



Search Conducted By



Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer must be a strategic, successful, creative, and insightful leader who will work to grow and expand the impact of this extraordinary organization and be a passionate ambassador to the Friends of the Smokies community across multiple states.



Organization Background

Founded in 1993, Friends of the Smokies (FOTS) assists the National Park Service (NPS) in its mission to preserve and protect the Great Smoky Mountains National Park by raising funds and public awareness and providing volunteers for needed projects. Since 1993, FOTS has raised more than \$75 million to fund historic preservation, wildlife management, environmental education, and more in support of the park.

Almost three decades later, Friends of the Smokies is one of the NPS's most successful partners. FOTS has an annual budget of over \$4 million and is rapidly growing in impact, scope, and complexity. The park serves as an important place of refuge for so many people and visitation at the park continues to rise dramatically. Memberships, license plate sales, and events account for a large percentage of the organization's expenses and income. With help from FOTS this year, Great Smokies National Park was able to provide better search and rescue response, repair more trails, provide more programs for youth, and better ensure the care of over 100 irreplaceable, historic structures so that these Forever Places are protected.

The next leader will add to the existing culture and employ professional business and leadership skills to advance the organization's strategic, operational, membership, fundraising, marketing, and financial practices to the next level of impact and success.



Position Overview and Responsibilities

FOTS seeks a visionary leader to drive the organization forward in its mission to support the park. The CEO will be responsible for guiding the ongoing operations and financial health of the organization as well as driving its long-term strategy. They will lead a large and dedicated team of staff, collaborate with an active and engaged Board of Directors, and serve as the voice and face of the organization, frequently communicating to the media and high-level partners. The CEO will oversee the development and implementation of programs, the maintenance of strong relationships with partner organizations, and the organization's finances. The position requires continuous dialogue as the direct contact to the park's superintendent and others to ensure Friends is serving and supporting park needs.

FOTS engages in collaborative efforts with federal agencies, gateway communities, and guests to create connections to the Southern Appalachians that lead to lifelong stewardship. By establishing business and agency partnerships, encouraging collaborative innovation, expanding educational opportunities, funding tangible projects, and leveraging resources, FOTS is building the next generation of leaders and stewards.

FOCUS AREAS



Organizational Leadership, Strategy, and Management

- Collaborate with a high-level Board of Directors (the Board) composed of sophisticated, cross-sector leaders who share a passion for the park and the region.
- Collaborate with the Board to develop the organization's strategic goals and oversee an annual planning, budgeting, and review process that engages new ideas through an entrepreneurial mindset.
- Collaborate with the Board to identify and prioritize projects and initiatives that enable evolutionary change within the organization and its partners.
- Grow and build a team and reinforce a positive workplace culture that flourishes with a diversity of voices and experiences.

Financial Management and Fundraising

- Maintain full accountability for coordinating, developing, and monitoring the organization's budget and revenue streams and event programming. Balance short-term program goals and long-term resource needs to broaden and deepen the organization's impact.
- Oversee and assist with the production of reports, including quarterly board reports, annual reports, and annual financial audits, all in accordance with general accounting principles.
- Collaborate with the investment committee to provide regular reports of the progress of endowment funds.
- Secure, maintain, and expand funding from memberships, license plate sales, events, high-net-worth individuals, corporations, foundations, and public partners.
- Secure, maintain, and expand funding from state and federal agencies and other public granting institutions, including overseeing grant proposals.
- Work with the Board to build the organization's capacity to raise large gifts to support the park.
- Serve as a charismatic ambassador at the organization's many events designed to raise awareness of FOTS, and the park, and solicit philanthropic funds.



Staff and Operational Leadership

- Lead, collaborate with, and support Friends staff, which includes nine full-time and four part-time employees and several supportive volunteers.
- Continue building and expanding the organization's membership base and earned revenue streams.
- Attract, develop, and retain high-caliber staff as needed to support the organization's work.
- Lead operations in accordance with FOTS nonprofit status under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Support the development of powerful new business operating systems that use KPIs, metrics, and reporting to manage accountability and enhance the functioning of our rapidly growing organization.



Board Relations

- Assist the Board to define and identify appropriate engagement opportunities and accomplish objectives collaboratively with organizational staff.
- Support and maintain effective relationships between the staff and the Board.



Relationship Building and Partnership Development

- Continually foster a culture of partnership, communication, trust, and goodwill within the organization, its partners, and passionate supporters of the park.
- Build relationships and work well with donors and supporters throughout the region, especially Tennessee and North Carolina.
- Serve as a welcoming ambassador of the mission to all stakeholders of the FOTS community to deepen and expand ties nationwide.
- Work alongside critical partners such as Great Smoky Mountains Association, Discover Life in America, and the Tremont Institute to promote FOTS operational goals and strive toward shared goals for conservation and sustainability by attending board meetings and events as needed.
- Build and maintain effective collaborative relationships with institutional partners.
- Respond to partner institutions' priorities, views, and concerns and support their interests and needs through the organization's work.
- Cultivate strong relationships with key connections at government agencies to share information, foster trust and credibility, and secure support.



