



Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications
Gulf of Maine Research Institute
Portland, Maine

THE SEARCH

The [Gulf of Maine Research Institute](#) (GMRI) seeks a seasoned, strategic, and entrepreneurial leader to serve as its inaugural Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications (SVP).

GMRI is science-based and community-driven, with a mission to develop and deliver collaborative solutions to global ocean challenges. This independent, objective nonprofit organization is dedicated to the resilience of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem, economy, and the communities that depend on it. Scientists at GMRI were the first to publish research revealing rapid warming in the Gulf of Maine. As of 2021—the hottest year on record for the Gulf of Maine—this body of water has warmed faster than approximately 98 percent of the world’s oceans. As they help coastal communities in their own region mitigate and adapt to the impacts of this rapid warming, GMRI leverages insights and data from work in the Gulf of Maine and develops solutions that are relevant locally, regionally, and around the world. It stands out as a highly effective model for making environmental science deeply relevant for the multiplicity of local stakeholders who drive change.

The organization collaborates with local communities to support healthy ocean ecosystems, a thriving blue economy, sustainable seafood, and climate-resilient coastal communities. GMRI has grown rapidly over the past two decades, emerging as one of the region’s most respected institutions due to its strategic approach, program impact, and the exceptional caliber and commitment of its staff, leadership, and Board of Directors. The organization has a proven track record of recruiting and empowering its thoughtful, entrepreneurial, and tenacious staff of approximately 100 experts and is committed to being a world-class employer of choice.

This is a pivotal moment for the organization as it enters the second year of an ambitious five-year strategic plan and is laying the groundwork for a comprehensive campaign. The Senior Vice President, Marketing and Communications, is a new, elevated role on the executive team and will report directly to the CEO, partnering closely with him and the rest of the executive team. This role presents a unique opportunity to build upon the strengths of GMRI’s current marketing and communications operation, elevating a strong regional brand to national visibility and working closely with the Development team to engage and build meaningful connections with new audiences of prospective donors and funders.

Providing vision and management for a team of five, the SVP will develop and lead a comprehensive marketing and communications program that strengthens brand awareness and delivers an integrated approach to engaging key stakeholder audiences. The SVP will bring the expertise, drive, and a creative and innovative spirit to articulate GMRI's distinctive identity, developing strategies that powerfully communicate the organization's outsized impact; promote GMRI's research, education, and innovation accomplishments; and elevate awareness of GMRI, particularly in the context of an upcoming comprehensive campaign. With expert knowledge of both traditional and digital media, the SVP will understand the changing nature of communications, marketing, media, and technology, and will be able to engage and communicate with diverse audiences within this rapidly evolving environment. A critical and strategic thinker, the SVP will bring experience differentiating and tailoring communications for a variety of audiences in a concise, clear, and transparent manner.

Key experience will include building and leading teams, supporting and developing people, and implementing multi-faceted marketing and communications programs for an organization with many audiences. As a leader and manager, the SVP will promote a culture of excellence, collaboration, and professional growth and set clear direction, priorities, and measurable goals for the team. With superior written and oral communication skills, the SVP will demonstrate the ability to champion the impact, strategic priorities, and vision of GMRI, capturing the organization's message and voice, and translating it to diverse audiences. This leader must be able to work with many stakeholders, understand their various concerns and priorities, and craft strategies, messaging, and programs that address multiple needs. Equally important are a collaborative, collegial orientation, intellectual curiosity, strong emotional intelligence, and the political savvy and flexibility to navigate a complex organization and broader landscape.

To this end, the SVP must also demonstrate an ability to fully immerse themselves in the life of the organization to effectively serve as the chief spokesperson. While a background in scientific organizations is desirable, it is not required; however, a passion for environmental science and the ability to compellingly convey GMRI's mission, history, and impact will be critical to success in this role.

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE GULF OF MAINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Gulf of Maine Research Institute develops and delivers collaborative solutions to global ocean challenges. This independent, objective nonprofit organization is dedicated to the resilience of the Gulf of Maine ecosystem and the communities that depend on it. GMRI leverages the Gulf of Maine to test and develop solutions to ocean challenges that also have a much broader global relevance. The organization collaborates with stakeholders to support healthy ocean ecosystems, a thriving blue economy, sustainable seafood, and climate-resilient coastal communities.

GMRI's [Science Division](#) conducts transdisciplinary research across biological, physical, and social sciences to deepen understanding and deliver that information to the people who need it most. The division's labs include: Integrated Systems Ecology, Fisheries Ecology, Coastal and Marine Economics, Coastal Dynamics, Biological Oceanography, Ocean Data Products, and Learning Sciences.

