SORRELL

Position Profile

LONE STAR FLIGHT MUSEUM
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Chief Development Officer

Sorrell is pleased to partner with Lone Star Flight Museum in the search for its next Chief Development Officer.

The Lone Star Flight Museum (LSFM), a non-profit 501(c)3, opened its $38 million facility at Ellington Airport in September 2017 after 27 years in Galveston, TX. With the belief that aviation inspires achievement and endless possibilities, the museum serves to fulfill its mission to celebrate flight and achievements in Texas aviation history in an inspiring educational environment that meets the needs of students and visitors of all ages. Emphasizing the role of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), LSFM's vision is to continue its growth trajectory as a dynamic and interactive educational flight museum reaching the people of Texas as a recognized museum experience. In 2025, LSFM welcomed more than 100,000 visitors, and more than 25,000 school age students to learn the wonder of flight, a 170% increase over the last three years. Working toward even greater goals, LSFM continues to build a stronger community through supporting young people toward careers in aerospace and STEM.

Position Overview

The Chief Development Officer (CDO) is a new position and a key member of the Lone Star Flight Museum's senior leadership team, responsible for developing and executing a comprehensive fundraising strategy to advance the mission and strategic priorities. The CDO provides visionary leadership for all aspects of philanthropy, individual, corporate, foundation, and government support—while building long-term relationships that sustain the museum's programs, exhibitions, and capital projects. The ideal candidate will combine strong leadership and management skills with a passion for aviation, education, and history, and the ability to inspire donors and partners to invest in community supporting museums and the vision of the Lone Star Flight Museum. The candidate will report directly to the President & CEO and work closely with the museum board of directors and committee chairs.

The museum is led by President & CEO Anna Hawley, who has been with the museum seven years in leadership positions and oversees a team of 45 employees. The Development team includes three development positions and seasoned contractors in grant writing and capital campaign management and execution. With an annual operating budget of $5 million, the museum's revenue model is represented by 39% fundraising and 61% earned revenue. (The annual fundraising goal is approximately $2M.) Fundraising is diversified and comprised of individual, corporate, foundation and government funding along with special fundraising events. These include well-established and supported fundraisers such as an annual gala, clay shoot, Girls in Aviation Day and the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony & Luncheon. Further, the museum is in the early stages of an exciting and achievable comprehensive campaign for an expansion of facilities and exhibits.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Serve as a member of the leadership team reporting to the CEO in setting and implementing the museum's overall development strategy.

- Develop and oversee the execution of an integrated fundraising plan including major gifts, annual giving, membership, legacy giving, sponsorships, grants, and special events.
- Work collaboratively with museum leadership, curatorial, and education teams to align fundraising initiatives with institutional goals and programs.
- Draft annual development plan and participate in the strategic planning processes.
- Serve as a key spokesperson and ambassador for the museum to external stakeholders.

Fundraising & Donor Relations

- Work with the CEO and Board in the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of major donors and institutional funders.
- Establish and manage systems for identifying, cultivating, soliciting, and recognizing donors at all levels.
- Oversee grant research and proposal development for foundation and government funding opportunities.
- Design and execute campaigns for capital projects, endowment growth, and special initiatives.
- Manage a portfolio of major donors and prospects.

Team & Board Development

- Lead, mentor, and support a professional development team and contractors responsible for membership, annual funds, events, and institutional giving.
- Collaborate with the CEO and Board Development Committee to engage trustees in fundraising and donor cultivation activities.
- Provide training, tools, and strategic guidance to staff and volunteers to strengthen fundraising effectiveness.

Communications & Stewardship

- Work closely with marketing and communications staff to ensure consistent messaging and donor recognition across all platforms and identify sponsorship and giving opportunities within museum departments and programs.
- Oversee creation of necessary development materials and annual report to communicate with donors, potentials donors and stakeholders.
- Oversee donor acknowledgment, recognition programs, and impact reporting.
- Represent the museum at public and private events to build visibility and relationships within the aviation and philanthropic communities.
- Work with the CEO face-to-face visits, donor tours, solicitations, and other high-level interactions with major gift donors and prospects.
- Possess excellent interpersonal skills: ability to build relationships and trust with board, donors, prospects, and friends of the museum.
- Maintain an articulate, positive attitude, professional demeanor with self-confidence, initiative, and sound judgment.

Data, Budget, & Reporting

- Oversee the development department's budget and ensure fiscal accountability.
- Oversee of donor database staff and ensure data integrity, accurate reporting, and analysis of fundraising performance.
- Provide regular progress reports to the CEO.
- Work with the leadership to develop accurate and strategic budgets for both annual and capital expenditures and establish sound budget tracking system for both fundraising and expenses.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree required; CFRE certification preferred.
- Minimum 10 years progressive fundraising experience, with at least five years in a management role.
- Preexisting professional relationships with Houston's philanthropic community is a plus.
- Proven success in major gift solicitation and donor relationship building.
- Portfolio management experience helpful.
- Experience and knowledge of working with boards, volunteers, and community leaders.
- Knowledge of fundraising in the arts, culture, or museum sectors strongly preferred.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal, and presentation skills.
- Strategic thinker with strong organizational and analytical abilities.
- Passion for museums, aviation, aerospace, or STEM education is highly desirable.
- Collaborative, collegial, and team oriented.
- Adaptable and able to thrive in a dynamic fast-paced nonprofit environment.
- Occasional evening and weekend work is required, and other duties as assigned.

The physical demands are consistent with the essential functions for this job. Reasonable accommodation may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Compensation and Benefits

- Fulltime, exempt position with competitive compensation commensurate with experience
- Opportunity to earn an annual performance bonus
- Flexibility for partial hybrid working arrangement
- Health, dental and vision insurance for employee and eligible dependents
- Paid life insurance
- Long term disability, basic life insurance, and other voluntary benefits
- 403(B) retirement savings plan
- Generous and flexible PTO

Application and Referral Process

Applicant review is currently underway and will continue until the candidate has been selected. To nominate or be considered for this position, please contact Priscilla Plumb at priscilla@sorrellco.com / 281.224.0881 or Stacie Gaff at stacie@sorrellco.com / 832.594.1925. The Lone Star Flight Museum is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes all qualified candidates to apply. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

About Sorrell

Sorrell is a highly relational provider of executive recruiting. Our mission is to serve as partners with our clients to accelerate their efforts to attract, hire and retain talent that impacts the future of the organization. For more information, call 713.840.1870.