



## Search for the President and Chief Executive Officer

Amideast  
Washington, DC

### THE SEARCH

Amideast, a leading non-profit organization with a long record of success promoting educational and cultural exchange between the United States and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, is seeking a dynamic and experienced leader to serve as its next President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Headquartered in Washington, DC, with offices throughout the MENA region, Amideast works with local, regional, and international partners to provide programs and services to improve educational opportunities, expand access to US educational programs, strengthen local institutional capacity, and develop language and professional skills for success in the competitive global economy.

Amideast seeks a leader with deep knowledge of and experience in the MENA region who combines the proven skills of a highly successful executive practitioner with the conceptual breadth of a thought pioneer in times of rapid change, delicate political ecosystems, and rapid technological advances. This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced leader to serve as the lead architect in guiding Amideast to sustain its core strengths in providing programming for underserved communities in the MENA region while leveraging opportunities for future success as the organization enters its eighth decade.

With an annual portfolio of \$55 million, and more than 20 offices in 11 MENA countries, Amideast is making a difference. In 2021, Amideast programs and services benefited 1,515 exchange and scholarship students; empowered 12,000 youth and women through special programs; enabled 35,000 students and professional trainees to learn English or a skill; provided guidance on US study to 100,000 individuals; and administered 210,000 standardized tests for individuals pursuing higher education or professional opportunities.

The successful President and CEO will embrace the values, mission, and goals of Amideast, believe strongly in the power of education to transform the prospects for underprivileged individuals and communities, and commit to enhancing the organization's identity as a global leader in international education. They will be an experienced and thoughtful team leader skilled at identifying areas for growth in a changing landscape, while effectively building relationships across Amideast's network in the MENA region and the US to ensure successful fundraising efforts. The next President and CEO should build on and leverage the organization's distinctive strengths and programs, including its long-time role with the Fulbright Foreign

Student Program in the MENA region, and pioneer other opportunities for educational opportunity and cultural exchange and understanding.

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, is assisting Amideast with the search for its next President and Chief Executive Officer. Drawing on the organization's existing materials and stakeholder interviews, this position description encapsulates the characteristics of the ideal next leader. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## **HISTORY**

Amideast was founded in May 1951 to promote mutual understanding and cooperation through education, information, and development programs; it has since established itself as a respected, dynamic institution committed to encouraging constructive dialogue between Americans and the people of the MENA region.

Amideast continued to advance educational and cultural exchange opportunities by growing its network in the region, expanding human capacity development, and adding technical training. During the 1970s, demand for education in the United States grew, and Amideast expanded advising services and introduced testing services to meet demand. Governments and businesses increasingly turned to Amideast for skills and development training. Field offices added English language and professional skills training to their offerings for the general public. In 1970, Amideast began to administer components of the prestigious Fulbright Program on behalf of the US Department of State.

The 9/11 attacks underscored the continuing relevance of Amideast's mission to support international cultural and educational exchange and advance mutual understanding. Offering programs to support and empower the region's youth and women was critical to furthering opportunity in the wake of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the ensuing prolonged economic malaise across the region. Among Amideast's responses to this evolving reality was the development of its Skills for Success® curriculum to provide youth with training in areas employers cite as most needed among job seekers, including English language, computer skills, and personal competencies, as well as building entrepreneurship awareness and skills. Amideast shifted to online training and virtual exchange activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These now-standard components of Amideast programming opened new possibilities for access to programs and services and have enabled the organization to reach new audiences in underserved communities.

## **ABOUT AMIDEAST**

### **Where Amideast Works**

Amideast is headquartered in Washington, DC, with a network of more than [20 field and project offices](#) in 11 countries, providing services across the MENA region. Amideast has offices in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan,

Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, UAE, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen. Amideast also operates programs in Algeria, Bahrain, Libya, and Qatar.

## **Staff**

Amideast staff currently number 494 employees (including 48 US citizen English language instructors), of whom 65 work in the United States and the remainder in the MENA region. Another 250-300 are engaged as independent contractors: professional skills trainers, non-U.S. English teachers, and other technical experts. The organization's senior leadership team includes the CEO, Chief Finance Officer, Vice President of Programs, Vice President of Business Development, and Vice President of Field Operations. Each country is led by a country director who reports into Amideast Headquarters.

## **Amideast's Mission Statement**

Amideast's [mission](#) is to create hope, opportunity, and mutual understanding among people in the Middle East, North Africa, and the United States through life-changing opportunities for education and cultural exchanges. Amideast envisions a world where all people have access to opportunities that enable them to go as far as their dreams, talents, and dedication can take them. Through its varied program areas, Amideast seeks to reach marginalized and under-resourced groups, empower women and girls, develop youth's potential as global citizens in the 21st century, expand educational and training opportunities, build cross-cultural understanding, prepare individuals for jobs in the global economy, and strengthen institutions and communities. Its extensive array of [program offerings and services](#) reflects the organization's deep commitment to expanding opportunities for people in the MENA region and the United States.

