



New Jersey Institute of Social Justice
Search for the President & Chief Executive Officer
Newark, New Jersey.

THE SEARCH

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice (the Institute), a social justice advocacy organization aimed at toppling the load-bearing walls of structural inequity to create just, vibrant, and healthy communities, seeks a dynamic, strategic, and transformational leader to serve as its next president and chief executive officer (President & CEO). This is an opportunity for an exemplary leader to guide the continued growth and impact of the Institute, which is currently fueled by its four programmatic areas (economic justice, criminal justice, environmental justice, and democracy & justice).

Established in 1999 by the Alan V. and Amy Lowenstein Foundation, the Institute is committed to a holistic, evidence-driven, and solutions-focused approach to social justice research, policy, and advocacy. Now in its 27th year of operations, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice is New Jersey's premier strategic innovator in policy, legal advocacy, and community engagement as vehicles to address issues of systemic racism and structural inequity. Using a holistic approach to address the unique and critical issues facing New Jersey, the Institute advocates for policy reforms that are transformative, achievable in the state, and replicable in communities across the nation. The Institute identifies, analyzes, and addresses the underlying causes of social and economic disparities and challenges the barriers that constrain individuals and communities from achieving their full potential.

The President & CEO serves as the chief executive and strategic leader of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and reports to the Board of Trustees. They will serve as the primary spokesperson and ambassador for the Institute and will assume responsibility for providing vision, leadership, and oversight of the Institute's strategy, programs, advocacy, litigation, fundraising, operations, and external partnerships. The position requires a person with a passion for social justice; a demonstrated commitment to civil rights, racial justice, and social equity; and a passion for advancing the Institute's mission and impact to improve the lives and futures of structurally and systemically marginalized people and communities across New Jersey and, as applicable, the United States.

The President & CEO will be an effective collaborator and communicator, placing value on the building of relationships with community leaders, policymakers, funders, and partners not only to accomplish the work of the Institute but to expand its reach throughout the state of New Jersey and nationally. The President & CEO will provide prudent fiscal oversight of the Institute's \$6.1 million annual budget and \$7.7 million endowment, while also fundraising assiduously to sustain and enhance the Institute's financial sustainability.

This leader must be a decisive, thoughtful strategist who can balance visionary initiatives with pragmatic operational stability. They will possess deep civil rights, social justice, and/or racial justice advocacy experience and demonstrate success catalyzing and shepherding consequential policy and advocacy campaigns and coalition-building efforts. This leader will possess an innate ability to build trust and buy-in internally and externally, nurture and further develop the Institute's reputation as a best-in-class comprehensive policy and advocacy organization, and thoughtfully navigate the dynamic interplay between community engagement, policy research, and legal and legislative advocacy to sustain and grow the organization's impact.

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice has retained the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search. All inquiries, applications, and nominations should be directed in confidence to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice was established in 1999 by Alan V. and Amy Lowenstein and a group of visionaries steeped in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1993, Alan Lowenstein proposed the establishment of a New Jersey law institute to advance social justice, and by late 1996, resources were gained to fully incorporate the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. After filling out the Board of Trustees, Alan Lowenstein designed the Institute to be "totally independent" and comprised of truth tellers who hold people in positions of power accountable to the people.

Since then, the Institute has used cutting-edge racial and social justice advocacy to empower people of color by building reparative systems that create wealth, transform justice and harness democratic power—from the ground up—in New Jersey. Known for its dynamic and independent advocacy that is grounded in a five-part community-centered [theory of change](#) aimed at toppling load-bearing walls of structural inequity to create just, vibrant, and healthy communities, the Institute is committed to exposing and repairing the cracks of structural racism in foundations that erupt into earthquakes in communities of color.

The Institute advances transformative yet achievable reforms that can be replicated in communities nationwide. Grounded in the voices and lived experiences of those most affected by structural racism, the Institute listens to community needs and advocates for innovative, responsive policies that address and repair systemic inequities. The Institute is 90% funded through institutions and foundations with an

annual budget of approximately \$6.1 million and an endowment of more than \$7.6 million. Since its founding, the Institute has been intentional in not soliciting or accepting government funding to maintain its independence as an advocacy organization.

For more information on the Institute, visit the website www.njisj.org.

Work of the Institute

The Institute team does its work in alignment with its core values of collaboration, diversity, inclusion, and belonging, independence, boldness, and excellence. Its stellar reputation has been made possible by its approach, which includes the team's expertise and commitment to a standard of excellence that informs all that it does—including community engagement, research, writing, advocacy, litigation, communications, operations, development, and administration.

With an evidence-driven approach to policy, robust advocacy, and solution-focused research, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice advocates for Black and other communities of color through four main areas of work:

Economic Justice: Working to close New Jersey's gaping racial wealth gap through expanding access to housing, employment, and other opportunities, including inclusive higher education, fair lending, and financial services. Much of this work relies on the Institute's novel research on the racial wealth gap.

