



*The difference between practicing medicine and leading it.*

Associate Chief Development Officer  
Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation  
Houston, Texas

## THE SEARCH

Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation (HMHF or the foundation) – the fundraising arm of the number one hospital in Texas and a member of *U.S. News & World Report's* prestigious Honor Roll for best hospitals – seeks a strategic and aspirational fundraising professional to serve as the associate chief development officer (ACDO). In this role, the ACDO will lead and direct the fundraising efforts of a dedicated and growing major gifts team, as well as select assigned constituent areas within the Houston Methodist system. The ACDO joins the foundation at an exciting moment of transformation and momentum as Houston Methodist prepares for a groundbreaking comprehensive campaign. The ACDO will support the ongoing development and implementation of fundraising best practices and moves management strategies, mentoring and motivating staff to realize and facilitate the foundation's ambitious campaign goals and long-term philanthropic aspirations. This is an exceptional opportunity for a proven fundraiser and manager of teams to contribute to the remarkable growth and impact of one of the nation's leading health systems and academic centers.

Founded in 1919, Houston Methodist exists today as an independent academic medical center and market leader in Houston, the state of Texas, and beyond. The last 20 years have seen unprecedented growth for the institution. In addition to providing highest-end care that is unparalleled in terms of safety and quality, Houston Methodist also boasts robust teaching and research initiatives, which are further strengthened by affiliations with Weill Cornell Medical College, New York Presbyterian Hospital, Texas A&M University, Rice University, and MD Anderson Cancer Center, among others. As clinical care, education, and research continue to grow across Houston Methodist, philanthropy will fuel the institution's remarkable trajectory of success in becoming one of the highest-ranking academic medical centers in the country.

Reporting to the chief development officer, Derek Dictson, early in his tenure, the ACDO is responsible for the strategy, leadership, and development of the foundation's generalist major gifts program. With the opportunity to build and expand the team, the ACDO will partner closely with the CDO to determine optimal roles and structure, leveraging data and analysis to ensure effective preparedness for the

upcoming campaign. With significant untapped philanthropic opportunity among Houston Methodist's expanding constituent base, the ACDO will lead and drive a strong focus on the qualification of major gift donors, significantly developing deep and sustainable donor pools and pipelines. Furthermore, the ACDO will oversee and support service line liaison assignments and engage with clinical leadership, establishing collaborative partnerships, cultivating a culture of philanthropy, and supporting the development of service line campaign priorities. The ACDO will effectively collaborate with peers across the foundation, ensuring exceptional cross-team synergy, in particular with colleagues in planned giving and fundraisers supporting Houston Methodist's Centers of Excellence. Leading by example, the ACDO will build, develop, and manage their own major gifts portfolio.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced, enterprising, and strategic fundraiser with at least seven years of development experience and at least three years of management experience, preferably in a complex research university or academic medical center environment. The ACDO must possess demonstrated strength in leading significant discovery and cultivation of major gift donors, as well as personal success in solicitation and stewardship at this giving level, and must be proficient in leveraging data and systems to inform strategy. With the opportunity to build and expand the generalist major gifts team, experience in evaluating, hiring, and coaching talent is desirable. The ACDO must possess a keen understanding of fundraising best practices and demonstrate the credibility, maturity, and sophistication necessary to effectively engage with executive leaders and diverse groups of internal and external constituents. Critical to success will be the ACDO's ability to reflect the I CARE values of the foundation, and to align deeply and authentically with Houston Methodist's commitment to excellence in clinical care, education, and research.

Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation has engaged Rachel Ellenport of Isaacson, Miller to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be sent in strict confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT HOUSTON METHODIST

The Houston Methodist System comprises a leading academic medical center located in the Texas Medical Center and eight community hospitals serving the Greater Houston area. Each hospital is staffed by committed personnel who exemplify [I CARE values](#): integrity, compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence. Patient safety, quality, and service are among the highest priorities.

Houston Methodist Hospital, the system's flagship, is recognized as a leader in cutting-edge research, education, disease prevention, and compassionate treatment of all health care needs. It was named to *U.S. News & World Report's* prestigious Honor Roll – the best hospitals list – for the eighth time overall and sixth consecutive year, and it has ranked as the number one hospital in Texas for 13 consecutive years. According to *U.S. News & World Report's* specialty rankings, Houston Methodist ranked in 10 specialties, and it is the 32nd year its flagship hospital has had at least one specialty ranked. Eight specialties made the top 20 list, with three in the top 10. Below is a breakdown of the 2024-25 specialty rankings in alphabetical order:

- Cancer – No. 18
- Cardiology, Heart, and Vascular Surgery – No. 15
- Diabetes and Endocrinology – No. 6
- Gastroenterology/GI Surgery – No. 7
- Geriatrics – No. 18
- Neurology/Neurosurgery – No. 13
- Obstetrics and Gynecology – No. 14
- Orthopedics – No. 23
- Pulmonology and Lung Surgery – No. 8
- Urology – No. 25

Houston Methodist is the official health care provider for the Houston Texas, Houston Astros, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Rice University Athletics, Houston Ballet, Houston Symphony, and Houston Grand Opera.

