



**Center
on Rural
Innovation**

Director of Development

*Hartland, Vermont (Dartmouth College Region)
Relocation Assistance Available*

Paul Towne, MBA
Vice President, Executive Search

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About The Center on Rural Innovation

The Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that partners with rural leaders across the country to build tech economies that support scalable entrepreneurship and lead to more tech jobs in rural America. Our mission is to create opportunities that empower rural people to thrive in the tech economy.

Established in 2017, CORI is at the heart of a dynamic social enterprise focused on closing the rural economic opportunity gap. The organization also works closely with a taxable nonprofit, [Rural Innovation Strategies, Inc.](#) (RISI), and a seed fund, [CORI Innovation Fund](#) (CIF), focused on early-stage technology companies located in rural areas. The overall annual budget for the social enterprise is \$6M+.

As a national nonprofit, CORI uses data-driven research, partnerships, programming, and investment to support and connect rural leaders as they build inclusive tech ecosystems in rural America. CORI's [Rural Innovation Network](#) is a growing community of practice comprising 39 member communities across 23 states and offers rural leaders access to a first-of-its-kind opportunity to collaborate with peers across the country to advance their tech economies. In addition, CORI makes direct seed-stage investments in rural technology startups through the CORI Innovation Fund. Finally, CORI produces original research and storytelling that offers actionable insights, analysis, and recommendations to address the economic challenges and opportunities facing rural America.

Per our most recent Impact Report released in the Spring of 2024, in 2023, CORI worked directly with 57 communities in 33 states to build and fund their tech ecosystems. It helped almost 200 rural learners gain skills to advance their tech careers, published research on rural issues that reached more than 30,000 readers, and invested in rural tech startups that raised \$26 million in follow-on funding.

Position Summary

The Center on Rural Innovation is seeking an entrepreneurial development professional passionate about rural America, social enterprise, and advancing inclusive economic opportunity. The Director of Development reports to the Founder + Executive Director and has primary responsibility for driving philanthropic support and achieving related revenue goals. This is a unique opportunity to be a key leader driving our mission.

Over the next three years, we are focused on growing our organization to bring tech jobs and scalable startups to over 90 regions, representing 20% of the US rural population. To achieve that goal, we need to increase our philanthropic support from \$3.8M to over \$10M per year from individuals, foundations, and corporations. We are seeking a Director of Development who is excited to accelerate our growth as a national organization to meet this ambitious goal.

Key success factors for this position include:

- » An ambitious, proactive executive with a growth mindset and a high level of personal ownership. Sleeves rolled up and “no task too big or too small” mindset.

- » Energized by the dynamic structure, fast pace, and entrepreneurial culture of an innovative social enterprise.
- » Skilled working across multiple funding communities, including visionary entrepreneurs (e.g., LinkedIn's Co-Founder, Reid Hoffman, provided initial financial support), corporations (e.g., Alphabet, Cisco, Land O' Lakes, Meta), and charitable foundations (e.g., Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Siegel Family Endowment, and Walton Family Foundation).
- » Growing capacity through individual and board giving.
- » Passion for rural places and people, a belief in the potential of tech-based economic development to transform rural communities, and interest in supporting venture-backed startups as a lever for economic equity.

Key Responsibilities

The Director of Development will:

- » **Lead + Strategize:** Drive CORI's foundation, corporate, and major donor fundraising efforts while contributing to federal and state grant-seeking. Develop a comprehensive development strategy to achieve CORI's ambitious goal of expanding to 90 communities in the Network and \$10M in annual philanthropy.
- » **Manage + Supervise:** Oversee and mentor a development team, fostering a collaborative environment that supports professional growth and ensures the team's success in meeting organizational goals. Assign responsibilities, provide guidance, and monitor performance to maintain high standards of excellence.
- » **Cultivate Relationships:** Working with the Board of Directors to build and steward new relationships with funders, including foundations, corporate sponsors, and individual donors.
- » **Manage Complex Funding Streams:** Secure funding from diverse sources, match funding to specific community initiatives, and secure matches for federal grant applications.
- » **Communicate the Mission:** Effectively articulate CORI's mission to create opportunities that empower rural communities to thrive in the tech economy. This involves presenting a compelling case to a diverse range of stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of rural economic equity and the transformative potential of venture-backed startups and technology jobs in driving sustainable growth.
- » **Collaborate + Innovate:** Work closely with CORI leadership and teams to identify evolving funding opportunities. Design systems to streamline fundraising processes, facilitate program design, and enhance operational efficiency.
- » **Promote Operational Excellence + Capacity Building:** Develop grant proposals, program budgets, and funding applications in alignment with organizational goals. Support Rural Innovation Network Communities in building their fundraising capacity to sustain and grow their economic development efforts.

