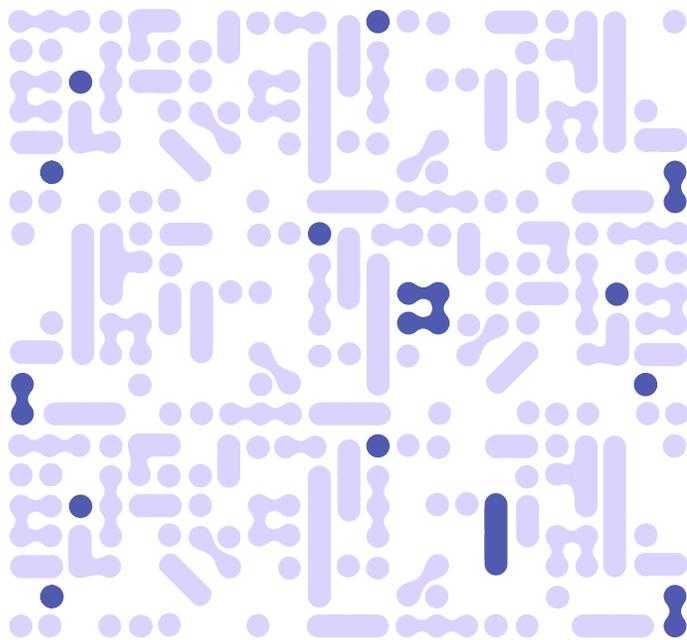


ALIGN



The Align
Foundation

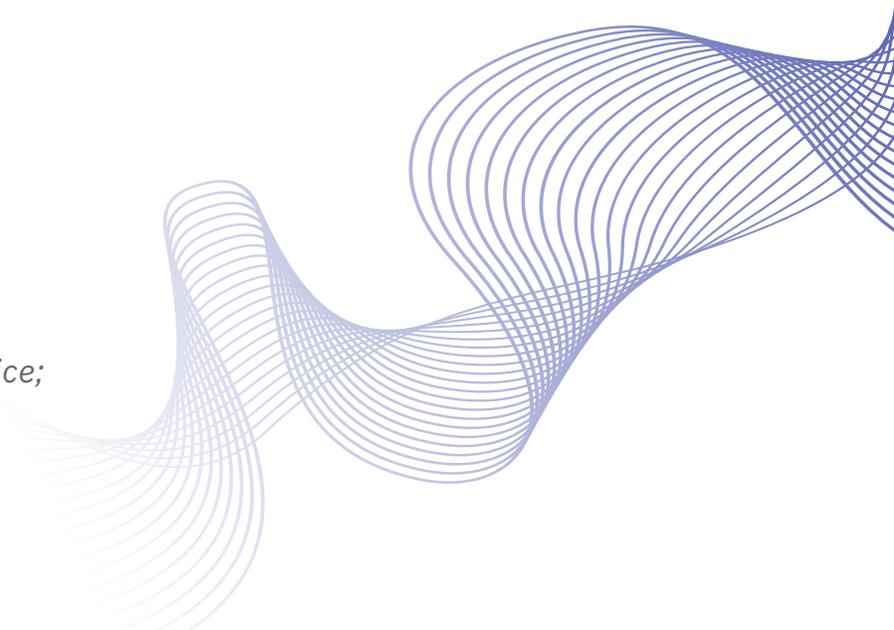
Executive
Director

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

NOVEMBER 2025

WittKieffer

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THE OPPORTUNITY

The Align Foundation is seeking a dynamic, strategic, and mission-driven leader to serve as its Executive Director. With a collaborative spirit and a strong partnership orientation, the Executive Director will help build organizational capacity, optimize operations, and support the Foundation's continued growth and impact. This is an exceptional opportunity for an experienced leader to contribute to groundbreaking work in science advancing innovations that improve lives.

As a key member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Executive Director will serve as a trusted advisor to the Board. The Executive Director will engage and contribute actively as a member of the Executive Team, collaborating with the Head of Data, Head of Science, and the Chief of Staff to shape strategy, align resources with organizational priorities, drive science forward, and lead with a shared responsibility for mission delivery, talent, culture, and long-term sustainability.