The [Impact Division](#)—comprised of the Community, Education, and Economic Development departments—turns knowledge into action to ensure communities can create and access the information, resources, and relationships they need to make important decisions.

Strategic Plan

GMRI's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan focuses on [four strategic initiatives](#):

- **Adapting Fisheries and Seafood:** Ensuring marine ecosystems, fisheries and seafood systems in the Gulf of Maine and beyond thrive as they adapt to change.
- **Building Climate-Ready Communities:** Helping communities connected to the Gulf of Maine successfully adapt to rapid change.
- **Developing the Blue Economy and Supporting Working Waterfronts:** Revitalizing coastal communities by supporting traditional and emerging industries and protecting vital infrastructure.
- **Supporting Energy Solutions:** Creating a lower-carbon economy and improving the resilience of electrical infrastructure.

GMRI also advances its mission through an array of [projects](#) designed to serve and support its stakeholders. The organization is undergoing a shift to transition its structure from a collection of programs and projects to an integrated organization pursuing a small set of strategic initiatives. A couple examples that illustrate the program work that stacks up to the strategic plan include:

- The [Aquaculture Apprenticeship Program](#) is a first-of-its-kind workforce development initiative designed to train the next generation of aquaculture professionals in Maine. This earn-while-you-learn model provides a structured pathway for aspiring farmers to gain hands-on experience, technical skills, and industry knowledge needed for long-term careers in aquaculture.
- Working waterfronts are a complex ecosystem of infrastructure, assets, relationships and uses, with deep social and cultural value, and facing a range of climate-related risks. Through its [Climate Smart Working Waterfronts](#) program, GMRI developed a planning pathway that leverages the organization's climate science expertise, community-driven municipal planning approach, and knowledge of waterfront economies that can be used by state officials, municipal governments, regional planning organizations, and blue economy businesses to build climate resilience in working waterfront communities.

- Each year, GMRI hosts nearly 10,000 Maine middle schoolers in its **LabVenture program**: a hands-on, interactive, authentic investigation of the changing Gulf of Maine ecosystem. Completely free for Maine schools, nearly 70% of the state of Maine's fifth- and sixth-grade cohort experience LabVenture annually. Students use scientific tools and methods of inquiry to explore many of the same questions about the Gulf of Maine that GMRI's research scientists are addressing.
- Established in September 2025, the **Physical Oceanography Lab** expands GMRI's research focused on the drivers and predictability of ocean change. The lab investigates key physical processes—including temperature variability, marine heat waves, circulation patterns, and shelf-slope exchange—that influence marine ecosystems in the Gulf of Maine and Northwest Atlantic. This lab leads GMRI's flagship Gulf of Maine **warming reporting**, strengthening connections between physical ocean science and ecosystem-based research.
- The **Sustainable Seafood Program** supports economic and ecologic sustainability, working with industry leaders across the supply chain—retailers, restaurants, seafood dealers, fishermen, and other stakeholders—to build market demand and empower consumers to find and buy Gulf of Maine seafood.

In recent years, GMRI has deepened its role as a primary owner of waterfront property in Portland, Maine, taking on the responsibility to protect and preserve working waterfront access and demonstrating a model of low-carbon, climate-resilient solutions for this key infrastructure. Acquired by GMRI in 2021, Union Wharf is Portland's oldest continuously used wharf on Commercial Street. The Institute's plans for Union Wharf include expanding its capacity to support innovative fishermen and fish processors, the aquaculture industry, and other marine economy innovators.

Leadership and Governance

Glenn Prickett joined the Gulf of Maine Research Institute as President and CEO in September 2023. He has served in a variety of environmental leadership roles over the course of his 35-year career, working across NGOs, government agencies, volunteer organizations, and the private sector. Most recently, he served as the President and CEO of the World Environment Center, a global organization that advances sustainable development through corporate business practices across Europe, Latin America, and North America. Before that, Prickett served in senior executive and management roles at The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Prickett also previously served as board co-chair at the Keystone Policy Center and strategic planning chair at the Woodwell Climate Research Center. Throughout his career, Prickett has focused on climate change, leading projects related to greenhouse gas mitigation in various sectors like energy, forestry, and agriculture. He has also been involved in corporate partnerships for climate resilience and adaptation. Prickett's prior marine-related work includes projects focused on fisheries policy, coastal flood insurance, and natural infrastructure.

GMRI is governed by a 23-member [Board of Directors](#) and two advisory committees: a Science Advisory Committee and an Impact Advisory Committee. Both committees support the institute's complex, multidisciplinary, and entrepreneurial nature.

