



Position brief for the position of
Executive Director for Systemic Risk
Assessment Accelerator
UN Foundation

August 2022



Opportunity Overview

The UN Foundation has been chosen to support the newly created Systemic Risk Assessment Accelerator. In our support of the process, we are seeking an innovative, inspiring, and strategic full-time leader to act as the founding Executive Director. This is a unique opportunity to be at the helm of a brand-new 3-year incubator project that harnesses the power of current risk assessment in order to investigate and implement further integrations at the systems level.

The Accelerator will mostly function in a virtual space in order to facilitate diverse staff support across regions and attract a small but high-caliber team. The secretariat team will also have access to an office in either London, New York, or DC.



The Project

There is escalating evidence that climate and other impacts are hitting harder and faster than experts had anticipated, and there is increasing recognition of the interdependencies and interrelationships between biophysical, ecological, socio-economic, and political systems undergoing simultaneous crises. The need for systemic risk assessment - defined as the potential for multiple, increasingly severe, abrupt, differentiated yet interconnected, and potentially long-lasting and complex impacts on coupled natural and human systems - has never been more critical. And yet mainstream risk assessment approaches remain siloed within dominant natural, ecological, social, and economic sciences and areas of inquiry, and are not responsive to the uncertainties of cascading impacts over timescales.

A new Systemic Risk Assessment Accelerator will provide frameworks for, and enable the provision of, systemic risk assessments at the national-to-regional-to-global levels for use in policy and resource allocation decisions principally for use by decision-makers in the public sector.

While international initiatives have been paving the way towards the recognition of "systemic risk," systemic risk assessment is still an emerging discipline and its community of experts is fragmented. The Accelerator's purpose is to fill this gap. To establish it properly will require a focused, aggressive effort to accomplish six tasks:

- 1 Develop frameworks for systemic risk assessment
- 2 Develop modular, expandable, and open-source tools that will radically simplify the development process of systemic risk assessment
- 3 Foster a global community of practice of diverse experts and practitioners for systemic risk assessment
- 4 Identify early options for building resilience to systemic risks and associated decision-making
- 5 Advocate the need for and potential of systemic risk assessment in supporting decision-making and inciting major and rapid systems transformation
- 6 Monitor, evaluate, and determine long-term opportunities



Global, anthropogenic problems are so severe, threatening the future sustainability of the planet and humanity, that major and rapid systems transformations are needed. Guided by a number of guiding frameworks such as resilience theory, systems thinking, and future scenario modeling, the Systemic Risk Assessment Accelerator will create systemic risk assessment frameworks, tools, and networks to support major and rapid systems transformation.

The Accelerator is envisioned as a pilot project over the course of three years, building the infrastructure, relationships, and partnerships that will facilitate its eventual spin-off to an appropriate international entity with the willingness, interest, and capacity to nurture its continued development and success.

The Role

Reporting to the Accelerator Steering Committee, the Executive Director will oversee all administrative, operational and programmatic functions of an organization with current seed funding of \$5M over 3 years and will build and lead a small team of passionate risk professionals. This individual will collaborate with the Steering Committee and staff to develop strategies for implementing the Accelerator's mission and vision through values-aligned partnerships and projects, and through building strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

The Executive Director will enhance the role of the Accelerator as a key environmental knowledge provider to support the development and implementation of integrated risk assessments with the wider goal of contributing to progress towards environment and climate goals. In close collaboration with the wider network of actors and stakeholders, the ED will play an active role in networking and building out knowledge on global risk.

Core Responsibilities

Startup

- Hire the Accelerator's first high-powered secretariat team, which will serve the existing actors and stakeholders in building a highly collaborative and cross-sectorial culture around the development of a new set of systemic and integrated risk assessment tools.
- In collaboration with leadership of VKRF and UNF, oversee the recruitment of the Accelerator's first Steering Committee.

Strategy Leadership

- Develop and monitor the Accelerator's first long-range strategic framework and plan.
- Ensure that the overall framework for the Accelerator's mission, values, and practices is equally embedded in integrated risk assessments for humans, nature and larger ecosystems.
- Help envision, build, and facilitate the central functions of the Accelerator and ensure connectivity between the current actors and end users.
- Lead implementation of yearly priorities and key initiatives.
- Attend to and build consensus on issues arising.
- Follow on-going discussions and identify emerging issues, research questions, policies, trends, and potential strategic responses.
- Keep an eye on the big picture and maintain and advance the Accelerator's overall vision.



Organizational Leadership

- Lead, oversee, and supervise a dynamic and effective team of 4-5 staff and multiple project partners and consultants to advance the Accelerator's core projects and strategic priorities. Align capacity strategy with strategic and operational priorities.
- Foster a collaborative, transparent, and coordinated working environment that supports and guides the organization's mission, encourage professional development, and champion accountability and teamwork amongst staff and other stakeholders.
- Support strong internal communications and process-driven decision making.
- Inspire a professional, results-driven and solutions-oriented environment across the organization. Ensure accountability for results throughout the organization.
- Overseeing the development and execution of metrics and a monitoring and evaluation system.

Governance

- Inform and support the work of the Steering Committee including agenda development, identification of critical issues, oversight and functionality, implementation of plans and priorities.
- Assist in identifying, establishing, and supporting permanent and ad hoc expert working groups needed to advance the Accelerator's mission.
- Maintain and advance the coordination with fiscal sponsor and donors.
- Facilitate the ongoing process to create coherence and synchronization across the Accelerator's strategy, structure, and governance.

Project Oversight

- Provide effective leadership, oversight and/or supervision of priority initiatives and projects.
- Provide effective leadership, oversight and/or supervision to the Accelerator's committees and panels.
- Provide leadership in the planning and development of core Accelerator activities.
- Oversee reporting of measurable impact.

Financial Stewardship

- Work with the Steering Committee and administrative staff to develop annual budgets.
- Implement budgetary decisions and directions.
- Work with and manage the Fiscal Sponsor connections, including reporting.
- Oversee quarterly financial reports to the Steering Committee in collaboration with the Fiscal Administrator(s).

Fundraising

- Assume the critical role of strengthening current funding from private and public sources.

Field Engagement and Relationship-Building

- Maintain strong connections with and be responsive to participating organizations and partners, as well as keeping key stakeholders informed of what is happening and what needs to be done.
- Drive the Accelerator's policy and advocacy agenda with policymakers, decisionmakers, and other partners around the globe.



- Act as chief relationship-builder to deepen, develop and expand the community of practice and partner and funder engagement.
- Encourage and participate in the build out of collaborations across sectors.
- Lead the Accelerator's effort to elevate and increase its reach through creative and strategic convenings. Represent the Accelerator at meetings and conferences, in international discussions and act as the public face of the Accelerator.

Communication

- Strategically articulate and able to motivate a diverse range of stakeholders around the Accelerator's mission, vision, and values.
- Actively communicate about the Accelerator's assessments and data relevant to ongoing and emerging policy and public debates.
- Lead the Accelerator's efforts to elevate and increase the reach and influence of narrative, need, and evidence around systemic integrated risk assessment.

The Ideal Candidate

- Holds a bold and ambitious vision for what the Accelerator can be.
- Is an innovative generalist with content knowledge of systems thinking, ecology, biodiversity conservation, climate change, and experience in working with transdisciplinary efforts in a political environment and across many types of institutions, including academia and multilaterals.
- Is a globally experienced leader with at least ten years of prior executive experience in a nonprofit organization, preferably in the environmental field.
- Has the proven management skills needed to build a new organization in dynamic and changing environments, including operational, financial, and human resource dimensions.
- Understands the complexities of leading a multi-partner cutting edge institutions.
- Is passionate about good process and problem-solving.
- Understands what it means to work as part of a small and flexible team where a range of practical tasks needs to be taken care of by the whole team.
- Has experience in event management.
- Has strong dialogue, facilitation, and conflict resolution skills.
- Has a passion for, and knowledge of, applying a systems lens to integrated risk assessment.
- Is skilled at developing and implementing innovative strategic visions and facilitating innovation processes on matters of complexity.



- Has the personal ability to confront the complex realities of the current state of our planetary systems and personal commitment to mitigate those existential threats.
- Has comfort with complexity and is accustomed to challenging mindsets and taking decisions in multifaceted environments.
- Has comfort collaborating with representatives from a wide range of actors, including academia, government, private sector, civil society, and military.
- Has in-depth knowledge of environmental and climate policies and processes.
- Is experienced in coordinating multi-actor processes and negotiating at a high level in an international environment of relevance to the Accelerator’s mandate.
- Is able to ensure a networked environment in which individual organizations are able to amplify their work and coordinate and co-design new work without compromising their own unique missions.
- Is able to leverage an extensive network at different scales (local & global) through the ability to work effectively in a transparent and open manner and to maintain appropriate relations with stakeholders.
- Communicate efficiently with media, is able to connect with various audiences and express a compelling message when speaking and delivering presentations.
- Has a demonstrated ability to cultivate major donors, mobilize resources, and establish fundraising strategies.



How to Apply

Applications to this position are open to generalists and experts in multiple geographies.

How to Express Interest

Please submit a comprehensive CV or bio along with a cover letter which outlines how your professional and lived experience prepared you for this leadership role, what inspires you about this opportunity, and why is this time right for you to undertake such an endeavor. Please send to:

Laura.Richards@odgersberndtson.com

Candidates who apply by September 1, 2022, 12.00 noon Eastern Time will be given priority.

Contact Details

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

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