The Executive Director will be the primary advocate for the Foundation to external audiences. As the leader of a growing non-profit, the Executive Director will play a central role in ensuring financial sustainability and long-term growth. This includes developing creative funding models, building goodwill and interest among donors and collaborators, and sustaining the Foundation's momentum through both traditional philanthropy and innovative, mission-aligned funding sources. The Executive Director must be able to imagine and lead growth that is both considerable and sustainable, balancing bold vision with disciplined execution. The Executive Director will be responsible for cultivating goodwill, strengthening philanthropic interest, and fostering collaborations that sustain and grow the Foundation's mission including developing a clear vision for growth that can sustain significant expansion over time.

The Executive Director will oversee the spectrum of Foundation operations. The ideal candidate combines strong expertise with strategic insight, fostering trust, promoting transparency, and supporting mission-driven decision-making. The Align Foundation currently operates with a distributed international team of 15 people and an annual budget of approximately \$5M. The Executive Director will lead across this team and ensure strong communication and coordination within a remote-first structure. The organization is entering a scaling phase focused on building sustainable systems for growth.

The Executive Director will report to, and collaborate with, the Board in support of their responsibility regarding oversight of the foundation's financial reporting, planning, and sustainability. The Board plays an essential role in governance defining and protecting the mission and vision, serving as a guardrail against deviation, and providing both creative input and accountability to the Executive Director. The Board ensures oversight of spending, burn rate, fundraising progress, and evaluation of new ideas and research areas. The Executive Director is expected to foster a transparent, collaborative relationship with the Board and to welcome constructive challenge. The organization values leaders who embrace productive friction and can champion early-stage science that learns from failure and drives discovery forward.



ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

“Science moves faster when people and ideas are aligned. At The Align Foundation, we act as a catalyst, helping bold ideas turn into breakthroughs by building the systems science needs to move faster and more reliably. Through roadmapping, method development, and smarter infrastructure, we accelerate discovery and amplify impact across the life sciences.”

- Erika DeBenedictis, Ph. D. Co-Founder

Mission

The Align Foundation accelerates scientific research by improving access to useful research methods and data. The Foundation’s goal is a future without data bottlenecks where science is reproducible, scalable, and openly shareable enabling researchers to build on one another’s work, accelerate discovery, and develop the next generation of predictive models.

The Align Foundation generates novel, labeled datasets the biggest need for AI-driven biology. The value of Align’s data is measured by tracking performance benchmarks focusing on the points where AI can meaningfully accelerate biological research. Align is focused on:

1. Roadmapping for research to find areas where predictive modeling can have outsized impact.
2. Organizing and executing collaborative data generation projects.
3. Hosting competitions to benchmark the impact of the data generated.

The Align Foundation partners with scientists worldwide to standardize methods and scale reproducible science. Align brings together the scientific community to identify high-impact data opportunities that will unlock the next generation of predictive models in biology. The process is open, inclusive, and rigorously engineered to surface the most promising ideas and make them actionable. This roadmapping process is not just how Align prioritizes—it is how they co-create the future of science. The resulting datasets are free, structured, and built to be accessible. By providing open, extensible, AI-ready datasets that drive reproducible science and fuel new discoveries, The Align Foundation provides a transparent platform for fostering collaboration, evaluating progress, and establishing computation protein engineering benchmarks. From community-driven roadmaps to massively collaborative living datasets, and transparent public benchmarks The Align Foundation is building the infrastructure to enable science at scale and openly sharing to accelerate discovery.



POSITION SUMMARY

Executive Director, Align Foundation

The Executive Director at Align Foundation will be the senior executive with oversight of the Align management team to guide strategic, scientific, and operational initiatives to bridge scientific innovation with program execution, ensuring the foundation's mission is realized through collaborative, reproducible, and scalable research efforts. This position is the head leadership role within the organization. The Executive Director will report directly to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will work closely with the leadership team.

The Executive Director must bring enough scientific background to credibly engage in discussions around molecular biology, big data, and automation, enabling thoughtful dialogue with scientific advisors and partners. The role requires someone who can bridge complex science and accessible communication; a charismatic evangelist who conveys excitement, builds relationships across philanthropy, academia, and industry, and inspires goodwill and collaboration within the scientific community.