Qualifications

- » At least seven (7) years of senior fundraising experience for a rapid-growth nonprofit or social enterprise, with a track record of success in corporate, foundation, and individual donor cultivation. Experience working with high-net-worth individuals is preferred. Experience fundraising for research initiatives is preferred.
- » Experience managing and supervising a development team, with demonstrated leadership skills and the ability to inspire and guide team members to achieve organizational objectives.
- » Experience managing and leveraging multiple funding streams, including corporate sponsorships, philanthropy, and government grants.
- » Strong written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to craft compelling cases for support and engage a wide variety of stakeholders.
- » Passion for rural communities, with a nuanced understanding of their unique challenges and opportunities beyond stereotypical perceptions.
- » Entrepreneurial mindset, capable of navigating a fast-paced, collaborative environment with creativity and ambition.
- » Experience leading fundraising strategies and initiatives for a rapid-growth nonprofit or social enterprise is highly preferred.
- » Proficiency in program design, proposal development, and budgeting.
- » Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Reporting Relationships

The Director of Development reports to the Founder + Executive Director and has supervisory responsibility for two direct reports: the Grants Manager and Development Operations + Research Manager.

Leadership + Key Colleagues

(Please do not contact the organization or its staff directly)

Matt Dunne (he/him)
Founder + Executive Director

Matt is the founder and executive director of the Center on Rural Innovation, which he launched in 2017 to reverse the nation's growing rural opportunity gap and create economic prosperity for small-town residents across the country.

Prior to founding CORI, Matt began his career by serving 11 years in the Vermont House and Senate, enacting the state's first broadband grants, brownfields revitalization funding, and downtown redevelopment program. He helped grow a Vermont-based software company to over 100 people and was Associate Director of the Rockefeller Center on Public Policy at Dartmouth College.

In 1999, Matt was appointed director of AmeriCorps*VISTA under President Clinton. There, he led PowerUp—one of the first national efforts to bridge the digital divide—and launched an Entrepreneur Corps to focus on micro-finance in high-need communities.

In 2007, he started Google's Community Affairs division out of a former bread factory in White River Junction, Vermont, where he led all local US philanthropy and engagement, including the Google Fiber rollout and orchestrating educational and development initiatives in Google's data center communities across rural America. Matt has also held an appointment at the MIT Media Lab.

Matt holds a B.A. from Brown University and is a lifelong Vermonter who lives on the 100-acre farm where he was raised.

Robyn Kilfeather-Mackey (she/her)
Director of Finance + Operations

Robin oversees the financial infrastructure and organizational strategy of CORI and RISI, a role that includes the design and management of finance practices, prioritizing and evaluating business development and new opportunities, and setting future goals and objectives.

Prior to joining the team, Robin served northern New England nonprofits in various financial and management leadership roles for more than three decades. She spent nearly seven years as the Chief Financial Officer of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Health, the largest private employer in the state of New Hampshire, during which time she established and chaired the system-wide environmental sustainability council that recognized human health and the health of our natural environment are fundamentally interconnected. Most recently, Robin was the vice president of operations and finance for the Upper Valley Land Trust, helping rural communities permanently protect forests, wildlife habitat, water resources, trails, and scenic landscapes.

Robin holds a B.S. from Bentley University, an MBA from the University System of New Hampshire, a master's in healthcare delivery science from Dartmouth College, and a master's in environmental sciences from Antioch University, New England. She is also a graduate of the Leadership New Hampshire Program and a Certified Public Accountant licensed in New Hampshire.

Robin currently lives with her wife and daughter in Cornish, New Hampshire. She enjoys the inspiration of the natural world, traveling, and photography.

Katelyn Rakotoarivelo (she/her)
Grants Manager

Katelyn is part of the development team, managing the full grants lifecycle from prospect research to reporting. She is primarily responsible for crafting compelling grant proposals to support the organization's foundation and corporate fundraising efforts. Katelyn is passionate about creating meaningful opportunities and pathways that eliminate barriers and empower individuals and communities to envision new possibilities for themselves.

Prior to joining CORI, Katelyn led grants management for a youth development nonprofit in her home state of Minnesota. She brings valuable experience in project management, cultivating partnerships,

and cross-team collaboration. Additionally, Katelyn served as a Lutheran pastor for five years, where she led and supported community partnerships and outreach, communications, and fundraising efforts.

Having grown up in a small town in northeastern Minnesota and previously working in a farming community in the southern part of the state, CORI's mission and work hold personal significance for Katelyn. She holds a bachelor's from Augsburg University and a master's from Luther Seminary.

Emily Szamocki (she/her)
Development Operations + Research Manager

As Development Operations and Research Manager, Emily manages key operations for the development team and builds grassroots support for CORI by engaging with individuals. Having been born and raised in the “Quiet Corner” of Connecticut, Emily draws upon her personal connection to rural America for inspiration.

