



Chief Development Officer
Lake George Association
Lake George, New York

THE SEARCH

The [Lake George Association](#) (LGA), the preeminent lake-protection organization dedicated to safeguarding Lake George, seeks its next Chief Development Officer (CDO) to catalyze philanthropic support as the organization embarks on a new chapter of growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Located at the southern end of the Adirondack Park in New York, Lake George is among the clearest and cleanest large lakes in the world. Formed nearly 10,000 years ago by melting glaciers, the lake draws nearly 8 million visitors annually, cherished for its water clarity and scenic beauty. It is also a key ecological and natural resource. More than 90 percent of the watershed remains as natural forestland, with nearly half of the forested acreage publicly owned by New York State and constitutionally protected as forever-wild Forest Preserve. Designated by New York State as a Class AA-Special waterbody, Lake George serves as the primary source of drinking water for surrounding communities and residents. Lake George is the primary driver of the region's tourism economy: its visitors generate roughly \$3 billion in annual economic activity, support more than 500 tourism businesses, and account for nearly \$630 million in direct tourism spending.

Founded in 1885, the LGA was the first lake conservation organization in the United States. Since its inception, the LGA has worked alongside residents, businesses, volunteers, educators, and local leaders who care deeply about protecting Lake George. In 2021, the LGA merged with The FUND for Lake George, a privately funded 501(c)(3). Today's LGA is supported by over 23,000 donors and has a strong financial profile with a history of successful fundraising and budget achievement. Its endowment has more than doubled to \$25 million in recent years. Recognizing that there are no subjects more pressing, consequential, and complex than those at the intersection of climate, environment, and society, the organization deploys its considerable assets to advance a science-guided, partner-driven model of freshwater protection designed for adaptation and scaling across the country and worldwide. With a new [2026–2030 strategic plan](#) underway and momentum for a future capital campaign, the goal may be straightforward—keep Lake George clear and clean now and for future generations—but the work is far from simple and far from complete.

This is a compelling opportunity to shape the future of the Lake George Association by building a dynamic membership and development program that broadens awareness, deepens engagement, expands philanthropic support, and fuels the organization's long-term impact. Working collaboratively with the President and CEO, Board Chair, Board of Directors, and staff, the Chief Development Officer will bring strategic vision, creativity, and relationship-building expertise to grow philanthropic and membership revenue at all levels across individuals and institutions. The successful candidate will strengthen the donor pipeline, elevate the member and donor experience, harness data to inform fundraising strategy, and foster a collaborative, high-performing culture in service of protecting Lake George in perpetuity.

The ideal candidate is an experienced and mission-driven fundraising leader with a strong record of building comprehensive development programs and campaigns, cultivating and closing significant gifts, and inspiring donors, boards, volunteers, and staff around shared philanthropic goals. With at least seven years of nonprofit fundraising experience, ideally in environmental conservation, candidates must bring demonstrated strength in strategic planning, major and annual giving, planned giving, donor stewardship, board engagement, prospect management, fundraising analytics, team leadership, and compelling donor communications. An appreciation for Lake George's history and its loyal base of intergenerational supporters, together with a passion for translating the LGA's science-informed work into meaningful giving opportunities, is essential. Lived experience in or a personal affinity for Lake George or the Adirondacks is a plus.

The LGA has retained Jack Gorman of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE LAKE GEORGE ASSOCIATION

The LGA is a multifaceted nonprofit that integrates scientific research, education, and policymaking into one dynamic organization. At its core, the LGA advances solutions to the lake's ecological challenges, including invasive species, pollution, and the impacts of climate change.

The LGA organizes its programmatic work around Science-to-Solutions and Advocacy. Since 2002, the [Lake George Waterkeeper Program](#) has advanced LGA's science-based protection strategy by promoting legal compliance, supporting research, applying engineering expertise, monitoring water quality, and advocating for solutions that strengthen public and private partnerships.

The association's work is further strengthened by the [Jefferson Project](#), a historic collaboration among the LGA, IBM Research, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Established in 2013, the Project aims to become a global model for freshwater ecosystem research and protection by using advanced monitoring, modeling, simulation, forecasting, and experimentation to guide data-informed decisions that protect Lake George amid climate change and growing human activity.

Additionally, its [Community Engagement and Education Programs](#) offer hands-on learning for K-12 students, adults, property owners, businesses, municipalities, and community scientists. Signature initiatives include the [Floating Classroom](#), which introduces students and community members to Lake George ecology and water-quality protection, and the [Bay by Bay Initiative](#), which engages lake communities in education and philanthropic support.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

The Chief Development Officer (CDO) works closely with the President and CEO, Board Chair, and Board of Directors to create a sustainable culture of philanthropy, cultivating and stewarding donor relationships that support and advance the LGA's mission and vision. The CDO is responsible for developing an advancement program capable of meeting and achieving the organization's philanthropic revenue needs with input and guidance from the President and CEO and the Membership and Development Committee. The CDO provides leadership, strategic direction, oversight, and coordination of the Membership and Development team to execute development plans and manage progress toward established goals and objectives.

