



# MYSTIC AQUARIUM

President and  
Chief Executive Officer



shelli  
herman  
AND ASSOCIATES



## The Opportunity

Mystic Aquarium seeks an experienced, mission-driven President and Chief Executive Officer to lead the organization into its next chapter, defined by expanded conservation impact, philanthropic growth, and deeper community relevance. Reporting to the Board of Trustees, this leader will set the strategic direction, build organizational capacity, and ensure Mystic Aquarium is well-positioned to advance its mission to protect aquatic life and empower communities to save our oceans. The ideal candidate will bring strong management skills and genuine business acumen and be able to translate compelling goals into sustained, measurable outcomes. Beyond operational expertise, this leader must be a visionary who looks at an institution with a proud, more than 50-year history, an extraordinary animal collection, a nationally recognized rescue program, and a deeply loyal community, and sees, with clarity and conviction, the remarkable organization it is becoming.

This is an opportunity to lead a distinctive institution at a pivotal moment. A [strategic plan](#) has been developed that provides a meaningful starting point; the incoming CEO will be expected to bring fresh eyes to this plan, innovating, revising, and creating the right blueprint moving forward, ensuring that the strategy is grounded in current realities and shaped by an aspirational vision. The central mandate is to build on Mystic Aquarium's stable foundation while helping the organization evolve to meet the growing demands of its mission and the extraordinary opportunities ahead. Success will require a leader who can galvanize both internal and external audiences around a shared vision, generating the enthusiasm, trust, and commitment needed to move the organization forward together. The CEO will understand the inherent connection between the Aquarium's revenue-generating capacity and its ability to support the conservation, education, and research initiatives that are foundational to its mission. Diversifying that revenue model will be a defining priority, moving the organization away from its current concentration in gate admissions and visitor spending toward a stronger, more sustainable balance between earned and contributed income.

To fulfill this mandate, three key capabilities are crucial. First, the new CEO must be an authentic and effective champion of the organization. This highly visible and influential leader, well-connected politically at both state and federal levels, will establish a strong fundraising foundation by engaging philanthropic organizations, strengthening corporate partnerships, and making a compelling case for investing in the Aquarium's mission. They should strategically position the organization as a conservation leader and develop relationships with peer institutions, academic partners, and civic leaders to broaden the Aquarium's influence regionally, nationally, and internationally. Second, this leader must be an inspiring internal figure and a decisive culture builder, earning the trust of a talented staff, clarifying accountability across departments, strengthening management at all levels, and fostering a transparent, mission-driven workplace that retains top talent and attracts new professionals. Third, and equally important, is governance: the next CEO must actively nurture the relationship with the Board, engage trustees in their philanthropic and governance roles, and maintain a high-trust, productive partnership between the Board and staff to support the organization's aspirational goals.

The new President and CEO will work with an enthusiastic and devoted community to chart the course for Mystic Aquarium's next exciting phase. In the near term, they will assess the organization, build trust with the Leadership Team, and craft a compelling philanthropic narrative that engages donors in the Aquarium's rescue, research, education, and conservation work. In the long term, they will prepare the organization for a potential capital campaign; guide master planning for facilities and animal habitats, including a dedicated animal rescue facility; and ensure that Mystic Aquarium expands its audience while maintaining the excellence in animal care and scientific engagement that defines its reputation. This leader will elevate the Aquarium's visibility across the philanthropic, scientific, and civic communities it serves and ensure that one of the region's most beloved institutions remains an indispensable force for ocean conservation for generations to come.



## Mystic Aquarium's Values

### Caring

They actively care for their animals, their guests, their planet, and each other in all that they do.

### Conservation

They champion progress for a more sustainable world through their choices and actions.

### Collaboration

They are enthusiastic and active partners in their internal and external communities.



## The Organization

Mystic Aquarium exists for a singular, urgent purpose: to protect aquatic life and empower communities to save our oceans. That mission serves as the guiding force behind the conservation, education, research, and exhibitry the institution does and is the source of its team's continual motivation to build a better future for our oceans and the animals that call them home.