Criminal Justice Reform: Working to close New Jersey's staggering racial disparities in incarceration and transform the overly punitive system into one that is more humane and supportive of truly safe communities for youth and adults. This work includes but isn't limited to advocating for the closure of New Jersey's three youth prisons, protecting youth due process rights, and supporting investment in community-based public safety options.

Democracy & Justice: Working to protect voting rights and expand access to the ballot for all New Jerseyans, including passing and enacting same-day voter registration, restoring voting rights to people on probation and parole, passing a state voting rights law when federal protections were weakened, and advocating for full funding of the 2030 Census to ensure a full census count and racially just redistricting maps.

Environmental Justice: Working, in this new area of work, to fight for vulnerable communities, primarily communities of color, who are disproportionately and repeatedly exposed to environmental harm from pollution, climate impacts, infrastructure and public works projects, and proximity to toxic facilities including large-scale data centers.

In recent years, the staffing infrastructure of the Institute has expanded, providing the Institute with the tools and expertise to be even more impactful in its endeavors and aspirations to grow and increase the reach of its efforts. The Institute strives to listen to what communities need, and then fights for responsive,

innovative, and strategic policies that repair the harms of structural racism and systemic injustice. Its 2026-2027 policy agenda embraces the Institute's commitment to:

- Closing the racial wealth gap.
- Transforming the criminal justice system and keeping communities safe.
- Ensuring democracy for all.
- Advancing environmental justice.
- Confronting New Jersey's history of slavery and systemic racism through reparations.

Impact

The Institute, with its partners, has had many successes and areas of impact in recent years, which include but aren't limited to:

- Successfully enacting the New Jersey Voter Empowerment Act.
- Successfully advocating for the lowering of the voting age to 16 in Newark school board elections.
- Securing online and automatic voter registration.
- Restoring voting rights to over 80,000 people on probation and parole.
- Restoring jury service for over 350,000 people previously denied it due to criminal convictions.
- Releasing the New Jersey Reparations Council report with a Blueprint for Repair.
- Championing a nearly \$10 million reinvestment from youth prisons into community-based programs.
- Successfully passing the Fair Price Protection Act to stop unpredictable—and potentially exploitative—pricing practices.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The President & CEO serves as the chief executive and strategic leader of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President & CEO provides vision, leadership, and oversight of the Institute's strategy, programs, advocacy, fundraising, operations, and external partnerships. The President & CEO is responsible for ensuring alignment, accountability, and collaboration across the organization and directly leads the Senior Management Team consisting of the chief financial and operations officer, the director of development, the director of people operations, the chief communications and marketing officer, the administrative director, and the law and policy director.

As the organization's chief spokesperson and ambassador, the President & CEO builds relationships with community leaders, state and national policymakers, funders, and partners to advance the Institute's mission and impact. The successful candidate will balance big-picture vision with the operational discipline and dexterity necessary to mobilize limited resources for the strongest impact. As this individual will be joining the Institute at the start of its next strategic planning process, the President & CEO must be a collaborative leader with a strong commitment to racial, social, and economic justice; a track record of

effective organizational leadership; and the ability to guide the Institute through its next phase of growth and impact.

This role requires a compelling communicator and external advocate with the ability to expand the Institute's reach beyond New Jersey and deepen its influence within the state—particularly in central and southern New Jersey—while also broadening its national profile. Equally important is cultivating an open, collegial, and highly relational internal culture comprised of colleagues who are driven by a shared sense of mission. The President & CEO must work collaboratively with a powerful, engaged board, managing diverse personalities and perspectives with sound judgment about where the Institute's involvement will be most impactful. The Institute seeks a leader with experience, strength of character, and the capacity to harness existing infrastructure and creative energies to sustain current programs and launch new initiatives.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The President & CEO will address the following opportunities and challenges that are central to the continued growth, impact, and success of the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice:

Expand the statewide impact of the Institute, particularly in Central and South New Jersey, as well as the Institute's national profile.

Approaching its next strategic planning process, the President & CEO will have the opportunity to develop a vision to effectively deepen and broaden the Institute's statewide presence—particularly expanding into Central and South New Jersey, while navigating the state's political dynamics. Emphasis will be placed on the strengthening of partnerships and community engagement beyond Newark and North Jersey, working to amplify the Institute's research and programmatic work on social, economic, and justice issues, and engaging government leaders, community groups, foundations, corporations, and major donors across New Jersey. With a focus on building capacity in all of New Jersey, the next President & CEO will also ensure the Institute is situated nationally, its voice is an active participant in national conversations when strategically appropriate, and its programmatic and advocacy work can be duplicated by other states.

Clarify and promote the work and priorities of the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice in relation to law, research, policy, and community engagement.

