



Search for the President and Chief Executive Officer
Saint Louis Science Center
Saint Louis, Missouri

THE SEARCH

The Saint Louis Science Center (the Science Center or Center) seeks an experienced and innovative leader to serve as its next President and Chief Executive Officer (President). This is an exciting opportunity to lead the Science Center through an era of transformation and community engagement. The President will direct a passionate team in leading the premier science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education organization in St. Louis. The Science Center is a well-respected institution that is a catalyst in building a more curious and scientifically informed community.

With over 300,000 square feet of space, the Saint Louis Science Center is one of the largest and most popular science centers in the country. With an average of about 525,000 guests annually, it has consistently ranked among the top five science centers in the nation and one of the best free museums in the nation according to *USA Today*. The award-winning Science Center engages people through on-site experiences including: more than 750 hands-on exhibits; an OMNIMAX® Theater, one of just nine IMAX® Laser Dome theaters in the world; and the James S. McDonnell Planetarium featuring the largest artificial sky in the Western Hemisphere. Additionally, the Science Center educates, engages, and entertains more than 12,000 community members annually through outreach and education programs. In the science museum field, the Science Center has earned a reputation for award-winning educational programs and successful partnerships in the local community and nationally.

The next President will join the Center at an opportune time for innovation. The organization has benefitted from an engaged board and a cohesive leadership team building out a strong operational and cultural foundation for the future. This is an exciting inflection point, as the President will be tasked with charting a rejuvenating course for the future and pursuing the philanthropic resources and community connections to make these ambitions a reality. Transforming the Science Center's spaces, programs, and overall guest experiences will be an exciting priority for the next President. A community-focused institution supported by the Zoo Museum (ZMD) District and philanthropy, the President will enhance existing offerings and bring in fresh ideas that showcase historical and cutting-edge innovations in science and technology. The President will collaboratively steward experiences that are exciting, interactive, and relevant to the scientific questions and issues of today and tomorrow. Guiding the work of the President

and the entire executive team is an exciting mission—to inspire everyone to be curious and engaged in science.

Reporting to the Board of Commissioners, the next President will lead the Center’s momentum in sustaining the Science Center’s position as an innovative leader in science education and an exemplary civic and cultural institution in St. Louis. The Science Center has a legacy of inspiring diverse audiences to pursue education and careers in the sciences--- a responsibility the President should be passionate about. Utilizing strong managerial expertise, attending to the operational and financial needs of the organization, generating excitement and growth for the Science Center, and leading philanthropic and community engagement efforts, the President will have the rare opportunity to build and execute bold and visionary plans in one of the premier science museums in the nation.

The Saint Louis Science Center has retained Isaacson, Miller, a leading national search firm, to assist with this recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, and applications, in the form of a CV and cover letter, should be sent in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE SAINT LOUIS SCIENCE CENTER

Located in the vibrant Forest Park neighborhood, the Science Center is home to over 750 exhibits in over 300,000 square feet of space, making the Center among the largest of its type in the United States. Since 2022, the Science Center has been ranked by *USA Today* as one of the top five best science museums in the country. The same publication recognized the Science Center as the 2nd-best free museum in the US. The Science Center is one of the nation’s few free nonprofit museums.

The mission of the Saint Louis Science Center is to inspire everyone to be curious and engaged in science. The Center envisions an equitable and inclusive society where people are passionate about science and use it to improve lives, transform communities, and empower future generations. Throughout its history, the Science Center has been a recipient of numerous awards, including recognition by the Association of Science-Technology Centers with its highest honor, the Roy L. Shafer Leading Edge Award. The Science Center is a member of the Association of Science and Technology Centers and the American Alliance of Museums. Accredited by the Association of American Museums, the Science Center was named a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate in 2016. The Center is also a founding member of Science Beyond the Boundaries, an international network of more than 270 museums.