### *Scholarships and Exchange Program Support*

Amideast supports the US Department of State's flagship international exchange Fulbright Program. For more than 40 years, Amideast has placed students from across the MENA region at universities throughout the United States, and continues to support them once they become alumni. The organization currently sponsors 380 students in the United States.

Academic exchanges comprised the majority of Amideast's activities in 2021. Amideast hosts EducationUSA advising centers in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, the West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen on behalf of the US Department of State. These centers support students to access higher education at more than 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States. Additionally, Amideast partners with multiple donors to administer scholarship and fellowship programs for students from the MENA region pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees in the United States.

### *English language training programs*

Amideast offers English language instruction for adults, teens, and children at all levels, from beginning to advanced. Courses range from conversational English to academic English to English for particular jobs or industries. Programs are available in person and online for young learners and teens, for undergraduate and graduate students preparing for standardized tests or admission to universities where English is the language of instruction, and for professionals seeking to build their skills for personal and professional advancement.

### *Skills Development*

Youth unemployment rates in the MENA region are among the world's highest, particularly for women and recent college graduates. Amideast offers professional skills training, workforce development programs, and entrepreneurship capacity-building to equip youth with the skills needed to obtain careers in competitive local, regional, and global job markets.

### *Testing Services*

As the representative of Educational Testing Service (ETS), Prometric, and other testing organizations, Amideast administers a variety of language, aptitude, achievement, and professional qualifying exams. In 2021, 210,000 individuals took tests administered by Amideast in 17 countries across the MENA region. Testing is a key gateway to US education.

### *Education Abroad in the MENA region*

Amideast supports virtual and onsite programs for young people to study in the MENA region while improving their Arabic language skills and interacting with the people and cultures of the region. Amideast Education Abroad offers semester and summer programs in Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, and the UAE and a Virtual Learning and Cultural Exchange Program, as well as custom-designed, faculty-led, and other short-term programs for clients and sponsors.

### *Institutional Capacity Building*

Amideast works with local, regional, and international partners across the MENA region to help strengthen educational, civil society, and government institutions, enabling them to better meet the needs of their clients and constituencies.

### **Current Financial Picture**

Following a dip in revenues during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization is returning to normal operating levels. This year, the budget is approximately \$55 million, with funding sources split almost equally between US government sources and other private, corporate, and foreign government sources, as well as international donor organizations. The organization's reserves are valued at \$16 million.

In 2020, the Board approved the purchase of the historic former US consulate building in Alexandria, Egypt, valued at \$2 million. Amideast had been renting space in that building for its programming. The organization believes this is a unique asset that will increase in value over time.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Amideast is governed by a 22-member [Board of Directors](#) (Board). Board officers include a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Board also has an Executive Committee comprising 7-10 officers, including the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer (who also serves as Chair of the Finance Committee), Secretary, Chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, and Chair of the Advancement Committee. Each officer is elected for a five-year term and may be re-elected for one additional consecutive five-year term. A quorum of the majority of the Board may elect a Chair and a Vice Chair for a term of one year. The bylaws require that the Board have no fewer than seven and no greater than 30 members. The Board meets at least twice a year, in the spring and fall; special meetings may be called at other times as determined by the Chair; the Executive Committee meets four times a year. This group of individuals is highly accomplished, engaged, and brings valuable perspectives and skills.

Amideast is incorporated in the State of New York and, in 2018, underwent a formal strategic planning process resulting in updated bylaws, term limits, and a greater focus on governance.

## **ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President and Chief Executive Officer will provide strategic leadership and direction for Amideast, as well as manage its day-to-day operations. They will work closely with the Board to implement the organization's mission and will be responsible for maintaining the continuing success of Amideast's programs and services. This leader is poised to evaluate current offerings and consider future opportunities for growth to ensure a sustainable model for the future.

Outside the organization, the President and CEO should be a connected leader – nurturing existing relationships while cultivating new partnerships. In collaboration with local, regional, national, and international entities, they will grow and expand Amideast's impact. This leader must be able to promote Amideast's mission, story, and services to multiple stakeholders, advocating and listening with the audience in mind. Internally, the president and CEO should focus on effective communication, collaboration, and improving operational efficiencies to ensure the continued health of Amideast's operations and its people.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The next President and Chief Executive Officer will inherit a well-established organization with a strong reputation at a time of tremendous opportunity for impact. Their success will be measured primarily by their constructive engagement with the following challenges and opportunities:

### **Maintain and enhance Amideast's position as a leading cultural organization focused on the MENA region and chart a path toward its future**

Amideast has a dedicated history of serving the MENA region in the face of complex economic and political challenges and is the only American international non-profit focusing exclusively on the MENA region. As the organization enters its eighth decade, it will need to continue to evolve in response to shifting global needs to be best positioned to support youth and communities. Ensuring clarity in direction, decision-making, and internal communication will be paramount as the organization considers opportunities to grow and scale its impact. As the external face of the organization, the President and CEO amplifies the reputational strengths of Amideast and communicates its mission while increasing visibility and status in stakeholder communities.

Amideast has a long and successful partnership with the US State Department in many program areas, and in particular, overseeing the implementation of the prestigious Fulbright Foreign Student Program in the region. In addition to being a hallmark of the organization's portfolio, the program is critical to its success and comes up for renewal in 1.5 years. The next leader should ensure the renewal process is handled with diligence and care, given the increased market competition. Given that half of Amideast's funding comes from government sources, the President and CEO will need to develop and maintain productive relationships with various offices awarding grants. This new leader will also ensure that the relationships between Amideast's headquarters and offices abroad remain solid and functional, with clear communication.

### **Continue to grow resources to support Amideast's mission**

It is important for Amideast to deploy its financial resources strategically and thoughtfully. The President and CEO will consider opportunities for diversification beyond traditional grantmaking in order to increase impact. An entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking will be important for the new leader as they consider pursuing new lines of business and other revenue-generating possibilities.

The President and CEO will also intentionally and proactively engage in donor cultivation and stewardship to increase its asset base. This leader should have experience cultivating donors and will work to grow the organization's charitable assets by enhancing existing funds and generating new funds.

### **Work to develop and maintain a talented staff**

Amideast's next President and Chief Executive Officer will provide leadership and management for Amideast's nearly 500 employees distributed between the Washington, DC headquarters and 20+ project and field offices in 11 countries. They will inherit a talented, thoughtful team of professionals with a deep commitment to the organization's mission. They will also nurture a positive and robust organizational culture. This leader will leverage the expertise and strengths of the staff, empowering and supporting them to do their best work both independently and collaboratively.

It will be important to recruit and retain top talent while continuing to cultivate community and collaboration across teams. The organization has a long-serving executive team, many of whom have been with the organization for decades. Retaining and growing the core leadership team will be critical; the President and CEO will need to consider replacing key leaders who may be retiring in a phased way over the next several years. This new leader should have the skills and appetite to support and evaluate Amideast's internal infrastructure. There should be careful attention to improving and developing streamlined processes and systems, developing internal growth opportunities for junior staff, and strategizing how to manage and support all teams across the organization.

### **Leverage Amideast's Dedicated Board**

The President and CEO reports to Amideast's Board, many of whom bring high-level experience through their previous work in the US Foreign Service, academia, the corporate sector, and other high-level leadership roles in the MENA region. Amideast went through an assessment that resulted in the organization embracing the growth and diversification of the Board demographically and by skill set. There are continued opportunities for Amideast to diversify its Board, increase Board fundraising efforts, and continue to adhere to best Board governance practices.

The President and CEO works closely with the Board to ensure the success of Amideast; they will engage effectively with the Board and present concise and thorough information to support sound and strategic governance decisions. As the fulcrum between the Board and the organization, they are essential to strengthening lines of open and productive communication, ensuring work is aligned. They will draw on members' knowledge and diverse experiences in furthering a coordinated mission for Amideast.

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

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

- Deep knowledge of and experience in the MENA region, ideally through executive-level government or private-sector employment. Personal connections with regional leaders, both government and private sector, and Arabic language skills a strong plus
- A proven ability to deal effectively with Amideast's significant partners, primarily the US State Department, especially its Education and Cultural Affairs division, and the US Agency for International Development
- Ability to adapt strategies and business models to volatile or otherwise rapidly changing environments and to engage effectively in communicating that vision, leading by example; the ability to develop an effective inclusive process for promoting innovation
- Prior experience with a 501(c)3 organization in a significant oversight role and the ability to work effectively, collaboratively, and transparently with a Governance Board
- Proven ability to oversee complex organizations overseas in a variety of challenging security and political situations

- Strong interpersonal skills adaptable to a variety of diverse cultures and political environments among Amideast's partners and stakeholders (including academia, businesses, governments, and bureaucracy in the US and abroad)
- A commitment to mindful management with attention to diversity and organizational inclusion; a willingness to explore a variety of viewpoints respectfully and transparently; regular interactions aimed at motivating a talented leadership team; and a demonstrated commitment to the welfare and development of all team members
- A clear understanding of complex budgetary processes, financial markets, and other potential sources of revenue and a proven ability to creatively match those resources with operational expenditures to ensure financial stability
- A willingness to engage in regular international travel
- A proven ability to identify potential donors and to nurture relationships for the purpose of obtaining gifts and grants from individuals, corporations, and foundations, as well as former Amideast beneficiaries, with a strategy for engaging the Board in such fundraising

#### **APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS**

All inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters can be sent electronically to:

Sean Farrell, Partner  
Annah Wells, Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/amideast/chief-executive-officer>

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