



Chief Executive Officer  
U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission  
Huntsville, Alabama

## THE SEARCH

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center (USSRC or the Center), home of the globally recognized Space Camp®, seeks a results-oriented and experienced business, non-profit, or state agency leader to serve as its next Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This is an exciting opportunity to lead a nationally recognized institution with a talented team and inspire current and future generations of space explorers, scientists, and innovators. The USSRC is an iconic institution that brings humanity's journey to space vividly to life, housing one of the world's most comprehensive collections of rockets and other space artifacts. A unique experience for both children and adults, campers and visitors report participating in life transforming adventures, leaving inspired and excited to continue to explore the ideas they discovered in their time on campus. The USSRC is an international hub for innovative space and STEM learning that honors America's space exploration legacy. Locally, the acclaimed Center serves as a vital cultural and economic anchor for the thriving city of Huntsville, reinforcing the city's identity as "Rocket City".

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is a world-class education hub and visitor destination welcoming more than 650,000 guests annually. An agency of the State of Alabama, the Center serves as the official Visitor Center for NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center, offering a museum and many other immersive experiences anchored by iconic artifacts such as the Saturn V Moon rocket, the Pathfinder space shuttle stack, and Apollo-era hardware. Through hands-on exhibits, simulators, theaters, Space Camp® and related STEM programs, USSRC unites education, innovation, and inspiration. Recent transformative investments, made possible through a successful \$65 million capital campaign, include a new Space Camp Operations Center and the restoration of Rocket Park. These and other Center enhancements reflect a dynamic institution committed to honoring its legacy while advancing the future of space exploration and STEM learning.

The Chief Executive Officer reports to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission and is responsible for the overall success of the Center, advancing its mission to inspire the spirit of discovery through education and immersive engagement across its camps, museum, events, and artifacts. The public face of the institution, the CEO provides strategic, supervisory, operational, and financial leadership for an

organization of approximately 300 full-time and 300–500 part-time/seasonal employees and an operating budget of roughly \$46 million. The ideal CEO brings strong business and operational acumen who is adept at managing multiple lines of business. To be successful, the CEO must be a highly effective manager and teambuilder, excel in public engagement, a successful fundraiser and partnership cultivator, who will strategically lead the Center to remain cutting-edge, groundbreaking, and a global leader in STEM and space exploration education.

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All applications, inquiries, nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## ABOUT THE U.S. SPACE & ROCKET CENTER

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is a world-class museum, education hub, and visitor destination drawing in over 650,000 visitors annually. It is home to one of the most extensive spaceflight hardware collections on Earth, with more than 1,500 rockets, spacecraft, engines, and related artifacts on display. As the official Visitor Center for NASA Marshall Space Flight Center and an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, USSRC offers a uniquely exciting and immersive window into the past, present, and future of space exploration ranging from early satellites to next-generation rockets. Notable artifacts on display include a towering Saturn V Moon rocket housed in the Davidson Center for Space Exploration, a full-stack space shuttle display called Pathfinder (one of only two in the world), the command module from the Apollo 16 mission, and a real lunar rock brought back by the Apollo 12 mission.

Beyond exhibits, USSRC delivers dynamic, hands-on experiences that bring spaceflight to life. Visitors can try astronaut-training simulators, explore the universe under a 67-foot dome in the INTUITIVE Planetarium opened in 2019, enjoy space-themed films in its theaters, and participate in interactive labs and programs through its outreach and education programs. The Center's flagship educational initiative, Space Camp®, continues to draw participants globally, underscoring USSRC's ongoing commitment to STEM education and inspiration. Over one million individuals have trained under its astronaut-style curriculum since 1982, working as teams, launching simulated space missions, designing future spacecraft, and building vital STEM and leadership skills. Complementing Space Camp are specialized programs including aviation-themed, robotics, and cyber-focused camps that broaden USSRC's reach and reinforce its role as a leading center for STEM education and inspiration. Further, the USSRC offers cutting edge, educational events, such as the annual Artificial Intelligence (AI) Symposium, drawing in notable experts and helping further the USSRC's own strategy.

In recent years, USSRC has also completed a series of significant capital projects that reflect its commitment to renewal and growth. In 2023, it opened a new 40,000-square-foot Space Camp Operations Center, a facility which now serves as the central hub for Space Camp and other educational offerings. More recently, in 2024 the Center completed a major restoration and expansion of Rocket Park. Historic Redstone-family rockets were refurbished, and the shuttle-stack display for Pathfinder was reinstalled, restoring one of the world's only complete shuttle stacks for public display. These improvements

combining preservation of heritage with modern infrastructure underscore USSRC's evolution as a living institution committed to both honoring its legacy and advancing educational and public engagement in space exploration.

USSRC is governed by the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission (the Commission), an 18-member body appointed by the Governor of Alabama. Commission members are required to be state residents with a demonstrated interest in national defense, space, and related fields, and provides strategic direction and oversight for all center operations. The U.S. Space & Rocket Center Education Foundation, a separate 501(c)3 organization, works closely with the Commission and raises funds solely for the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and for the organization's family of educational programs, including Space Camp.

## ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is a state agency created and governed by state of Alabama law. In partnership with the Commission, the CEO is responsible for the overall success of the USSRC. Together, the Commission and CEO ensure the USSRC's continued relevance to the consumers, community, and the State of Alabama, the fulfillment of its mission and vision, and accountability to its diverse stakeholders.

The Commission delegates responsibility for management and day-to-day operations to the CEO, who has the authority to carry out these responsibilities in accordance with the Commission's policies and consistent with state laws.

As a result of a recent reorganization, the CEO has five direct reports: Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Marketing Officer, Vice President for Human Resources, and an Executive Assistant. The Center employs approximately 300 full-time and between 300-500 part-time/seasonal employees, depending on the time of year. The CEO manages the operating budget of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center of approximately \$46 million.

## Success Profile of the Chief Executive Officer – First 12 Months

This success profile outlines the priorities, outcomes, and leadership behaviors expected of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center's Chief Executive Officer during the first twelve months of tenure. It is intended to provide clarity for candidates, the Commission, and key stakeholders regarding near-term expectations and measures of success.

### Strategic Leadership & Governance

- Establish a strong, trust-based working relationship with the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission, including clear communication, decision-making protocols, and performance expectations.
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the statutory, governance, and fiduciary responsibilities of the CEO role, including any recent legislative or structural changes affecting the Commission.
- Provide clear, disciplined executive leadership to the senior management team; assess organizational structure and address any key leadership gaps.

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### **Operational Excellence & Guest Experience**

- Demonstrate command of day-to-day operations across all major functions, including museum operations, Space Camp® and related programs, retail, food and beverage, facilities, and special events.
- Improve or sustain high standards for guest experience, security, safety, and reliability, with visible attention to youth protection, incident prevention, and crisis readiness.
- Review and strengthen operational metrics, including attendance, guest satisfaction, staff engagement, and safety performance.

### **Financial Performance & Sustainability**

- Effectively manage an operationally independent (self-sustaining) enterprise, including delivery of a balanced and credible operating budget aligned with mission priorities and long-term financial sustainability.
- Assess earned revenue performance and cost structure, identifying opportunities to improve margins, pricing discipline, and revenue diversification.
- Ensure strong internal controls, audit readiness, and transparent financial reporting.

### **External Relationships & Fundraising**

- Establish productive working relationships with the USSRC Foundation, major donors, corporate partners, and government stakeholders.
- Serve as an effective ambassador for USSRC at the local, state, national, and international levels, strengthening the organization's visibility, credibility, and partnerships.
- Collaborate with the Foundation to align fundraising priorities with institutional strategy and capital needs.

### **Strategy & Future Positioning**

- Lead the development of a clear three- to five-year strategic framework that aligns mission impact, financial sustainability, capital planning, and workforce needs.
- Identify and prioritize capital improvement and programmatic investment opportunities, with associated funding strategies.
- Position USSRC to strengthen its role as a nationally significant science education, space, and STEM institution.

### **Overall Indicators of Success**

- By the end of the first twelve months, the successful CEO will have established credibility with the Commission and staff, demonstrated effective control of operations and finances, strengthened external relationships, and articulated a compelling, achievable vision for USSRC's next chapter.

## Supervisory Functions of the Chief Executive Officer

- Oversee the ongoing operations of all divisions.
- Manage and direct the organization toward its primary goals and objectives.
- Make executive-level employment and leadership decisions.
- Promote communication and cooperation across divisions to foster organizational unity.
- Monitor and evaluate staff performance, providing coaching, mentorship, and discipline as needed.
- Serve as a role model for professionalism, integrity, and work ethic.

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

To be successful, the next chief executive officer will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

### **Cultivate a high-performing, purpose-driven workplace culture**

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is a great place to work. The Center is staffed by talented, mission-driven professionals who believe deeply in inspiring the spirit of discovery. The Center's employees represent various disciplines and trades, all motivated and unified by the awe-inspiring experiences made possible through all that the USSRC has to offer. The next CEO will manage an experienced team that values collaboration and being empowered to do their best work. The CEO will need to demonstrate a management style that balances strategic oversight with delegation to capable professionals. Together with their team, the CEO should foster an environment where staff are supported, trusted, and brought together as a team to collaborate. The CEO must integrate diverse functional departments around a clear vision, champion mission-consistent creativity, lean on the talents of their team, and articulate clear goals and measures of performance and accountability. Visibility and presence throughout all levels of the organization will also be important as the CEO sets a strategic vision with measurable outcomes and pursues breakthrough results in a strong, people-centered workplace.

### **Forge strategic partnerships across government, industry, and the space science ecosystem**

As a state agency with a global brand, the Center sits at the nexus of government, space science innovation, and STEM education. This is an exciting opportunity as Huntsville continues to grow as an aerospace and technology hub. The CEO is the Center's principal relationship-builder throughout the community and serves as the most prominent representative in external relationships. The CEO will deftly develop and sustain productive relationships with local, state, and national leaders of government, industry, and education. As Chief Executive, this person must succeed in maintaining strong and trusting relationships with members of the Commission and effectively representing the USSRC to the state of Alabama and beyond. This is a rare chance to transform already-existing strong local, government, and industry ties into a broader ecosystem of influence and build partnerships locally and nationally that amplify impact and further cement the Center's role as an essential institution in inspiring space

exploration. The role requires enthusiasm, diplomacy, and persistence to cultivate successful relationships.

