



## **LEADERSHIP PROFILE**

**President & CEO**  
**The Alaska Community Foundation**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**

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Inspiring the spirit of giving and connecting people, organizations and causes to strengthen Alaska's communities, now and forever

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# Executive Summary

The Alaska Community Foundation, one of Alaska's most important philanthropic institutions and its only statewide community foundation, is in search of its next Chief Executive Officer. The foundation has doubled its assets and staff over the past five years, a record that reinforces heightened expectations for the future.

The CEO will inherit a staff of committed veterans and energized newcomers eager to provide effective, efficient service to donors and grantees alike. The engaged board will embrace a CEO who can capitalize on the current momentum and provide true strategic leadership supported by operational excellence.

The strategy has not been finalized, but the collective ambitions are clear: Lead the organization to its full potential as a statewide force for change, developing and supporting the people, systems and relationships that its mission requires and its stakeholders deserve.

## The Context

The Alaska Community Foundation (ACF) is a unique philanthropic force in a unique part of the country, the largest community foundation in the nation's largest state and Alaska's only community foundation with a statewide purview.

Everything about Alaska is special—its scale, its environment, its economics and especially its people—and thus its needs are special too.

For example,

- Alaska is twice the size of Texas, but it has just 730,000 residents, compared to Texas's 30 million.



*Alaska's size relative to the Lower 48*

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A trusted vehicle for investing in community, ACF has furthered philanthropy by being inviting, responsive and flexible.



Prize-winning sculpture in Fairbanks Ice Park

- Forty percent of the state’s population lives in just one municipality, Anchorage, but another 40% live in 260 communities with fewer than 1,000 residents each.<sup>1</sup>
- Most of Alaska’s communities are inaccessible by road (including Juneau, the state capital), and most do not have water or sewer service.
- Per capita income and the cost of living are both among the highest in the nation.<sup>2</sup>
- Alaska Natives comprise 22% of the state’s population.<sup>3</sup> Oil remains a critical piece of Alaska’s economy, and Alaska Native Regional Corporations are an [integral part of the economy](#).<sup>4</sup>
- Pride of place is evident everywhere. As one stakeholder put it, “Nobody lives in Alaska; they live in *communities*.”

Ramifications of such factors on human services, workforce development, education, economic mobility, logistics and the like are enormous—the very reality ACF was born to address.

## The Organization

The Alaska Community Foundation has been a quiet force for philanthropy since its earliest days. A trusted vehicle for investing in community, ACF has furthered philanthropy by being inviting, responsive and flexible.

The seeds of the foundation were planted in 1995 by five citizens who imagined a place where

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<sup>1</sup> A roster of Alaska’s communities ranked by population is available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> [US News & World Report](#). Other sources peg Alaska’s cost of living in Alaska from 24% to 29% higher than the US average.

<sup>3</sup> [US News & World Report](#).

<sup>4</sup> Visit [ANCSA Regional Association](#) for a comprehensive overview of the twelve Alaska Native Regional Corporations and a summary of their [economic impact](#).

Alaskans who had done well could give back. Their imagination paid off: From just \$400,000 in five funds in 1999, ACF has grown to today's \$200 million<sup>5</sup> held in over 2,000 funds. In 2022 alone, per the [annual report](#) just issued, 1,984 nonprofits received over \$35 million from funds held at ACF. That brings to \$200 million the total grants awarded since 1995.

Much of ACF's work would be familiar to anyone generally knowledgeable about community foundations. Like most, it promotes local philanthropy by local donors, helping to identify causes or organizations consistent with a funder's own individual charitable focus. For example, ACF lists all its funds [here](#), searchable by fund type, focus and geography. [The Alaska Fund](#) is an unrestricted endowed fund supporting emerging needs and collaborative philanthropy across the state. [Pick.Click.Give](#), a State of Alaska program managed by ACF, makes it easy for Alaskans to direct a portion of their Permanent Fund Dividend to a nonprofit of their choice.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years, three developments in particular have raised the foundation's profile and the community's expectations of it:

- ACF's statewide efforts were bolstered in 2008 by support for the [Affiliate Program](#) from the Rasmuson Foundation, the state's largest private foundation, which funded salaries for part-time staff in each of the eleven Affiliate foundations serving in rural and remote parts of the state. Each has a local advisory board, and each has attracted additional support (locally and otherwise) for local efforts that otherwise might not have succeeded.
- In 2020, ACF partnered with Hilcorp Alaska to administer the company's groundbreaking

<sup>5</sup> Unaudited estimate.