Houston Methodist was ranked third on [Forbes' America's Best Large Employers](#) list for 2025, making it the top-ranked healthcare organization in the nation. This marks the third year Houston Methodist has received this prestigious recognition.

**Houston Methodist Academic Institute:** The [Houston Methodist Academic Institute](#) is the cornerstone of Houston Methodist's position as a nationally recognized academic medical center. The President of the Academic Institute serves as the Chief Academic Officer and is the senior most academic executive within Houston Methodist. The Academic Institute, comprised of the [Houston Methodist Research Institute](#) and [Houston Methodist Education Institute](#), aligns its research and education initiatives to serve Houston Methodist's mission to advance the new technologies and skills clinicians need for patient care. Its primary academic affiliate is the top-ranked Weill Cornell Medicine, as well as affiliations with Texas A&M University, Rice University, the University of Houston, and MD Anderson Cancer Center.

**Houston Methodist Community Benefits:** At Houston Methodist, caring for the community means more than providing quality healthcare at its eight hospitals – it means supporting individuals and organizations that touch the lives of those who make up the community. Based on the I CARE values, programs provide financial and medical assistance to more than 150,000 patients annually. This support also helps foster confidence, peace of mind, and compassion in individuals rebuilding their lives.

**Houston Methodist Specialty Physician Group:** Doctors in Houston Methodist Hospital's Physician Organization are employed by Houston Methodist Hospital and have offices located on campus. These physicians are deeply rooted in an academic and research environment where teaching, continuing education, and collaboration are strongly encouraged. Membership in the organization provides an affiliation with Houston Methodist Research Institute and opportunities for Weill Cornell Medicine faculty appointments.

**Houston Methodist Primary Care Group:** With 45 locations throughout the Greater Houston area, the Houston Methodist Primary Care Group is dedicated to providing quality patient care for the entire family. Houston Methodist Primary Care Group is proud to be a part of Houston Methodist and its family of hospitals, ensuring efficient access to specialty and hospital services whenever the need arises.

**Centers of Excellence:** Houston Methodist's six multidisciplinary Centers of Excellence unite clinical care, research, and education to create innovative solutions to clinical problems and provide personalized patient care with compassion. Each center has clinical and translational research programs led by expert teams of physicians and scientists dedicated to enhancing disease diagnosis, prevention, and treatment, as well as education and patient support. There are six Centers of Excellence:

- Houston Methodist Dr. Mary and Ron Neal Cancer Center
- Houston Methodist DeBakey Heart & Vascular Center
- Houston Methodist J.C. Walter Jr. Transplant Center
- Houston Methodist Lynda K. and David M. Underwood Center for Digestive Health
- Houston Methodist Neurological Institute
- Houston Methodist Orthopedics & Sports Medicine

## Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation

The Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation helps to accomplish institutional priorities through fundraising, gift management, and stewardship. Governed by a board of directors, the foundation accepts all gifts on the hospital's behalf. Since fundraising began at Houston Methodist in 2003, the foundation has raised more than \$1 billion, increased the endowment to more than \$790 million, and supported the creation of more than 132 endowed chairs for faculty physicians, researchers, and key leaders. This has included two campaigns (\$212 million raised between 2003 to 2012 and \$518 million raised from 2013 to 2020). In 2025, Houston Methodist will begin the quiet phase of its third campaign, with a working goal of more than \$1.25 billion over ten years.

In Fiscal Year 2024, the foundation raised a total of \$83 million. More than 3,938 gifts were made by nearly 3,264 unique donors – 84 percent of whom were individuals, followed by 16 percent from foundations, corporations and corporate foundations. For more information on fundraising results, please visit the foundation's [2024 annual report](#).

In 2017, Houston Methodist received the largest contribution in its history – a \$101 million gift from billionaire Joseph C. “Rusty” Walter, his wife, Paula, and the Walter Oil & Gas Corporation to accelerate neuroscience research efforts at the hospital. To learn more about the gift, and other notable contributions, please visit [here](#).

The foundation's new leadership has aspirational goals for the growth of the team. In the next few years, the staff is anticipated to grow from the current size of 85 to 150 full-time employees.

## ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Reporting to the chief development officer, the associate chief development officer is responsible for leading and directing the foundation's generalist major gifts fundraising team. With significant untapped potential in Houston Methodist's constituent base, the ACDO will lead major gift pipeline development with a strong focus on the qualification of major gift donors as the foundation prepares for a groundbreaking comprehensive campaign. The ACDO will mentor, motivate, and empower a team of five, fostering fundraising best practices to facilitate the foundation's ambitious campaign goals and long-term fundraising aspirations. Serving as a key partner and colleague across the foundation, the ACDO will establish and deepen collaborative partnerships with service line leadership, including among the Centers of Excellence, as well as colleagues across corporation and foundation relations, planned giving, donor relations and stewardship, and prospect development.

## MAJOR FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide strategic and operational leadership and oversight for the generalist major gift fundraising team, with plans to grow to eight staff in the near term.
- Develop and lead strategy to significantly expand the major gifts donor pipeline with a strong focus on discovery and qualification work.
- Oversee and support service line liaison assignments, ensuring effective collaboration and contributing to the development of service line campaign priorities. Engage with service line leadership, establishing collaborative partnerships and cultivating a culture of philanthropy.
- Ensure that best practices in fundraising and moves management are followed while fostering a work culture that values creativity, rewards new ideas and data-informed risk-taking, builds confidence, and encourages teamwork.
- Inspire, empower, and motivate staff through active communication, transparency, and delegation, placing staff members' work within the context of Houston Methodist's and the foundation's strategic priorities and mission.
- Sustain a collaborative, respectful, and high-achieving environment that recognizes and rewards performance and promotes a welcoming and inclusive workplace culture; support the Houston Methodist culture through consistent behavior in alignment with I CARE values.
- In collaboration with the CDO, develop and plan future team growth, identifying optimal roles and structure. Identify, hire, and recruit fundraising talent.
- Personally cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of high-level prospects and donors, setting an example for the major gifts team.

- Lead and coordinate with the volunteer relations and special events departments to support strategic enlistment and use of councils, volunteers, and events for Houston Methodist and assist with events that support key volunteer and donor pipeline development, as appropriate.
- Cultivate strong working relationships with foundation peers, administrators, faculty, and staff across the hospital system, engendering trust through transparent communication and a clear motivation to work as a team.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will possess at least seven years of fundraising experience and a minimum of three years of management experience, preferably in a complex research university or academic medical center environment.

In addition, the successful candidate will demonstrate many, if not all, of the below skills and competencies:

- Experience building or elevating a comparable fundraising program, and preferred experience growing a fundraising team, resulting in an increase in philanthropic revenue for an organization. A bachelor's degree is required; a master's degree is preferred.
- Knowledge of best practices in all key areas of fundraising, including donor qualification and discovery, and strategic planning.
- A proven track record of success in personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major gifts (\$100,000+) from individual donors; a high level of comfort and effectiveness working with high-net-worth individuals and organizational leaders.
- The ability to establish a team- and goal-oriented environment through the use of best-practice methodologies, strategic guidance, and mentorship. Strong knowledge of and experience in managing and communicating performance expectations, professional development, and shared goals for a team of development professionals.
- Strong leadership and decision-making skills; the instinct and ability to develop recommendations and strategies for fundraising success that are consistent with the overall development strategic plan and fundraising priorities for the Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation.
- The credibility, maturity, and sound judgment required to effectively engage and leverage leadership, volunteers, and other key constituents in the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of key prospects and donors.
- Preferred experience recruiting frontline fundraisers and enhancing professional development and career planning opportunities as a means of retention.

- A diplomatic and collaborative demeanor; the political savvy to navigate a highly complex institution; the desire and ability to gain trust and build strong collaborative relationships with all members across a complex organization.
- Demonstrated experience utilizing data and metrics to inform strategy and as a foundation for development programs; impeccable attention to detail and superb follow-through.
- Superior written and oral communication skills with the ability to succinctly communicate a vision and process to senior leaders and other key audiences and constituents.
- Excellent judgment and creative problem-solving skills, including the ability to meaningfully contribute to a growing and evolving organization.
- Creativity, flexibility, a high level of responsiveness, and the ability to work effectively in a fast-paced environment.

## LOCATION

Houston, Texas, is a vibrant and diverse city known for its blend of world-class attractions and bustling economy. As the fourth most populous city in the nation and the largest in the southern U.S. and Texas, Houston is a dynamic hub of culture and innovation. The city boasts a thriving arts scene, with outstanding performing and visual arts venues, and a globally recognized dining scene. Its economy thrives on a wide range of industries, including energy, aerospace, manufacturing, life sciences, and technology. With numerous parks, eclectic neighborhoods, and a variety of attractions, Houston offers something for everyone to enjoy.

## 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 below. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/houston-methodist-hospital-foundation/associate-chief-development-officer-major-gifts>

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