History

The Science Center traces its roots to the Academy of Science of St. Louis, founded in 1856 as the first scientific organization west of the Mississippi River. In 1959, the Academy created the Museum of Science and Natural History in Clayton’s Oak Knoll Park. When the Metropolitan Zoological Park & Museum District (ZMD) was formed in 1971, the Museum of Science and Natural History became a member, independent from the Academy. In 1984, the Center acquired the Planetarium from the City of St. Louis. The

Planetarium was designed by the famed architect Gyo Obata, who later went on to design the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. After extensive renovations and named after aviation pioneer James Smith McDonnell, the McDonnell Planetarium reopened in 1985 at the Saint Louis Science Center. Today, the McDonnell Planetarium is home to the Mark IX Star Projector, one of only three in the United States.

Over the last couple of decades, the Center has received significant investment, including a \$34 million construction project to build a new facility for the Science Center. The new building was opened in 1991. The building is connected via an enclosed bridge to the McDonnell Planetarium. The building includes the five-story OMNIMAX Theater, one of the Center's most recognizable features. Boeing Hall opened in October 2011, providing 13,000 square feet of dedicated space for traveling exhibitions. In 2016, another major capital project was completed. Called [GROW](#), the project's centerpiece is a 5,000 square foot permanent pavilion that has a flexible, open floor plan that houses ever-changing exhibits and events. Its primary focus is the story of agriculture, and the many ways technology is shaping the agricultural landscape.

Today

While the Center draws a global audience and serves as a noteworthy tourist destination in St. Louis, approximately two-thirds of annual visitors are residents, reflecting the Science Center's longstanding commitment to bringing science and technology to the forefront of the St. Louis community. With more than 100,000 objects in the Collections Department, and over 1,100 continuously on public display, the Science Center always offers something new to see and learn. Presently, visitors can learn about the history of space travel, see Sue, the most complete and best-preserved T. Rex ever found, or collaborate and create in the Center's makerspace. Also serving as a popular community gathering and entertainment space, the Science Center has hosted many Planetarium shows ranging from educational content on the night sky, to laser light shows featuring the music of Lizzo, Queen, and more.

The Science Center is a leader in the region in promoting scientific education. One example is the Loeb Prize awarded by the Science Center for excellence in math and science education. In addition to programming for schools and other organizations in the community, the Center is home to the nationally recognized [Youth Exploring Science](#) (YES) program, which works with underserved teens throughout their high school years to prepare them for in-demand STEM careers. The YES program also impacts St. Louis by delivering STEM learning to the community through outreach initiatives. In addition to educational outreach, there are numerous opportunities for engagement with the rapidly growing St. Louis science ecosystem. Scientific industry and academia are well-represented in St. Louis. Indeed, there are many exciting developments related to science and technology in St. Louis. There is strong resolve to develop the workforce for new and existing companies and to stimulate opportunities for inclusive economic growth for the St. Louis region. The business community has developed the *STL 2030 Jobs Plan*, and the St. Louis Science Center can play a critical role in serving the community by enhancing STEM education programs and by communicating to the public the many challenges of the world that will be addressed through application of science.

As one of the few free nonprofit museums in the country, visitors of all backgrounds are invited to explore, create, and share ideas. A reflection of the Science Center's commitment to inclusion was the recent Sensory Inclusive certification from KultureCity, the nation's leading nonprofit on sensory accessibility and acceptance for those with invisible disabilities. The Science Center is doing its part to meet the needs of a diverse community through intentional experiences that inspire and support more women and other underrepresented populations to engage with science education and pursue scientific and technological careers.

The Science Center has 110 full-time employees and an annual operating budget of approximately \$20 million. About two-thirds of the Science Center's revenues are generated through ZMD tax revenue. Philanthropic contributions, which support Center operations as well as enhancements, accounts for about 10% of annual revenues. The Center's endowment is approximately \$4 million.

Tomorrow

The Science Center unveiled a new vision, mission, and organizational values in early 2023. With this reaffirmation of inspiring everyone to be curious and engaged in science was the launch of a new [strategic plan](#). This plan seeks to find new ways in making science and technology education exciting, reposition the role of the Science Center in the community, evolve the operating and philanthropic model to be more sustainable, and drive growth and innovation. The strategic pillars, or key priorities, guiding the strategic plan are community alignment, equity and inclusion, destination appeal, financial sustainability, and brand relevance. The Science Center will also work to grow museum attendance and engage more diverse audiences to drive an interest in STEM education and careers.