Founded in 1973, [Mystic Aquarium](#) has grown from a coastal destination along Connecticut's scenic shoreline into a nationally recognized leader in marine science, animal care, and immersive public engagement. At its core, Mystic Aquarium is a research, conservation, and education institution that conducts critical research to advance knowledge of marine life, partners with experts from leading organizations and institutions worldwide to establish science-based conservation efforts, and communicates findings to policymakers, regulatory agencies, the scientific community, and the public. Voted among the top five aquariums in the nation by USA Today readers and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), Mystic Aquarium is dedicated to being a local and global conservation leader while providing exceptional animal care and educational experiences. The Aquarium is home to 325 animal species, representing nearly 3,500 individual animals, including some of the country's rarest and most remarkable marine life, such as beluga whales, Steller sea lions, African penguins, sand tiger sharks, and a giant Pacific octopus. Each year, nearly 800,000 visitors pass through the Aquarium's doors, where they are inspired to care for and protect our ocean planet.

**Conservation** To promote the health and stability of natural habitats and the populations of marine life, particularly those of Long Island Sound and adjacent waters.

Since 1975, Mystic Aquarium's Animal Rescue Program (ARP) has rescued, rehabilitated, and released sick, injured, and stranded marine animals along 1,000 miles of the Northeastern coastline, spanning Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Fishers Island, New York. As a founding member of the Greater Atlantic Region Stranding Network, the program responds to an average of 150 hotline calls each year. It provides support to other stranding facilities in New England and as far as California and Bermuda. Working closely with NOAA Fisheries and other government agencies, the ARP is the only authorized marine mammal rescue facility serving its tri-state region. In 2025 alone, the program collected Level A stranding data on 104 marine mammals, disentangled 13 seals from fishing gear, submitted histopathology on 14 seals and 8 dolphins, admitted 31 seals for rehabilitation, conducted 6 field trainings, and responded to a live Risso's dolphin and a live cetacean stranding. The program has become both a regional lifeline and a powerful platform for public storytelling and philanthropic engagement.

The health and welfare of the animals in Mystic Aquarium's care are always a top priority. From advanced environmental and water-quality systems to diagnostic services that detect dangerous pathogens, the Aquarium's researchers, veterinary team, and animal rescue staff work every day to advance the well-being of aquatic animals and their environments. Community-based stewardship programs, including beach cleanups, horseshoe crab monitoring, habitat restoration, marine debris prevention, and citizen science, extend the Aquarium's conservation reach beyond its walls and mobilized 64,000 community members in conservation action in 2025.

**Education** To foster an interest in and understanding of the science and conservation of the aquatic world through formal and informal programs, written interpretive materials, and exposure to living marine animals.

Education is central to Mystic Aquarium's mission. The Aquarium is committed to inspiring the next generation of ocean ambassadors through inquiry-based, hands-on programs that help guests appreciate the marine environment, understand the value of our oceans, and take conservation action. In 2025, more than 170,000 individuals were engaged nationwide through education and conservation programs that reached communities in 84% of Connecticut's towns. The Aquarium served 16,900 students on-site, representing 280 schools and community organizations, and 53,000+ youth visited as part of school or organized groups. More than 3,000 students from 30 under-resourced schools and organizations participated in fully funded programs, reflecting the Aquarium's deep commitment to access and equity. The Education and Conservation team also leads nationally recognized STEM mentoring efforts at more than 30 sites in 19 states, connecting underserved youth with mentors, hands-on science, and marine career pathways. The Aquarium hosted more than 100 student interns across high school and higher education programs, and partnerships with colleges, universities, and workforce development organizations continue to expand opportunities for career exploration in marine science, conservation, and the Blue Economy.





**Research** To collect, evaluate, and disseminate scientific data gathered through investigations and collaborations sponsored by the Aquarium and the scientific community. Such data will advance knowledge of aquatic animal husbandry, aquatic animal biology, and behavior, and promote a better understanding of our place in nature.

Successful conservation of marine ecosystems requires balancing human development with the needs of aquatic animals and their environments. Mystic Aquarium's research aims to deepen understanding of how that balance is best achieved, both at the Aquarium, where resident animals inform baseline health data and noninvasive sampling techniques, and in the field, where scientists engage with wild populations and aquatic ecosystems. The Aquarium's research enterprise spans marine mammal biology, aquatic animal health, and marine ecosystem conservation. It is supported by a dedicated staff research team, a Scientists-in-Residence program that brings external expertise onto campus, and a formal [Research Experiences for Undergraduates](#) program that deepens ties to the academic community and its pipeline of future marine scientists.