Fundraising and Financial Overview

Now is a pivotal moment for both GMRI and the communities it serves. The organization's diverse mix of federal and foundation grants, corporate giving, and individual philanthropy—which is roughly evenly split between federal and private funding—supports an annual operating budget of approximately \$24 million. The organization's operating budget has grown consistently over the course of the last decade and is poised to grow further in the coming years. GMRI's proven ability to deliver and sustain impact, along with its financial security and long-tenured senior management team, creates a stable platform for future growth.

In FY25, GMRI raised \$21.8 million, of which 25% came from individuals, 10% from corporate and foundation support, and 65% from federal and state grants. These figures include \$2.8 million in special one-time state and federal funding.

GMRI has weathered a rapidly changing research funding landscape well, as there has been strong bipartisan support for the collaborative work with industry partners and the science education that are both core pillars of GMRI's mission. Although it has been stable thus far, to make GMRI's critical work less vulnerable to exogenous shocks, the organization is preparing for a comprehensive campaign to shift its balance from roughly equally public and private to a greater proportion of private funding. Marketing and communications will be a critical partner in this effort.

Portland, Maine

A growing city of over 65,000 with a metropolitan area of over 500,000, Portland, Maine, sits on the beautiful and scenic Casco Bay on a peninsula in southern Maine. Home to bold coasts, high peaks, rural farmlands, and thousands of lakes and rivers, Maine contains a diverse set of cultures and traditions, including indigenous peoples and lifelong residents, as well as new immigrants who have just arrived and are excited to call Maine home. Portland has long been a city of immigrants and recently welcomed new residents from across the globe who have added to the City's diversity.

Once a fishing port established in 1632, Portland offers historic 19th-century architecture juxtaposed with a blossoming entertainment and dining industry. With fairs and music festivals, endless opportunities for the outdoor enthusiast, locally sourced farm-to-table dining options, and all the arts, cultural, and recreational offerings of a big city with a small-town feel, Portland is truly an up-and-coming destination on the East Coast. The city is also home to the University of Southern Maine, Maine College of Art & Design, The Roux Institute of Northeastern University, and the University of New England, Portland campus (colleges of Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Professions, and Osteopathic Medicine).

Portland sits on the traditional lands of the Waponahiyik (Wabankai People/Dawnland People), including the Mi'kmaq, Wolasttoqewiyik (Mailiseet), Panuwapskewiyik (Penobscot), Aponahkewiyik (Abenaki), Peskotomuhkatiyik (Passamaquoddy). GMRI recognizes that Portland's history exists before its establishment as an English colony.

ROLE OF THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Senior Vice President for Marketing and Communications will serve as the organization's top marketing and communications strategist, responsible for shaping, protecting, and advancing the brand at the local, regional, national, and international levels. This executive will lead all aspects of brand management, strategic communications, marketing, public relations, content strategy, digital engagement, design, and crisis/reputation management.

With a mandate to elevate institutional impact, the SVP will position GMRI as a trusted, influential voice, ensuring that all communications are high-quality, cohesive, and aligned with mission and organizational priorities. They will oversee a multidisciplinary team of five, including a communications department led by a Vice President and Chief Communications Officer and a marketing program led by a Senior Marketing Manager.

As a key member of the executive and senior leadership teams, the SVP will collaborate closely with peers to drive organizational strategy and ensure communications and marketing are fully integrated into enterprise-wide planning, decision-making, and public engagement. This leader will report directly to the CEO and will provide executive communications leadership, including board support and preparation of high-level messaging.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

While few candidates will possess all the qualifications and characteristics, the ideal candidate for the SVP role will bring many of the following professional qualities, skills, and experiences:

Develop and implement a strategic, comprehensive vision for marketing and communications.

- Build upon a robust marketing and communications operation that incorporates traditional, digital, and social media; reliably generates written and video content that is engaging, timely, and integrated; and is equally able to support broader communications efforts and generate bespoke materials.
- Assess the effectiveness and success of existing marketing and communications assets, including the website, video library, social media channels, and donor communications regarding scientific progress, organizational priorities, and impact. Identify opportunities to improve outreach and increase awareness across multiple audiences.

- Craft a compelling “One GMRI” narrative that crisply conveys what GMRI does and why it matters. Identify key audiences and develop nuanced differentiated messaging that aligns with the overarching GMRI narrative while facilitating effective connection with these audiences through segmented outreach.
- Lead creation and execution of a long-term marketing and communications strategy and oversee delivery of annual communications and marketing plans (led by the respective team leads), providing regular updates to the executive team and board.
- Cultivate and manage relationships with international, national, and regional media outlets; expand earned media presence and thought leadership.
- Serve as the chief architect of the organization’s long-term brand strategy; establish, grow, and protect the GMRI brand and its sub-brands, ensuring clear, consistent, mission-aligned messaging across all platforms. Oversee continuous evolution and application of GMRI’s visual identity across all programs, products, and experiences.