Leadership & Governance

The President and CEO reports to an appointed Board of Commissioners through the Chair of the Board of Commissioners. Eleven commissioners currently represent the city and the county of St. Louis. Mark Wrighton, Chancellor Emeritus and the James and Mary Wertsch Distinguished University Professor at Washington University in St. Louis, is the current Chair of the Board of Commissioners. As a member of the St. Louis ZMD, the commissioners are charged with overseeing the management of the Science Center and in particular its operation as a subdivision of the larger ZMD, and ultimately, the state. The Science Center also has a Board of Trustees. The trustees meet quarterly and are stewards and advisors of the Center representing a cross-section of industry, civic leadership, and education.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The opening for the President and CEO of the St. Louis Science Center represents an exceptional opportunity for an experienced and visionary civic leader passionate about science. The President is responsible for facilitating and implementing the Science Center's strategic plan, ensuring operational and

financial excellence across the organization, and fostering a healthy workplace culture guided by the Science Center's values. The President is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Science Center represents the leading edge of new ideas, innovation and collaboration in the field.

The President serves as the chief fundraiser of the institution. The President will embody the values of the organization and will represent the Science Center to multiple local, regional, national and international audiences. The President is expected to be a visible and active leader among the community and develop relationships within the educational, scientific, and cultural communities of St. Louis.

Organizational and interpersonal skills are foundational for the President's responsibility for continually assessing and enhancing effectiveness in the ability to carry out the Science Center's mission. Additionally, they should have demonstrated success in leading or governing a scientific organization.

The President's direct reports include the chief financial officer, chief institutional advancement officer, chief science and education officer, managing director of museum enterprises, managing director of marketing and communications, managing director of diversity and inclusion, and managing director of operations.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Vision and Strategy
 - Contribute inspiring and forward-thinking leadership to advance the mission, vision, values, and goals of the strategic plan.
 - Work closely with the Board of Commissioners, the Board of Trustees and their Leadership Team to develop, articulate and communicate institutional goals and priorities.
 - Ensure that the Science Center's resources are aligned with the operating plan annually.
 - Encourage and support innovation that leads to increasing revenues and exceptional guest experiences.
- Program Development
 - Ensure that exhibitions and educational programs are aligned with the mission and the strategic plan and are designed to reach multiple audiences including adults, families and school-age children as well as new, targeted audiences as identified.
 - Support a collegial atmosphere that fosters creativity and cross-functional collaboration among all departments.
 - Encourage and assist in the development of an ongoing exhibition program and the development of new exhibitions designed to engage, entertain and inform.
 - Develop and enhance the organization's position as a regional resource for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.
 - Welcome the scientific community to the institution and continue to build cooperative partnerships with the public schools, universities and other educational groups.

- Seek ways to engage other cultural institutions in St. Louis and the region in activities of mutual benefit.
- Financial Management
 - Develop and manage budgets, both annual and capital, to ensure effective and responsible fiscal practices.
 - Ensure that capital assets (collections, buildings, grounds, exhibitions and equipment) are protected. Oversee all management policies, procedures, and systems to ensure the highest level of efficiency and quality throughout the organization.
 - Continuously review and enhance the operations of the organization to maximize all income opportunities and improve the guest experience.
- Human Capital Management
 - Maintain and further develop a talented and highly motivated professional team through open communication and respect.
 - Through inspired leadership, sustain a work culture that values teamwork, communication, collaboration, accountability and outstanding customer service.
 - Develop effective communication channels between the Board of Commissioners, the Board of Trustees, and the entire SLSC team.
- External Relations and Fundraising
 - Be visible and accessible to both internal and external constituents, particularly community partners and potential partners.
 - Serve as a key public spokesperson for the organization and develop a leadership position within the cultural, educational and scientific community.
 - Through leadership of the SLSC team, and in conjunction with the Board, complete an ongoing successful endowment campaign.
 - Together with the Commission, the Trustees, and other stakeholders play an important role in increasing the private financial support for the organization.
 - Continue to build the Science Center's visibility and recognition of its value to the community through media channels, speaking engagements, and participation in associations and clubs.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As the Science Center reflects on its recent successes as well as opportunities for innovation, the President will play a critical role. Specifically, the President will address the following opportunities and challenges:

Facilitate a renewed and invigorating vision for the future

The President will build and plan for the execution of strategic goals that support a vision for the Science Center's next chapter. The strategic goals should be clear, relevant, and inspiring. Stimulating passion for science is the foundation and future of the Science Center. Through a data-driven approach, the President will define goals and action steps that are measurable and achievable. Key outcomes of the plan will include bolstering the Science Center's financial base, transforming the building, enhancing the guest

experience and ways that guests engage with the Science Center, and increasing the overall community awareness and visitations to the Center. Crafting and pursuing this plan will be a collaborative exercise, including working closely with the Science Center's team and the Board. Building on the existing strategic plan, the President will be charged with charting a course that identifies key objectives, amplifies the Science Center's impact and presence, and maps out the path forward.

Strengthen philanthropic support

The Science Center provides free general admission thanks to the steadfast support of St. Louis residents through ZMD funds and philanthropic contributions. Donor-generated funds are requisite to support operations and enhance the Center's offerings and achieve future ambitions. The Science Center is in the early phases of a comprehensive fundraising and capital campaign which would generate the funds necessary for future renovations and growth. The President will be tasked with growing philanthropic support for the Science Center. In advance of these fundraising efforts, the CEO will need to communicate a clear vision for the future of the Science Center that will generate excitement, inspire new supporters, and cultivate existing donor relationships.

The President will be instrumental in leading the fundraising campaign and other philanthropic efforts, which include growing the endowment. The successful candidate should have a track record of leading successful fundraising initiatives and being a responsible steward of donated resources.

Transform spaces and experiences

To engage with the Science Center is to be curious and engaged in science. To do so effectively, the Center must offer the best facilities and experiences imaginable. The Science Center's ambitions include renovating existing spaces and creating entirely new galleries and experiences that are state-of-the-art, interactive, and captivating. The incoming President should have led notable programmatic innovations and capital planning successes, aimed at improving facilities and guest or user experiences. The President will need to be familiar with the challenges and excited by the opportunity to shepherd robust enhancements to facilities and programs. One barometer of success will be a transformation that enables exhibits and programs to be sophisticated, flexible, and remain at the cutting edge of science and technology education.

Augment the Science Center's presence and partnerships in the community

This is an exciting time to be in St. Louis and lead the Science Center. Civic engagement and a commitment to its cultural institutions are notable traits of St. Louis. Additionally, St. Louis continues to grow as a science and technology hub. Integrating the Science Center with the community both builds connections to support the Science Center and promotes appreciation for science. The President is the Center's principal relationship-builder throughout the community and serves as the most prominent representative in external relationships. The President will be expected to lead the Science Center in

intentionally increasing connections with local school systems, community organizations, industry representatives, and historically underserved communities. Ultimately, the President's ability to connect with partners and potential collaborators will generate support and buy-in for the Center's vision and goals. The role requires enthusiasm, diplomacy, and persistence to cultivate successful relationships.

Showcase modern technological & scientific issues through exhibitions, programs, and partnerships

Climate change, artificial intelligence, and advances in agricultural and biosciences are just a few of the captivating scientific issues of today. For the next era, the Science Center should have a well-crafted plan for showcasing existing exhibits and programs and should also provide opportunities to learn new things about historic and cutting-edge innovations in science, engineering, and technology. The outcomes of future exhibits and programs should be directly relevant to scientific and technological education. The President and the entire executive team will be responsible for envisioning and planning a 3–4-year exhibition calendar. In working with the executive team, the President has a distinct opportunity to formulate an identity for the Science Center within the St. Louis community and the broader science museum field to plan for future exhibits and programs that tackle the important issues at the intersection of innovation and the broader effects on the global human experience. As these exhibitions and programmatic efforts are pursued, the President must keep accessibility, inclusion, and diversity at the forefront of the Science Center's efforts.

Lead a thriving work environment

The President will lead a team of passionate individuals and has the exciting opportunity to capitalize on the Science Center's greatest strength (its people). The President will be expected to continue efforts to make the Science Center a sustainably run organization and the best possible place to work. The President will be instrumental in influencing the culture, facilitating opportunities for teamwork and creativity, and shaping the future of work and science education in St. Louis. There is a culture of dedication and teamwork at the Science Center and the President should lead with a vigorous spirit of creativity, passion for science education, operational excellence, and collaboration. With authenticity and determination, the President will build strong relationships with colleagues, model and expect positive workplace behaviors and values, and provide a high-quality, supportive, and mission-centered work experience. Critical to this work is a commitment to advancing diversity, belonging, and inclusion within the Science Center and continuing the work in diversifying the STEM education and career pipeline in the region.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The St. Louis Science Center seeks an experienced and ambitious manager to lead the organization's mission and strategy for the future. Significant experience with strategic planning implementation, fundraising, and financial and operations management in a large environment is required. In addition, the ideal candidate will bring many of the following experiences, skills, and qualities.

- **Passion for Science:** Must embody a personal and professional enthusiasm for science and technology, as well as demonstrated engagement in scientific endeavors, including but not limited to science education.
- **Leadership Attributes:** Successful in establishing an organizational culture of teamwork and collegial interactions. Demonstrated success in leading change, developing talent, fostering effective communication, is guest-focused, building high-performance teams, and consistently achieving results.
- **Advanced degree preferred, such as an MBA; Minimum of ten years' experience as an executive responsible for a significant element of a not-for-profit or for-profit institution, managing an operation of similar size and complexity.**
- **Vision and Thought Leadership:** Successful record of innovation and thought leadership in their field. Has demonstrated the ability to formulate a vision, communicate it effectively, build support and enthusiasm, and then execute it.
- **Fiscal/Budget Management:** Has a track record of sound fiscal management and has successfully developed and managed the budget for a significant element of a not-for-profit or for-profit institution.
- **External relations:** Has played a significant role in the creation and execution of a successful fund-raising campaign. Experience building and cultivating relationships/partnerships with a broad range of constituents.
- **Educational Outreach and Networking:** Has meaningful experience in developing productive relationships with educational institutions.
- **Board Relations:** Must have demonstrated experience with relationship management and working effectively with both governing and advisory boards.

ABOUT ST. LOUIS & THE ZOOLOGICAL PARK AND MUSEUM DISTRICT

Many people's knowledge of St. Louis starts and stops at the Arch. But for locals, the world-famous monument is a doorway to discover the unexpected diversity of people, culture, values, industry, and even geography that thrive in this unique Midwest metropolis. Even those who've lived here all their lives are continually surprised to discover something new. Green spaces galore. Art in every direction. Free cultural attractions. Communities of all kinds. An inventive food scene, historic neighborhoods, innovation districts, startup incubators, well-paying jobs, and striking affordability put St. Louis as a top-tier location to reside.

The Saint Louis Science Center is adjacent to Forest Park, one of the nation's greatest urban public parks. The Science Center is also one of five cultural institutions within the Metropolitan [Zoological Park and Museum District](#). Since 1971, residents of St. Louis City and County have generously supported the ZMD. The ZMD is a property tax-supported district governed by an eight-member Board of Directors, each appointed for a four-year term by the Mayor of the City of St. Louis and the St. Louis County Executive. The ZMD distributes funds through five culture sub districts, one of which includes the St. Louis Science Center. The Science Center can offer free general admission to all who enter its doors thanks to generous philanthropic support, as well as funds from the ZMD.

Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the [Isaacson, Miller search website](#). Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

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The Saint Louis Science Center provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, amnesty, or status as a covered veteran in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws.