



**Search for the Chief of Staff
The Morton Arboretum
Lisle, Illinois**

THE SEARCH

The Morton Arboretum (the Arboretum), globally recognized for its century-long commitment to tree-focused science, conservation, and education, seeks an inaugural Chief of Staff to directly support the President and CEO. Since its inception, the Arboretum has been a vanguard in its mission to collect, study, display, and conserve trees and plants from around the world to inspire learning, foster enjoyment, benefit communities, encourage action, and enhance the environment. The vision is to create a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world where people and trees thrive together.

It is a momentous time for the organization, under the leadership of Jill Koski as President and CEO. In Jill's first year in the role, the organization has collaboratively developed a compelling strategic direction for the future. As a vital partner and trusted advisor to the President, the Chief of Staff will manage mission-essential initiatives for the Arboretum and the President, providing insights, thoughtful perspectives, and critical analyses on important decisions and projects. The Arboretum seeks a strategic thinker with a knack for translating conceptual aspirations into tangible actions and high-level strategies into actionable plans. Additionally, this leader will possess the finesse to engage with public officials and cultivate valuable partnerships, serving as a bridge between internal stakeholders and external partners.

Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, is assisting The Morton Arboretum with the search for the Chief of Staff. 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 MORTON ARBORETUM

Mission

The Morton Arboretum is a world-renowned tree-focused public garden. Its mission is to collect, study, display, and conserve trees and other plants from around the world to inspire learning, foster enjoyment, benefit communities, encourage action, and enhance the environment. The vision is to create a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world where people and trees thrive together.

History

The Arboretum was founded in 1922 by Joy Morton, founder of the Morton Salt Company and son of the founder of Arbor Day. “Plant Trees” was the Morton family motto, and its legacy carries through the Arboretum’s mission and programs to this day. Joy established his country estate in Lisle, IL in the early 1900s as a respite from the bustle of the Chicago industrial scene 25 miles away. Between 1909 and 1921, Joy focused on transforming the property into an arboretum, and in 1922, The Morton Arboretum was formally established, with members of Joy’s family and Morton Salt executives appointed to life terms on the Board of Trustees. When Joy died in 1934, the Arboretum consisted of 735 acres and many plantings and nurseries, an extensive system of roads and paths, and a small but mighty staff developing and overseeing a general landscape plan.

Strategic Vision

The Morton Arboretum envisions a greener, healthier, and more beautiful world where people and trees thrive together. Three interlinked strategic priorities will help achieve this vision:

- People and communities are engaged and inspired
- Knowledge is advanced through collaborative scientific inquiry
- Trees are protected, preserved, and supported

A key component of the new strategic plan is the Arboretum’s continued partnership and engagement with a range of audiences and perspectives. The Arboretum seeks to welcome a diversity of community members to engage with its mission and programs onsite, in addition to engaging audiences virtually and in their communities. The Arboretum is committed to hiring employees, electing trustees, and attracting volunteers representing the broader public, through which the Arboretum will gain enriched perspectives to inform its objectives.

Organization and Programs

In 2022, the Arboretum celebrated its first century of mission impact. Today, the Arboretum encompasses 1,700 acres of woodlands, prairie, lakes, and streams, with plant collections and specialty gardens amid natural landscapes. In addition, the Arboretum is home to 16 miles of hiking trails and 9 miles of paved roads for driving, bicycling, and guided tram tours. The organization attracts more than 1 million visitors annually from across the nation and world and has 58,000 member households. The Arboretum is operated by a team of staff and volunteers, including 230 full-time, 135 part-time, 120 temporary employees, and 900 volunteers.

Plant Collections

The Arboretum grows and displays a rich diversity of trees, shrubs, and other plants that are evaluated for their suitability for the midwestern United States. These living collections include 222,000 plant

specimens representing 4,100 different kinds of plants. Arranged by geographic, taxonomic, and other special groupings, the collections are enhanced by restored natural areas of native plants and ecosystems. The Arboretum's work in new plant development results in useful and attractive trees and shrubs that are introduced in the marketplace.

Science and Conservation

The Arboretum is globally recognized for its leadership in developing leading-edge solutions in tree science and research. [The Center for Tree Science](#) (the Center) is the hub of this important work, where a team of scientists with expertise in tree biology, ecology, evolution, conservation, and the cultivation of trees and shrubs develop a deep understanding of trees and what makes them thrive. The Center engages scientists worldwide through its Collaborative Network, which encompasses scientific colleagues from gardens, universities, industries, and organizations. These scientists share their expertise with the Arboretum through special relationships established between the Arboretum and their home institutions. The Arboretum also has an herbarium with a collection of 205,000 dried specimens that are used for botanical research.

In addition to research, the Arboretum advances tree conservation. Through the Global Tree Conservation Program, the Arboretum leads partnerships and assists efforts to prevent tree extinction and secure threatened tree species, with a focus on oaks. In March 2023, the [Species Survival Commission](#) (SSC) of the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN), the world's largest conservation organization, designated The Morton Arboretum as the first *Center for Species Survival: Trees*. Only eleven Centers are recognized globally by the IUCN SSC, five of which are in North America.

Learning, Engagement, and Outreach

The Arboretum's Learning and Engagement division provides programming for guests of all ages, including Little Trees, a nature-based early childhood learning program. Educational programs for adults include in-person and online classes in gardening and plant care, conservation, and tree and nature-related topics, in addition to art, photography, and other classes.

The Arboretum also offers science-based advice about trees, plants, and landscapes to amateur and professional gardeners and landscapers throughout the world through the [Plant Clinic](#), which answers thousands of inquiries annually about plant care and selection.

