



The Vice President of Museum
U.S. Space & Rocket Center
Huntsville, Alabama

THE SEARCH

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center (USSRC or the Center) seeks a strategic, creative, and collaborative leader to serve as its Vice President of Museum. Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Vice President will provide leadership for the Center's museum, collections, archives, exhibits, planetarium, and visitor experience functions while advancing a bold vision for one of the nation's most recognized institutions dedicated to space exploration and STEM learning.

This is a rare opportunity to shape the future of a museum that stewards world-renowned artifacts, inspires millions of visitors and learners, and occupies a unique position at the intersection of science, education, innovation, and discovery. The Vice President joins USSRC at a pivotal moment as the Center advances a campus-wide master planning effort focused on enhancing the museum experience through improved arrival and entrance experiences, stronger wayfinding, more immersive exhibits, and greater connectivity across campus. The successful candidate will bring a demonstrated record of transforming visitor-focused environments, balancing immediate opportunities with a long-term vision that drives engagement, repeat visitation, and institutional impact.

USSRC is a world-class visitor destination and STEM education hub that welcomes more than 650,000 guests annually. As the official Visitor Center for NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and an agency of the State of Alabama, the Center houses one of the world's most comprehensive collections of rockets and space artifacts, including the Saturn V Moon rocket and Pathfinder space shuttle stack. Through immersive exhibits, simulators, the top-ranked INTUITIVE Planetarium, and the internationally recognized Space Camp® program, USSRC inspires visitors of all ages to explore, learn, and innovate while reinforcing Huntsville's identity as "Rocket City."

Few museums are as closely connected to the history they interpret as the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. Many of the artifacts on display were designed, built, or tested in Huntsville, creating a direct connection between the museum experience and the community's profound contributions to America's space

program. This unique relationship provides a powerful foundation for storytelling, community engagement, and inspiring future generations of explorers, innovators, and problem-solvers.

A proud Smithsonian Affiliate, the Center not only houses the Smithsonian's largest artifact but also curates the world's largest assemblage of space hardware. Recent investments, supported by a successful \$65 million capital campaign, include the new Space Camp Operations Center and the restoration of Rocket Park. These initiatives reflect an institution that is building on a remarkable legacy while investing in its future.

Success in this role requires a collaborative, data-informed executive with strong museum leadership experience, financial acumen, and the ability to translate institutional vision into exceptional visitor experiences. The Vice President will be responsible for aligning talented teams around a shared strategy, elevating the guest experience, and helping guide the next chapter of one of the nation's most distinctive museums and educational destinations.

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All applications, inquiries, and nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE U.S. SPACE & ROCKET CENTER

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is a world-class museum, education hub, and visitor destination. It is home to the most extensive spaceflight hardware collection on Earth, with more than 1,500 rockets, spacecraft, engines, and related artifacts on display. USSRC offers a uniquely exciting and immersive window into the past, present, and future of space exploration ranging from early satellites to next-generation rockets. Notable artifacts on display include the United Launch Alliance's Vulcan Rocket, the command module from the Apollo 16 mission, and a real lunar rock brought back by the Apollo 12 mission.

Beyond exhibits, USSRC delivers dynamic, hands-on experiences that bring spaceflight to life. Visitors can try astronaut-training simulators, explore the universe under a 67-foot dome in the INTUITIVE Planetarium opened in 2019, enjoy space-themed films in its theaters, and participate in interactive labs and programs through its outreach and education programs. The INTUITIVE Planetarium was recently honored as the top planetarium in the United States, according to *USA Today*. The Center's flagship educational initiative, Space Camp®, continues to draw participants globally, underscoring USSRC's ongoing commitment to STEM education and inspiration. Over one million individuals have trained under its astronaut-style curriculum since 1982, working as teams, launching simulated space missions, designing future spacecraft, and building vital STEM and leadership skills. Complementing Space Camp are specialized programs including aviation-themed, robotics, and cyber-focused camps that broaden USSRC's reach and reinforce its role as a leading center for STEM education and inspiration. Further, the USSRC offers cutting edge, educational events, such as the annual Artificial Intelligence (AI) Symposium, drawing in notable experts and helping further the USSRC's own strategy.

In recent years, USSRC has also completed a series of significant capital projects that reflect its commitment to renewal and growth. In 2023, the Center opened a new 40,000-square-foot Space Camp Operations Center, a facility which now serves as the central hub for Space Camp and other educational offerings. More recently, in 2024 the Center completed a major restoration and expansion of Rocket Park. Historic Redstone-family rockets were refurbished, and the shuttle-stack display for Pathfinder was reinstalled, restoring one of the world's only complete shuttle stacks for public display. These and other improvements combining preservation of heritage with modern infrastructure underscore USSRC's evolution as a living institution committed to both honoring its legacy and advancing educational and public engagement in space exploration.

