



Vice President, Administration

Puppies Behind Bars

New York, New York

THE SEARCH

Puppies Behind Bars (PBB), a nationally recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to service, rehabilitation, and the remarkable human-animal bond, seeks a strategic, collaborative, and mission-driven leader to serve as its inaugural Vice President, Administration (VP). The VP will join an organization that has spent nearly three decades transforming lives through an innovative model that trains incarcerated individuals in New York State correctional facilities to raise and train service dogs for wounded veterans and first responders, facility dogs for schools and law enforcement agencies, and explosive detection canines for public safety partners. The VP position will be a hands-on executive leadership role reporting directly to the President/Founder of PBB, managing day-to-day administration and engaging in strategic thought partnership.

Since its founding in 1997, PBB has helped raise and train more than 2,000 service dogs and has adapted its programs to address the evolving needs of a country that experienced the tragedy of 9/11, years of overseas military conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and dramatic changes in how police departments relate to their communities. During this time, PBB has become a respected leader at the intersection of public safety, service, workforce development, and healing. PBB currently operates in six correctional facilities across New York, maintains offices in Manhattan, and owns a property in the Hudson Valley used for whelping, training, events, and more.

PBB's impact is sustained by a dedicated team of approximately 10 professionals working across dog breeding, training, and placement; correctional facility partnerships and program operations; development and fundraising; finance and administration; communications; and volunteer engagement. The organization is supported by an 11-member Board of Directors, and its FY2025 revenue totaled \$5.7 million, the majority of which was derived from a broad base of individual and foundation contributions.

PBB seeks its first VP, Administration to help guide the organization as it builds on its strong foundation and prepares for its next phase of operational maturity and growth. Much of the VP's portfolio will focus on internal operations and administrative management, so that the President/Founder can focus more fully on relationship-building, fundraising, external partnerships, and long-term vision. The VP will be expected to grow organizational capacity, enhance cross-functional collaboration, upgrade PBB's human resources capability, and ensure that the systems, people, and resources are in place to support the successful execution of organizational, financial, and programmatic goals.

The VP will bring experience creating scalable systems, processes, and infrastructure that advance organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Specific experience in human resources and exposure to financial best practices are desired. The VP will have a track record of cultivating productive relationships and serving as both a strategic advisor and an operational leader. They will bring an empowering and inclusive leadership style; a demonstrated commitment to equity, inclusion, and empathy; and experience developing staff, engendering trust, and creating a culture of continuous improvement. The successful candidate will be resourceful, conscientious, and adaptable, with the ability to balance high-level planning with hands-on execution in a dynamic, lean environment.

ABOUT PUPPIES BEHIND BARS

Gloria Gilbert Stoga, a respected nonprofit leader with a distinguished career in public service and philanthropy, founded Puppies Behind Bars nearly 30 years ago. What began with five puppies at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, New York's only maximum-security prison for women, has grown into a widely respected organization that delivers transformative outcomes for both people and communities.

Puppies enter the program at approximately eight weeks old and spend nearly two years living and training with incarcerated individuals who serve as puppy raisers, providing daily care, socialization, and specialized training. Approximately 150 incarcerated individuals serve as puppy raisers in any given period. During their time together, the dogs develop into highly skilled working partners, and the individuals who raise them gain responsibility, purpose, job-readiness skills, and meaningful personal growth. Incarcerated program participants are asked to put puppies at the center of their lives and commit to producing the best working dogs in the country. Year after year, dog after dog, they have delivered. Many former participants maintain long-term success after release, and several have become PBB employees.

PBB-trained dogs support veterans living with physical injuries and post-traumatic stress, first responders affected by the cumulative effects of trauma, police departments seeking to improve officer wellness and community engagement, and law enforcement agencies requiring highly trained detection canines. Through these placements, PBB advances its mission of promoting healing, independence, second chances, and safer communities across the country. Approximately 75 percent of PBB dogs go on to lead successful and productive working lives. Because of the program's rigorous nature, some dogs do not graduate and are released for adoption. PBB is accredited through Assistance Dogs International.

PBB's success depends on a broad network of partners, including the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, veteran and first responder communities, local and federal law enforcement agencies, schools, veterinarians, philanthropic supporters, and a dedicated volunteer cohort. PBB has also engaged in corporate partnerships, most recently with the National Football League, which has committed to supporting the development of three future service dogs. The trust and goodwill PBB has built, along with its good governance and fiscal responsibility, has led to 19 consecutive four-star ratings from Charity Navigator.

Visit the Puppies Behind Bars website for more information: <https://puppiesbehindbars.com/>

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VP

The VP will be a key strategic and operational partner to the President/Founder, enabling her to focus increasingly on dynamic external representation with full confidence that the organization is positioned to thrive internally. As the organization's first VP, this leader will have a unique opportunity to help shape PBB's next chapter. The VP's portfolio may undergo deeper focus and adjustments as the organization's priorities develop.

Work alongside the President/Founder to ensure operational excellence, organizational accountability, and long-term sustainability.

- Lead the day-to-day operations of PBB, ensuring the effective coordination of programs, administration, and key functions in support of the mission and strategic priorities.
- Partner closely with the President/Founder to identify and evaluate emerging opportunities for organizational development, program improvement and innovation, and increased impact.
- Provide strategic counsel on implementing priorities, proactively identifying possible obstacles, and embracing challenges head-on.

Enhance internal communication and cross-functional collaboration to improve efficiency, alignment, and engagement.

- Strengthen systems, policies, processes, and workflows to advance effectiveness, service delivery, and organizational health.
- Create systems and processes that facilitate timely communication and feedback, reduce silos, and enable efficient coordination among programmatic, administrative, and operational staff.
- Clarify roles, priorities, reporting structures, and expectations while maintaining the organization's agile, entrepreneurial culture.

Foster a relational, performance-driven environment and invest in human resources and staff development.

- Position PBB to attract and retain dedicated, competent, and diverse staff at every level, including formerly incarcerated staff.
- Mature PBB's human resources function and invest in staff support structures, professional development opportunities, and succession planning.
- Nurture trust, engage in team building, and foster a collaborative, results-oriented, accountable environment where staff are valued and empowered.

Evaluate and implement necessary changes to PBB's internal infrastructure and develop a culture of continuous improvement.

- Ensure that PBB's structures and systems allow for the most effective organizational capacity. Investigate best-practice process management tools and technologies to enhance productivity.

- Establish mechanisms to gather feedback, measure outcomes, and use data to strengthen programs, maximizing impact for participants, partners, and communities.
- Maintain compliance with all financial, legal, regulatory, contractual, and organizational requirements and uphold robust reporting practices, risk management strategies, and administrative and budgetary oversight. Promote a culture of fiscal responsibility.

Work with the President/Founder to develop PBB's reach, resources, and impact through strategic relationship-building, community engagement, and philanthropic relations.

- Support the President/Founder in cultivating relationships with key partners, including correctional institutions, public safety departments, veteran-serving organizations, schools, corporate partners, funders, and others.
- Faithfully represent PBB with external parties to inspire investment in PBB's transformative work. Elevate awareness of the mission and programs among appropriate external audiences.
- Collaborate with the President to identify opportunities for partnerships that could benefit PBB and its programs.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no individual will possess every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications, professional experiences, and personal attributes:

- Sincere belief in and commitment to PBB's mission, with a passion for creating opportunities for personal growth, healing, second chances, and service to others.
- Demonstrated success in a senior leadership role within a nonprofit or corporation of comparable size and complexity.
- Expertise in translating a vision and strategy into a practical plan, with concrete implementation methods and measures of anticipated outcomes.
- Demonstrated ability to partner with an enterprising, devoted President/Founder, an experienced staff, and a committed board and volunteer community.
- In-depth knowledge of best practices in human resources and organizational development and design. Experience managing risk and compliance.
- Financial and business acumen, including an understanding of budgeting, financial planning, and resource management.
- Experience with workplace technology systems and exposure to facilities management.
- Record of success as a people-centered leader who recognizes and relies on staff areas of expertise; believes that good ideas can come from anywhere; and effectively motivates, engages, and inspires.
- Success in cultivating and sustaining collaborative relationships with a wide range of constituencies, including program partners, clients, volunteers, and potential funders. Experience working with departments of correction or similar entities is a plus.

- Experience working with individuals and communities that have faced significant barriers, adversity, trauma, or systemic challenges. A commitment to treating all people with dignity, empathy, and respect.
- High emotional intelligence, sound judgment, resilience, and skill in navigating complex dynamics with diplomacy and integrity. The ability to work independently and juggle multiple priorities.
- While previous experience working with animals is not required, the VP will bring a commitment to animal welfare and be comfortable engaging with dogs regularly.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills.
- Integrity of the highest order, self-confidence without self-importance, and the instinct to always put the organization first.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

Salary Range and Benefits: \$180,000-\$220,000. 401(k) plan, employer contribution to health insurance, 14 paid holidays, paid sick leave, and vacation starting at three weeks, increasing over time.

Location: The VP should expect to work in person five days a week at the Puppies Behind Bars office in Midtown Manhattan.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Nominations, inquiries, and applications, including resumes with cover letters that address the opportunities and challenges outlined above, should be submitted to the search team via the hyperlink below. Screening of applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is completed. If you require reasonable accommodation to complete an application, interview, or otherwise participate in the candidate selection process, we welcome you to submit an inquiry to the team.

Tatiana Oberkoetter, Quizayra Gonzalez, and Melissa Barravecchio
Isaacson, Miller

Puppies Behind Bars Vice President, Administration

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