Emily started her career in development work as an AmeriCorps VISTA with a nonprofit in Rhode Island that focused on housing and homelessness. Following her year of service, Emily stayed on as development coordinator to further her knowledge. During this time, she learned the importance of relationship-building and authentic messaging when cultivating philanthropic support. Emily brings an extensive knowledge of database management, online fundraising, and donor communications.

Emily holds a bachelor's in political science from Quinnipiac University, which she received during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, she was able to grow her career during this tumultuous time while remaining in her rural hometown thanks to the rise in remote work opportunities—opportunities she hopes other rural Americans will be able to leverage as a result of CORI's work.

Compensation + Benefits

The salary range for the role is **\$120,000 to \$140,000**, depending on experience. This is a full-time, hybrid position with the following added benefits:

- » Comprehensive benefits package, including health, dental, vision, short-term disability, and life insurance, and 5% employer-matched 401(k).
- » 5.5 weeks of combined paid time off.
- » Relocation assistance for candidates moving to the Dartmouth College region.
- » Professional development opportunities and a collaborative, entrepreneurial culture.

As a reflection of our firm's commitment to equity and equal pay for all, Cooper Coleman requires that salary ranges or salary starting points be published for every search we conduct. The practice of not posting salaries perpetuates the gender and racial wage gap and discriminates against women, people of color, and other historically excluded populations by causing individuals to negotiate from a disadvantaged starting point.

Location + Travel

This role is based in Hartland, Vermont, and requires in-office collaboration three days a week. The Dartmouth College region offers an excellent quality of life, strong K-12 educational opportunities, and vibrant cultural amenities. Relocation assistance is available for candidates moving to the area.

The position will require about 15-20% travel, including all-staff retreats, donor meetings, and professional conferences.

About Hartland, Vermont + the Upper Valley Region

The Upper Valley region of Vermont and New Hampshire is located on the Connecticut River, with the majestic White Mountains to the east and the spectacular Green Mountains to the west. The region is frequently selected as one of the best places to live in the United States because it balances local with global and casual with sophisticated.

CORI's headquarters are based in a converted general store building in the village of Hartland, a rural community located between the historic towns Windsor, Woodstock, and White River Junction.

At the heart of the region and 15 minutes up the interstate, Dartmouth College catalyzes a rich cultural life, a vibrant economy, and amenities that are unusual for a rural region. Dartmouth supports major teaching hospitals, a globally connected high-tech sector, and a vibrant arts scene.

A range of breweries, classic diners, and ethnic food options are found throughout the Upper Valley. Dartmouth's award-winning Hopkins Center for the Arts, as well as the nearby Opera North and Northern Stage, offer high-caliber theatrical and musical productions. The area has plenty of nature to explore, including the Appalachian Trail, the Connecticut River, and vast forest land. Popular outdoor activities include hiking, skiing, canoeing, and kayaking.

Excellent schools, great employment opportunities, cultural activities, and the abundance of nature make the Upper Valley region a great place to work and live.

Equity + Diversity

The Center on Rural Innovation is an Equal Opportunity Employer – people of color, people with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ candidates are strongly encouraged to apply. We are committed to a diverse workplace and to supporting our staff with ongoing career development opportunities. We are interested in your ambitions, personal experiences, great ideas, and passions, and we believe that everyone's unique story and perspective adds value to our organization.

Background Checks

Before sending your resume for this position, please read it over for accuracy. Cooper Coleman verifies its candidates' employment and academic credentials represented at the time of offer, and an offer of employment is contingent upon the successful completion of a civil and criminal background check.

Submission Instructions *(please read carefully)*

[Cooper Coleman](#) is leading this search on behalf of The Center on Rural Innovation. To apply, please [visit this link](http://www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches) (www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches). Inquiries and nominations of qualified candidates can be sent to:

Paul Towne

paul@coopercoleman.com

Kindly use the position title as the subject line of your email. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

A cover letter is not required with your initial application but is welcomed to help us understand your fitness for this role during our initial evaluation. Candidates invited for interviews with the Center on Rural Innovation team will be asked to provide a thoughtful letter of interest indicating their specific qualifications for the opportunity, desire to join the Center on Rural Innovation, and experience with rural places.

Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the successful candidate has been selected.

Cooper Coleman LLC is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all qualified candidates and will refer candidates without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or identity, age, ability, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis.

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About Cooper Coleman

Cooper Coleman is a full-service recruiting and consulting firm that partners exclusively with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and research and academic institutions to drive meaningful growth. We move organizations forward by placing the right leaders in the right roles at the right time and helping to strengthen management and fundraising capacity to amplify their mission and impact.

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