POSITION PROFILE

CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER
National Park Foundation

Washington, DC preferred

Photo credit: NPS Photo / Jacob W. Frank
As the official nonprofit partner of the National Park Service (NPS), the National Park Foundation (NPF) generates private support and builds strategic partnerships to protect and enhance America’s national parks for present and future generations.

Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation is rooted in a legacy that began more than a century ago, when private citizens from all walks of life took action to establish and protect our national parks. The creation of the Foundation led to the immediate protection and enhancement of some of our most iconic and historic places. For example, within the first 10 years, NPF established grants to protect President Theodore Roosevelt’s home in Sagamore, Long Island; made emergency land purchases to save Gettysburg, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Muir Woods; and supported other critical initiatives across the country.

In recent years, the Centennial of the National Park Service in 2016 led to a period of significant growth at the Foundation with strategic investments in fundraising capacity and programmatic impact. Strong alignment with NPS led to impact in signature programs and projects across the country including the restoration of landmark sites, the protection of key landscapes and wildlife corridors, broader and more inclusive storytelling, support for new national park sites, and a considerable push to make national parks relevant to all.

Today, the National Park Foundation carries on that tradition of strong alignment with the National Park Service as the only national charitable nonprofit whose mission is to directly support NPS.
Areas of Work:

In fiscal year 2021, NPF raised nearly $130 million in contributions and other support to fund its mission. At its core, NPF invests in seven strategic areas to drive positive impact. These areas are aligned with NPS’ priorities and are referred to as mission pillars: (i) Landscape and Wildlife Conservation, (ii) History & Culture, (iii) Resilience and Sustainability, (iv) Parks of the Future, (v) Youth Engagement and Education, (vi) Outdoor Exploration, and (vii) Communities and Workforce. NPF’s work is implemented through strategic partnerships with NPS, park friend’s groups, corporate partners, and other park partners.

The Chief Program Officer will be responsible for overseeing and guiding the strategy for these seven mission pillars. This will be done in close alignment with National Park Foundation and National Park Service leadership.

Protect

LANDSCAPE AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

NPF commits to conserving native wildlife and restoring critical habitats and ecosystems in the nation’s most treasured places for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of current and future generations. National parks protect and preserve 85 million acres of land including stunning landscapes, world heritage sites, iconic landmarks, natural habitats, and threatened and endangered species. Many sites are increasingly subject to environmental and human impacts that threaten the health of wildlife. Rising sea levels, changing weather patterns, and ecosystem degradation are leading to paradigm shifts in society. Conservation and preservation are at the core of the
ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

Foundation’s mission. Over the past 50 years, NPF and conservation partners have helped conserve over 135,000 acres of additional park land. NPF also funds studies and restoration efforts that protect biologically diverse landscapes across the country, supporting iconic wildlife.

RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

NPS’ Green Parks Plan acts as a road map to build resilient, green infrastructure and educate park visitors on climate change and sustainability, with the objective of moving parks toward significant reductions in their energy, water, and waste profiles. NPS maintains a large footprint requiring significant quantities of energy, water, and other resources across over 400 national park sites, contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and waste sent to landfills. To combat this, NPF supports ongoing work across the entire National Park System through waste reduction efforts, water conservation projects, and investments in renewable and alternative energy projects. By proactively building strategic partnerships and raising private philanthropy to accelerate NPS’ goals, NPF is working to make parks future models of environmental sustainability.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Nearly half of the nation’s national parks are primarily historic or cultural in their mission, but few Americans visit them or even know they exist. As America’s storyteller, these national parks can engage all audiences and tell a broader and more inclusive story of American history. Through dynamic educational programs, professional development opportunities, rehabilitation of historic sites, and the preservation – both physically and digitally – of irreplaceable artifacts and places, NPF, together with its partners, remains dedicated to increasing access to places, cultural resources, and stories that help all people gain a deeper understanding of parks as our common ground and shared inheritance. NPF aims to amplify the full range of experience and voices that are woven into the fabric of the United States. By elevating stories of America’s diversity and the fight for equality, meaningful conversations are sparked about our past and the work remaining to achieve a more perfect union.
PARKS OF THE FUTURE

Two hundred million more visitors are expected annually in national parks by 2040, a 60% increase from 2018 levels. National parks must be prepared to address the changing demographics and a diversity of needs for these new visitors. From visitor congestion to the workforce of the future. From recreational access to campground and transportation experiences of the future. From how audiences feel welcome to how new audiences can be developed and cultivated. National parks must remain nimble and invest in strategies today that ensure world class visitor experiences tomorrow. Through transformational investments in both emerging technologies and proven solutions, NPF envisions a stronger and more resilient National Park System in 2040.

Connect

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

National parks are America’s largest classroom, offering unparalleled educational resources as hands-on laboratories poised to inspire a new generation. NPF supports youth education and engagement programs that provide ways for kids to enjoy, understand, and connect with the nature, history, and culture of parks through a variety of classroom subjects at national parks across the country. Education programs tied to parks enhance classroom curriculum and have a transformative impact on students, increasing critical thinking skills, knowledge, self-confidence, and motivation to learn. Beyond time spent in the parks, classroom activities conducted before and after in-park or virtual field trips reinforce what students learn during their exploration.

OUTDOOR EXPLORATION

The average child spends five to eight hours a day in front of a digital screen and only about 12 minutes of active time outdoors. National parks hold the power to inspire a sense of wonder and a love of exploration. Exploration of parks’ wildlife, landscapes, history, and culture is an important and memorable element of national park experiences for all visitors. NPF supports ongoing opportunities to promote access for everyone to experience, enjoy, and cultivate life-long
connections to the social, mental, and physical health benefits of the outdoors through magnificent national parks. By teaching valuable lifelong skills, collaborating with partner organizations to foster inclusion, and promoting the engagement of all communities with outdoor recreation, NPF’s Outdoor Exploration programs create and deepen longstanding connections to national parks for all.

COMMUNITIES AND WORKFORCE

National parks are the landscapes where American’s build community and cultivate stewardship. NPF supports an expansive network of local non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, and service corps dedicated to critical preservation and restoration projects across the country. NPF’s communities and workforce programming aims to grow the capacity of partners, as well as inspire and diversify the next generation of outdoor leaders. Through efforts like service corps crews that preserve historical sites, restore trails, and remove invasive species in parks, NPF’s programs highlight the power of teamwork and collective dedication to preserve the nation’s most treasured places. Additionally, increased fundraising and management capacity of the park partner community strengthens collective support of critical preservation, restoration, and protection projects in parks across the country.

For more information on the National Park Foundation, please click here. For more information about NPF’s programs, please click here.
The Opportunity

Reporting directly to the Chief Operating Officer and working in close collaboration with the President and Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Program Officer (CPO) will have overall strategic and operational responsibility for programs and partnership initiatives of the NPF. As a thought leader to the organization, this position serves an important role integrating the grants and partnership work of NPF and fostering close strategic relationships with key national and regional partners. Close alignment with the National Park Service will be paramount to the success of any candidate. In addition, internally, the CPO will act as a critical facilitator, reaching across the organization to foster a positive, collegial working environment.
As a key member of the senior management team, the CPO oversees a growing program budget of roughly $60-$70 million and a total staff of 17 through a team of 5 direct reports. The budget and size of the staff are expected to increase in the coming years. The CPO will focus on program leadership and visibility as well as external relationships.

This individual must be an innovative thinker with the organizational acumen, management and leadership skills necessary to strategically lead the programs and partnerships team through a time of closer alignment with NPS and of growth within the national park movement. The candidate will bring previous experience building collaborative relationships both internally and externally within complex environments, and will understand how to drive coordination, collaboration, and progress across multiple constituencies.

The candidate will have outstanding interpersonal skills, be a skilled communicator, and will be a natural relationship builder. This individual will have an ability to build, manage, lead, influence and sustain a multi-dimensional team in a diverse work environment. They will have a proven track record of success leading teams to design, implement and evaluate collaborative programs and projects that achieve organizational goals. The next leader will be visionary, well-organized, creative, patient, and highly flexible. Working effectively “up and down and across” the organization will be key in the individual’s success. They will embody the spirit of a collaborative communicator and empower their team to deliver superior results while leading through partnerships and collaboration. Working with a large, federal agency is a plus.
Key responsibilities include:

- Building and sustaining a trusted and collaborative relationship within NPF and with the National Park Service and key partners.
- Designing and implementing programs and initiatives that build out the organizational vision as established in NPF’s Strategic Plan.
- Serving as the primary liaison to the Programs & Partnerships Board committee, ensuring committee members are regularly engaged in the development and implementation of strategic initiatives.
- Driving internal communication, cohesiveness, and culture during a period of rapid organizational growth.
- Attracting, developing, coaching, and retaining high-performance team members. Empowering them to elevate their level of responsibility, organizational empathy, and performance.
- Establishing and sustaining relationships with other leaders in the fields of conservation, historic preservation, park management, outdoor recreation, and stewardship.
- Convening partners to share best practices and ideas for enhancing support for the national parks.
- Developing the necessary systems, processes, and tools to better support the facilitation, collection, and sharing of knowledge that is generated by the programs.
CANDIDATE PROFILE