Mystic Aquarium collaborates with individuals and organizations that share its vision for strong, lasting impact on ocean research and conservation. The Aquarium's most notable research partner is the University of Connecticut (UConn). Its state-of-the-art research laboratories are located at UConn's Avery Point campus, dedicated to marine science and maritime studies. Mystic Aquarium scientists hold appointments in the Department of Marine Sciences. Mystic Aquarium was instrumental in the collaborative effort to establish the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument in 2016. The Aquarium continues to work with its partners, including the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a number of non-governmental organizations, and peer institutions such as the New England Aquarium, on research, education, outreach, and advocacy to conserve this unique and diverse ecosystem. The organization champions innovation, research, and exploration through partnerships that bring groundbreaking deep-sea discoveries to life via exhibits that bridge science and public imagination.

## Exhibitory

To develop techniques that advance the art of live animal display and its role in stimulating interest in the aquatic world.

The Aquarium's campus offers a diverse, engaging experience for guests of all ages. Exhibits include the [Main Gallery](#), [World of Wonders](#), [Ocean Solutions](#), [Marine Theater](#), [Interactives](#), and an [Undersea Explorer](#) virtual-reality experience, reflecting the Aquarium's commitment to immersive storytelling and multigenerational engagement. This year, the Aquarium updated [Jellies: The Ocean In Motion](#) and opened [Kisfhy Coral Lab and Pathways to the Deep](#). The Aquarium continues to integrate augmented reality and technology-driven programming, layering compelling animations and information over exhibits to enhance engagement without requiring additional physical space. Premium guest experiences, including [animal encounters](#), [overnight programs](#), [summer camps](#), [early childhood programs](#), and [birthday party](#) packages, deepen visitors' connection to the mission while contributing meaningfully to earned revenue alongside food and beverage offerings operated in partnership with Oakview Group.

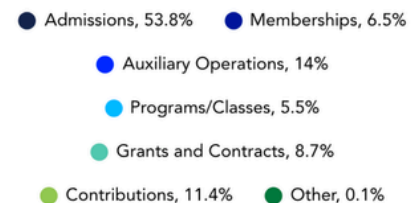
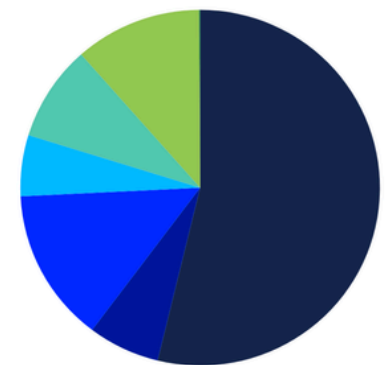


## Governance and Financial Health

Mystic Aquarium is operated by Sea Research Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Governance is provided by a Board of Trustees currently comprising 18 members from business, philanthropic, and civic leadership across the region and beyond. The Board operates through standing committees that provide focused governance oversight. Required by-law committees include the Executive Committee, the Buildings & Grounds Committee, the Finance & Audit Committee, the HR & Compensation Committee, and the Nominating & Governance Committee. Additional committees include the Conservation Committee, the Development Committee, the Investment Committee, and the Marketing & Guest Services Committee. The Aquarium is further supported by a President's Council, an advisory and philanthropic group composed of community leaders, scientists, volunteers, and advocates who advance the Aquarium's mission.

The organization's financial position is supported by a Board-designated, restricted endowment of just over \$13 million. Operating revenue is drawn from admissions, memberships, auxiliary operations, program income, grants and contracts, and contributions. Admissions revenue currently accounts for a significant share of the organization's earned income, a concentration the Board and incoming chief executive will work to address through diversified fundraising, deeper philanthropic engagement, and mission-aligned revenue development. For 2026, operating revenues and operating expenses are projected to be approximately \$31.4 million and \$27.7 million, respectively, leaving the balance available for capital improvements. Further details are available in the [audited financial reports](#).