Desired Experience and Competencies

The ideal CEO will have an extensive background in management and leadership, including a track record of progressive leadership positions with effective operational and financial oversight, successful fundraising, and developing dynamic new programs and innovations to drive organization growth. They must be motivated by a deep love for the great outdoors and protection of public lands.

The ideal candidate may come from a variety of career pathways including for-profit business leadership, entrepreneurship, academia, government, or nonprofits. Excellent interpersonal skills are essential, including staff leadership and development, a diplomatic approach to collaborating with the Board, and the ability to cultivate strong relationships with partner institutions. The successful candidate will be a visionary leader with the strategic ability to chart a path forward and the attention to detail to execute the operational steps needed to ensure success. Proven executive experience, experience leading fundraising initiatives, and strong financial reporting experience, all paired with a creative, collaborative, and entrepreneurial approach, are essential. Private sector experience is helpful. A bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience with 10 years or more in senior management and relevant training is preferred.

Management and Strategic Vision

- A track record of meeting or exceeding expected organizational results in positions of increasing responsibility and authority
- Deep commitment to the mission of FOTS
- Experience managing large, complex projects or initiatives with multiple stakeholders
- Track record of objective, data-driven strategic and operational decisions
- Quantitative and qualitative decision-making skills
- Embrace, support, and demonstrate a commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Leadership and collaboration

Operational Oversight

- Skilled in organizational development, administration, and personnel management
- Capable project manager with careful attention to detail and follow-through
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and comfort with public speaking
- Experience managing a complex budget with multiple funding sources and grant obligations
- Demonstrated fundraising experience from both public and private sources, including a successful track record in grant writing and developing strong partnerships with federal agencies
- Experience with retail operations and earned revenue

Leadership and Collaboration

- Career advancement based on robust leadership skills and the ability to inspire and motivate others
- Demonstrated staff leadership and development experience, especially working with a team to accomplish operational and program outcomes
- Track record of establishing goals and objectives and holding themselves and others accountable for achieving the results
- Experience working collaboratively with a large group of engaged board members
- Able to maintain and engage a wide network of partners and stakeholders, delivering clear communication, a professional media presence, and working to build cohesion
- Ability to develop and cultivate strategic relationships with elected officials in the counties and states surrounding the park and in Washington, DC

Interpersonal Skills

- Able to resolve conflict and find common ground
- Navigate strong personalities; act as a diplomat with people with many viewpoints
- Able to deeply listen to and acknowledge stakeholder viewpoints and support their engagement, while also maintaining a strong sense of vision and strategic direction for the organization; charismatic
- A confident leadership presence, comfort making decisions and maintaining strong convictions while remaining open to the ideas of others
- High ethics, integrity, sound professional judgment, and ability to maintain confidentiality with tact and discretion
- Adaptable and flexible in the face of changing conditions; tolerance for adversity and uncertainty



Compensation

A competitive compensation package, including a comprehensive benefits package, will be offered based on experience. The anticipated annual salary range for this position is \$175,000–\$200,000.

Location

The CEO will work from the FOTS offices in Kodak, TN. Periodic remote work is possible. Regular travel is expected.

To Apply

Please visit <https://potrerogroup.com/executive-search/friends-great-smoky-mountains-national-park-chief-executive-officer> and select “Apply.” Applications should include a resume and a cover letter describing your qualifications that match the position criteria and what you will bring to the role.

Interested candidates should apply by November 11, 2022 for priority consideration.

Start Date

Winter — Spring 2023



Additional Information

More information on the Friends of the Smokies can be found at <https://friendsofthesmokies.org>.

For additional information regarding this opportunity, please contact:

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Friends of the Smokies is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

At Friends of the Smokies, we recognize that our effectiveness is enhanced when equity and inclusiveness are practiced and protected throughout our organizational governance, operations, culture, and staffing. Friends of the Smokies is committed to building a diverse community that is inclusive of people from all backgrounds. Friends of the Smokies does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, genetic information, disability unrelated to job or admission requirements, or veteran status.



Potrero Group is honored to coordinate this search on behalf of Friends of the Smokies. Supporting a world-class park partner organization is in perfect alignment with Potrero Group's commitment to providing rigorous strategy and business planning, organizational effectiveness, and nuanced search services to mission-drive organizations. Potrero Group supports innovative leaders and organizations making a difference in the world. We are committed to equitable and inclusive practices in all of our work.

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