Position Specification

The National Park Foundation

Chief Program Officer

Private and Confidential
Our Client

The National Park Foundation (NPF), the official charitable partner of the National Park Service, enriches America’s national parks and programs through the support of private citizens, park lovers, stewards of nature, history enthusiasts, and wilderness adventurers. Chartered by Congress in 1967, the NPF grew out of a legacy of park protection that began over a century ago, when citizens acted to establish and protect our national parks.

The National Park System, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), was established for the benefit and enjoyment of all Americans. More than a century later, it secures our inheritance, and requires our constant and committed effort to protect and steward. The more than 400 park units comprising the National Park System belong to all of us. We are partners in their protection. National parks need us now more than ever to ensure that in the next century these American treasures are supported, protected, enjoyed, and appreciated by all. National parks have long relied on a combination of federal appropriations and private philanthropy to keep them beautiful, vital, and accessible. Throughout its 52-year history, the National Park Foundation (NPF) has played a leadership role, raising approximately $1 billion in priority projects and programs. This model of public-private partnership underscores NPF’s belief that we all share in the responsibility to protect our parks as a living inheritance for future generations.

In 2016, NPS celebrated its milestone Centennial anniversary. NPF’s involvement in the Centennial planning and celebration demonstrated the value of strategic alignment and collaboration with agency partners to identify funding priorities required to direct private philanthropy in a larger, transformational way. Find Your Park, the centerpiece marketing campaign of the Centennial, invited all Americans to experience the natural and cultural treasures preserved in our national parks. The combination of strategic focus and increased public awareness positioned NPF to dramatically expand its fundraising efforts and to more aggressively target new donor communities and channels. NPF’s unique relationship with NPS, as its congressionally chartered national philanthropic partner, provides the opportunity to jointly leverage strategic planning and funding for emerging areas of innovation. This relationship enables NPF and NPS to pilot and scale best practices within the park service; and to advance complex, high impact, high priority projects that the service wouldn’t otherwise be able to accomplish.

NPF is poised to advance the bold and important vision for the National Park System. With the completion of a strategic refresh in 2018, NPF’s strategic realignment is to amplify the impact of NPS’ highest priority initiatives where philanthropic investment can both accelerate impact, and leverage NPF’s core competencies. The first pillar of the strategic framework (Protect) focuses on investments designed to (i) enhance the visitor experience and (ii) protect, preserve and restore the natural, cultural, and historic resources stewarded by NPS. The second pillar (Connect) focuses on individuals and partners to build greater public awareness of national parks, communicate the relevancy of parks, and inspire deeper public engagement with them.

National parks do more than preserve our nation’s natural and cultural heritage; they enrich lives, enhance learning, and provide inspiration. Many Americans have not experienced these special places, do not feel a strong connection to them or cannot physically access them. NPF’s challenge is to connect them to our national parks not only to experience the intrinsic value of their pristine, natural beauty, but because parks
connect us to one another. As the stories of lesser known parks are amplified and shared, our parks become places of awe, joy and wonder, telling a more an inclusive story of our heritage and our history, its glory, and its imperfections. Bringing people to parks was a vital facet of the first century of NPS. In the next century of park stewardship, NPF will also invest in bringing parks to people. We will share stories of the parks that reflect a diversity of American experience, leveraging the power of media and technology to inspire all people to visit, care for, and invest in these treasures for the benefit of future generations.

For more information on the full range of programs and projects supported by the National Park Foundation please review their website at www.nationalparks.org.

The Role

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. 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 program budget of $65 million and a total staff of 17 through a team of 5 direct reports. The CPO will focus on program leadership and visibility as well as external relationships.

The key responsibilities for the Chief Program Officer include:

▪ Building and sustaining a trusted and collaborative relationship 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 organizational growth.
▪ Attracting, developing, coaching, and retaining high-performance team members. Empowering them to elevate their level of responsibility, span of control, 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

The National Park Foundation seeks an innovative thinker with the organizational acumen, management, and leadership skills necessary to strategically lead the programs and partnerships team through a time of evolution and change. The candidate will bring previous experience working with the National Park Service, park partners, the public sector, conservation groups, or other relevant organizations, 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. S/he will have a proven track record of success leading teams to design and implement collaborative programs and projects that achieve organizational goals. The next leader will be visionary, well-organized, creative, patient, and highly flexible. S/he will empower the team to deliver superior results and will lead through partnerships and collaboration.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

**Passion for Parks**

- A passionate commitment to our 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 and mission of the NPF and a demonstrated conservation ethic.

**Strategic Acumen**

- 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.
- Ability to think strategically, tactically and creatively.

**Building Relationships and Influence**

- Proven ability to engage a wide range of stakeholders including advisory groups, coalitions, forums, trade associations, foundations, corporate sponsors, and practitioner groups.
- An inspiring communicator who can articulate vision and direction to a wide audience as well as being effective one-on-one.
- Ability to influence internally and externally through informed vision, political savvy and networking – while bringing multi-constituency sensitivity and demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion.
Leadership and 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 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.
- A team player, who can interrelate and operate effectively with peers and other associates within a collegial, entrepreneurial work environment.
- Demonstrated leadership, coaching, and relationship management experience.

Interpersonal Acumen and Character

- Possessing the highest level of personal and professional integrity, quality standards and a strong work ethic often requiring weekend and evening engagements.
- A superb professional and personal presence with impeccable integrity and a strong work ethic.
- Positive outlook on life, mission-driven, and team motivated.
- Personal creativity and strategic vision coupled with an ability to listen to others and learn from their best ideas.

*The National Park Foundation is an equal opportunity employer and invites individuals who bring a diversity of culture, experience and ideas to apply.*

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search, and prospective candidates are invited to contact Russell Reynolds Associates directly. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential. For more information or to apply for the role, please reach out to NPFChiefProgramOfficer@russellreynolds.com. All applications should include a resume and statement of interest.