

# Berkshire Taconic

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

### Search for the President Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation Sheffield, Massachusetts

#### THE SEARCH

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) seeks a dynamic, inspirational President who will advance its mission to build stronger, more equitable communities through philanthropy and leadership. Each year, BTCF delivers between \$15 and \$20 million in transformative grants to the unique tri-state, four-county region where Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York meet. The Foundation successfully connects donors with the causes they care about, leads county and regional efforts, supports nonprofit capacity building, and provides vision and leadership to tackle defining local and regional issues.

BTCF is a prominent philanthropic partner, convener, and catalyst for the Berkshire Taconic region, advancing educational attainment, deepening community engagement, and enhancing economic opportunity. Like most community foundations, BTCF offers a variety of fund types that allow donors and organizations to build charitable resources and make grants and other awards to achieve their philanthropic goals. The Foundation has also established permanently endowed funds to address issue- and geography-specific needs. This has resulted in the creation of 10 area funds, education enrichment funds serving every school district in the region, and the Equity Fund, launched in 2023.

BTCF prudently stewards its financial resources through a diversified, actively managed portfolio with long-term strategies that maximize grantmaking and preserve and grow philanthropic capital for the future. BTCF has enjoyed excellent investment performance and experienced notable growth over the past decade, increasing its combined assets from \$130 million in 2016 to over \$252 million at the end of 2024. Last year, these funds distributed over \$15.4 million in grants, scholarships, and other awards.

BTCF is supported by 22 knowledgeable staff and a dedicated 21-member board of directors, and its FY2024 operating budget was \$3.9 million. BTCF serves 70 towns, three cities, over 245,000 residents, and 2,200 square miles across Berkshire County, MA, Columbia County, NY, northeast Dutchess County, NY, and northwest Litchfield County, CT.

BTCF's next President will be driven by an authentic passion for the Foundation's mission, with a particular dedication to expanding equity and quality of life in the rural communities of the tri-state region. They will bring strategic vision and agility, management aptitude, investment and financial know-how, and a demonstrated ability to lead and animate an organization that has experienced tremendous growth. They will enhance BTCF's role as a local and regional leader and sharpen its long-term

programmatic and financial direction to be responsive to community and donor priorities. Results- and relationship-oriented, the President will connect with and galvanize various stakeholders, cultivate current and new donors, build strategic partnerships, and lead community engagements. Reporting to and working closely with the board, the President will ensure that BTCF is fiscally and administratively sound and that programs, the organizational structure, and investment activities are effectively managed. The President will be attuned to staff success and well-being, drive diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities, and nurture a productive, creative, positive, and results-oriented culture.

## ABOUT BERKSHIRE TACONIC COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

### History

BTCF was established in Salisbury, Connecticut, by four friends who treasured their community and knew that life in the Berkshire Taconic region was not easy for all. They believed that the area, where three states meet, had common interests and would benefit from the support of an active charitable foundation to address persistent community challenges. The friends raised \$100,000 to create BTCF in 1987, and in 1988, the Foundation hired its first executive director. In the nearly 40 years that have followed, BTCF has become a critical regional leader, conduit, and vehicle for community transformation.

### The Region

BTCF serves all of [Berkshire County](#), Massachusetts; northwestern [Litchfield County](#), Connecticut; northeastern [Dutchess County](#), New York; and all of [Columbia County](#), New York. Within a few hours' drive from both Boston and New York City, the region has a shared way of life defined by natural beauty and historic, small-town character and features world-class art museums, outstanding music, dance, and theater festivals, and extensive protected lands. Over the last 150 years, the region's economy has evolved substantially, from primarily agricultural before the 20<sup>th</sup> century to major manufacturing thereafter to a more modest corporate economy today, with sustainable agriculture and food production, creative industries, and a large tourism trade. Tourism is a significant driver of the regional economy, with a total annual economic impact of \$960 million in Berkshire County alone. In addition to tourists, the region draws a substantial population of seasonal residents.

Many in the Berkshire Taconic region live well; graduation rates are increasing, and the population of professionals with post-graduate degrees is higher than the national average. However, the area's strengths have been tempered by systemic challenges, many exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The region has experienced an increase in the immigrant population but an overall decline in population, with school enrollments shrinking as the share of seniors increases. Attracting large employers and infrastructure investments has been a challenge; wages have not kept up with inflation; housing affordability and the opioid crisis are serious concerns; and poverty rates are rising,

disproportionately impacting Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities. BTCF is responding to these systemic challenges and strives to have a regional impact, seeding new initiatives in one locality that can be replicated or scaled and creating region-wide initiatives that allow for the cross-pollination of ideas and solutions.

## Strategic Priorities

In its 2018 strategic plan, which was most recently updated and refreshed in 2022, BTCF identified three overarching strategic priorities to achieve its vision of economic mobility and high quality of life for all the region's residents.

### Educational Attainment

BTCF knows that higher levels of education lead to greater economic opportunity and financial security and can help close the opportunity gap for lower-income students. In partnership with its area funds and donors, the Foundation invests in Early Childhood Development to improve early literacy among young children and in College and Career Readiness to increase the number of lower-income youth and adults who complete certificate and degree programs and participate in internships and experiential learning opportunities. BTCF is also the largest scholarship source for the region's student population, developing and administering dozens of scholarships for aspiring artists, engineers, teachers, nurses, and more. Scholarship committees award one-time and renewable scholarships to students attending trade schools, colleges and universities, and graduate programs through 84 scholarship funds, which paid over \$880,000 in awards in 2024. Through its permanently endowed Education Enrichment Funds, BTCF also distributes over \$650,000 annually to the region's 33 school districts, funding critical work from nutrition and robotics programs to field trips.

### Community Engagement

BTCF invests in community engagement to promote connectivity and involvement, which create far-reaching benefits, including building trust and reciprocity within communities. For example, in response to heightened political polarization and a pandemic that has magnified persistent racial and economic inequities, BTCF established the region-wide Bridging Divides, Healing Communities initiative in 2020, which helps residents build trust, strengthen relationships, and pursue opportunities for healing. Through its Arts Build Community Initiative, generously supported by \$3 million in grants from the Barr Foundation, BTCF partners with residents and arts and culture nonprofits in Berkshire County to increase community engagement through the arts and creative process, especially among lower-income, BIPOC, young, and immigrant residents. With Barr's funding for this project ending in 2026 after 10 years of support, BTCF is planning the continued evolution of this work. BTCF also invests in board leadership development, believing serving on a nonprofit board is one of the most consequential and satisfying forms of community engagement. This focus on board leadership development is one of several ways that BTCF supports nonprofit capacity-building as a grantmaker and partner to help nonprofit boards, leadership, and staff think strategically, govern effectively, and operate efficiently.

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## Economic Opportunity

BTCF believes that philanthropy can play a vital role in strengthening local and regional conditions that allow the economy to grow and residents to prosper. Towards these ends, the Foundation has invested in strategies that support emerging and existing entrepreneurs, especially entrepreneurs who are lower-income and from the region's growing communities of color. In 2019, BTCF led a coalition of business and municipal leaders and other funders to launch Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll) in Berkshire County. EforAll is a national program that leverages public-private partnerships to help residents turn their promising ideas into successful businesses. BTCF is also developing strategies, partnerships, and funding opportunities to increase housing affordability, a key driver of a healthy economy and sustainable, year-round communities.

## Special Initiatives

Launched in 2023, BTCF's Equity Initiative is a partnership between leaders of color and the Foundation to inspire and mobilize participatory philanthropy, a form of grantmaking that involves communities of color in identifying goals, defining grant criteria, and making grant decisions. The BTCF board seeded the Equity Fund with the Foundation's largest-ever commitment of discretionary resources. A Leadership Advisory Committee of regional leaders of color leads the initiative. A component of the Equity Initiative is a Learning and Giving Circle of BTCF donors and other funders who have been meeting since 2023 to explore how to embed equity and inclusion into philanthropic practice and to help grow the Equity Fund.

BTCF's Neighbor-to-Neighbor program is a cohort of county-level funds that provides emergency relief to individuals and families in crisis through trusted social service partners, municipal offices, and other community providers. This program awarded \$356,000 in 2024, with small grants of about \$1,000. During the pandemic, BTCF partnered with other funders and foundation donors to raise \$4.4 million to support a multi-phased effort focused on pandemic relief, response, and recovery across the four-county region. In addition, BTCF addresses food security across the region through partnerships with donors, Massachusetts state agencies, and local organizations.

Since 2020, BTCF has supported efforts to sustain local journalism, believing that an informed citizenry is important to healthy and engaged communities. It has established fiscal sponsorship relationships with two local papers, including the Berkshire Eagle, the county's venerable paper of record. It also has a partnership with the Lakeville Journal/Millerton News, an innovative nonprofit seeking to sustain longstanding newspapers in Litchfield and Dutchess counties, which has an agency fund at BTCF and has received grant support.

## Funds

BTCF manages 589 funds created by generous individuals, families, and organizations supporting specific geographies, institutions, or areas of interest. This total does not include 91 legacy funds set up because of donor bequest intentions. In 2023, the median value of active funds was approximately \$93,000, and the mean was \$374,000. Forty-eight funds were above \$1 million, and the largest was \$6.6 million.

The Foundation's funds include:

### Area Funds

BTCF's 12 area funds serve nearly every town in the Foundation's catchment area. Advisory committees comprised of local residents guide each permanently endowed fund and award grants annually with support and guidance from BTCF program staff. Area funds respond to local needs and align much of their grantmaking with BTCF's strategic priority areas of education, community engagement, and economic opportunity. Some advisory committees are involved in fundraising to grow their area funds. In 2024, area fund assets totaled \$27.3 million, and they distributed \$1.2 million to the region's nonprofits and received \$444,000 in contributions, not including nearly \$239,000 contributed to area funds through internal transfers from other foundation funds, such as donor-advised funds.

### Community Fund

The Community Fund is BTCF's only unrestricted, discretionary fund and has been the source of initial investment for several of the Foundation's strategic initiatives. These are then linked with and built on through field-of-interest, area, and other funds to create an ongoing base of support and resources for BTCF's strategic priorities and community leadership. In 2024, the Community Fund had \$2.7 million in assets, made \$463,000 in grants, and received \$453,000 in contributions and internal gifts.

### Nonprofit Agency Funds

Local nonprofit organizations can choose to invest their endowments or reserve funds through BTCF, thereby gaining access to the Foundation's investment services, expertise in handling gifts and planned giving, and community knowledge. In addition to ease and convenience, investing with BTCF can boost donor confidence in a nonprofit's sustainability. The Foundation for Community Health is BTCF's largest agency fund. In 2024, 70 agency funds had \$65 million in assets, with most in non-endowed funds, so nonprofits can retain the fiduciary responsibility to comply with donor restrictions, including endowment restrictions. In total, agency funds made \$3.7 million in distributions and received \$2.9 million in contributions.

### Donor-Advised Funds

Donor-advised funds (DAFs) are designed for donors who wish to remain active and retain the power to recommend grants, while BTCF handles the investment and administrative details. In 2024, donor-advised funds had \$56 million in assets, made \$6.8 million in grants, and received \$6 million in contributions across a portfolio of 185 funds, not including over \$636,000 in internal gifts from other foundation funds.

### Field-of-Interest Funds

Some donors wish to focus their philanthropy on a specific cause or community. In 2024, 72 field-of-interest funds had \$26.5 million in assets, made \$791,000 in grants, and received \$640,000 in contributions, not including over \$2 million in internal gifts from other foundation funds.

### Designated Funds

Donors can establish a fund for a particular organization's long-term benefit. These funds are often established via estate and planned gifts. In 2024, 74 funds had \$25 million in assets, made \$926,000 in grants, and received \$1.4 million in contributions.

### Legacy Funds

Donors can choose to include BTCF in their wills and after-lifetime giving by making provisions in their estate plans to support their cherished community and institutions in perpetuity. BTCF currently has 91 legacy funds established by donors who intend to leave a gift to the foundation after their lifetime. Since its inception, BTCF has received bequest and estate gifts totaling over \$50 million from 87 donors.

## Grantmaking

Annually, BTCF makes between \$15 and \$20 million in grants, ranging in size from \$1,000 to \$500,000, across all fund types. Donors from donor-advised funds make the largest percentage of grants each year. All donor-advised fund donors have an assigned relationship with a staff member who serves as an information resource on issues and organizations in the region, although donor giving is mostly self-directed. BTCF offers four primary grantmaking cycles to cluster over 130 competitive grant and scholarship programs established over the years, mostly from endowed funds. Competitive grant and scholarship programs rely on 70 advisory committees supported by program staff to review proposals and make grant recommendations. Volunteer committees involve residents with deep knowledge of their communities and/or issue area expertise. For example, BTCF has grant programs that support arts and artists, education, environmental issues, and nonprofit capacity building in addition to the grantmaking done by the area and educational enrichment funds across the region. In 2024, 19 percent of grants across all fund types were directed toward education, 16 percent toward arts, 12 percent toward human services, 9 percent toward environmental efforts, and 6 percent toward health. The remaining third went to a variety of grant areas. Four thousand ninety-five grants were awarded to

nonprofits and individuals, and 303 scholarships were awarded to students. Thirty-eight percent of grants went to Berkshire County, 16 percent went to northwest Litchfield County, 8 percent went to Columbia County, 7 percent went to northeast Dutchess County, 5 percent were designated as multi-area, and 26 percent were awarded outside of the Foundation's catchment area.

## Investment and Finance

More than 500 individuals and organizations trust BTCF with investing charitable funds. By pooling resources, BTCF gives donors and organizations privileged access to a highly diversified and sophisticated global portfolio with world-class money managers. BTCF is ranked in the top quartile of foundations nationwide for investment performance over the long run, and total returns of the investment portfolio have often exceeded industry benchmarks. BTCF's investment return in 2024 was 12.4 percent for BTCF's managed pool, the Foundation's largest and most diversified pool. Donors can also direct their funds to the Foundation's socially responsible investment portfolio. BTCF's investments are managed by its investment committee, which is comprised of a skilled and knowledgeable board and community members; Prime Buchholz, an independent investment consultant; and the Foundation's professional finance staff.

In 2024, BTCF's fund balance was \$252 million. Its public donations totaled \$14.9 million in gifts and bequests, its grants, scholarships, and other distributions totaled \$15.4 million, and it opened 47 new funds. Endowed funds make up 53 percent of BTCF's assets. In 2024, the Foundation's operating budget was approximately \$3.9 million, the majority of which was derived from fees on invested assets. BTCF also has a \$3.9 million endowment for operations and has enjoyed clean audits year after year.

## Governance and Organization

BTCF is a tax-exempt Massachusetts public charity governed by a 21-member board of directors representing a broad cross-section of leadership across the tri-state, four-county region. The board can have up to 24 members, meets at least four times a year, and each member is elected to an initial three-year term, with the possibility of re-election to two additional terms. Committees include executive, governance, program, stewardship, investment, finance, audit, and an ad hoc equity committee. The President is an ex-officio member of the board.

BTCF's offices are in Sheffield, a small, rural community in the southwest corner of Massachusetts along the Connecticut border. Reporting to the President are the Vice President of Finance and Administration; Interim Director, Philanthropic Services; Program Director; and Director of Communications and Marketing. The Foundation has 22 full-time staff, most of whom work under a hybrid model. BTCF also benefits from a network of more than 300 volunteers who serve on numerous grantmaking and scholarship committees.

## Leadership Transition and Current Context

Peter Taylor served as BTCF's President from 2016 until fall 2024. During his transformative tenure, BTCF nearly doubled in size, including total assets (from \$130 to \$247 million), staff (from 12 to 22), and funds invested in the community (from \$7.8 to \$19.5 million in 2023), and undertook an important strategic shift to become a more visible and effective leadership organization. This process involved a robust community assessment process, the development of a strategic plan, a reconfigured staffing structure to increase capacity for advancement, and increased emphasis on donor engagement, new funder partnerships, and revenue diversification. Under Taylor's leadership, the board became more diverse in community perspectives and experiences and there was, and continues to be, investment in external and internal equity work. BTCF's Chief Philanthropy Officer, Kara Mikulich, is currently serving as the Foundation's interim President.

BTCF is poised for an exciting new era of progress, community impact, and organizational development. The new President will build on BTCF's impressive growth trajectory and increased community visibility. They will amplify the Foundation's external profile, strengthen its internal operations, spearhead the next strategic plan, closely engage the board of directors, and cultivate essential stakeholder and donor relationships. They will develop and diversify assets, attend to the Foundation's complex investment portfolio, increase discretionary funding to be directed toward identified priority areas, and equitably distribute resources across all four counties. The President will energize the Foundation's dedicated and talented staff, some of whom have decades of institutional experience and some of whom are newer to BTCF, thoughtfully evaluate internal structures, strengthen processes and systems, and invest in human resources priorities. A commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion will be fundamental, both in BTCF's outward-facing initiatives and grantmaking and in its internal culture.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT

In partnership with board, staff, and other relevant stakeholders, the President will:

**Advance the Foundation's ability to collaboratively develop and amplify regional strategies that empower communities and improve the quality of life in the Berkshire Taconic region.**

- Shape BTCF's strategic vision and develop a holistic and comprehensive leadership and grantmaking strategy that will maximize regional impact.
- Strengthen BTCF's capacity for grantmaking around priority issues and ensure its grant portfolio is responsive, equitable, and attends to each county. Develop new funds and initiatives as appropriate.
- Target resources to low-income and BIPOC community members and prepare for current and future realities of shifting demographics, income inequality, inflationary pressure, housing affordability, food insecurity, political instability, and the rising cost of education.



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**Represent BTCF as its principal spokesperson and strengthen the Foundation's visibility as a thought leader on strategic issues and a catalyst for action.**

- Use BTCF's independence and influence to highlight emerging and existing issues affecting the region, galvanize donor and community engagement, and leverage resources.
- Nurture strategic and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders, including other funders and community, civic, nonprofit, academic, business, governmental, and media entities to effect change.

**Further prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in BTCF's strategy, resource allocation, and internal culture.**

- Grow and pivot flexible funds to support equity goals and ensure grantmaking reaches a greater share of underserved populations, including BIPOC communities. Develop and maintain policies and practices that provide for fair and equitable grant review.
- Foster an organizational culture of inclusion, trust, respect, open communication, and continuous learning.
- Continue efforts to diversify the staff, board, and advisory committees to better reflect the communities served.

**Ensure BTCF's current and future fiscal sustainability.**

- Partner closely with BTCF's finance and investment committees and investment consultant to maintain the Foundation's strong asset base, allowing it to direct more resources to regional needs, weather adverse market conditions, and maintain operations.
- Prudently manage the Foundation's operating budget. Assure there is financial flexibility to invest in key internal priorities as they arise.
- Ensure timely, efficient, transparent, and compliant finance and investment operations.

**Cultivate BTCF's financial assets to address the region's most pressing issues and enhance donor satisfaction.**

- Develop existing funds, generate new funds, deepen fund-holder engagement, attract new donors, and optimize investments. Secure sufficient resources to advance strategic priorities.
- Serve as a key contact with top donors. Partner with the philanthropy team on advancement strategy development.
- Grow BTCF's pool of unrestricted funds in order for the Foundation to seize opportunities to lead on issues, respond to urgent needs, and launch new projects.

**Invest in BTCF's internal infrastructure and capacity.**

- Ensure that staff and operational capacity increase alongside assets, funds, and external impact.

- Attend to grantmaking efficiencies, technology, effective marketing and communication strategies, and other critical internal functions, including human capital and culture.
- Drive measurable and data-driven strategies, reporting and analysis enhancements, and grantee transparency.

#### **Attract, develop, and motivate an effective staff team.**

- Leverage staff expertise and ensure that staff have the support, resources, and data to be informed about community needs and trends. Manage and supervise effectively and support the senior leadership team in doing the same.
- Adapt BTCF's organizational structures and staff roles and responsibilities as needed to allow for the most effective and efficient operation.
- Invest in organizational culture, staff well-being, competitive compensation and benefits, and professional development opportunities. Support program staff in their dual grantmaking and donor stewardship roles.

#### **Engage, inform, and work symbiotically with BTCF's board of directors.**

- Engage board members as active contributors, fiduciary custodians, and thought partners, leveraging their diverse expertise in short- and long-term strategy. Work closely with the board's committed leadership.
- Foster opportunities for board involvement and board-staff engagement and support the board in their ambassadorial roles.
- Maintain a robust, diverse, and representative pipeline of board prospects from the four counties.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

The new President of BTCF will bring many of the following qualifications, professional experiences, and personal attributes:

- A record of inspirational, energetic, and visionary leadership in a senior position in a nonprofit, philanthropic, corporate, or public setting.
- Passion for and demonstrated commitment to BTCF's mission and priorities. A thorough understanding of community foundations' roles as leaders, conveners, and catalysts for change.
- Experience leading impactful place-based initiatives that address systemic inequities, particularly in a rural context. Familiarity with the Berkshire Taconic region preferred.
- Experience developing a compelling vision and strategy and translating those into a practical plan with concrete implementation methods and measures of anticipated outcomes.
- A generalist by orientation with an appetite for learning and mastering the critical needs of BTCF's philanthropic and grantee communities.

- A skilled connector and collaborator with experience engaging a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, including volunteers and community members, small nonprofits, large private foundations, corporate leaders, elected officials, and others.
- An effective fundraiser who has a passion for and skill in securing financial support for community priorities.
- Strong understanding of complex financial administration and investment management.
- Experience managing organizational evolution and growth, with demonstrated ability to define and implement new organizational structures.
- Ability to guide, support, and leverage staff expertise and capacity. Success in nurturing a dynamic, healthy, and balanced work environment.
- Experience partnering with a governing board.
- Demonstrated personal and professional dedication to and experience in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. The communication skills to articulate BTCF's equity priorities to staff, board, donors, and other external constituents.
- A commitment to accountability, innovation, judicious risk-taking, collaboration, flexibility, and transparency.

## EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

Salary range: \$235,000-\$250,000

Commitment: The President is routinely required to work early morning, evening, and weekend hours and travel frequently across the region by car.

Location: The President must reside within daily commutable distance of Sheffield, Massachusetts.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

All inquiries, nominations, and applications (including resumes and two- to three-page letters of interest describing relevant experience relating to the opportunities, challenges, and qualifications outlined above) should be directed in strict confidence to the search team below. Applications will be reviewed as they are submitted.

Rebecca Swartz and Tatiana Oberkoetter  
Isaacson, Miller

[Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation President Search](#)

*Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer. We encourage applications from people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.*