This role advances annual fundraising revenue goals, including a target of \$5.8 million by 2030 through strategic philanthropy, grants, and partnerships. The LGA's fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31. In Fiscal Year 2024, the LGA raised more than \$3.9 million from these sources, and membership and development represented 12 percent of the LGA's total expenses. The CDO is responsible for ensuring that all financial growth aligns with organizational impact.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Board and Organizational Leadership:

- As a member of The LGA's Leadership Team, lead the accomplishment of the organization's membership and development objectives, reporting to the President and CEO and working closely with the Board Chair, Board of Directors, and staff.

- Design and implement a development plan that aligns with and supports the LGA's mission, strategic plan, long-term financial model, and annual operating budget targets with input from the President and CEO and Membership and Development Committee.
- Establish, monitor, and manage the LGA's annual income and expense budget for targeted appeals, annual memberships, online donations, direct mail campaigns, leadership gifts, special events, and other solicitations.
- Serve as staff liaison to the Board of Directors' Membership and Development Committee to develop and advance strategies that meet fundraising and engagement goals.

Leadership, Annual Memberships, and Planned Gifts:

- As a member of the Leadership Team, partner across departments to ensure alignment with the LGA's strategic goals and contribute to a collaborative, high-performing organizational culture.
- Establish and implement comprehensive identification, cultivation, and solicitation strategies for prospective and current leadership gift donors, focusing on individual engagement that qualifies capacity, builds rapport, and identifies philanthropic passions and interests.
- Oversee and expand the LGA's circle of most loyal and engaged leadership donors, the [LG100](#).
- Establish and lead prospect review and goal setting for the President and CEO, Board Chair, and Directors.
- Establish and manage portfolios for the President and CEO, Board Chair, other Directors, and trained advancement staff and volunteers.
- Oversee strategic annual membership initiatives to inspire introductory and mid-level gifts and ensure leadership gift pipeline development.
- Oversee the LGA's annual membership activities, including targeted appeals, annual giving, online donations, direct mail campaigns, major gifts, special events, and other solicitations.
- Cultivate and steward relationships with current and potential corporate and private foundation sponsors with the Membership and Development Manager.
- Partner with colleagues to coordinate grant proposal preparation, including research, writing, and reporting requirements.
- Establish a planned giving program, with a focus on deferred gifts such as bequests, charitable gift annuities, and other legacy instruments.

Stewardship and Donor Relations:

- Review current practices and develop comprehensive stewardship plans articulating donor recognition and relationship development for donors at all levels.
- Strategize, implement, and manage events and engagement opportunities for prospect and donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
- Oversee all donor and gift recognition activities, including receipting, acknowledgment letters, and inclusion in all appropriate print and digital materials and events.
- Oversee all gift and recognition agreements, including pledges, planned giving, corporate sponsorships, and naming opportunities.

Marketing, Communications, and Outreach:

- Provide input and oversight on all communications with prospects, members, and donors related to recruitment, retention, and stewardship.
- Oversee production of appeals, the annual report, and other donor-inclusive materials in keeping with donor pledges and stewardship.

Data Management:

- Oversee and manage the LGA's donor and prospect database to ensure that all data is applied and leveraged to drive effective use of donor and prospect analytics and to facilitate ongoing campaign design and execution.
- Establish fundraising performance reports with input from the President and CEO and the Membership and Development Committee for periodic presentation to the Board, senior staff, and key partners.

Team Leadership and Development:

- Oversee and evaluate staff as required by organizational structure and annual operating objectives.
- Maintain continuous lines of communication, keeping the President and CEO informed of all critical issues.
- Promote a culture of high performance and continuous improvement that values learning and a commitment to quality, and coach and mentor the team on fundraising best practices.

CORE COMPETENCIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Ideal candidates will possess many of the following attributes:

- A minimum of seven years of progressively responsible fundraising experience and a track record of envisioning, developing, and implementing a successful and comprehensive philanthropy program, preferably in environmental conservation.
- Commitment to and passion for the LGA's mission, demonstrated through a science-informed, equity-minded, and solutions-focused approach to work, as well as an appreciation for and understanding of the organization's history, impact, and programmatic breadth.
- Proven track record of cultivating donors at all levels, meeting fundraising goals, and successfully closing gifts of at least six figures.
- Strong planning, strategic foresight, and analytical skills, as well as proven experience in developing and effectively implementing an organization-wide fundraising plan that includes major gift cultivation, annual giving, planned giving, and donor stewardship initiatives.
- Highly effective interpersonal, communication, and active listening skills; able to comprehend and translate technical information to lay audiences in compelling and inspiring ways.
- Strong resource management skills, with demonstrated experience forecasting, allocating, and tracking all resources—human and financial—to support strategic decision-making.
- Proven ability to inspire and mobilize leadership, board members, community members, and staff to embrace a culture of philanthropy and achieve fundraising goals and objectives.
- Proficiency in using fundraising applications and databases to perform comprehensive donor data analysis, portfolio creation, and reports.
- Experience supervising staff and/or leading complex projects and initiatives in a medium-to-large nonprofit environment.
- Familiarity with tax and charitable gift laws, as well as planned giving vehicles and methods.
- Demonstrated commitment to fundraising ethics, donor stewardship best practices, and relationship-based philanthropy.
- Willing and able to work evenings and weekends, and to travel to meet with prospects and donors, as necessary.
- While a bachelor's degree is not required, the successful candidate will have demonstrated coursework or relevant professional experience in nonprofit management, communications, business, philanthropy, environmental studies, or a related field.

Preferred Qualifications

- Lived or professional experience in the Adirondacks or Lake George region, or in a comparable place-based conservation context.
- An optimistic, entrepreneurial spirit; a warm, genuine approach; and a collaborative, hands-on willingness to contribute where needed.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The target salary range for this role is **\$140,000 to \$170,000** and will be commensurate with experience.

Lake George draws year-round nature lovers, second-home owners, and visitors with its charming towns, Adirondack heritage, Gilded Age elegance, and abundant recreation—from swimming, kayaking, boating, and fishing to shoreline camping, mountain hikes, nearby downhill and Nordic skiing, historic forts, museums, parks, and cultural landmarks.

The LGA office in Lake George, New York, is close to many of the state's most desirable residential communities, including Glens Falls and Queensbury (a 15-minute drive) and Saratoga Springs (a 25-minute drive). New York State's capital, Albany, and its airport are roughly an hour away.

Lake George itself is a gateway to many cities and destinations across the Northeast. These include Lake Champlain; Burlington, Vermont; and, across the Canadian border, Montreal and Quebec City. Boston and New York City are each about a four-hour drive, and both are reachable by Amtrak from the Albany–Rensselaer station. Albany International Airport is served by American Airlines, Delta, JetBlue, Southwest, and United, offering nonstop flights to major cities including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and New York City.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search concludes. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/lake-george-association/chief-development-officer>.

Jack Gorman, Partner
Christina Garrison, Senior Associate
Lisa Clayton, Senior Search Coordinator

The Lake George Association believes in providing equal employment opportunity and does not discriminate against any applicant or employee based on veteran status, military status, race (including traits historically associated with race), color, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, status of being transgender, age, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation, and related medical conditions), reproductive health decision-making (including the decision to use or access a particular drug, device, or medical service), national origin or ancestry, citizenship and immigration status, physical or mental disability, certain arrest or conviction records, predisposition or carrier status, marital or familial status, the status of being a victim of domestic violence, genetic information (including testing and characteristics), known relationship or association with any member of a protected class, or any other class or status protected by applicable law.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Lake George Association. 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 Lake George Association would supersede any conflicting information in this document.

ADDENDUM: LEADERSHIP

Brendan Wiltse, Ph.D. | President and CEO

Brendan Wiltse, Ph.D., joined the Lake George Association as President and CEO in January 2025. Prior to the LGA, Dr. Wiltse served as executive director of the Adirondack Watershed Institute in Paul Smith, NY.

Dedicated to protecting freshwater through science, advocacy, and community education, Dr. Wiltse earned a Ph.D. in biology with a focus on aquatic ecology from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, in 2014.

After completing his doctorate, Dr. Wiltse chose a path of nonprofit advocacy rather than academia, bridging science and action to increase the impact of freshwater protection. He served as Science and Stewardship Director for the Ausable River Association in Wilmington, NY, for six years before joining the Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute as Senior Research Scientist. Three years later, he was named executive director of the institute.

Dr. Wiltse's work at the institute earned wide appreciation in the community. In October 2024, at the ninth annual Adirondack Champlain Regional Salt Summit, Lake Placid Mayor Art Devlin called Dr. Wiltse "a godsend to our area" for spearheading solutions that greatly reduced the amount of road salt runoff entering Mirror Lake.

Now, as President and CEO for the LGA, Dr. Wiltse has set and implemented a cohesive and ambitious vision to safeguard Lake George by accelerating the organization's Science-to-Solutions approach to lake protection.

William "Bill" Creighton | Chair, Board of Directors

Mr. Creighton is a multi-generation Lake George family member whose connection to the lake spans more than a century. His great-grandfather built the family's Pilot Knob home in 1898—just 13 years after the LGA was founded—and his family has remained deeply connected to the lake ever since.

Mr. Creighton joined the Board of Directors in 2015 following a distinguished 35-year career in finance at IBM. Throughout his LGA tenure, he has helped advance practical, community-driven solutions that protect water quality, including establishing partnerships with Arrow Bank and Adirondack Trust Company that created no-interest loan programs to help Lake George watershed property owners replace aging septic systems. He also serves as Board Chair of the Adirondack Community Foundation.