The Center is under the exciting leadership of its new Chief Executive officer, Ms. Tina Tucker. Tucker brings two decades of leadership experience in aerospace, defense and training systems development and has deep roots in the Huntsville community. USSRC is governed by the U.S. Space & Rocket Center Commission, an 18-member body appointed by the Governor of Alabama. The U.S. Space & Rocket Center Education Foundation, a separate 501(c)3 organization, works closely with the Commission and raises funds solely for the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and for the organization's family of educational programs. The position of Vice President of Museum has been vacant for over 8 months. The Center waited until the new CEO was selected and on board before initiating the search.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF MUSEUM

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Vice President of Museum provides executive leadership for the museum experience, ensuring the U.S. Space & Rocket Center delivers engaging, educational, and mission-aligned experiences for guests while safeguarding the institution's collections, archives, exhibitions, and planetarium programming.

The Vice President leads cross-functional museum strategy, operational execution, exhibit development, guest engagement, collections stewardship, and interpretive planning in alignment with the Center's mission, strategic plan, and standards of excellence. The Vice President holds executive-level supervisory responsibility for assigned museum functions. The revenue for both the museum and the planetarium is approximately \$10 million, with an additional \$6 million from gift shop sales. The Vice President's direct reports include the Senior Director of the Museum, the Director of the Planetarium, the Director of Visitor Experience, and the Curator. There are approximately 35 full-time employees, with part-time staffing typically around 40 employees and expanding to approximately 150 during the summer season. The role is responsible for aligning these teams around strategic priorities, operational excellence, fiscal responsibility, guest experience, exhibition quality, and collections stewardship.

Beyond divisional oversight, the Vice President will serve as the architect of a cohesive museum experience, helping visitors seamlessly navigate and engage with the Center's exhibitions, attractions, retail offerings, dining venues, and educational experiences. Working closely with leaders across Space Camp, events, marketing, education, and operations, the Vice President will ensure the museum functions

as an integrated component of the broader USSRC experience while providing strategic direction that aligns teams around shared goals and priorities.

The following are the key responsibilities of the Vice President:

Strategic Leadership & Museum Oversight

- Provide executive leadership for the museum division, including Museum Visitor Services, Planetarium, Exhibition Management, and Collections and Archives.
- Develop and implement museum strategies that advance the Center's mission, improve the guest experience, strengthen educational impact, and support long-term institutional growth.
- Lead planning and execution for new, refreshed, and traveling exhibitions, with emphasis on compelling storytelling, accessibility, visitor flow, interactivity, and operational sustainability.
- Ensure museum programs, exhibitions, planetarium experiences, and interpretive activities reflect high standards of scholarship, guest engagement, safety, and mission alignment.
- Use data, financial analysis, audience feedback, and operational metrics to guide priorities, allocate resources, improve performance, and enhance the visitor experience.
- Collaborate with executive leadership, Education, Marketing, Facilities, Development, Finance, and external partners to align museum initiatives with institutional priorities.
- Represent the museum with internal and external stakeholders, including the Smithsonian Institution, aerospace partners, donors, community organizations, peer museums, and professional associations.

Museum Visitor Services

- Oversee the visitor-facing museum experience, ensuring consistent, welcoming, safe, and engaging service from arrival through departure.
- Establish and monitor service standards, operating procedures, staffing models, training expectations, and performance goals for visitor services functions.
- Support ticketing, admissions, guest wayfinding, docent and volunteer engagement, crowd flow, accessibility, and front-of-house coordination.
- Partner with Facilities, Security, Exhibit Maintenance, and other operational teams to ensure public spaces, exhibits, and guest pathways are clean, functional, safe, and visitor ready.
- Work with Marketing and Membership teams to support admissions initiatives, visitor communications, promotions, and audience development.

Planetarium

- Provide executive oversight for the planetarium, ensuring programming is educational, engaging, scientifically accurate, and aligned with the Center's mission.
- Guide the development of planetarium programming, special presentations, collaborations, and revenue-generating opportunities that enhance STEM education and visitor engagement.
- Ensure planetarium operations are properly staffed, scheduled, maintained, and supported by appropriate training and professional development.

- Support technology planning, equipment maintenance, system upgrades, and capital planning necessary to sustain a high-quality planetarium experience.
- Coordinate with Education, Marketing, and museum leadership to promote planetarium offerings and integrate them into the broader guest experience.

