



Smithsonian

Search for the Chief Information Officer
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, District of Columbia

THE SEARCH

The Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum, research, and education complex, with 21 museums, nine research centers, multiple educational units, and the National Zoo, seeks a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to drive the organization's technology, infrastructure, and data strategies. A strategic and transformational leader, the CIO will oversee the Smithsonian's data systems and technology operations and provide high-quality technology solutions to advance its core values of discovery, creativity, excellence, diversity, integrity, and service.

Reporting to the Smithsonian's Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, the CIO will lead and manage IT teams, and provide strategic leadership to ensure the Institution's people, processes, and technologies support and strengthen the Smithsonian's ever-evolving requirements in support of its mission to reach people globally with impactful and relevant content.

By 2026, the Smithsonian will bring the concept of a "virtual museum" to life and become a digitally empowered institution with expanded virtual reach by building a digital ecosystem where the Smithsonian's most valuable assets are accessible and can be deployed wherever, whenever, and however they are most needed. The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will be a key supporting organization for that effort, led by the Office of Digital and Innovation, that reports to the Deputy Secretary. The CIO will partner closely with the Chief Digital and Innovation Officer, a leadership role dedicated to creating and executing Institution-wide digital initiatives, data strategy, audience experience practice, and data analytics and insights practice.

The ideal candidate will bring a record of accomplishment and experience in leading and aligning technology and data teams and systems across a complex organization while managing significant change toward successful outcomes and maintaining a strong focus on team culture. A servant leader and listener, the CIO will have a record of building and leading high-performing teams, establishing and sustaining productive working relationships with a range of constituencies, and achieving results through collaboration and influence. The successful candidate will understand the importance of recruiting, developing, and leading a diverse and vibrant workforce composed of both employees and contractors.

Equally important, the ideal candidate will demonstrate a clear capacity to support public-facing outreach strategies that advance the Smithsonian's mission to engage audiences across the nation.

The Smithsonian Institution has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, with 21 museums, nine research centers, five educational units, and the National Zoo. Every day, the Institution continues to shape the future by preserving heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing its resources with the world. Under the leadership of the Secretary, the Smithsonian advances its core values of discovery, creativity, excellence, integrity, and service.

The Smithsonian employs more than 6,700 committed professionals, including renowned scientists and scholars, and a comparable number of highly motivated volunteers, interns, fellows, research associates, and visiting artists and scientists. The Smithsonian annually attracts more than 20 million visitors to its museums, and 160 million unique visits to its websites, as well as over eight million followers on social media. Using digital technologies enabled by OCIO, the Smithsonian reaches a much larger audience than the limited number of people who will ever visit its museums, archives, libraries, and other facilities in person. The Institution aims to reach every household and classroom in America with a "digital first" strategy for its collections, research, and education resources. The Institution reaches millions of others through its cable channel, magazine, and other publications. The Smithsonian's vast collections include more than 154 million objects and specimens.

Leadership

Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III is the 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian. As Secretary, he oversees 21 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo, nine research centers, and multiple education units and centers. Bunch was the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. He chronicled the creation of the museum in his book, *A Fool's Errand: Building the National Museum of African American History and Culture in the Age of Bush, Obama, and Trump*, and is the first historian to be Secretary of the Institution.

Ronald Cortez is the Smithsonian's Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer. He is responsible for the Smithsonian's management and operations functions supporting the Smithsonian's 21 museums, including two new museums early in their development, as well as the National Zoological Park, education centers, research facilities, and multiple cultural centers and libraries. He oversees over 2,000 employees specializing in human and financial resources, information technology,

procurement, facilities operations and maintenance, design and construction, health and safety, security, and more.

ABOUT THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

The Office of the Chief Information Officer equips members of the Smithsonian community with the technological tools, services, and applications they need to carry out their responsibilities effectively and to advance the Institution's mission. OCIO manages a state-of-the-art data center in Northern Virginia, supporting Smithsonian facilities and staff in Washington, DC, New York, Massachusetts, Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Hawai'i, the country of Panama, and other locations around the world. Beyond ensuring robust day-to-day operations, OCIO professionals partner with subject matter experts throughout the Institution to deliver leading-edge technology solutions in areas of strategic importance.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer has identified the following priorities:

- Empowering all Smithsonian staff members with the technological solutions they need to do their best work and meet the Smithsonian's goals of outreach and content delivery.
- Delivering enterprise solutions that respond to the organization's complex and ever-evolving requirements.
- Safeguarding the Smithsonian's information resources and operations by implementing a robust IT security program.
- Enabling the full, coordinated sharing of Smithsonian cultural, scientific, and information resources with the public.
- Creating a technology environment that supports and strengthens the Institution's scientific research enterprise.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer is comprised of a number of units, including the information technology security staff, the Office of Business Integration and Customer Service, the Office of Information Technology Operations, the Office of System Modernization, the Privacy Office, and Smithsonian Event Technologies. In total, OCIO is comprised of 147 employees and 172 contractors. Through those organizations, OCIO oversees the Institution's information technology systems, including computer facilities, voice and data networks, and applications and technologies supporting the diverse needs of the Smithsonian's mission.

