



POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute

Fostering Resilient Agriculture Through Research, Policy, and Education Since 1984

michaelfields.org



Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) seeks a **dynamic, experienced, mission-led and people-focused Executive Director**. Celebrating its 40th anniversary next year, MFAI is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization primarily funded through state and federal grants with a \$1M+ annual operating budget. MFAI is headquartered in East Troy, Wisconsin with staff located in southern WI and northern IL.

MFAI's History

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute was founded in 1984 by Christopher and Martina Mann. The Manns agricultural journey began in England and later in Germany and Switzerland.

Christopher and Martina were concerned about the problems of modern production agriculture. In 1979 the Manns were drawn to America. After visiting several states, they settled on purchasing a farm near East Troy, Wisconsin. They were confident they “could find young farmers that would join their endeavor.”

The name, Michael Fields, sprang from a housing community Christopher started near Michael Hall Waldorf School where he and his parents had labored in England. The first event hosted by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute was a sustainable agricultural conference in 1984.

Mission

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute fosters agricultural systems that are environmentally, economically, and socially healthy. Our policy, research, and education programs empower farmers and communities throughout Wisconsin and beyond to achieve these goals.

Vision

Michael Fields Agricultural Institute is guided by a vision of agriculture that prioritizes people and promotes human and ecosystem health, food sovereignty, and justice.

Equity Statement

MFAI recognizes the harm that systemic social, racial, and economic injustice has played in our agricultural systems. We are committed to policies, structures, and practices that foster food and farming systems that are just and equitable.



MFAI Program Areas

Research

Our research program is built around a vision of healthy agroecosystems.

To accomplish this goal we conduct research trials and demonstrations with [perennial grains](#), legume [cover crops](#), food-grade small grains, and alternative crops such as mung beans, millet, and buckwheat.



Education

We support healthy ecosystems and a resilient food system through our education programs:

[Wisconsin Women in Conservation](#) (WiWiC) brings together Wisconsin women landowners to learn about conservation practices, resources, and funding opportunities.

[Peer-to peer learning](#) focused on strengthening diverse small and mid-size Midwest food-grade grain farmers.

Free [one-on-one consulting services](#) to help Midwest farmers, agricultural entrepreneurs, and institutions navigate USDA-SARE and other grant resources.



Policy

Our policy work is predicated on the simple belief that people should feel empowered to use democratic processes to direct government resources to advance their vision of agriculture in society.

We work at the grassroots level to organize with policymakers, non-profit leaders, and farmers to support conservation practices while addressing socioeconomic barriers in agriculture on both a federal and state level.

MFAI's [policy work](#) is built from relationships with farmers in networks like the Uplands Watershed Group, Midwest Farmers of Color Soil Health Network, and the Grassland 2.0 Driftless Learning Hub. We bring those insights to our state Capitol, coalition partners in Washington D.C., and elected representatives and agency staff nationwide.



Michael Fields Agricultural Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization addressing the challenges of soil health, water quality, climate resilience, racial equity, food security, and farm success through research, policy, and education.

We believe that responsible food and farming systems can help solve some of the most pressing environmental and social problems of our time.

Moving Forward

Building on its rich history and innovative programming, MFAI has **opportunities** in the near-term to

- Take advantage of this leadership transition to articulate a clear trajectory for the institute drawn from MFAI's mission and vision
- Build on the strengths of the dynamic, talented, and high-performing staff to advance innovative programming
- Capitalize on the federal funds that currently support work in MFAI's key areas, such as food systems and urban agriculture
- Develop a long-term vision for the institute's 210+ acres of certified organic farmland in southeast Wisconsin, including opportunities to train and advance land access for beginning and BIPOC farmers
- Leverage the long history of success in research, education, and policy to create strategic synergies
- Anticipate programming and funding relevant to climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Develop a mission-focused fundraising strategy to expand programs and enhance organizational capacity

MFAI faces the **challenges** of

- Managing administrative overhead costs and securing unrestricted funding sources
- Ensuring space and equipment needs are maintained for a competitive, high impact Research Program
- Continuing to expand an integrated Education Program that serves MFAI's stakeholders
- Operating multiple programs while ensuring overall organizational cohesion



The **priorities** for the next Executive Director will be to

- Articulate MFAI's unique attributes, how it differs from other agricultural non-profit organizations, and the strategic resources it can offer regional stakeholders
- Evaluate and streamline MFAI's programmatic work based on what distinguishes MFAI
- Build out a robust donor network and funding strategy
- Strategically and judiciously manage overhead expenses
- Provide intentional leadership in equity and justice work



Primary Responsibilities

The Executive Director is key to carrying out the mission and goals for MFAI and ensuring it has the human talent and financial resources needed to achieve its vision. The Executive Director role is divided between three primary responsibilities:

(1) Organizational Management and Staff Support

- **Articulate and advance a cohesive vision** for MFAI's continued growth and development as an equitable and inclusive organization.
- **Lead the organization's long-term strategy**, including overseeing strategic planning and implementation of a strategic plan.
- **Oversee communications** including distilling and creatively communicating MFAI's story.
- **Be accountable for MFAI's financial performance** and work in partnership with the financial officer to oversee finances, develop and monitor an annual budget, and provide strategic communications to the board and staff.
- **Prioritize technology enhancements** to create and maintain an effective and efficient operational infrastructure.
- **Manage staff recruitment**, onboarding, and support.
- **Foster an equitable and just work environment** that attracts, motivates, cultivates, and keeps quality employees.
- **Facilitate staff development** and assist program staff in professional advancement.
- **Ensure that an effective management team** is in place with frequent communication and consultation.
- **Develop programmatic work** in partnership with staff that aligns the mission, strategy, and financial needs of MFAI.
- **Work collaboratively with the board of directors** to ensure the organization's health and wellbeing through frequent and constructive communication.

(2) Community and Partner Engagement

- **Guide racial equity efforts**, both for internal learning and development and stakeholder-facing programs.
- **Cultivate strong relationships** regionally and beyond, working closely with staff and the board of directors.
- **Engage with current partners** and develop new partnerships that advance MFAI's mission.
- **Serve as the spokesperson** for MFAI and be a champion and advocate by actively engaging in the community and at partner events.

(3) Fundraising and Donor Development

- **Develop a fundraising strategy**, drive fund development, and create annual fundraising goals.
- **Cultivate relationships** with foundations and other potential donors.
- **Develop unrestricted funds** to support long term organizational capacity.
- **Manage the grant pipeline** process in collaboration with the financial officer.
- **Work closely with staff** to submit grant applications and reports to federal, state, and local agencies.

Core Competencies

- **A strategic thinker** who listens actively and excels at problem-solving, decision-making, and developing realistic action plans to achieve specific goals.
- **Highly collaborative** with a proven record of connecting and supporting staff to work collaboratively on creative solutions to challenges, including hybrid and remote teams.
- **A team leader** who can build an environment of inclusivity and belonging.
- **An excellent communicator** who has proven success developing and delivering multi-mode communications, and implementing strategies that convey a clear message while promoting the mission of the organization.
- **A seasoned writer** who can craft a well-written compelling message concisely and transparently.
- **An experienced fundraiser** with proven success in developing a fundraising strategy, cultivating donors, and reaching financial targets.
- **Financially adept** with a keen understanding of key financial indicators and standards of fiscal accounting, controls, and best practices to make astute business decisions.

Personal Characteristics

- **Communicative.** They engage others in dialogue, actively share and seek feedback, practice participatory decision making, and are perceived as open and involved.
- **Empathetic.** They are genuinely interested in others' lives, challenges, and feelings. They interact with compassion and leave others feeling valued and respected for their personal and professional worth.
- **Relational.** They are other-focused. They care deeply for those they lead and seek to serve them well. They desire to develop and empower others.
- **Adaptable.** They can work with a wide diversity of people with tact, grace, and kindness.
- **Accountable.** They demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving exceptional results.
- **Visionary.** They are driven and inspired by what could be. They focus on the big picture with the intent to usher in new eras of innovation and development.
- **Goal-oriented.** They consistently establish clear markers to achieve and persistently move toward those outcomes.
- **Flexible.** They are willing to create, adapt, and punt when needed.
- **Confident.** They are optimistic, self-reliant, and resilient.
- **Energetic.** They bring enthusiasm to their work and can transfer their energy to others.

Qualifications

- Committed to strengthening regenerative food systems, farmers, and the communities they support
- Experience overseeing long-term capital plans including deferred maintenance
- Experience managing a diverse team
- Relationship building skills to cultivate and maintain engagement with partner organizations and donors
- Demonstrated commitment to racial equity
- Strategic and financial management experience
- Exceptional written and oral communication skills
- Demonstrated experience with technology including virtual communication, digital media, donor relationship management, and project management
- A track record of 5 years of effective fundraising leadership, including grant management
- A minimum of 5 years of experience in leadership and/or management roles within the not-for-profit sector
- An undergraduate degree is required, a graduate degree in a related field is preferred

Salary and Benefits

The salary range is \$90,000 to \$110,000 with a competitive benefits package including up to \$400/month towards the employee's single or family monthly premium for health insurance, paid time off, and a SIMPLE IRA with a 3% match.

This is a **hybrid full-time position, based in the Upper Midwest (WI, MN, IA, IL).**

Commitment to Equal Opportunity

MFAI is an Equal Opportunity Employer. MFAI is committed to equal treatment of all employees without regard to race, national origin, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, veteran status, physical or mental disability or other basis protected by law. Reasonable accommodation will be made so that applicants with disabilities may participate in the application process. Please advise in writing of needs at the time of application.

Application Process

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and interested parties are encouraged to apply early. To apply, send the following to scanlandk@greystoneglobal.com with only **MFAI SEARCH and YOUR NAME** in the subject line:

- a cover letter that speaks to the applicant's core competencies and qualifications outlined above
- a current résumé

MFAI has contracted with Greystone Global LLC to manage the search process. All questions and inquiries can be sent to Kathryn Scanland at scanlandk@greystoneglobal.com