Exhibition Management

- Provide strategic direction for exhibition planning, design, fabrication, installation, maintenance, evaluation, and deinstallation.
- Lead cross-functional coordination among curatorial, creative, education, facilities, marketing, collections, and operations teams to deliver high-quality exhibitions on time and within budget.
- Oversee exhibit content development and interpretive planning to ensure exhibitions are accurate, engaging, inclusive, accessible, and aligned with institutional priorities.
- Establish project management practices, schedules, budgets, and decision-making structures for exhibition development and implementation.
- Assess exhibition performance through visitor feedback, attendance data, maintenance needs, educational impact, and operational outcomes.

Collections and Archives

- Provide executive oversight for collections and archives stewardship, ensuring responsible care, documentation, preservation, access, and interpretation of institutional assets.
- Support policies and practices related to acquisitions, loans, deaccessions, conservation, registration, archival management, and collections documentation.
- Ensure collections and archives work is aligned with applicable museum standards, donor expectations, legal requirements, and Smithsonian Affiliate responsibilities.
- Promote appropriate access to collections and archives for exhibitions, research, education, public programs, digital initiatives, and institutional storytelling.
- Partner with Development and executive leadership on donor relations, artifact-related opportunities, grants, sponsorships, and strategic collections initiatives.

Leadership, Budgeting, and Collaboration

- Direct, mentor, and evaluate senior museum leaders, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, professionalism, innovation, and guest-centered service.
- Lead annual planning, budgeting, forecasting, procurement, and resource allocation for assigned museum functions.
- Identify operational risks, staffing needs, capital priorities, and process improvements, and recommend practical solutions to the CEO and executive leadership team.
- Communicate clearly with staff, executive leadership, board members, visitors, donors, industry partners, and community stakeholders.
- Champion the U.S. Space & Rocket Center's commitment to education, innovation, preservation, and the celebration of human space exploration.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT OF MUSEUM

To be successful, the next Vice President of Museum will address the following key opportunities and challenges:

Reimagine an iconic museum for a new generation

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center stewards one of the world's most significant collections of spaceflight artifacts. The Center's legacy museum spaces present opportunities for modernization, requiring a thoughtful approach to facility renewal, exhibition enhancement, and visitor experience improvements. The Center is undertaking a significant planning process that will shape the future of the visitor experience for years to come. Central to these efforts are opportunities to rethink guest arrival, improve wayfinding, strengthen connections between museum spaces, and create a more intuitive, immersive, and engaging journey through the Center's extraordinary offerings.

The next Vice President will have the rare opportunity to help shape the future of a museum that holds extraordinary historic assets while redefining how visitors experience and engage with them. Success will require more than refreshing exhibits. The next leader must develop a strategic vision for the museum experience, one that blends immersive storytelling, interactivity, visitor-centered design, and authentic connections to the ongoing story of space exploration. The challenge is to honor a remarkable legacy while creating a museum experience that inspires repeat visitation, broadens audience engagement, and reflects contemporary standards of museum excellence.

Provide strategic leadership, alignment, and advocacy

The Vice President will have the opportunity to lead a talented team with deep institutional knowledge, specialized expertise, and a shared passion for the Center's mission. By providing clear direction, consistent leadership, and a compelling vision for the future, the Vice President can build upon the strong foundation already in place while empowering staff to contribute their ideas, creativity, and professional strengths. This is a role for a leader who values collaboration and recognizes that many of the best solutions will emerge from leveraging the collective expertise of the team.

The Vice President will be expected to align museum priorities with the broader goals of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center and ensuring that the museum's voice and ambitions is represented in organization-wide planning and decision-making. The next Vice President must serve as a visible advocate for the museum, its staff, and its strategic needs, helping to secure support, resources, and institutional focus for key initiatives. By championing the work of the museum across the organization and with constituents, the Vice President can help position the museum and its team for long-term success and impact.

Elevate the museum's national profile and impact

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center possesses extraordinary assets, including world-renowned collections, compelling stories of innovation and exploration, a nationally recognized planetarium, and unique connections to the past, present, and future of spaceflight. The next Vice President will have the opportunity to build upon these strengths by elevating the museum's visibility, influence, and impact within the institution and across the broader museum, education, and aerospace communities.

To achieve this goal, the Vice President will need to effectively communicate the museum's vision, champion its priorities, and build support for future initiatives. By fostering strategic partnerships with educators and museum professionals nationwide, expanding opportunities for collaboration, and increasing awareness of the museum's distinctive strengths, the Vice President can help unlock new opportunities for growth, engagement, and institutional impact while reinforcing the museum's essential role in fulfilling the Center's mission.

Enhance the potential of the museum's assets and creative capabilities

Few museum leaders have the opportunity to oversee collections and archival holdings of such historical significance. From iconic rockets and spacecraft to irreplaceable documentation of America's space program, the Center's assets represent an unparalleled resource for education, scholarship, and public engagement. Complementing these holdings is an accomplished in-house team that develops planetarium productions, exhibits, and interactive experiences, creating unique opportunities to transform collections-based content into engaging experiences. The next Vice President will have a unique opportunity to harness these creative talents to create dynamic experiences that deepen visitor engagement and strengthen the museum's impact.

Realizing this opportunity will require a leader who can thoughtfully balance preservation, innovation, and accessibility. The Vice President will help establish priorities for collections stewardship, archival development, exhibition planning, and content creation while fostering collaboration across teams responsible for exhibits, the planetarium, visitor experiences, and educational initiatives.

Innovate strategically for greater impact

The Center is entering an exciting period of opportunity, with the potential for new exhibitions, enhanced visitor experiences, expanded museum spaces, and continued growth of innovative offerings. The Vice President will have a meaningful opportunity to help prioritize and advance initiatives that strengthen the museum's impact, enrich the visitor experience, and support the Center's broader mission. This is a role for a leader who is energized by the opportunity to shape the future of a distinctive and highly visible institution.

Particular attention will be devoted to identifying initiatives that drive attendance, membership growth, repeat visitation, and community engagement. The Vice President will be expected to think entrepreneurially about the museum's future, identifying partnerships, funding opportunities, traveling

exhibitions, sponsorships, and new experiences that expand impact while supporting long-term financial sustainability.

Achieving these ambitions will require a leader who pairs vision with disciplined execution and an entrepreneurial mindset. Operating within a resource-conscious environment, the Vice President must be adept at identifying creative solutions, forging strategic partnerships, securing external support, and maximizing the impact of available resources. Success will depend on the ability to balance immediate operational needs with long-term aspirations, align stakeholders around shared priorities, and thoughtfully deploy resources toward the initiatives that generate the greatest institutional and visitor impact.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center seeks a collaborative executive leader with strong museum management experience and the ability to translate vision into high-quality visitor experience at one of the nation's most prominent science education and visitor institutions. Qualifications and characteristics of the successful candidate will include many of the following:

Museum & Visitor Experience Leadership

- Bachelor's degree in museum studies, history, science, education, business administration, nonprofit management, hospitality management, or a related field required, advanced degree preferred.
- At least ten years of progressive leadership experience in museums, science centers, cultural institutions, visitor attractions, or similarly complex public-facing organizations, including at least five years in a senior management role.
- Demonstrated success creating engaging, immersive, and interactive visitor experiences that enhance audience engagement, attendance, membership, repeat visitation, or guest satisfaction.
- Knowledge of professional standards and best practices related to visitor experience, exhibition development, collections care, archives, interpretation, accessibility, and safety.
- Experience working with or within Smithsonian Affiliates, science museums, aerospace organizations, or STEM-focused institutions preferred.
- Passion for space exploration, science, education, history, and public engagement strongly preferred.

Strategic Planning & Operational Acumen

- Demonstrated ability to lead complex museum or institutional operations, aligning creative, curatorial, educational, guest-facing, and operational functions around shared strategic priorities.
- Strong strategic planning, organizational, and problem-solving skills, with the ability to manage multiple priorities and drive both short- and long-term initiatives.
- Experience overseeing budgets, financial planning, revenue and expense management, procurement, contracts, project execution, and operational performance metrics.

- Entrepreneurial mindset with experience identifying and advancing new revenue opportunities, strategic partnerships, sponsorships, grants, or other resources that support organizational growth and sustainability.

Leadership & Collaboration

- Highly collaborative and transparent leadership style, with a demonstrated ability to build trust, develop consensus, and lead teams through periods of change, growth, and transformation.
- Proven success leading and developing multidisciplinary teams in complex organizations.
- Executive presence, professional gravitas, and exceptional communication skills, with the ability to inspire and influence a wide range of stakeholders, including staff, executive leadership, board members, donors, partners, vendors, and the public.

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

Huntsville offers a dynamic blend of opportunity and quality of life, thus making it a compelling home base for professionals and their families. The city has experienced rapid growth. As of July 2025, its population reached roughly 249,000, reflecting a nearly 16% increase since the 2020 census, making it one of the fastest-growing mid-size cities in the U.S. The cost of living remains well below the national average, including housing expenses. At the same time, Huntsville boasts a robust and diverse economy, with employment opportunities in aerospace, defense, technology, manufacturing, and scientific services. The presence of top-tier educational institutions and family-friendly neighborhoods, along with plentiful green space and easy access to natural areas such as hiking trails, parks, and mountains nearby, makes it especially appealing. Huntsville offers the energy and opportunity of a growing tech-centered city, paired with affordability and quality of life with access to remarkable amenities and nature.

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](#).

Jacqueline Mildner, Partner
Ivan Ceballos, Managing Associate
Pamela Carty, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, or veteran status.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by U.S. Space & Rocket Center. 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 U.S. Space & Rocket Center would supersede any conflicting information in this document.