The President & CEO will work collaboratively with the Institute's Board of Trustees, team members, and stakeholders to assess and clarify priorities and strategies to effectively integrate law, policy, research, and community engagement to amplify its impact. Flexible and strategic, the President & CEO must be able to navigate competing priorities and make difficult decisions, often under pressure, regarding the Institute's involvement in a range of worthy causes, issues, and coalitions. They will exercise sound

judgment and discernment, and diplomatically guard the Institute's brand, reputation, and missional commitments. Amid a shifting and unpredictable political, legislative, and funding landscape, the President & CEO will work closely with the Institute's board and team members to ensure the Institute's programmatic work is appropriately aligned to maximize impact and sustainability.

Promote the financial sustainability of the Institute and increase fundraising efforts.

The President & CEO will be expected to energetically lead the Institute's fundraising efforts and sustain the Institute's fiscal health in partnership with the Board and senior team colleagues. These efforts will include sustaining and bolstering multi-year grant funding for strategic priorities across the four programmatic areas, strengthening the development infrastructure, and cultivating and managing relationships with new and existing donors (individuals, foundations, and institutions). The President & CEO must cultivate and deepen partnerships with national and local foundations and corporate supporters, work closely with the financial and operations lead to understand current finances and devise sustainability strategies, and catalyze a leadership vision aligned with the Institute's next strategic plan to generate the level of interest, excitement, and buy-in for the Institute's work that drives donor interest and fiscal vitality.

Assess the operations and staffing structure of the Institute to sustain its future growth.

The Institute has grown considerably over the past decade in scope, scale, and impact. In light of this growth, the new President & CEO will have an opportunity to work with the board and team to assess organizational structure, staffing capacity and alignment, and overall organizational health and best practices. Equally essential is the ability to identify and recruit mission-aligned top-tier leadership and continue to foster an organizational culture that promotes efficient, accountable, and transparent decision-making that preserves the Institute's reputation for high-quality and impact, as well as a healthy, generous, and flexible workplace.

Develop and enhance external and political relations.

As part of its work to develop and carry out its strategic priorities for the next five years under new leadership, the preservation and broadening of political and stakeholder relationships is of utmost importance. The President & CEO will utilize the Institute's state and national reputation to re-establish trusted partnerships and a visible advocacy presence related to the work of its four programmatic areas. They must strengthen ties with the current New Jersey legislature and administration while leveraging a deep understanding of federal and state dynamics – while also continuing to hold power to account. The leader will exhibit sophistication and gravitas, proactively developing relationships with social justice and advocacy organizations at the state, regional, and national levels, and remain attentive to shifting priorities among long-standing supporters to ensure the Institute stays relevant and impactful.

Develop and strengthen the internal culture and communications of the Institute.

The next leader of the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice will be an inclusive, trust-building leader and will serve as a visionary communicator and leader. The President & CEO will place value on developing and cultivating a strong trust-based and empowering culture within the organization where colleagues receive adequate supervision while also feeling open to sharing their ideas and insights and are empowered to take the lead on various programmatic and advocacy initiatives, giving them the opportunity to shine. The next leader will balance being engaged in the day-to-day work of the Institute without being a micromanager and will foster and enhance communication across the organization, ensuring that all relevant parties are actively and consistently engaged.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The ideal candidate will have many of the following professional experience and personal characteristics:

- Advanced degree in law, public policy, public administration, social science research and practice, or related field.
- At least ten years of relevant professional experience with a track record of increasing responsibility and accomplishment, including significant experience at the senior leadership level.
- Visionary leader with a demonstrated commitment to civil rights, racial justice, and social equity, especially involving responses to barriers to social and economic equity and justice.
- Proven success in fundraising, organizational growth, and financial stewardship.
- Experience working with boards, government leaders, funders, and diverse stakeholders.
- Experience working or collaborating with national organizations.
- Strong understanding of advocacy strategies, including policy, community engagement, communications, and legal approaches.
- Exceptional leadership, strategic planning, and change-management skills.
- Skilled communicator with the ability to inspire, influence, and build consensus across diverse audiences.
- Ability to work effectively with diverse coalitions and community groups, particularly of color, and to work across political ideology, race, ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.
- Experience leading teams through growth, transition, and organizational change.
- Sound political judgment, diplomacy, and the ability to navigate complex relationships while advancing the Institute's mission.
- Experience in engaging and mobilizing communities and building support in the civic and public arenas for new initiatives and issues.
- Strategic thinker with strong judgment.
- Diplomatic and collaborative with the ability to build trust and develop others.
- A sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the political and advocacy landscapes and the most pressing issues of our time.

- Persuasive written and oral communicator who exhibits an inviting and engaging persona to energize and galvanize a broad range of audiences in settings that range from churches and union halls to boardrooms and legislatures.
- Resilient and adaptable in times of change.

COMPENSATION

The salary range for this position is \$300,000 - \$325,000.

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/new-jersey-institute-social-justice/chief-executive-officer>.

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EEO/DIVERSITY Statement

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. 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 New Jersey Institute for Social Justice would supersede any conflicting information in this document.