### 2026 Operating Revenues





## Location

Mystic, Connecticut, is a destination of rare and enduring appeal—a historic coastal village nestled along the Mystic River where it meets the waters of the eastern Long Island Sound, offering a quality of life that blends New England charm with real vibrancy. The greater Mystic area and surrounding southeastern Connecticut and Rhode Island communities, including Stonington, Groton, New London, Westerly, and Watch Hill, offer a rich cultural and outdoor life: world-class sailing and maritime heritage, acclaimed restaurants and farm breweries, direct access to some of New England's finest beaches and state parks, and a dynamic arts and music community centered on institutions such as the Garde Arts Center, The United Theater, and the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Mystic Seaport Museum, the region's other major cultural anchor, sits near the Aquarium's campus, creating a remarkable concentration of mission-driven institutions and a rich landscape for collaboration, partnership, and civic engagement.

Southeastern Connecticut is home to a diverse and growing economy that includes Pfizer's global research headquarters, Electric Boat/General Dynamics' shipbuilding operations, the Naval Submarine Base New London, the Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun, and an expanding healthcare, education, and technology sector. The region is a two-hour drive from both Boston and New York City and is served by Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. It is within easy reach of T.F. Green Airport in Providence and Bradley International Airport in Hartford.

The President and Chief Executive Officer will serve as an active, visible presence throughout the region, engaging directly with civic leaders, philanthropic partners, government agencies, corporate neighbors, academic institutions, and peer organizations. This leader will be deeply embedded in the institution and its community, reflecting Mystic Aquarium's role as a beloved regional anchor and a nationally significant force in ocean conservation. Candidates who do not currently reside in the area should be prepared to relocate; a commitment to establishing roots in the community is strongly preferred to ensure the genuine, ongoing engagement this role demands and that this place inspires.

## Key Relationships

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President and CEO leads a staff that fluctuates seasonally between 250 and 290 employees and is supported by a talented and experienced Leadership Team. The CEO's direct reports comprise the organization's C-Suite and senior leaders: the Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Advancement Officer, the Chief Zoological Officer, the Chief of Staff, the Vice President of People and Culture, the Vice President of Education and Conservation, and the Vice President of Research. Additional Vice Presidents, including those overseeing Finance, Guest Experience, Exhibits, Facilities and Capital Projects, and Marketing, complete the Leadership Team alongside the CEO's direct reports.

The President and CEO, also the organization's chief relationship officer, will build personal connections with key stakeholders, including Board members, staff at all levels, major donors, government partners at the state and federal levels, peer institutions in the zoo and aquarium community, academic research collaborators, corporate sponsors, and the communities served by Mystic Aquarium across coastal Connecticut, Rhode Island, and beyond. They will work closely with the Board to strengthen governance and advance the organization's philanthropic efforts, while also serving as the Aquarium's primary representative to the media and the public.

# Top Priorities

- Assess and develop new revenue streams focused on key indicators of business growth, success factors, and changing audience needs. Promote the expansion of philanthropic donations, corporate partnerships, and government collaborations by increasing the network of donors, foundations, and community groups engaged with Mystic Aquarium's mission. Shift the earned revenue model from its current dominant role (around 75% of total revenue) to a more balanced split between philanthropy and earned income.
- Mystic Aquarium aims to be a prominent advocate in the national dialogue on marine conservation, ocean science, and the contribution of aquariums and informal science organizations to promoting environmental responsibility. The new CEO should enhance connections with local and international stakeholders, the Board of Trustees, corporate partners, governmental bodies, peer institutions, and the communities served by Mystic Aquarium.
- Conduct a thoughtful assessment of the organization—its people, structure, culture, and operations—building on recognized strengths and identifying opportunities to sharpen focus and elevate performance. Lead the development and implementation of Mystic Aquarium's next strategic plan, ensuring it is grounded in current realities and community needs, embraced by the Board and staff, supported by the right internal capabilities, and designed to be executed with established success metrics.
- Develop and deliver integrated, mission-aligned guest experiences that are emotionally resonant, consistently executed, and responsive to evolving audience needs. Bring creativity, vision, and business acumen to identifying new ways to connect with visitors while strengthening existing programs. This leader will understand that the Aquarium's operations and guest experience are inseparable from its broader mission, that every interaction with a visitor, every exhibit, and every premium experience is an opportunity to enrich educational and cultural engagement, deepen the public's commitment to saving our oceans, and strengthen the organization's long-term relevance.
- Foster authentic relationships with the Mystic Aquarium team by investing in staff development and professional growth. Nurture a high-performing, deeply engaged culture rooted in shared values, collaboration, and accountability that attracts and retains exceptional people and reflects the excellence of the institution's work. Establish clear roles and responsibilities across the Leadership Team and throughout the organization, and promote cross-departmental collaboration and operational discipline to deliver on the institution's mission at the highest level.
- Actively engage with the Mystic Aquarium community and the wider southeastern Connecticut region, maintaining a reputation as a dedicated partner who consistently works to advance the institution's mission. Continue to enhance Mystic Aquarium's visibility within nonprofit, philanthropic, scientific, and civic sectors, establishing the organization as a prominent regional and national leader in marine conservation and public outreach.

# Essential Functions

The President and CEO will uphold the highest standards of excellence while advancing the Aquarium's mission and deepening its impact. This will be accomplished through the following key functions:

## Vision and Strategic Leadership

- Serve as the organization's foremost champion, a visible, inspiring, and accessible leader to internal and external constituencies alike, and a prominent voice in the national marine science, conservation, and informal education communities.
- Provide inspiring, forward-thinking leadership that catalyzes the organization through a shared vision that is collaboratively built, grounded in current realities, and ambitious enough to define Mystic Aquarium's next chapter. Work closely with the Board of Trustees to develop and execute long-term and annual plans that align resources, staff capacity, and organizational priorities, and collaborate with the Leadership Team to translate strategic direction into operational excellence and measurable outcomes.
- Foster a mission-driven culture grounded in the Aquarium's core values of Caring, Conservation, and Collaboration. Create the conditions, including the infrastructure, communication practices, and leadership modeling, necessary for staff and volunteers to do their best work and feel deeply connected to the mission.



## Financial Oversight and Resource Development

- Maintain rigorous financial accountability through sound budget management, active oversight of financial operations, and transparent communication with the Board on all matters of fiscal consequence.
- Lead the sustained effort to diversify the Aquarium's revenue base by building contributed revenue from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government sources into an equal partner with earned income. Work in close collaboration with the Chief Advancement Officer to build the donor relationships, fundraising infrastructure, and philanthropic culture needed to support operating, capital, and endowment priorities over the long term.
- Serve as the Aquarium's lead fundraiser and most compelling advocate, bringing donors and funders into the organization's mission narrative, particularly the animal rescue and marine research programs, in ways that inspire sustained investment. Play a personal and active role in major gift cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
- Long term, work with the Board of Trustees to develop a capital campaign strategy and long-term master plan that addresses priority infrastructure and habitat needs, reflecting the organization's commitment to both animal welfare and the guest experience.
- Continuously review and improve operations to maximize earned income opportunities, guided by market intelligence, performance data, and a clear understanding of audience and visitor dynamics.
- Collaborate with the Chief Operating Officer/Chief Financial Officer to oversee budgeting, financial reporting, and resource allocation across the organization, ensuring that financial management supports mission delivery and long-term sustainability.



## Conservation, Research, and Animal Care

- Ensure that excellence in animal care and welfare remains a foundational organizational priority, supporting the Chief Zoological Officer and zoological staff in maintaining and advancing best practices and AZA standards.
- Champion the Animal Rescue Program as a defining institutional asset by investing in its capacity, visibility, and public narrative, and by positioning it as a platform for conservation impact and philanthropic engagement.
- Support and advance the Aquarium's research enterprise, ensuring that scientific work conducted at and by the institution contributes meaningfully to the global body of knowledge on marine life, ocean health, and conservation strategies.
- Elevate the profile of the Aquarium's conservation and research programs through strategic scientific storytelling, partnerships with peer institutions and academic organizations, and advocacy at the state and federal levels on behalf of marine animal care and ocean health.

## People Management and Organizational Culture

- Engage, support, and develop the Leadership Team through inspired people management, open communication, and genuine commitment to professional growth. Promote a collaborative, accountable work environment that values the contributions of every staff member and volunteer.
- Make and communicate decisions transparently, delegate responsibilities clearly, and hold the organization to consistent standards of accountability at all levels. Conduct regular organizational assessments to ensure the team's structure and composition align with strategic objectives.
- Recognize each team member's contributions and foster mentorship and professional development. Model the Aquarium's values in day-to-day leadership to set the tone for the entire organization.

## Board Relations and Governance

- Maintain regular, transparent, and productive communication with the Board of Trustees, providing timely, accurate information the Board needs to fulfill its governance responsibilities.
- Work with Board leadership to strengthen governance practices, enhance committee engagement and effectiveness, and support the Nominating & Governance Committee in recruiting talented new trustees who bring diverse perspectives and skills.
- Serve as a partner to the Board, a trusted chief executive who keeps the Board well-informed, appropriately engaged, and aligned with organizational priorities.

## Community and External Relations

- Build and maintain relationships with government officials, the media, community leaders, and peer organizations to enhance the Aquarium's reputation, visibility, and impact, serving as a trusted, prominent presence in the region's civic and philanthropic life and across the broader zoo, aquarium, and conservation sectors.
- Actively engage with the civic, philanthropic, and business communities of coastal Connecticut and the region, participating in associations, partnerships, and public forums that extend the Aquarium's reach and reinforce its role as an essential community institution.
- Cultivate relationships with government officials at the state and federal levels, including relevant Connecticut agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA, to support grant funding, regulatory partnerships, and policy advocacy for marine animal care and conservation.

# Candidate Qualifications and Personal Traits

The President and Chief Executive Officer will be an inspiring, mission-centered leader with the gravitas, business acumen, and interpersonal intelligence to lead a complex, beloved, and consequential institution. Versatile, creative, and people-driven, this executive will prioritize visibility and authentic engagement with the Board, staff, donors, and the public while steering the organization's strategic and financial agenda to position it for growth.

The CEO will combine a deep passion for conservation and ocean stewardship with the operational expertise and fundraising fluency needed to ensure the Aquarium achieves its ambitions.

Mystic Aquarium is seeking a dynamic, accomplished leader with at least 12 years of senior management experience in a mission-driven organization focused on conservation, culture, or related fields. Preference is given to candidates from diverse organizational backgrounds, such as aquariums, zoos, natural history or science museums, conservation groups, higher education, foundations, or private-sector roles aligned with mission-driven work or complex nonprofits known for excellence in mission delivery and audience engagement. Experience as a CEO or executive director is desirable. The key requirement is not necessarily sector-specific expertise but the ability to operate confidently across nonprofit, corporate, philanthropic, scientific, and civic spheres. The candidate must build credibility and trust while connecting these stakeholders and serving as a passionate, authoritative advocate for marine conservation and the communities that rely on it.



While no candidate will meet every qualification, the ideal individual will demonstrate most of the following qualities and experience, with an emphasis on the skills most vital to the organization's current needs.

- The incoming CEO must bring financial acumen and the discipline to guide the organization toward a more diversified and sustainable revenue model. The Aquarium's most pressing structural challenge is its reliance on earned gate revenue, and the next leader will need to develop and execute a strategy to grow contributed revenue, reduce concentration risk, and build the reserves and endowment necessary to support long-term mission delivery.
- This executive will have a natural, compelling public presence, commanding respect among elected representatives, donors, and the media. Politically astute and community-minded, they will bring a demonstrated ability to build coalitions and work productively across sectors, engaging government officials, tribal and civic leaders, academic partners, peer institutions, and the philanthropic community to advance the Aquarium's mission and reputation. They will excel at representing Mystic Aquarium to diverse audiences, from elementary school students to federal agency partners, with authenticity and conviction.



- The CEO will arrive with proven change-management experience and the emotional intelligence to lead the transition thoughtfully. A self-aware, humble, and collaborative culture builder, this executive will understand that organizational effectiveness depends on trust, transparency, and cross-departmental cooperation. They will balance confidence with openness, delegate meaningfully, invest in building these conditions with patience and genuine care for staff, and bring out the best in a talented Leadership Team, modeling the Aquarium's values in their daily leadership practice.
- This skilled fundraiser will bring a proven record of philanthropic achievement and a refined instinct for connecting donors with compelling narratives. The CEO will be a natural storyteller who can translate the Aquarium's rescue, research, and education work into a persuasive case for investment and cultivate relationships with major donors, corporate partners, foundations, and government funders with equal ease. The ability to engage sophisticated philanthropists and open new doors is essential.
- Drawing on a strong command of budget development and financial planning, the CEO must evaluate and take calculated risks, balancing ambitious goals and a growth orientation with practical stewardship and long-term financial sustainability. An understanding of the relationship between revenue mix, organizational capacity, and mission impact will be essential to making sound decisions. This business-savvy leader will ensure the organization's economic stability while pursuing the bold, innovative thinking that positions Mystic Aquarium for its next chapter.
- Experience at more than one institution is strongly preferred. The Board seeks a leader who brings a fresh perspective and can see Mystic Aquarium clearly and objectively.
- This adept operator will bring experience overseeing or closely collaborating on capital projects and facilities strategy, enabling them to guide the development of a master plan and capital campaign that elevates both animal habitats and the campus experience when the Aquarium approaches this work.
- While the CEO need not be a marine biologist or a veterinarian, they must bring a committed, informed passion for the natural world and the Aquarium's mission. A clear connection to conservation and the ocean, as a cause rather than merely a context, will resonate with staff, volunteers, and the broader community the Aquarium serves.

# Education

The successful candidate will hold a bachelor's degree, with an advanced degree preferred, or a combination of professional experience and proven achievement that optimizes success in the role.

# Compensation

Mystic Aquarium offers a competitive base salary of \$450,000 to \$480,000, plus a performance-based annual bonus of up to 20%. Within the first three months of employment, the CEO and the Board of Trustees will set goals and KPIs to evaluate performance; these will determine whether the CEO's bonus is earned each year. In addition to relocation assistance, the Aquarium offers a comprehensive benefits package that includes health insurance, life insurance, long-term disability, accidental death and dismemberment coverage, a retirement plan, and paid time off. The final offer will depend on factors such as educational qualifications, relevant experience, and demonstrated performance in comparable positions.



# Process

As an Equal Opportunity Employer, it is Mystic Aquarium's policy not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, familial status, marital status, predisposing genetic characteristics, actual or perceived domestic violence victim status, unemployment status, caregiver status, or any other category protected by law. We encourage applications from all qualified individuals. The Mystic Aquarium Board of Trustees has retained Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc., an executive search firm, to assist in this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to Shelli Herman, who leads the search; all inquiries will be kept strictly confidential.

This search was initiated on June 1, 2026, and the position will remain open until it is filled. We are actively reviewing applications and conducting interviews on a rolling basis. To ensure your candidacy receives full consideration, please provide your credentials as soon as possible, and no later than July 15, 2026. Please apply on our [website](#) with a cover letter outlining your commitment to Mystic Aquarium's mission, how your experience aligns with the position description, and your resume, including all work experience. The Board's Search Committee plans to conduct virtual interviews with vetted candidates in August 2026, host finalists for on-site visits and meetings with an expanded group of stakeholders in early September, and have the new President and Chief Executive Officer identified by the fall of 2026.

Please review your resume carefully for accuracy before submitting it for this position. Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc. verifies academic credentials for all candidates, and Mystic Aquarium will conduct a background check before finalizing any offer. Upon hire, the successful candidate will demonstrate authorization to work in the United States.

## About Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc.

Based in Los Angeles, Shelli Herman and Associates, Inc. is a dedicated executive search firm specializing in building C-suite teams for exceptional organizations. Our services are tailored for senior executives and leaders at the top levels of their organizations. We have extensive experience working with both mission-driven organizations and Fortune 500 companies. Our clients are diverse but share a common trait: they are trailblazers in their fields. We have a proven track record of collaborating with clients seeking a flexible, experienced, and skilled search team, and we are unmatched in our sector. To become part of the SHA network, follow us:

