Search for the Vice President and Chief Financial Officer
Buzzards Bay Coalition
New Bedford, Massachusetts

THE SEARCH

The Buzzards Bay Coalition, a nonprofit organization based in New Bedford, MA dedicated to protecting and restoring Buzzards Bay, Vineyard Sound, and their watershed lands, seeks a strategic, agile, and collaborative leader to serve as its first Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO). After years of significant growth, leadership and the Board now seek an inaugural financial executive who can build and lead a reimagined finance function capable of developing sophisticated financial strategy, systems, and processes capable of sustaining and amplifying the Coalition's continued expansion and strategic ambitions across land conservation, conservation science, advocacy, and community engagement.

The inaugural CFO will report to the President and Chief Executive Officer, serve as a key member of the senior leadership team, and liaise with the audit and finance committee of the Board of Directors. As the principal steward of the Coalition's financial resources, the CFO will be expected to simultaneously operate as a hands-on financial leader and strategic advisor, able to elevate financial operations to the Coalition's newly increased scale, complexity, and ambitions. The CFO's portfolio will include all financial activities including accounting operations and internal controls, financial planning and analysis, budgeting, forecasting, financial reporting, audit management, treasury operations, endowment oversight, and grants and contract administration. Working closely with the President, Chief Operating Officer, and the Board, the CFO will align financial plans with strategic goals, guide long-term decision-making, and ensure sustainable growth into the future.

The successful candidate will possess a deep appreciation for the Coalition's conservation mission. They will be a strategic leader with deep nonprofit financial experience, strong accounting capabilities, and the ability to translate complex financial information into clear and actionable insights. Experience with endowment management, grants and contracts administration, and complex real estate transactions will also be greatly beneficial. The incoming CFO will be a change manager, able to facilitate the Coalition's evolution from an entrepreneurial organization with a start-up mindset into an increasingly mature and sophisticated organization.

The Buzzards Bay Coalition has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national search firm, to assist in this important search. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

BUZZARDS BAY COALITION

The Buzzards Bay Coalition is a membership-supported non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of the Buzzards Bay ecosystem for all through education, conservation, research, and advocacy. With operations throughout the entire Buzzards Bay and Vineyard Sound watersheds, the Coalition works to protect the region's coastal, river, and drinking water quality and the upland forests, wetlands, and streams that support a healthy watershed and bay.

The Coalition is currently staffed by a team of 40 professionals, aided by hundreds of volunteers and supported by more than 15,000 members. The dedicated staff is broken into four program teams (Watershed Protection, Clean Water Advocacy, Outdoor Exploration, and Bay Science) and four support programs (Advancement, Public Engagement, Operations, and the newly formed Finance team). In addition to President Mark Rasmussen's leadership, the Coalition is further guided by a volunteer Board of Directors, as well as a Leadership Council of community members who provide expertise, contacts, and resources to advance the mission.

For over a decade, the Coalition has been on an impressive growth trajectory, dramatically expanding its reach and impact. Years of ambitious land acquisition efforts have enabled the Coalition to emerge as the largest land conservation program in southeastern Massachusetts. To date, the Coalition has protected more than 13,000 acres of land in the region – over 2,100 acres in 2025 alone – recently driven by an unprecedented opportunity to acquire, protect, and restore old cranberry bogs within the watershed.

Financial Overview

The Coalition enjoys a strong financial position marked by growing revenues and significant assets consisting largely of conservation properties, investments, and other land, buildings, equipment, and vessels. In fiscal year 2025, the Coalition's operating expenses were $19.6 million with approximately 83 cents of every dollar going towards mission-related programs. On the revenue side, total operating revenue and support in fiscal year 2025 was $27.7 million with $18 million coming from government grants and contracts. As of June 30, 2026, the endowment stood at $20.3 million. Currently the Coalition is in the quiet phase of a $150 million capital campaign, with the goal of adding $50 million to the endowment. To support endowment performance and associated financial sustainability, the Coalition brought on Merrill Lynch in the spring of 2026 as their endowment manager.

Programs

Buzzards Bay and its watershed face serious threats, including nitrogen pollution related to inadequate wastewater infrastructure, poorly planned development, and climate change. To respond to the complex and interrelated challenges on the bay and in the watershed, the Coalition runs four programs:

Watershed Protection

The Buzzards Bay watershed is a 431-square-mile area that drains to the Bay. The Coalition conserves important natural areas and restore damaged streams and wetlands.

- Land Conservation: to protect clean water in Buzzards Bay, the Coalition has, in perpetuity, protected more than 13,000 acres. To do so, the Coalition purchases land outright, acquires development rights on private lands, and works with towns and local land trusts to protect forests, stream buffers, farms, and wetlands.

- Ecological Restoration: the Coalition is restoring damaged streams and wetlands to protect clean water and improve the health of the Bay.

Clean Water Advocacy

Since their founding in 1987, the threats to Buzzards Bay have evolved, from devastating oil spills to toxic pollution, to nitrogen pollution, and now most notably the effects of warming water and sea level rise. Equipped with sound science, the Coalition has fought and continues to fight the threats of the moment through robust advocacy work across local, state, and federal levels.

Bay Science

Starting in 1992, the Coalition's water quality monitoring program has provided data to study the health of Buzzards Bay and its harbors, coves, and rivers. This Bay Health data forms the foundation of all the Coalition's work to restore and protect the Bay and is the largest, longest-running coastal monitoring effort in New England.

Weekly in the summer, the Coalition monitors over 300 stations in 30 major harbors, coves, and rivers across Buzzards Bay — an area covering more than one-quarter of the Massachusetts coast. This data helps the Coalition and local decision makers identify pollution problems across the region and has been used for long-term research projects investigating topics such as the local impacts of climate change.

Outdoor Exploration

The Buzzards Bay Coalition believes everyone who lives in the Buzzards Bay watershed should have access to experience the natural wonders of the coast. Coalition properties are preserved and developed with a focus on how best the community can access and enjoy the property. The Coalition runs school programs and Bay Adventures, free activities across the region offering hands-on, outdoor activities. Additionally, its four Centers offer high-quality, on-the-water programming for thousands of kids, adults, and families each year.

Leadership

President Mark Rasmussen

Mark grew up on Buzzards Bay and has dedicated his career to making the greatest possible impact on its restoration and protection. President since 1998, Mark's path with the Coalition flows through an oyster farm, Woods Hole science missions, and positions as a staffer at the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management and associate at the Stockholm Environment Institute. He is a graduate of Boston College and Harvard University.

New Bedford, MA

Located approximately 60 miles south of Boston and with a population just over 101,000, New Bedford boasts 18 miles of shoreline and a rich maritime and abolitionist history. In the first half of the 19th century, New Bedford was one of the world's most important whaling ports. The whaling industry, along with textile manufacturing, made New Bedford one of world's wealthiest cities per capita in the mid 1800s; however, the waning of these activities led to economic decline in the 20th century. Today, New Bedford is seeing a renaissance and resurgence as the city leans into its maritime past and history of promoting equality. Sites that explore and celebrate the city's deep connections to the sea abound, in addition to artist studios, performance spaces, and restaurants, not to mention incredible parks and recreational areas, all making New Bedford an exciting place to visit, work, and live.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The inaugural Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) will serve as the Coalition's senior financial leader responsible for the stewardship of the organization's financial resources. Reporting directly to the President and CEO and serving as a peer to their fellow Vice Presidents, the CFO will provide strategic leadership and guidance across the Coalition's financial functions.

The CFO will build and lead a new finance team that will assume responsibility for key financial activities currently shared amongst operations and program staff and external advisors including accounting operations and internal controls, financial planning and analysis, budgeting, forecasting, financial reporting, audit management, treasury operations, and endowment oversight. The CFO will also manage the transition of responsibility for grant and contract administration from the program teams to the finance function. Given the Buzzards Bay Coalition's highly collaborative, hands-on culture, the successful candidate will be comfortable rolling up their sleeves, engaging directly with staff, and building relationships across the organization to ensure financial processes effectively support mission delivery.

The CFO will serve as a key partner and financial advisor to the President and the Board of Directors, responsible for guiding the Coalition's long-term vision and positioning the organization for continued growth and long-term sustainability. The CFO will liaise with and provide regular reporting and financial analysis to the finance and audit committee of the Board and will lead relationships with external partners including banks, endowment managers, auditors, insurers, and local and state officials.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

The success of the inaugural Chief Financial Officer will be determined by how well they address the following opportunities and challenges:

Serve as a Strategic Financial Leader During a Time of Growth

The Buzzards Bay Coalition has entered a new phase of maturity marked by numerous land acquisitions, strong fundraising momentum, and ambitious plans across programmatic areas. The inaugural CFO will serve as a trusted strategic advisor to the President, fellow senior leaders, and the Board, translating long-term aspirations into actionable financial strategies. Through robust reporting, sophisticated modeling, scenario planning, forecasting, and financial analysis, the CFO will provide insights needed to support growth while ensuring financial sustainability and responsible resource stewardship.

Build a Robust Financial Planning and Analysis Function and Elevate Financial Reporting

In recent years, the Coalition has invested in modern financial systems, specifically Sage Intacct, which has improved efficiency and elevated planning, analytical, and reporting capabilities. The CFO will harness Sage Intacct to develop a comprehensive financial planning and analysis function that provides leadership with timely and actionable insights. The CFO will leverage Sage Intacct modules to provide multi-year budgeting, capital planning, cash flow forecasting, modeling, and scenario planning to guide and pace projected growth. While the Coalition has enjoyed a history of clean audits and solid financial reporting, the incoming CFO has an opportunity to shift the focus from primarily transactional and retrospective reporting to proactive financial management and decision support that improves visibility into future obligations and aspirations.