Close alignment with the National Park Service will be paramount to the success of any candidate. In addition, the ideal candidate will have the following professional and personal qualities, skills, and characteristics:

STRATEGIC AND VISIONARY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Track record of setting priorities and leading a program, department, or organization through change and to success.
- Proven ability to inspire trust, lead and facilitate with strong interpersonal skills and move from ideas to action.
- A strong thought leader who can own program development organization-wide and work directly with the Board to identify and pursue new projects and program opportunities.

A COLLABORATIVE PARTNER

- A patient and thoughtful partner to internal audiences and external stakeholders, in particular the National Park Service, but also including donors, advisory groups, coalitions, institutional foundations, corporate partners, and practitioner groups.
- Collaborative teamwork and taking time to adapt to organizational culture will be a key factor in the success of any candidate.
- An inspiring communicator who can articulate vision and direction to a wide audience as well as being effective one-on-one.
- Ability to influence and collaborate internally and externally through political savvy and networking – while bringing sensitivity and demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Solid experience working with finance in managing budgets, planning for contingencies, and identifying revenue streams.
- Management style that is goal oriented, but flexible and respects the capabilities and independence of Board volunteers and staff alike and provides them with a clear sense of direction.
- Unwavering commitment to quality programs and excellence in organizational and project management with the ability to achieve strategic objectives and manage a budget.
CANDIDATE PROFILE

A COMPASSIONATE STAFF LEADER AND DEI CHAMPION

• A team player, who can relate and operate effectively with peers and other associates within a collegial, entrepreneurial work environment.

• Demonstrated leadership, coaching, and relationship management experience.

• Personal creativity and strategic vision coupled with an ability to listen to others and learn from their best ideas.

• Ability to serve as an equity leader across the entire organization and in the field, including a vision for how the National Park Foundation’s mission and work is connected to broader DEI efforts.

Photo credit: NPS Photo / Emily Hassell
CANDIDATE PROFILE

A PASSION FOR THE MISSION

• A passionate commitment to the National Park System and NPF’s mission and a demonstrated record of success building and leading programs which address public lands management and cultural and conservation stewardship.

• Passionate commitment to the values, mission, and guiding principles of NPF:
  • Stewardship: We foster a culture of stewardship of our national parks and the investments we make in them.
  • Strategic: We work with the National Park Service to identify, fund, and advance priority initiatives.
  • Impact: We invest in critical projects that provide lasting, measurable benefits to national parks.
  • Common Ground: We represent common ground where all those who love the national parks can support a shared agenda.
  • Partnership: We convene strategic partnerships to amplify our efforts and achieve broader impacts within our national parks.
  • Innovation: We employ an entrepreneurial approach to address the complex challenges facing our national parks.
  • Diversity: We encourage inclusion and diversity of people, beliefs, and viewpoints among National Park Foundation staff, board, and partners.
  • Future Orientation: We help the National Park Service to anticipate future challenges and create long-term solutions.

Photo credit; NPF Photo / Gary Noren
The annual base salary for this role will start at $250,000, commensurate with qualifications and experience. NPF also offers a generous and comprehensive benefits package including health and dental coverage, short and long-term disability plans, term life insurance, voluntary life and disability, a 403(b) savings plan with matching employer contributions, vacation and sick leave accrual, transportation subsidies for DC-based employees, as well as monthly cell phone and internet reimbursement.

All NPF employees are required to be fully vaccinated and to submit proof of vaccination to Human Resources. Booster shots are required based on the timing recommended by the CDC and proof of boosters should be submitted to Human Resources as well.

At present, fully vaccinated DC-based staff are expected to come to the office at minimum 3-5 days during March 2022 and then 8-10 days per month going forward.

Washington DC preferred. Candidates from outside the Washington DC metropolitan area will also be considered. NPF is currently registered (or registering) as an employer in the following states: CA, CO, DC, FL, IL, MA, MD, MN, NC, NH, NM, NJ, NY, SC, TN, VA, WA, WI.
Koya Partners, the executive search firm that specializes in mission-driven search, has been exclusively retained for this engagement. Kara Teising of Koya Partners has been exclusively retained for this search. To express interest in this role please submit your materials here. To contact a member of the search team, please email npf_cpo@koyapartners.com.

All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

Koya Partners is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email NonprofitSearchOps@divsearch.com. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

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