



President and Chief Executive Officer
Naples Botanical Garden
Naples, Florida

THE SEARCH

Naples Botanical Garden (“NBG” or “the Garden”) seeks a dynamic, community-facing President and CEO to lead a growing cultural and environmental institution in Southwest Florida during a pivotal moment of maturation and promise. NBG is a 170-acre world-class botanical garden, featuring plants from around the tropical and subtropical regions of the world. The Garden connects people and plants through display, education, conservation, and applied science. Since opening to the public just over 15 years ago, NBG has grown to an \$18M annual operation with more than 160 employees. The Garden has beautifully restored native habitats from around the globe, cultivated gardens, walking trails, and public programming that offer education and enjoyment for people of all ages.

The next President & CEO will drive the thoughtful growth of the Garden, continuing to build its reputation and impact in conservation, education, and horticulture, and honoring its role as a “garden for all” in the region. The CEO will champion the Garden’s multi-phase master plan, translate the vision into deliverable projects that bring alive the space in exciting ways, and grow and diversify revenue for long-term stability. An effective external ambassador and relationship-builder, the next leader will steward increased board engagement and expand the Garden’s community of visitors and supporters while also empowering a high-performing, cross-disciplinary, and experienced team of dedicated staff.

Priorities for the next President and CEO include:

- Provide vision and strategy to lead the next chapter of the Garden’s evolution
- Bring rigorous financial acumen to the Garden’s operations
- Galvanize existing philanthropic support and build new long-term donor relationships
- Strengthen internal systems and unify a strong leadership team
- Cultivate strategic partnerships across Southwest Florida and the Caribbean and with the broader botanical and museum worlds

Isaacson, Miller, a global executive search firm, has been retained to support Naples Botanical Garden in this search. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN

Naples Botanical Garden is a living center for plants, people, and place that combines conservation, horticulture, education, visitor experience, and community engagement to protect South Florida's unique ecosystems and inspire stewardship. Founded as a nonprofit in 1993, the Garden purchased its first land in 2000, and over time, acquired a total of 170 acres of open space three miles from downtown Naples. NBG initiated its first master planning project in 2005, the same year it opened to the public. Construction of newly developed spaces began in 2008, and in 2009, the Garden began to open those spaces to the public. By October of 2014, the initial master plan implementation was completed. 2024 saw the opening of the Evenstad Horticulture Campus, a 60,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art growing operation that has enabled the Garden to further expand and refine collections. NBG now welcomes over 260,000 visitors per year to experience themed gardens that represent the culture and flora of the tropics. NBG has also increased its membership base to over 15,000 households and continues to attract more members given its location in fast-growing Southwest Florida.

NBG's impact reverberates throughout the Caribbean and Central America, where it plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the future of the region's plants. The Garden has the region's only [conservation seed bank](#), a collection of Southwest Florida native plants, many of which are threatened by rising sea levels, habitat loss, storm damage, and other stressors. As the coordinator of the [Caribbean and Central American Botanic Gardens Network](#), NBG is a central figure in preserving this biodiversity. The network serves as a knowledge exchange hub, conference organizer, training resource, and a catalyst for partnerships.

Mission and Programs

Naples Botanical Garden's mission is to conserve the plants and habitats of the tropics, cultivate beauty, offer knowledge, and inspire the protection of nature. The Garden's mission and core values serve as the "north star" for all programming and planning efforts at the Garden.

The Garden's [conservation](#) work advances coastal resilience and habitat restoration across Florida and the Caribbean; the [horticulture](#) team cares for world-class living plant collections, specialty propagation, and display gardens; [education](#) and interpretation bring science to life for school groups, families, and adults through inclusive programs like Garden for All; and the [visitor services](#), events, and membership programs create beautiful, welcoming experiences that connect people to nature. Together, these programs support research partnerships, community resilience projects, and public access to nature while generating earned revenue and philanthropic support to advance the Garden's mission.

NBG is a key partner across the local community as well. The Garden provides guidance to municipalities and county governments on landscape restoration and resilient plantings, and partners with local charities and neighboring institutions to provide a range of programming options, as well as free admission for first responders, health care workers, educators, and those employed in the tourism industry. The Garden is also involved in research partnerships with Florida Gulf Coast University studying beach dune restoration, and houses the University's Everglades Wetland Research Park (EWRP) in the [Kapnick Education and Research Center](#).

Master Plan

The Garden has developed a new master plan focused on expanding family-friendly experiences, providing a work environment where staff can thrive and flourish, and balancing stewardship of existing gardens and ecosystems with increased access through multiple new destinations within the 170-acre site. It also recommends new facilities that will help to advance the conservation mission, improve the workplace, and provide new options and pre-ticketed amenities to the community. NBG is currently engaged in schematic design for Phase One of the master plan. This first phase will address key short-term priorities, while later phases outlined in the master plan will be a longer-term effort that the President and CEO will have an opportunity to lead.

Operations and Governance

The Garden's annual operating budget is \$18 million, and it employs over 160 full- and part-time employees. The President and CEO supervises an eight-person [executive team](#) comprised of the Vice President of Horticulture, Vice President of Conservation, Vice President of Education and Interpretation, Vice President of Facility Operations, Vice President and Chief Revenue Officer, Vice President and Chief Strategic & Philanthropic Officer, Vice President and Chief Finance Officer, and the Vice President and Chief People Officer. This leadership team meets weekly with the CEO to discuss strategic decisions for the Garden.