The Executive Director will effectively advocate for science, knows how to grow science, and understands the need to navigate early-stage challenges to achieve exponential growth. The Executive Director will be the external face for the Align Foundation with the primary responsibility to continue philanthropic fundraising and expansion of funding resources. The Executive Director will foster relationships with funders, science policy makers and collaborators in academia and industry. In addition, the Executive Director will represent the Align Foundation in public and scientific forums by delivering compelling talks to popularize the Align Foundation's approaches to science including conversion of the life sciences to a data-first discipline by allowing researchers to collaborate on large, data-intensive projects. The accomplishments desired within the initial 6-12 months include: securing funding to support future growth, building a strong collaboration network, establishing new partnerships, and overseeing the initialization of new programs.



Requirements:

- Strong leadership experience guiding, managing, and scaling a team, ideally within a similar non-profit or government organization.
- An ability to communicate complex scientific concepts to diverse audiences, including donors and collaborators.
- Scientific and research experience, with a proven track record in leading and delivering R&D projects.
- A basic understanding of the landscape and progress of data science and machine learning.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and gravitas to engender trust, respect, and credibility.

Preferred attributes:

- A strong network in science philanthropy and understanding of science policy.
- Startup/founder experience.
- A doctoral degree (Ph.D.) in a relevant scientific field.
- The incumbent should be able to engage credibly with scientists and technical experts, translating complex ideas for diverse audiences.

Core competencies and attributes:

Strategic & Scientific Leadership

- Define and execute the Foundation's strategic roadmap in alignment with open science principles.
- Serve as a politically savvy partnership builder, with experience across philanthropy and science funding ecosystems.
- Comfort and excitement with engaging philanthropic, governmental, and collaborative funders while maintaining alignment with the core mission in open, data-centric biology.
- Collaborate with scientific advisors and partners to help guide experimental priorities.
- The Executive Director will operate with meaningful autonomy, collaborating closely with the Board and Founder, while holding final accountability for day-to-day management and execution.

Program Management

- Provide leadership on organizational go/no-go decisions.
- Ensure processes enable timely delivery of data and documentation to collaborators and the public.
- The incumbent will embrace, champion, and broadcast reproducibility and transparency standards upheld by the Program Managers and leadership team.

Partnership Oversight

- Foster high-level relationships with scientific partners, funders, and vendors.
- Provide high-level monitoring of contracts, performance, and ensure cost-effective service delivery.
- Evaluate and integrate emerging technologies and partnerships.

Operational Leadership

- Align's scientific and administrative functions across a distributed, cross-functional team.
- Ensure that documentation and workflow processes are efficient and streamlined.
- Monitor financial and project progress including budgets, timelines, and resource allocation.
- Align's culture is built on transparency, intellectual rigor, open communication, and cross-disciplinary collaboration; the Executive Director should model and reinforce these values.
- Support the Board and executive leadership through transparent reporting and input.

Location:

The Align Foundation supports fully remote work with employees in four countries, and engagement with collaborators worldwide.





GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives have been identified as immediate and ongoing priorities for the Executive Director role:

- **Fundraising & Visibility:** Expand the Foundation’s funding base and elevate its presence within the global scientific and philanthropic communities. In the first 12–24 months, success will include securing new multi-year funding commitments, expanding institutional partnerships, and strengthening relationships with philanthropic and grant-funding organizations.
- **Vision & Strategy:** Develop and communicate a compelling organizational vision that ensures The Align Foundation’s continued success, relevance, and sustainability. The incumbent will spend the majority of their time on external strategy, fundraising, and partnership development, with a smaller portion focused on internal management and organizational operations.
- **Mission Alignment:** Ensure that the Foundation’s mission and values are well-articulated, widely understood, and deeply integrated across all programs and operations.
- **Organizational Growth:** Strengthen internal systems and capacity to support growth, operational excellence, and long-term impact. The Foundation’s current funding model centers on major philanthropic donors, and the next phase of growth will include building relationships with new philanthropic foundations and competitive grant-funding agencies.
- **Financial Stewardship:** Enhance a robust financial infrastructure that enables data-informed decision-making and responsible resource allocation.
- **Partnership Development:** Cultivate and maintain strategic partnerships across academia, industry, and philanthropy to accelerate scientific collaboration and data sharing.

TIMELINE

Potential interview dates for this position have been outlined as follows:

Paper presentation of qualified candidates to Search Committee: Early January 2026

Zoom interview dates: January 23rd & 27th, 2026

Selected candidates should plan to hold the above dates in the event they are invited by the committee to participate in the interview process.





PROCEDURE FOR CANDIDACY

All applications, nominations and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV/resume and a letter of interest. Review of applications has begun and will continue until the position is filled.

Please direct all applications, nominations, and inquiries to the WittKieffer consultants assisting The Align Foundation with this recruitment, preferably via e-mail, to Roxana Woudstra (rwoudstra@wittkieffer.com) or by phone (781.564.2638) or through this [link](#).

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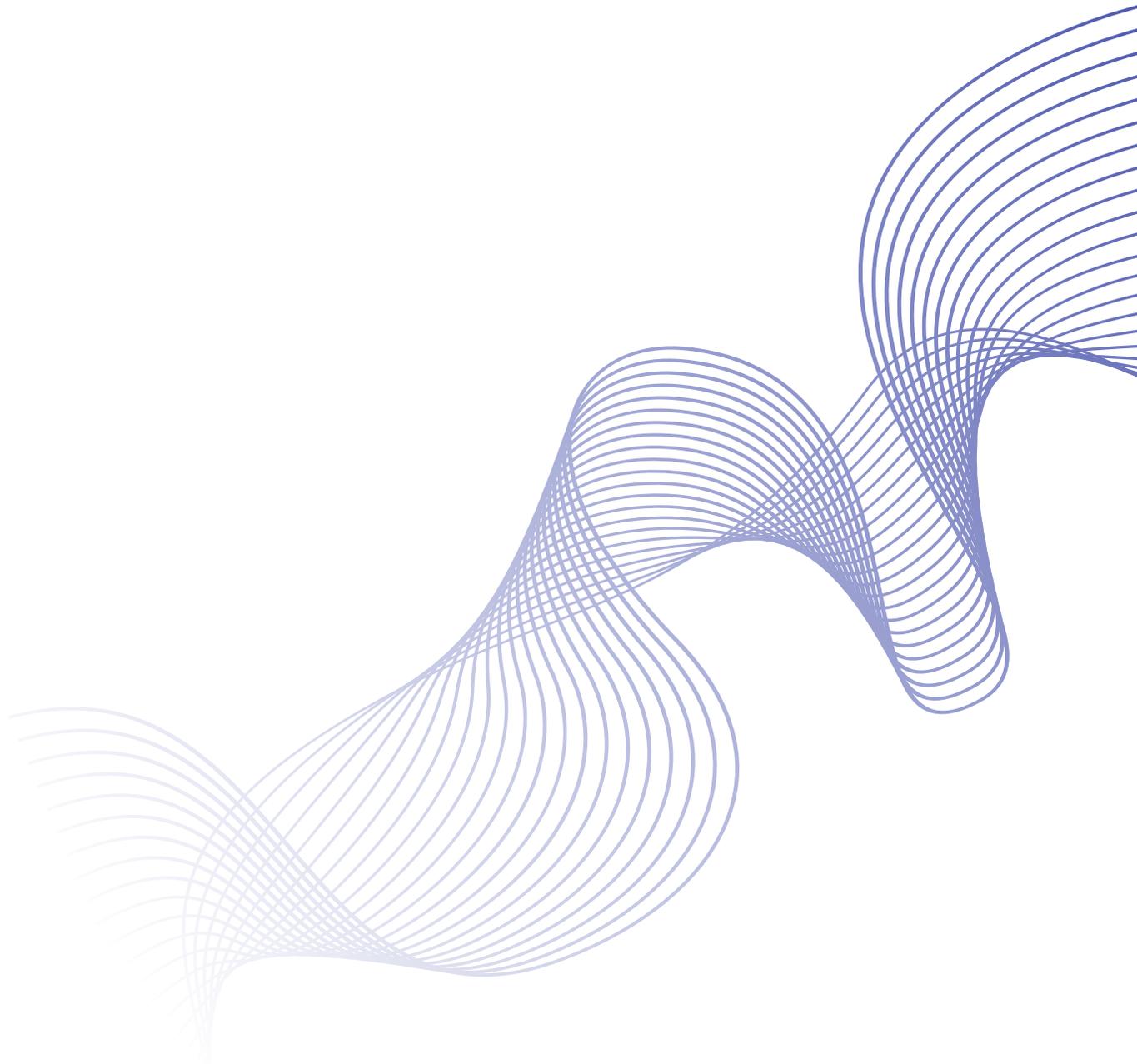
The Align Foundation welcomes everyone.

The Align Foundation believes diversity enriches our team and so strive to hire people with a wide range of identities, backgrounds, and experiences.

The Align Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. That means we don't discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability status.

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