The following cross-cutting strategies are core to the CIO's role and central to the [Smithsonian's Strategic Plan](#) and overall mission of connecting Americans to their history and heritage, as well as to promote innovation, research, and discovery in science:

- Enable the use of commercially available and open-source technologies for the Institution to increase public access to digitized collections and research data;

- Use state-of-the-art, secure information systems to modernize financial, human resources, facilities management, collections, education, and research processes;
- Replace network equipment, servers, desktop computers, and scientific workstations on an industry best practice life cycle to increase reliability and improve the security of information systems and the data they contain;
- Maintain and enhance the Institution's telecommunications infrastructure to provide reliable, secure, and cost-effective voice and data communications systems in support of the Smithsonian mission;
- Meet federal requirements for providing timely and accurate financial information;
- Continue to improve and refine the Institution's IT Security Program;

ROLE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Reporting to the Smithsonian's Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, the CIO will lead and manage IT and data teams, and provide strategic leadership to ensure the Institution's people, processes, and technologies support and strengthen the Smithsonian's ever-evolving requirements.

The CIO has seven direct reports, all of whom are leaders of their respective sub-units within the Office of the Chief Information Officer, including; Information Technology Security, Privacy Office, Information Technology Operations, System Modernization, Business Integration & Customer Success, Finance & Administration, and Strategic Initiatives. An Executive Assistant also supports the Chief Information Officer. Annually, the CIO is responsible for the oversight and management of a budget of roughly \$70M.

The Chief Information Officer will continue using best practices in the implementation, management, and operations of information technology to enhance the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." Under the CIO's leadership, the Office of the Chief Information Officer accomplishes its mission by collaborating with industry partners, Smithsonian organizations and leaders, cultural organizations, academia, and the public to develop innovative solutions for research and digitization challenges and realize the vision of creating a virtual Smithsonian to serve 21st-century audiences.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Establish a strategic vision and alignment for the OCIO and IT broadly

The CIO will develop, communicate, and drive a compelling vision for technology and data systems, strategies, and initiatives to support the vision, strategic goals, and priorities of the Smithsonian. They will effectively communicate the status, value, and importance of data and technology to senior leadership and staff while breaking down the complexities of IT into simple and translatable concepts. The CIO will build a data-driven culture that champions better use of technology across the Institution, including oversight and improvements to enterprise-wide systems such as ERP. The CIO will also need to develop a

strong partnership with the Chief Digital and Innovation Officer to support leadership's vision for a digital Smithsonian and thereby operationalize and implement an IT infrastructure to support the Office of Digital and Innovation's strategic initiatives. As conversations around the ethical use of AI continue globally, the CIO will be responsible for developing reasonable regulations and guidelines around how and when AI may be deployed within the OCIO within the context of the Smithsonian's overall policies on AI.

Assess computing infrastructure to support data-intensive computing demands

The OCIO manages a state-of-the-art data center in Northern Virginia, supporting Smithsonian facilities and staff in Washington DC, New York, Massachusetts, Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Hawai'i, the country of Panama, and other locations around the world. As a leading technology executive, the CIO will engage in evaluating the current state of the IT infrastructure and offer cost-effective solutions for the modernization and efficiency of the IT apparatus to meet the needs of the Smithsonian. The CIO will provide oversight into the design, development, operation, and support of IT systems and programs, including enterprise architecture management, application management, security and risk management, and infrastructure and operations support management. Recent developments and advancements in the Office of Digital and Innovation are beginning to push on the limitations of some IT infrastructure and will require the CIO to assess the physical and technological infrastructure of the data center and develop a strategy as conversations around on-premises versus cloud-based environments evolve.

Grow and develop the Office of the Chief Information Officer staff

The CIO will join an organization of long tenured, committed IT professionals. The CIO will be a leader with a passion for fostering IT staff professional development and opportunities for advancement including re/upskilling to help staff stay abreast of emerging technologies. The CIO will be a dedicated manager and partner to the IT staff, with a willingness to lead by example, a commitment to seeking resources for professional growth, and an eye for an organizational structure that utilizes the talent across IT at the Smithsonian. The CIO will also need to assess the needs of the OCIO team and where areas could be rightsized, advocating for more staff to support the overall mission of the Institution through proactive delivery and enablement. The CIO will also need to be skilled in managing a mixed workforce of employees and contractors.