The Garden is governed by a 23-member Board of Directors that actively engages in governance and fiscal oversight and provides counsel and expertise to Garden management. The Board is led by a five-member Executive Committee, and the President and CEO of the Garden reports to the Board of Directors and the Board Chair. Board members exercise their responsibilities through service on various administrative and operational committees.

In addition to the Board of Directors, NBG has several other critically important affiliated groups, including the Royal Palm Society and the Sustaining Leadership Council. The Sustaining Leadership Council provides essential fundraising support to the Garden and organizes the annual Hats in the Garden event, which in 2025 raised \$4.5 million.

OPPORTUNITY AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The next CEO will be an energetic, outgoing leader who can develop and communicate an exciting, achievable vision to a wide range of audiences. This is an opportunity to steward one of the region's premier cultural attractions and vital conservation and education programs and translate a bold master plan into measurable impact, growing audiences and diversifying revenue for long-term stability. Key opportunities and responsibilities are outlined below.

Provide a unifying vision and strategy

The next CEO will have an opportunity to lead the development of a strategic plan that guides the organization in its next chapter. This overarching strategy will articulate how the display gardens, science, horticulture, education, and conservation work together to advance the Garden's impact over the next decade by cultivating broad

community support and increasing engagement among existing and new donors. The CEO will lead with an inspiring vision, be comfortable with complexity, and work collaboratively through challenges to define and achieve the Garden's goals.

Champion master plan fundraising and implementation

The CEO will be the primary architect and public face of the capital campaign to implement the Garden's multi-phase master plan by translating it into a compelling, fundable vision. This work will include partnering with the Board and staff leadership to select which elements of the master plan to prioritize, and securing major gifts, naming opportunities, and multi-year commitments to bring the plan to life. The CEO will coordinate cultivation strategies across individual, foundation, and corporate donors to ensure funding for both design and long-term implementation. In addition to raising funds to support master plan implementation, the CEO will oversee a comprehensive, long-term roadmap for managing resources that balances organizational growth with long-term sustainability. This leader will partner with the CFO and Board committees to ensure governance, compliance, and the successful completion of large capital projects on time and within budget.

Expand and diversify sources of revenue

This role requires an entrepreneurial leader who can expand and diversify revenue sources and engage a donor base beyond traditional constituencies. Focused outreach, corporate cultivation, and programming that engages newcomers will be essential to expanding revenue and broadening annual and major gift pipelines. The CEO will develop strategies to engage new demographics, cultivate prospects, pursue foundation and grant opportunities, and optimize signature events and programs.

Deepen conservation, horticulture, education, and community impact

The CEO will champion the Garden's strong reputation in conservation, horticulture, and education. They will continue to invest in programs such as the seed bank and stormwater and resiliency initiatives, and deepen partnerships with municipalities and local organizations. The CEO will ensure that educators and staff who interpret the Garden's collections have the resources and support to transform visitors into compassionate stewards of their communities and the planet. The next leader will also build on the Garden's regional leadership, cultivating ongoing strategic partnerships across Southwest Florida and the Caribbean and with broader conservation organizations, as well as the botanical and museum worlds.

Strengthen internal systems and empower a high-performing leadership team

Given the Garden's multi-department structure (over 160 full-time staff across horticulture, education, conservation, visitor experience, finance, and advancement), the CEO must build, retain, and empower a high-performing leadership team. The CEO will balance delegation with accountability, foster cross-departmental collaboration, and lead the Garden's staff, volunteers, and operations in accordance with the Garden's values and goals.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The desired candidate will exhibit many of the following ideal experiences and track record:

- Leadership experience in an organization of similar complexity with successful progression to roles of increasing responsibility.
- A proven track record of developing and implementing a strategic vision for an organization.
- The capacity to lead successful capital campaigns and a history of growing annual giving, major gifts, and corporate support; familiarity with fundraising in a nonprofit context.
- Experience in carrying through a capital project from fundraising through execution.
- A history of strong collaboration with a board of directors.
- Experience in building collaborative relationships with cultural institutions and government entities.
- A demonstrated ability to expand an organization's local impact and global influence; experience leading innovations in operations, programs, and guest experience.
- A welcoming and passionate brand ambassador with exemplary people skills, media presence, and comfort with high-touch donor cultivation.
- The capacity to develop and promote a positive organizational culture that invests in talent development across all staff.
- Experience managing large, multi-department organizations and implementing effective operating processes and systems to ensure organizational sustainability.
- An advanced degree in a related field is preferred.

COMPENSATION & LOCATION

The anticipated compensation for this position is \$320,000-\$360,000, which will be competitive and commensurate with experience. The President and CEO is expected to have a regular presence at the Garden, ensuring visibility and accessibility with staff and the community. Periodic travel for conferences, events, and network building is expected.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS & INQUIRIES

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications with resumes and letters of interest should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search. Electronic submission is strongly encouraged.

Jeff Kessner, Ben Tobin, Nella Young, and Jenny Rubin
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/naples-botanical-garden/president-and-chief-executive-officer>

Naples Botanical Garden is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The Garden has a long-standing policy of employment and advancement based solely upon qualifications to perform the essential elements of a position without regard

to age, creed, gender, national origin or ancestry, race, color, religion, veteran status, pregnancy, marital status, HIV status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, handicap or mental or physical disability.

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