



POSITION PROFILE

Executive Director Adventure Risk Challenge

Central or Northern California



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ABOUT ADVENTURE RISK CHALLENGE

Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC) is a youth development non-profit that works to eliminate barriers and create pathways for youth to achieve academic success, to access outdoor spaces, and to exercise leadership in their communities and beyond.

ARC's immersive, multi-year program progression engages high school youth in rural communities of the Sierra Nevada and the Central Valley whose identities are underrepresented in the outdoors and higher education, especially English learners and first-generation students.

ARC envisions a future where all youth become stewards of their own success, their communities, and the environment – transforming into lifelong learners, leaders, and advocates for social and environmental justice.

ARC facilitated its first program, a 40-day summer course, at UC Berkeley's Sagehen in 2004. That inaugural program hosted 9 students, who engaged in writing projects while participating in backpacking, rock climbing, and kayaking. The results were tremendous: students reported enhanced academic confidence, improved literacy skills, and a deeper connection to both their community and the natural world.

Over the years, ARC has grown from its first class of 9 students to serve over 4,000 total participants in academic-year programs and over 400 total graduates from summer courses.

Students who have participated in ARC programs have reported a wide range of positive outcomes - including improving their writing and public speaking, growing their confidence in their leadership skills, improving their approach to working through challenges, and increasing their comfort communicating their feelings and needs.



Programs

ARC's year-round programming blends academic instruction with outdoor adventure, allowing students to grow both intellectually and personally. ARC's program progression is designed to engage students in four key areas of development: literacy skills, leadership, community & belonging, and outdoor experiences & connection.

Programs include:

Summer Courses: Every summer, ARC offers immersive summer programming for high school students in the Sierra Nevada. Students are challenged academically, physically, and emotionally as they learn and grow from each other and the dedicated ARC team.

Academic Year: The ARC Community Leadership Program is a multi-year progression that provides leadership opportunities, academic support, and mentoring for students throughout high school. Offered at four high schools (North Tahoe, Truckee, Firebaugh, and Dos Palos), the program offers integrated literacy, leadership, and outdoor curriculum. Community Leadership participants who complete their programs are also awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to support their continued growth.

Program participants report that through ARC they have improved their writing, public speaking, leadership skills, and comfort in advocating for their needs.

What's Next

In 2024, ARC partnered with the consulting firm Point b(e) Strategies to embark on a transformative journey of organizational reflection and growth. Through a dynamic six-month change management process, ARC engaged with its history, accomplishments, and aspirations, culminating in a retreat where staff and Board members charted a vision for the organization's future.



At the retreat, ARC celebrated its impressive evolution—steadily growing its revenue, programs, and team size since its founding. This growth has positioned ARC as a vibrant and impactful organization, ready to embrace its next stage of maturity with renewed focus and purpose. Together, stakeholders envisioned a future where ARC’s growth is fully aligned with a powerful mission and guided by a strategic vision to drive meaningful and lasting impact.

This process has laid the groundwork for a forward-looking strategic plan to be championed by ARC’s next leader. With a commitment to innovation, collaboration, and excellence, ARC is poised to achieve impactful goals, including:

- Maintaining and strengthening academic-year programs across four schools, with structures that align programmatic, administrative, and fundraising needs.
- Investing in administrative capacity and creating a supportive environment to retain talented staff.
- Enhancing the ability to measure and showcase program effectiveness, amplifying ARC’s impact.
- Securing access to a stable, long-term summer base camp to enrich participant experiences.
- Prioritizing organizational sustainability to ensure ARC’s success for decades to come.
- Cultivating a healthy, engaged, and visionary Board of Directors.
- Deepening ARC’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in every facet of its work.

ARC’s success is reflected not only in its strong programming, but also in the strength of its internal culture. The organization fosters a culture of transparency and collaboration, with a strong and caring team, who take pride in their work and share a deep commitment to the organization’s mission, as well as an active and engaged Board of Directors. Internally, ARC thrives as a workplace where team members are valued, supported, and inspired, contributing to an environment that is both productive and deeply fulfilling.

ARC stands at the threshold of an exciting new chapter, fueled by optimism, purpose, and the unwavering belief that the best is yet to come. Together, the organization is ready to dream big and achieve even greater heights.



THE OPPORTUNITY

At this moment of change and tremendous opportunity, Adventure Risk Challenge will welcome its next leader. Reporting to the Board, the Executive Director will have the opportunity to build on the momentum and growth of the past few years, and lead ARC into its next chapter of impact.

The Executive Director will have the opportunity to lead and set ARC's strategic vision, while overseeing a budget of ~\$1.4M and a talented team of 12 (with additional seasonal staff in the summer).

