

Cambridge, MA

An Invitation to Apply for the Role of

Executive Director

*“The most important
decisions a scholar makes are
what problems to work on.”*

—Professor James Tobin (1918–2002) in
Essays in Economics

About the Opportunity

The Tobin Project, a catalyst for new academic thinking on the most pressing national challenges of the 21st century, seeks a new Executive Director. This well funded, non-profit, non-partisan organization has engaged over 200 scholars, from Nobel Laureates to the most promising graduate students, at 60 institutions in 12 disciplines, as well as more than 100 policymakers and legislative staff who provide the practical policy grist and some of the key long-term policy questions that help shape our work.

Now in its fifth year, Tobin has successfully built and proven the model for how to engage the best scholars in vital questions, how to advance new interdisciplinary research agendas, and how to disseminate compelling academic ideas that have the potential to reshape public policy formation, academic research, and overall public discourse. The Project is energized by its impact to date, and by its potential to change—and improve—fundamental ideas about the interplay between democracy and markets and the role of government.

Tobin has organized a series of highly productive conferences, seminars, and workshops; seeded groundbreaking new research; created a collaborative online technology platform for scholars; recently produced two timely and widely praised books on regulation (one for scholars and the other for policymakers); and influenced key aspects of financial regulatory reform on consumer protection and systemic risk.

The new Executive Director will leverage his/her passion and skills to create energy and momentum behind fresh, innovative ideas; envision new areas for productive research; think strategically about how best to generate that research; engage with the nation’s top scholars and policymakers; and build the capacity to disseminate cutting-edge work for public debate. The Tobin Project is at a critical inflection point given the strong team and foundation in place and the current political and economic climate, presenting a unique opportunity for the Executive Director to spearhead initiatives that build and grow the organization to the next stage of influence and impact.

About the Tobin Project

The organization has built an alliance of leading scholars who seek to stimulate the development of cutting-edge ideas that address major challenges facing the nation and will help to shape policy formation over both the short and long term. These ideas have the potential to challenge existing paradigms and expand the realm of the possible in American politics. They are often shared directly with key policymakers and disseminated through publications (both academic and popular), think tanks, academic teaching, and other communication mechanisms that inform—and strengthen—public discussion and debate. The Tobin Project has chosen a path to policy reform through academia because a scholarly consensus has the potential to carry great weight with the public and the nation’s policymakers. Strong links between scholars and policymakers played a pivotal role in many of the great policy triumphs of the 20th century—from the creation of Social Security during the New Deal, to the introduction of Keynesian fiscal policies during the Kennedy/Johnson years.

Over the past several years, scholars at the Tobin Project have been working to develop an expanded understanding of government and its role in the economy and the international arena through an interdisciplinary lens. Naturally, this work has taken on new urgency in the wake of the financial crisis. The crisis has in fact revealed deep inadequacies in the current understanding of how markets and democratic institutions function and interact. John Cassidy’s recent *New Yorker* article, “After the Blowup,” asserted that if the U.S. wants to move beyond the limitations of current academic thinking about political economy, it would require the equivalent of a “big-bang” theory from scholars with a fresh perspective. For some time, the Tobin Project has been working to provide such a perspective, particularly through an interdisciplinary approach in the social sciences. Now, in the aftermath of the financial crisis, there is increasing public recognition of the importance and urgency of this new direction.

In particular, the Tobin Project is stimulating some of the most advanced work anywhere on government, markets, and democracy; and its scholars have produced path-breaking research that is today contributing to policy development and public discourse on these and related issues, including economic regulation, economic inequality and mobility, democratic institutions, and national security. Given the fundamental power of ideas, the Tobin Project has just begun to realize its potential to positively impact society.