Support Complex Real Estate Transactions

The Coalition's conservation activities involve highly complex land acquisition, restoration, and stewardship activities supported by a combination of government grants, philanthropy, and bridge financing tools. Further complicating matters, acquired lands often involve easements, development restrictions, and/or physical assets that impact value and create contract obligations. The Coalition's real estate transactions and reporting involve sophisticated accounting, careful compliance oversight, and nuanced financial analysis. Moreover, any one transaction may involve numerous stakeholders including local, state, and federal agencies, lenders, grantees, requiring close coordination and communication. The CFO will bring deep technical expertise and accounting acumen to this work, helping the Coalition navigate increasingly large and complex transactions. Working with their team, they will develop systems for planning, tracking, reporting, and close-out activities.

Support a Growing Endowment and Early-Stage Capital Campaign

The Coalition recently engaged Merrill Lynch as their professional endowment manager and is in the quiet phase of capital campaign that, among other goals, will add $50 million to their endowment. Working closely with leadership, development staff, the Board, and advisors at Merrill Lynch, the CFO will provide oversight, analysis, and guidance for the endowment, specifically related to spending policies, gift administration, and long-term planning. The CFO will ensure that resources are managed thoughtfully and in alignment with strategic priorities.

Partner with Program Leaders to Oversee Grants Administration

Each year, the Coalition's program areas bring in millions of dollars in grant funding from local, state, and federal sources. Government grants are expected to remain a major driver of organizational growth. Currently, administrative responsibilities associated with grants, including tracking funds, managing budgets, generating invoices, and reporting, reside with program teams. To lessen the administrative burden on program staff so that they can more readily focus on mission delivery, the CFO will centralize these activities under the finance team, eventually hiring a staff member to oversee day-to-day administration. Leveraging recently implemented modules within Sage Intacct, the CFO will professionalize grant and contract-related business processes, streamlining workflows, strengthening reporting and compliance, and enhancing service to program teams.

Build a Matured Financial Infrastructure While Preserving Organizational Agility

The Coalition prides itself on being entrepreneurial, nimble, and highly responsive to emergent opportunities to protect and preserve the Buzzards Bay ecosystem. Yet, as the organization grows and matures, there is a need for institutional systems, policies, and processes. The CFO will establish appropriate financial controls and infrastructure for the Coalition's current size and complexity while preserving the internal culture of flexibility and creativity that has contributed to its success. The CFO will take time to understand the needs, processes, and goals of leadership, operations, and program teams and leverage strong change management and communication skills to design and introduce structures that enhance, rather than hinder, mission and strategic priorities.

Lead, Build, and Mentor the Finance Team

Previously, the finance function reported up through the Chief Operating Officer and was supported by one internal staff member and an outside advisor. To best support the Coalition's expanded size and complexity, the finance function will be moved from the Operations team to stand as its own vertical. The incoming CFO will have the unique opportunity to build and grow this newly established finance team.

Initially, the CFO will inherit one direct report, a very strong and seasoned Accounting Manager. The CFO will support, mentor, and develop the Accounting Manager, leveraging institutional knowledge to quickly establish the new function. The CFO will also evaluate opportunities to thoughtfully expand the team and add capacity in areas such as grant administration, financial analysis, and reporting. The CFO be expected to establish an organizational structure for the finance function capable of scaling in response to the Coalition's continued growth trajectory.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree, preferably in accounting, finance, business administration, or a related field required; advanced degree and/or CPA designation preferred.
- Progressive leadership and management experience of at least 7 years over finance and accounting functions.
- Financial management experience in a nonprofit setting preferred along with a corresponding understanding of nonprofit funding models, including philanthropy, government grants and contracts, restricted gifts, endowments, and earned revenue streams.
- Knowledge of investment oversight, endowment management, and spending policies, including the financial implications of restricted and board-designated funds.
- Strong change management skills demonstrated by a track record of establishing new systems, processes, and policies and the ability to take concepts to action in an effective manner. Experience supporting and scaling an organization in a time of growth would be a plus.
- Expertise with multi-year budgeting, scenario planning, and forecasting and the ability to align financial planning with short-term and long-term strategic goals.
- Ability to leverage financial systems and technology to enhance reporting, efficiency, forecasting, and decision-making.
- Positive and collaborative attitude and an entrepreneurial mindset. Ability to balance strategy and tactical operations to thrive in a lean and agile environment.
- Experience managing relationships with auditors, financial institutions, investment advisors, and other external financial partners.
- Demonstrated success in building, developing and leading teams. Strong candidates will exhibit a highly collaborative and compassionate management style.
- Experience overseeing or supporting complex projects involving grants and contracts, capital projects, real estate transactions, land acquisitions, or other highly structured financial arrangements is strongly preferred.
- Strong relationship-building skills and a genuine desire to engage colleagues across an organization to understand operational realities and support mission success.

- Ability to communicate complex financial concepts clearly and effectively to non-financial audiences, including staff, senior leaders, board members, and community stakeholders.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The salary range for this role is $220,000 to $250,000, commensurate with skills and experience. The position is based in New Bedford, MA at the Coalition's headquarters. The CFO role is expected to be in-person at least four days per week.

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/buzzards-bay-coalition/vice-president-finance-and-chief-financial-officer.

Dan Rodas, Partner
Amble Ryan, Managing Associate
Katanya Cathcart, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

The Buzzards Bay Coalition is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified persons are encouraged to apply and will be considered without regard to race, national origin, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, or veteran status.