Responsibilities of the Executive Director include, but are not limited to:

Leadership & Strategy

- Develop and implement ARC's long-term strategy, ensuring alignment with its mission and vision.
- Provide leadership to the board, staff, and stakeholders, fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and accountability.

Financial & Operational Oversight

- Manage the annual budget, ensuring financial sustainability and responsible fund allocation.
- Oversee resource use to meet organizational goals.
- Hire, train, and support a high-performing staff team, promoting professional growth and a positive work environment. Oversee management of ARC's organizational chart and structure.



External Relations

- Represent ARC in the community, cultivating relationships with key stakeholders, partners, and donors. Attend and participate in in-person events regularly.
- Collaborate with the Development Director to grow the donor base and diversify revenue streams.
- Strengthen partnerships with educational institutions, local governments, and community groups.

Program & Governance

- Guide the development, evaluation, and expansion of programs aligned with ARC's goals.
- Monitor program effectiveness, including through occasional in-person program attendance, making adjustments for continuous improvement. Report program outcomes to stakeholders and donors.
- Support board development, recruitment, training, and engagement in fundraising and strategic planning.

Culture & Inclusion

- Foster an inclusive, transparent, and collaborative work environment.
- Lead DEI initiatives to ensure inclusivity in programming, staffing, and decision-making.
- Ensure programs are accessible to underserved and marginalized communities.
- Maintain feedback channels to refine DEI efforts and promote ongoing inclusivity.



CANDIDATE PROFILE

While it is understood that no candidate will offer every desired skill, quality, and characteristic, the following offers a detailed, aspirational view of the ideal candidate profile:

A Visionary Leader, Experienced in Change Management

This leader will:

- Have the ability to articulate and unite the organization around both a long- and short-term vision, ensuring strategic goals are both aspirational and actionable.
- Bring experience navigating organizational transformation, scaling operations, and creating stability in a growing or evolving nonprofit.
- Be able to implement systems and structures to support sustainable growth and operational efficiency.
- Be comfortable making tough decisions and trade-offs, ensuring organizational decisions align with vision, mission, and capacity.
- Have the capacity to manage stress and guide the organization through challenges with calm, decisive leadership.

An Effective Collaborator & Communicator

This leader will:

- Be skilled in networking and creating lasting partnerships with stakeholders, donors, schools, and local communities to enhance ARC's visibility and impact.
- Have an ability to understand the unique needs of the communities ARC serves, building strong relationships with students and their families.
- Be a skilled ambassador, with the ability to represent ARC as its public face, effectively communicating the organization's impact and inspiring community and donor support.



A Relational & Inclusive Leader

This leader will:

- Be able to build trust and rapport across all levels—board, staff, students, and community.
- Ideally have a demonstrated track record with hiring, training, and supporting a high-performing, largely remote team.
- Be a high-energy, fun, driven, and adaptable leader with a hands-on, flexible approach.
- Have a track record of fostering an inclusive, equitable, and supportive organizational culture and programmatic offerings.

A Passion for the Mission

This leader will:

- Bring an authentic passion for ARC's mission, along with a belief in its future and impact.
- Have an unwavering desire and commitment to meet community needs and serve the students of ARC.
- Be community focused, with a strong and demonstrated commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.
- Ideally bring a familiarity with the communities ARC serves, along with an appreciation for the cultural and social dynamics of those communities, ensuring that programs are accessible and relevant.
- Possess a personal passion for outdoor education and experience in the field, understanding that ARC's unique culture is shaped by time spent together in nature.
- Be self-reflective, humble, and open-minded; understanding the importance of listening, learning, and growing from feedback.
- Inspire others because they are inspired by the work itself.



LOCATION

Adventure Risk Challenge operates a remote workplace. The successful candidate should be based in or willing to relocate to and maintain a home office in Northern or Central California (ideally within 90 minutes of one or more of ARC's program sites in Tahoe, Yosemite, or the Central Valley). The successful candidate will be expected to spend time in person at various ARC programming sites, and to be a highly visible leader within the communities ARC serves.

COMPENSATION

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. The salary range for this role is \$120,000 - 140,000 with a generous benefits package, including 80% coverage of insurance premiums for employees and dependents/partners and flexible time off policy.



CONTACT

Koya Partners has been exclusively retained for this engagement, which is being led by Cheryl Stevens and Claire Hunt. Express interest in this role by [filling out our Talent Profile](#) or emailing the search team directly at arc_ed@koyapartners.com. All inquiries and discussions are strictly confidential.

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ABOUT KOYA PARTNERS | DIVERSIFIED SEARCH GROUP

Koya Partners, a Diversified Search Group company, is the nation's premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

Diversified Search Group is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of "America's Best Executive Recruiting Firms" and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

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