Responsibilities and Opportunities

Reporting to and working closely with the Board of Directors, the Executive Director is responsible for driving the change necessary to advance our mission by envisioning, directing, managing and growing the following key areas of the organization through a staff currently composed of eight full-time employees:

- Identify/deepen relationships with and organize a network of leading scholars
 - Identify and assemble strategic research questions that align with the Tobin Project mission and core research areas
 - Convene and/or co-sponsor conferences, working groups and graduate student seminars to further academic research and dialogue, particularly across the social sciences and related disciplines such as history
 - Provide the capacity for academics to share and collaborate on important topics, ideas and research questions through a web-based “whiteboard” platform
 - Develop long-term pipeline for meaningful research by supporting promising scholars early in their careers to work on important questions
- Communicate and collaborate with policymakers/elected officials
 - Engage policymakers in dialogue with academics to inform key research questions based upon the nation’s most pressing problems
 - Educate policymakers on the latest academic research in specific areas through seminars or symposia with Tobin scholars
 - Develop partnership strategies with other non-profits (and advocacy groups, as appropriate) to provide leveraged approach to sharing latest research with policymakers and identifying key problems for further research
 - Connect policymakers with scholars on targeted basis to inform policy formation

“There are plenty of pressing issues that need rigorous, principled thinking...If there is a latent demand for serious thought on these problems, there is probably also a latent supply from academics who would like their research to matter in the world. The Tobin Project hopes to bring demand and supply together.”

—Professor Robert Solow, 1987 Nobel Laureate in Economics

- Disseminate knowledge to scholar network, policymakers, students and the public
 - Support publication of journal articles, edited volumes and/or book projects
 - Foster curriculum adoption of publications to educate undergraduate and graduate students on cutting edge research
 - Provide frequent newsletters to scholar network to share latest papers, current events and overall impact that Tobin scholars have contributed to the public debate
 - Develop public relations strategy to communicate research output and Tobin’s successes, as appropriate
- Develop and maintain robust and diversified donor base
 - Develop fundraising strategy including individual donors and foundations whose interests align with Tobin’s mission
 - Establish and maintain executive level relationships with targeted foundations and donors
 - Secure/close commitments for financial contributions
- Manage overall operations and drive organizational future
 - Provide leadership role in developing program, organizational and financial plans
 - Maintain a working knowledge of significant developments and trends in the policy arena
 - Maintain a dynamic, innovative climate that attracts, keeps and motivates a diverse group of top quality people, including paid staff and volunteers
 - Conduct quarterly meetings with the Board of Directors and prepare regular reports on financial and organizational performance
 - Maintain official records to ensure compliance with federal, state and local regulations (and especially IRS rules covering 501(c)(3) organizations)

The Executive Director will also work closely with the organization’s founder and Board of Directors in shaping and refining overall strategy.

Personal and Professional Characteristics

The ideal candidate will be a passionate, strategic leader and thinker; a creative, entrepreneurial and experienced manager; and a sophisticated, cogent communicator and disseminator of practical information to drive policy change. He/she will care deeply about ideas and their power—especially over the long term—to reshape the intellectual climate and to redefine the realm of the possible in public policy. While no one person will embody all of the qualities enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal abilities, attributes, and experiences:

- Strong entrepreneurial orientation and capacity to think creatively and strategically about complex problems
- Ability to develop and maintain executive level relationships with senior scholars, policymakers and donors
- Capacity to understand cutting-edge academic research, to discuss it with leading scholars, and to communicate its essence to a non-academic audience
- Ability to oversee and direct research agendas for staff in conjunction with leading scholars

- Ability to fundraise (or sell) through a relationship-based approach
- Comfort with technology as a mechanism to engage stakeholders
- Effective communication skills, including strong writing and presentation skills
- Proven management skills in setting and achieving objectives as well as defining and implementing strategy
- Comfort working in an entrepreneurial, mission driven environment
- MBA, MPP, MA, JD or other advanced academic and professional training
- 5+ years of demonstrated experience, including in two of the following fields: entrepreneurial/start-up organizations, academic institutions, research organizations, public policy/government, non-profits, fundraising/development
- 2 years experience in a leadership/management position preferably in an intellectual product and/or mission driven organization

To Apply

More information about the Tobin Project may be found at: <http://www.tobinproject.org>

Nominations and applications will be reviewed as received. Candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Applications including a cover letter describing your interest and qualifications, your resume (in Word format), salary history and where you learned of the position should be sent to: ExDirOpportunity@tobinproject.org

In order to expedite the internal sorting and reviewing process, please type your name (Last, First) as the only contents in the subject line of your e-mail.

This search is being conducted by the Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group, in conjunction with the Tobin Project.

The Tobin Project is an equal opportunity employer.

The Tobin Project

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Tobin Project, Inc. is a non-partisan organization recognized as a public charity under Sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code.