing your interest in the position and fit for the role via the "Become a Candidate" button.

The application form will prompt you to also upload a Cover Letter, **in lieu of a Cover Letter, please instead submit a "Candidate Experience Brief" document** which contains your responses to the following three questions.

Please answer each question separately and include them all in one document.

1. Please share your experience securing major gifts from family offices and high-net-worth individuals including average gift size. In particular, how have you identified and engaged new donors, and what approaches have you used to build those relationships into sustained, multi-year support?
2. How have you engaged with federal and/or state government funding efforts in your current or past roles?
3. Highlight your experience engaging and securing support from institutional foundations. Please include specific examples of the scale and nature of partnerships you've led or contributed to. How have you identified and cultivated new opportunities?

Applications without a completed **"Candidate Experience Brief"** will not be considered final. Submissions may be addressed to Jailan Adly.

Applicants applying by May 9, 2025 will be given priority consideration.

GoodCitizen has been exclusively retained by Activate to lead this search. For questions, please contact:

Jailan Adly
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