

# Vida Verde Head of Program Position

Head of the School Year Program for 4th-6th Graders



## MISSION STATEMENT

*Vida Verde is a nonprofit that promotes educational equity by providing free, overnight, environmental learning experiences for students who don't otherwise get the opportunity.*

**ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW:** We are a small, tightly-knit, and exciting organization. Our jobs are the BEST, and so are the people who work here!

**School Year Program for 4th-6th graders:** For 25 years, Vida Verde has delivered **free**, three-day, two-night school-year camping trips (our core program), to over 15,000 4th-6th grade students and teachers from low-income Bay Area schools. This program is the focus of this job posting for Head of Program.

**Leadership Program for Teens:** In 2019, we began our Summer Leadership Project as well that provides teens with the next level experience that they've been asking for: a one-week immersive summer camping trip focussed on these emerging young adults in a complex and beautiful world. This program is led by other staff.

Youth at Vida Verde interact in the outdoors with their peers through programs that nurture positive self & interpersonal connections and instill a sense of belonging and connection to the natural world. They are exposed to new and exciting environments, challenges and ideas. Vida Verde's programs serve historically marginalized populations and are free for all participants and schools.

With equity as a cornerstone of Vida Verde's mission, we as a staff, intentionally and actively engage in Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) work with an understanding and agreement that JEDI work is critical to achieving our mission fully. (See our full JEDI statement below.)

Working at Vida Verde is one of the hardest jobs you may ever have. AND it is also *extremely* rewarding and real. We are a nonprofit with limited resources that come exclusively from donations. We are scrappy and resourceful, stretching our budget together to carefully support ourselves with pay, housing, and benefits. The well-being of us, our team, is paramount to our success with the kids. Working at V.V. is full of professional development opportunities, and we work hard to develop ourselves here, growing in our roles and talents.

We work hard. We work on site. We are positive in our feedback. We are professional.



## Values of Vida Verde

↔ **The Mission First** ↔

**Persistent Improvement and Our Best Practices** ↔ **The Environment and Natural Resources**

**Relationships and Community** ↔ **Making It Happen**

**POSITION OVERVIEW:** This year-round, full-time salaried (aka “exempt”) position is responsible for planning, managing and operating 30 inspiring, successful, & life changing weeks of the School Year Program (Sept-Dec & Jan–June) and for managing, leading, and developing Vida Verde’s 4 or 5 Instructors. All work takes place at the program site and nearby parks. The HOP is the manager, leader & administrator running the program and delegating, while the instructors staff the program. The typical workday includes leading the instructors in meetings, completing computer work and outdoor coordination.

Additionally, the Head of Program (HoP) collaborates with other Vida Verde leaders, integrating the instructor team with the full staff team. HoP work also includes participating in other mission focussed work such as fundraising, strategic planning and organizational team building.

The Head of Program wants to be challenged and work hard towards educational equity, wants to lead and is responsible for the success of this beautiful and systematized program. The HoP is a strong personnel manager, with consistent follow-through, a competent project manager, likes using existing systems, with great attention to detail.

The position is well-supported and offers benefits, including Staff Housing, paid vacation during specified periods, retirement contributions, health and dental benefits, and professional development opportunities. More details below.

### **KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

*Duties include, but are not limited to:*

#### **Manage & Support Instructional Team: (~45% of the job)**

- Embody Vida Verde’s organizational values and motivate the instructional staff with these.
- Utilize the V.V. Management & Support system with each instructor to support and hold them to high performance levels.
  - Including many tools, ie.: 1 on 1 monthly mtgs, setting & tracking goals, quarterly reports
- Ensure Instructors own the V.V. Educational Philosophy and successfully implement V.V.’s unique and central Methods of Management by:
  - Planning & facilitating instructor training weeks (utilizing existing systems)
  - Serving as an exemplary instructor with students and ensuring peer-to-peer observational growth year-round
  - Improve instructional efficacy by leveraging feedback from internal teaching observations and visiting teacher/chaperone evaluations
  - Lead Friday Instructor Workshops (Professional Development): plan, facilitate and execute the system that is already in place
  - Motivate and inspire the team to success with students each program week
- Ensure instructors succeed in their facilities/caretaking roles, and be housing tenants in good standing
- Maintain ongoing communication with instructors in person and via email, text
- Ensure that all instructors comply with Commercial Driving license requirements on time

#### **Program Operations Management: (~35 % of the job)**

- Problem-solving for any larger program disruptions
- Communicate well with your manager (COO): For many reasons, including to report on program success/challenges, instructor progress/fit, obtain guidance on job-related issues, and request any personal/professional support
- Manage the existing systems and execute processes of Vida Verde that relate to staff and program, including creating a weekly program work schedule

- Ongoing maintenance and improvement of all the pieces of program (beat back the entropy!)
- Schedule the ED weeks at program and communicate with the ED regarding their week at program
- Maintain V.V. Risk Management Plan and ensure instructors are aware/prepared to implement the protocols therein. Meet bi-annually with E.D./COO to review and revise this plan
- Maintain a positive working relationship with the V.V. Facilities Team Manager
- Act as a liaison between the Vida Verde leadership, visiting teachers, chaperones, donors and others as required.

#### **Organizational Collaborative Leadership: (~20 % of the job)**

- Work with other managers to help maintain Vida Verde's culture and team as a whole by serving as a positive leader and role model for the entire staff
- Engage in misc. fundraising help including preparing for and participating in donor/volunteer events, maintaining some relationships with funders, as requested by other staff leaders
- Communicate program facilities needs with the Facilities Team Manager. Be available and assist with tents, trails, vehicles, animals, etc.
- Attend and participate in Annual org-wide goal setting.
- Represent the organization at events outside of program
- Prepare agenda, facilitate monthly All-Staff Meetings (with support of the COO)
- • Keep staff aware of Risk Management Plan

#### **Term of Work**

- Year-Round Salaried position
- The term is a minimum commitment of 3 years
- Desired Start Date: Summer 2025, as early as July 1 (Flexible part-time training can start ahead of FT work)
- HOP works M-F year round, with program operating Tu-Th 30-32 weeks / yr.
  - The program operates during the school year from Late August to early December and mid-January to early June, with 30-32 weeks of program
  - During summer and other non-program weeks (late December/early January winter break, spring break in March) the HoP plans trainings, revises systems, prepares for the program year
  - see vacation info in compensation section.
- Occasional weekend work: annual fundraiser in December, rotating weekend caretaker work commitments (roughly 1 hour, once a month), volunteer work parties or other donor events 6x / yr.

#### **Qualifications of a Strong Applicant**

- Inspired by and committed to the mission
- Experience in team management or leadership
- At least 3 years experience in outdoor education or classroom teaching with at least 1 year experience in teaching, supporting and/or engaging low-income and students of color
- Strong attention to details, systems/procedures management and strong organization skills
- Positive attitude, commitment to excellence, great communicator, full of integrity
- Enthusiastic about participating in an improvement-driven and supportive management system. Comfortable giving and receiving feedback and regularly setting/tracking goals
- Composure when dealing with adversity and conflict, diplomacy in crucial conversations, practices non-violent communication
- Comfortable working independently and as part of a small tight team
- Experience working as an Instructor at Vida Verde
- Desire to work in a small, values-driven nonprofit
- Experience in any of the following: trauma-informed, culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching
- Appreciation of and comfort leading and teaching students in the outdoors in all types of weather
- Ability and willingness to work flexible hours (some evenings and some weekends)
- Current Commercial Driver's License with Passenger Endorsement, and First Aid/CPR certification (Or readiness to obtain immediately upon hire. Resources and financial support available.)

### **Bonus Qualifications**

- Bilingual (Spanish and English)
- Handy with tools/fixing,
- Comfortable playing guitar or other instruments during songs/campfire

### **Compensation and Benefits**

- \$50,000 – \$62,000 annual salary, based on experience, plus housing and benefits.
- Housing is provided and conservatively valued at \$12,000 annually, bringing the total compensation package to approximately \$62,000 – \$74,000 annually, plus additional benefits.
- Staff Housing: housing for HoP is provided on site, and is a condition of the job. It includes a private bedroom. Kitchen, bath, laundry may be shared with other staff housemate(s) depending. More details readily available in interview / upon request.
- 3 Weeks of Paid Vacation plus 5 holidays for year 1. (Vacation to be taken primarily over Summer, Winter Break and/or 1 week of HOP Spring Break \*that does not align w/ instructors Spring Vacation)
- \$200 monthly contribution from Vida Verde towards the group Health, Dental & Vision insurance plan of your choice from the menu
- Full-time staff at Vida Verde are eligible for retirement benefits (V.V. matches your contributions at a rate of up to 5% of your salary) after nine months of employment. Vida Verde's contributions are applied retroactively upon completion of nine months of work, and are vested over a five-year period
- Option to join 6 student meals, weekly during program weeks (throughout the 3-day program), and surplus food from the garden/animals.
- Pro Deals (deep discounts on name brand outdoor gear, clothing and products)
- Paid Training for the position - details to be worked out based on date of hire
- Paid costs of relevant professional development opportunities

### **Program Site**

3540 La Honda Road San Gregorio, CA.  
(One hour from San Francisco, 45 minutes from Santa Cruz)

### **How to Apply**

Applications are now being accepted. The Tentative Start day is between **January and May 2026**.

\*Unfortunately, no dogs are allowed at Vida Verde housing.

To apply, please email a **letter of interest** and your **resume** to all three of the following contacts:  
Shawn Sears – [shawn@vveducation.org](mailto:shawn@vveducation.org), Arturo Cervantes – [arturo@vveducation.org](mailto:arturo@vveducation.org), and  
[jobs@vveducation.org](mailto:jobs@vveducation.org)

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

### **Hiring Process**

1. **Application Review** – We will review your resume and letter of interest.
2. **Interview #1 (45 minutes)** – A conversation to get to know you and your experience.
  - If you move forward, we will request:
    - Contact information for **three references**, and
    - A **video of you teaching** (we will provide guidance and options).
3. **Interview #2 (1.5 hours)** – A deeper dive into your teaching & management style, experience, and alignment with our program.
  - If selected to proceed, we will contact your references.
4. **Final Interview (30 minutes)** – A meeting with our Executive Director to discuss organizational alignment.

Website for reference: [www.Vveducation.org](http://www.Vveducation.org)



## **Values of Vida Verde**

### **The Mission First**

We are a mission-centric organization. We make every decision with the kids' benefit and the mission as our guide. We specifically tailor the program to meet the unique needs of the kids we serve, with deep respect for students and their communities.

### **Persistent Improvement and Our Best Practices**

We are driven to continually improve and reach the highest standards across the organization for the benefit of the kids we serve. From program quality to healthy communication, from strategic goal setting to prioritization: we are detail-oriented, reflective, and strive to serve as a model. We balance our best practices and lessons from our history with innovation and inspiration for improvement.

### **The Environment and Natural Resources**

We practice responsible and long-term thinking regarding land stewardship facility management, building, and design. Using resources wisely, we value the earth's resources over convenience and cost, and share that value with the greater community.

### **Relationships and Community**

People are at the heart of this work. We strive to create long-lasting relationships with our staff, supporters, students, and teachers. We believe that by honoring and including diverse perspectives, our organization is stronger and more sustainable. We believe in love, not hate. We help different people see each other and all that we share in common, as well as what we can learn from each other.

### **Making It Happen**

We overcome outrageous obstacles and successfully achieve ambitious goals by using a combination of resourcefulness, a positive mindset, and our team's diverse set of skills and experiences, without compromising our work/life balance and well-being. We know that beliefs lead to actions, which lead to results. We "make it happen" even when circumstances would lead most to think progress impossible.

## **VIDA VERDE JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) STATEMENT**

### **We acknowledge that:**

Everything is not okay.

We live in a world and society with personal, structural, and institutional injustice based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other differences. This is affecting the lives of the Vida Verde students and the Vida Verde community in myriad profound ways.

### **We see our role as:**

We have a deep commitment to examining, understanding, and working intentionally, every day, and for the long run to do our small part in dismantling the pieces of institutional injustice that we are able to. Vida Verde is one of the few outdoor education organizations that is focused on educational equity, and is dedicated to engaging Bay Area youth from low income families and communities who do not have free access to outdoor education experiences. Even though equity is a cornerstone of Vida Verde's mission, intentionally and actively engaging in Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) work more holistically will only continue to support these young people in accessing quality culturally relevant and inclusive nature education experiences that translate to positive outcomes in their traditional classrooms.

### **Why?**

- Culturally relevant outdoor programs better engage students, and support them in developing necessary critical thinking skills, improving their health and wellness, and more meaningfully connecting them to the land and food, and often fostering a passion and interest in the outdoors.
- The future of the environment is tethered to connecting the diverse youth of today to the outdoors.
- Research shows diversity in staff, an inclusive workplace culture, and culturally responsive practices lead to both better experiences and outcomes for students, and better attraction and retention of talented staff.
- Vida Verde aspires to serve as a blueprint/model for other values-aligned organizations (especially outdoor education organizations) who are looking for a exemplar in JEDI work.

### **Our vision:**

We envision a future where all people have access to quality experiences in the outdoors, which have the power to profoundly impact hearts, minds and bodies.

### **Our commitments:**

- To steadfastly work toward our mission to promote educational equity by providing culturally relevant, free, overnight, environmental learning experiences for students who don't otherwise get the opportunity.
- Through culturally relevant programming, work to ensure Vida Verde students view nature as a place **FOR** them; a place they have a fundamental right to access, and a place that may influence them as leaders to vote, act and spend with the environment in mind.
- To build and grow a more racially diverse staff and board, and foster an inclusive culture within Vida Verde where all staff, donors and volunteers feel they are valued and belong.
- To serve as a blueprint/model for other values-aligned organizations (especially outdoor education organizations) who are looking for an example in JEDI work.