Support development communications as GMRI elevates its sights in preparation for an upcoming comprehensive campaign.

- As GMRI embarks on future fundraising endeavors, partner closely with the Chief Development Officer to align marketing strategies with fundraising goals across digital, print, social media, events, and public relations channels. Play a lead role in achieving campaign readiness targets and ensure consistency in messaging across all marketing and communications channels.
- Support development of donor acquisition campaigns and partner with Development on donor messaging and the creation of collateral materials.
- Increase brand awareness and affinity among key donor groups through targeted engagement strategies.
- Collaborate with Development, program teams, and the Sponsored Projects office to secure resources for marketing and communications initiatives, including philanthropy, foundation grants, and project-based support.

Serve as a key member of the CEO’s executive team, providing sound and impactful guidance on all marketing and communications matters.

- Serve as an advisor and thought partner to the CEO and Board on high-stakes organizational initiatives with external visibility or reputational implications.

- Provide communication counsel to the CEO and senior leadership team, developing strong, collaborative, and mutually supportive partnerships; support executive visibility and external affairs activities.
- Set the tone and strategy for internal communications across GMRI, serving as a collegial, decisive, and compelling leader who can persuade, communicate, and collaborate, receiving feedback and surfacing ideas from a variety of stakeholders. Empower experts across the organization to communicate important messages in a timely manner and celebrate the great work being done at GMRI.
- Report to Board on marketing and communications strategy, plans, and performance, serve as staff liaison to the Board Communications Committee, and prepare messaging and materials for directors as brand ambassadors.
- As a senior leader within GMRI, foster an environment that rewards new ideas and risk-taking, builds confidence, promotes inclusion, and encourages effective partnerships and collaboration. Lead change, generate buy-in, and respond with care to a complex array of constituent needs.

Lead, manage, and empower a strong marketing and communications team that serves as a strategic partner across the organization.

- Serving as a player-coach, lead, mentor, and develop a high-performing marketing and communications team, fostering a culture of creativity, collaboration, professional growth, and accountability; further develop a high-caliber staff that is well-prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of GMRI's ambitious strategic plan and campaign goals.
- Maintain a leadership style that is open and fluid, and which empowers staff through active communication and delegation.
- Utilize data and analytics to inform decision-making, optimize strategies, and measure the effectiveness of all communication initiatives.
- Manage relationships with external consultants and vendors to ensure high-quality output.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While few candidates will possess all the qualifications and characteristics, the ideal candidate for the SVP role will bring many of the following professional qualities, skills, and experiences:

- Minimum 15 years of progressively responsible experience in nonprofit and/or corporate communications, marketing, or related fields, with significant national-level brand and media experience. At least 3 years of executive-level leadership (VP or above), ideally in a complex, mission-driven organization.

- Proven experience increasing efficiency and effectiveness of marketing and communications programs and vehicles without sacrificing quality and impact; the ability to inspire innovative solutions to scale and deliver measurable progress toward organizational goals.
- Keen creative and design sensibilities, with a strong understanding of the communications and marketing process from creative concept through production and fulfillment. Demonstrated expertise in brand management, strategic communications planning, media relations, crisis communications, and digital strategy.
- Creative and entrepreneurial management; the ability to build, lead, mentor, and motivate staff in alignment with GMRI's values. A strong commitment to coaching and professional development, and the ability to foster a collaborative, diverse, and inclusive team environment.
- Strong executive presence and persuasive communication skills; demonstrated ability to provide strategic counsel and influence stakeholders at all levels
- Proactive with a spirit of initiative and the ability to juggle multiple priorities, programs, and projects in a fast-paced environment.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.

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:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/gulf-maine-research-institute/senior-vice-president-marketing-and-communications>

Rebecca Kennedy, Partner (she/her)
Kennedy Kearney-Fischer, Managing Associate (she/her)
Cortnee Bollard, Managing Search Coordinator (they/them)
Isaacson, Miller

Research shows that people belonging to structurally marginalized groups often only apply to jobs if they meet 100% of the qualifications. As no one ever meets 100% of the qualifications, we encourage you to apply if you feel that most of the above qualifications reflect your experience and expertise.

Gulf of Maine Research Institute has a long-standing policy and commitment to providing equal access and equal employment opportunities in all terms, conditions, processes, and benefits of employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. GMRI's employment decisions are made without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute. 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 Gulf of Maine Research Institute would supersede any conflicting information in this document.