The Sterling Morton Library has collections mainly focused on botany, horticulture, and related subjects, with a wide range of resources from highly scientific works to general gardening guides and a robust children's collection.

The Arboretum's four-acre Children's Garden encourages hands-on learning through immersive play in a tree-filled setting. The Arboretum also hosts Summer Science Camps, nature-based early learning classes, and other programs for children. Additionally, the Arboretum provides a host of supplementary resources for educators and students.

The Arboretum leads the [Chicago Region Trees Initiative](#), a partnership for coordinated action to improve the health, diversity, and equitable distribution of trees in the Chicago region to benefit people and communities. The Arboretum's outreach not only focuses on the Chicago region, but also expands globally through programs like ArbNet, an interactive professional community of arboreta and an arboretum accreditation program. Launched in 2011, ArbNet now includes more than 2,000 institutions from 40 countries.

Leadership

The Arboretum's [Board of Trustees](#) is responsible for the overall governance of the institution and the advancement of its mission. Comprised of corporate and civic leaders, trustees are elected to their roles. Additionally, a Board of Advisors provides guidance and perspectives to the leadership of the Arboretum around strategic matters related to its mission and work.

In 2022, Jill Koski was named the President and CEO of the Arboretum. She was selected as the fourth leader in the Arboretum's 100-year history and the organization's first woman President and CEO. Jill came to The Morton Arboretum from Holden Forests and Gardens in Ohio where she was president and CEO from 2017 to 2022. Prior to that, she was vice president of development at The Morton Arboretum for 10 years. Her previous experience includes leadership roles in science-focused environmental nonprofits, namely the John G. Shedd Aquarium and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

Provide direct support to the President and CEO

The Chief of Staff will oversee the day-to-day management of the Office of the President and CEO and serve as a trusted strategic partner and administrative resource to her, offering valuable insights, acting as a sounding board for critical decisions, identifying and troubleshooting risks, and providing high-level executive support. The Chief of Staff will ensure the President's time and energy are strategically directed and focused on the work that she is uniquely positioned to do, especially the long-range vision, positioning, and impact of the organization as well as relationship-building both internally and externally.

Serve on the Arboretum's leadership team and as a senior-level project manager for key organization-wide initiatives and planning

In addition to providing counsel to the President and CEO on organization-wide priorities, the Chief of Staff will build trust across the Arboretum's highly accomplished senior leadership team, identifying opportunities to improve current processes and coordinating organizational procedures for optimized efficiency and productivity. In particular, the Chief of Staff will identify communication gaps, find solutions to close those gaps, and ensure a shared focus on institutional priorities to prevent work redundancies.

This important work will require the Chief of Staff to stay up-to-date on all workforce and Arboretum matters to best support institutional decision-making.

In the context of championing annual and long-range strategic planning across functional areas, the Chief of Staff will serve as a senior-level program manager, working closely with the President and leadership team to establish priorities, design strategies for implementation and assessment, and lead the collection and collation of metrics and milestones. The Chief of Staff will provide regular progress updates to the President and the full leadership team on this work.

Partner on board management

In partnership with the President and CEO, the Chief of Staff will ensure robust and meaningful engagement of Arboretum trustees. They will assist with the management of the Governance Committee with a specific focus on board policies and practices and partner with the Vice President of Development on matters related to trustee prospect development, and former trustee and life trustee engagement. They will ensure consistent management of all board of trustees standing committees and ad hoc task forces in partnership with the CEO and vice presidents who serve as primary liaisons to various committees. The Chief of Staff will manage board meeting preparation and actions from materials development, preparation of appropriate resolutions, and follow-up actions and reporting.

Coordinate the Arboretum's government relations and civic engagement

The Chief of Staff will serve as the primary liaison for government relations including coordination and tracking of all public and governmental organization activity, managing work with lobbying firms, and determining the best representation of the organization for related communications and in-person meetings. The Chief of Staff will identify opportunities and support active engagement of the President and CEO and other staff members in external leadership, speaking, and program opportunities provided through various civic clubs, professional organizations, and community programs.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

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

- An understanding of the position and representation of the President and CEO in all interactions; model of organizational culture based on institutional values.
- Superb communication that fosters positive relationships and instills trust and confidence across the organization.
- Organizational skills and good judgment required to prioritize projects and decisions; ability to proactively identify solutions to potential challenges and accurately track progress toward goals.

- Effective process management to ensure the President's involvement in a project takes place at the right place and at the right time.
- Ability to make clear-headed and objective decisions under pressure.
- Commitment to discretion and confidentiality.
- Commitment to, and a high level of comfort with lifting up diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion as foundations of institutional success.
- Flexibility to adjust to changing environments based on new information, circumstances, or unanticipated opportunities, and an openness to innovation.
- A dedication to the mission and vision of The Morton Arboretum.

COMPENSATION

The anticipated salary range for this position is \$130,000-\$170,000.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The Morton Arboretum has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Review of applications, nominations, and expressions of interest will begin immediately and continue on a confidential basis until an appointment is made. Applicants should send a cover letter and resume or curriculum vitae. Nominations, applications, and inquiries should be sent electronically and in confidence to:

Jeff Kessner, Partner
Annah Wells, Associate
Jenny Rubin, Search Coordinator

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/morton-arboretum/chief-staff>

The Morton Arboretum is a champion for diversity, supporting a culture of inclusion that attracts, inspires, and engages people to achieve success. The Arboretum is committed to hire and develop employees based on job-related qualifications irrespective of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, or veteran status. To increase diversity in professions related to the public garden realm, we encourage applications from underrepresented minorities, persons with disabilities, and veterans.

The Morton Arboretum is dedicated to complying with our obligations as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. All applicants are guaranteed equal consideration for employment.