### **Ensure financial stewardship and operational excellence**

The Center operates a complex enterprise with multiple lines of successful businesses including camps, museum operations, retail and food service, ticket sales, and events management. The CEO will transition into an organization experiencing a strong financial position. The CEO's charge is to preserve that financial strength through disciplined stewardship, transparent governance, and metrics-driven decision-making, all while modernizing infrastructure and elevating guest experiences. Success will mean harmonizing strategy across varied lines of business, investing in facility upgrades and interactive experiences for guests, and streamlining processes to improve quality and efficiency without micromanaging. With sharp business acumen and a clear prioritization framework, the CEO can turn operational complexity into a competitive advantage and ensure the Center's resilience for the next generation.

### **Advance the mission through fundraising and engagement growth**

The CEO will be instrumental in leading fundraising and other philanthropic efforts. The successful candidate should have a track record of leading successful fundraising initiatives and being a responsible steward of donated resources. The USSRC is fortunate to have a successful, separate 501(c)(3) foundation focused on philanthropic endeavors for the Center. The CEO is a vital partner to the Foundation and the overall fundraising strategy, which recently completed a successful \$65 million capital campaign. The Center's success is backed by an internationally renowned brand of excellence in space exploration and STEM education. Building on this reputation, the CEO will work collaboratively to expand donor and corporate partner bases locally and more broadly, as well as lead strategies that grow audience and participant engagement. By uniting compelling storytelling with disciplined partnership management, the CEO can catalyze broader engagement such as driving increases in tickets, events, programs, and alumni activation across the camps and the museum. This is an opportunity to turn affinity for the Center into enduring investment and advance the mission at scale.

### **Elevate the Center's profile through high-impact public engagement**

Beloved locally and recognized globally, the Center's full story continues to be broadcast in the public sphere. As chief ambassador, the CEO will amplify visibility through compelling speaking, media presence, and strategic marketing, showcasing the USSRC's offerings as modern, multi-modal experiences that captivate today's learners and lifelong space science enthusiasts. By curating signature events, forging content partnerships, and spotlighting alumni and industry champions, the CEO can broaden audiences and further ensure that the Center is synonymous with wonder, credibility, and leadership in space education. In a rapidly evolving attractions market, bold public engagement will be a catalyst that keeps the Center on the leading edge.

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## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center seeks an accomplished, mission-driven executive to serve as its next Chief Executive Officer. Reporting to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission, the CEO will provide strategic, operational, and external leadership for one of the nation's most prominent science education and visitor institutions. Qualifications and characteristics of the successful candidate will include many of the following:

- A bachelor's degree in business, sciences or engineering from an accredited institution is required; an advanced degree (MBA, MS in Business, sciences or engineering) is preferred.
- A minimum of ten years of progressively responsible senior executive leadership experience, ideally within a complex, multi-revenue organization such as a major museum, science center, cultural institution, educational institution, visitor attraction, or comparable enterprise.
- Demonstrated experience leading large-scale operations that integrate education programs, consumer services, retail, food and beverage, ticketing, events, and facilities management.
- Strong financial and business acumen, including oversight of budgets, internal controls, pricing strategies, capital planning (>\$25 million), and audit processes.
- Experience working effectively with a governing board or public commission, preferably within a publicly accountable or politically visible environment.
- A record of success in fundraising, external relations, and partnership development, including collaboration with affiliated foundations, donors, sponsors, and governmental or corporate partners.
- Demonstrated commitment to safety, youth protection, and enterprise risk management, including leadership of organizations serving minors or hosting large public audiences.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to serve as a compelling public spokesperson and to build trust with diverse stakeholders.
- A leadership style marked by integrity, sound judgment, decisiveness, and collaboration, with the capacity to lead through complexity, change, and public scrutiny.
- Eligibility to work in the United States and U.S. citizenship, and eligibility for a security clearance given the nature of the institution and its national partnerships.

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## HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

Huntsville offers a dynamic blend of opportunity and quality of life, thus making it a compelling home base for professionals and their families. The city has experienced rapid growth. As of July 2025, its population reached roughly 249,000, reflecting a nearly 16% increase since the 2020 census, making it one of the fastest-growing mid-size cities in the U.S. The cost of living remains well below the national average, including housing expenses. At the same time, Huntsville boasts a robust and diverse economy, with employment opportunities in aerospace, defense, technology, manufacturing, and scientific services. The presence of top-tier educational institutions and family-friendly neighborhoods, along with plentiful green space and easy access to natural areas such as hiking trails, parks, and mountains nearby, makes it especially appealing. Huntsville offers the energy and opportunity of a growing tech-centered city, paired with affordability and quality of life with access to remarkable amenities and nature.

## 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](#).

Jacqueline Mildner, Partner  
Ivan Ceballos, Managing Associate  
Pamela Carty, Senior Search Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or veteran status.

*This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission would supersede any conflicting information in this document.*