Chief Advancement Officer

Reports to: President

Supervises the following staffing areas: Philanthropy, Marketing, Communications, and Events

Position Objective

The Chief Advancement Officer (CAO) serves as a key leader and member of Big Waters Land Trust's Executive Leadership Team, working closely with the President and CEO. The CAO provides vision and leadership across fundraising, marketing, communications, and external relations, advancing a comprehensive strategy that deepens philanthropic partnerships, strengthens brand and storytelling, and supports the organization's long-term sustainability and impact.

The CAO ensures Big Waters' tactical plans are executed to increase philanthropic support, strengthen the brand, and inspire constituents to engage deeply and frequently with our mission. They work closely with the President & CEO, Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, donors, corporate partners, foundations, and community leaders to achieve Big Waters' long-term vision, strategic plan objectives, and annual fundraising goals. The CAO inspires, manages, and develops volunteer leaders and staff while fostering strong collaboration between philanthropy and marketing, as well as other departments, to ensure a seamless and donor-centric organizational culture.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership

- Serve as a trusted member of the Executive Leadership Team and a key staff partner to the Board, fostering collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- Partner closely with the president and CEO to articulate a compelling national case for support, translate strategy into fundable priorities, and advance donor relationships.
- Build, lead, and mentor a high-performing advancement team, with the opportunity to reshape and grow the function's structure, systems, and capabilities.
- Build, lead, and mentor an integrated marketing and communications strategy that advances fundraising goals, elevates brand visibility, strengthens impact storytelling, and ensures consistent, audience-centered messaging across platforms and stakeholders.
- Serve as lead fundraiser for Big Waters, personally managing and soliciting a portfolio of major donors, foundations, and individual philanthropists.

- Ensure annual advancement goals, initiatives, and priorities align with Big Waters' Vision, Strategic Plan, brand, and culture.
- Promote effective communication, coordination, and collaboration between Philanthropy, Marketing & Events, and other departments.
- Ensure accurate and timely information flow between advancement, program, and finance teams.

External Relations & Partnerships

- Develop and maintain strong relationships with donors, corporate partners, foundations, community leaders, and strategic partners.
- Represent Big Waters in external meetings, presentations, and community events as appropriate.
- In concert with the President, advance the organization's visibility, philanthropic support, and community partnerships.

Organizational Standards & Accountability

- Ensure adherence to organizational policies, standards, and best practices across all advancement functions.
- Develop annual advancement budgets, goals, and performance metrics.
- Support continuous improvement through evaluation of fundraising, marketing, communications, and event performance.
- Inspire, manage, and mentor advancement staff while fostering professional growth, innovation, accountability, and high performance.

Qualifications & Experience

- Senior leadership experience in nonprofit advancement, philanthropy, fundraising, marketing, communications, or a related field.
- Demonstrated success leading comprehensive fundraising and advancement programs.
- Experience supervising senior leaders and developing high-performing teams.
- Experience working closely with boards, executive leadership, donors, and volunteers.
- Strong understanding of fundraising strategy, donor relations, marketing, branding, communications, and event management.
- Excellent leadership, relationship-building, communication, and organizational skills.
- Comfortable with public speaking and representing the organization.
- Commitment to Big Waters Land Trust's mission and values.
- Willingness to work a flexible schedule of weekends, evenings, and holidays as needed.
- Physical ability to carry 20lbs and willing to travel to remote and undeveloped property, hike in a variety of environmental conditions, be outdoors for considerable periods, potentially interact with wildlife.
- Comfort with water-based activities such as kayaking and boating.
- Valid driver’s license and proof of insurance.