Address resource and budget constraints

The CIO will need to make strategic decisions on resource allocation, employing creative solutions to optimize IT resources across the Institution. The CIO will serve as a strong advocate for IT's critical role in supporting the Smithsonian's operations and mission, actively seeking partnerships and funding opportunities to supplement existing budget limits. Balancing resource constraints with institutional priorities will require exceptional skill in strategic planning, fiscal stewardship, and innovative thinking. By working closely with the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, the CIO will explore new funding models, cost-sharing initiatives, and partnerships that maximize IT's impact.

This approach will help ensure that the Smithsonian's IT resources remain both impactful and sustainable, enabling the Institution to adapt to evolving technology needs and support its technological goals.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While not one person will embody each one of these qualities in equal amounts, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications, skills, experience, and personal qualities:

Technological and institutional sophistication: Senior leadership experience in information technology supporting content delivery, encompassing strategic planning, navigating complex organizational structures, project planning, budgeting and financial management, and process transformation. An understanding of the spectrum of IT activities, including technology infrastructure, instructional technology, data processing and database management, web strategy and development, risk management and security, telecommunications, and related capabilities and requirements. Proven ability to lead and work in a complex organization, with users on- and off-site and in offices around the globe. A passion for staying abreast of information technology trends. An understanding of and commitment to support requirements in business areas, with practicable and cost-effective solutions. Proven knowledge of state-of-the-art information technologies and new media, and successful experience implementing major IT initiatives.

Institutional presence: The intellectual depth, experience, and confidence to work with and command the respect and confidence of the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, senior leadership team, and Board of Regents. The patience and humility to take the time to circulate widely, listen and observe, and gain a broad understanding of the Smithsonian Institution and how IT actively supports its mission. The authority to inspire trust and credibility within and outside the IT division. The knowledge and ability to effectively educate others as to best practices for information technology and guide the allocation of appropriate resources. A history of building collaborative working relationships with a range of constituencies spanning organizational leadership, administrative departments and business units, and external constituents. An appreciation for an environment committed to learning and the advancement of coordinated sharing of the Smithsonian's cultural, scientific, and information resources with the public.

Management experience: Demonstrated effectiveness in managing resources--human, financial, and physical--and in moving disparate interests toward a common institutional goal. Experience leading a support operation nested in a larger organization with content-diffusing operations. Proven strengths in hiring, developing, and retaining talent; defining, implementing, and reinforcing effective management structures and systems; and upholding high performance standards. An inclination for teamwork and collaboration; a natural emphasis on openness, candor, mutual respect, and fairness; talent for building confidence; compassion. Ability to take ownership as needed and seek counsel as appropriate. The analytical capacity and imagination to note opportunities to enhance efficiency and productivity; the ability to plan, monitor, and manage a budget with diverse funding streams and a blended workforce of

contractors and employees. Negotiation skills, practical wisdom, and an ability to lead, manage, delegate, and do.

Leadership qualities: Superb communication and interpersonal skills. Diplomacy and tact, and acumen for cultivating social and political capital. A strong sense of self, along with an appetite for constructive feedback, a willingness to learn, and a sense of humor. A natural bias toward informed action, self-direction, and decisiveness. Passion and persistence, as evidenced by a strong work ethic. Excitement about contributing to the evolution of a dynamic, public-facing institution and a strong customer service orientation.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The salary range for this role is \$250,000-\$300,000, depending on experience and Institution policy. As the Office of the Chief Information Officer is responsible for the state-of-the-art data center in Northern Virginia, it is expected that the CIO will live within a commutable distance of Washington, DC.

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 website for the search: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/smithsonian-institution/chief-information-officer>. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Karen Avery, Partner
Dan Rodas, Partner
Stephen Kalogeras, Associate
Caroline Corry, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

The Smithsonian Institution provides reasonable accommodation for applicants with disabilities where appropriate. Applicants requiring reasonable accommodation should contact OHRTrustBranch@si.edu.

Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis. To learn more, please review the Smithsonian's [Accommodation Procedures](#).

The Smithsonian Institution is an **Equal Opportunity Employer**. We believe that a workforce comprising a variety of educational, cultural, and experiential backgrounds support and enhance our daily work life and contribute to the richness of our exhibitions and programs. See Smithsonian EEO program information: www.si.edu/oeema.