<sup>6</sup> An overview of the Permanent Fund and its dividend can be accessed [here](#).



*Petersburg, Alaska*

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ACF has just come through a period of rapid growth, having doubled both assets and employees in the past five years.



*US Coast Guard Base, Kodiak*

[employee giving program](#). Launched with a contribution of \$5 million, Hilcorp matches employee contributions to their donor-advised funds at ACF up to preset limits. There are now over 1,600 Hilcorp employee funds at ACF from which employees direct grants to nonprofits important to them.

- [The Coronavirus Nonprofit Relief Fund \(CNRF\)](#), the [ARPA Nonprofit Recovery Fund](#) and the [Western Alaska Disaster Recovery Fund](#) are all examples of critical and time-sensitive projects ACF undertook that few other organizations could have managed. Such efforts continue to solidify ACF’s standing as the go-to resource for extraordinary projects.<sup>7</sup>

Much of ACF’s work is behind the scenes. Its daily interactions with current and potential fundholders, professional advisors, nonprofit and community leaders, and a host of others attract no public attention, but they are essential ingredients in the impact the Foundation facilitates, examples of which can be found [here](#).

ACF has just come through a period of rapid growth, having doubled both assets and employees in the past five years. Not surprisingly, the rapid growth (especially during pandemic years) has stressed the legacy systems and protocols that were designed for a much smaller organization.

The staff’s roles may resemble those of other like-sized community foundations, but bold initiatives in Alaska often entail a large volume of small transactions.<sup>8</sup> Last year, ACF processed some 44,000 transactions. Per [CF Insights](#), only two community foundations in the whole US handled

<sup>7</sup> Philanthropy Northwest’s article on the Typhoon Merbok response is available [here](#).

<sup>8</sup> A grant of a few hundred dollars by one of the Affiliate foundations may make the difference between success and failure for a local nonprofit.

more transactions in 2021 than ACF did, but their assets were six to twelve times as large as ACF's.

As noted, ACF has assets of just over \$200 million.<sup>9</sup> The foundation has some 2,200 funds (1,600 of them Hilcorp employees' donor-advised funds), about 150 donor-advised funds and 150 agency funds. Less-restricted funds represent just under 30% of the total, but a strong majority of legacy gifts, a growing category, are less restricted.

ACF is being led by Interim CEO [Ken Osterkamp](#), a veteran nonprofit leader and Foraker Group consultant who has served as interim CEO of multiple organizations. He heads a [staff](#) of 20 full-time employees, most based in Anchorage, and eleven part-time staffers who live and work in the Affiliate foundations' home communities.

The foundation is governed by a passionate [volunteer board](#) of 18 leaders from across the state. Collectively, this dedicated group leverages a diverse mix of leadership and life experiences in their service to ACF.

*For additional context:* Locally, the nonprofit [Foraker Group](#) is a comprehensive resource for Alaska's nonprofit community. Regionally, [Philanthropy Northwest](#), based in Seattle, serves grantmakers of all kinds in the six northwestern states and Hawaii. Nationally, [CF Leads](#) is a unique resource for community foundations.

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<sup>9</sup> Unaudited estimate. Audited statements and IRS Forms 990 for ten years through December 31, 2021 are available here.



*Seward Highway near Moose Pass*

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Already an important vehicle for philanthropy, ACF is primed to embrace deeper relationships and a larger leadership role across its footprint.



*The small-boat harbor in Cordova*

## The Mandate

Already an important vehicle for philanthropy, The Alaska Community Foundation is primed to embrace deeper relationships and a larger leadership role across its footprint. Accordingly, ACF's next CEO can expect several overlapping priorities:

- **Leadership.** ACF has a superb reputation for responsiveness. "Yes, we can do that" is the default mode for responding to most requests. Part of the current momentum derives from ACF's willingness to take on very tough challenges, like handling many millions of dollars of Covid funding on little notice, which have expanded awareness of the foundation and its philanthropic mission.

No one wants to lose the spirit of responsiveness, and efficient processing of transactions will always be critical to donor service. Long-term, however, there is an increased appetite, both within the ACF family and among a cross-section of community leaders, for the foundation to take a more proactive role—a more strategic role—in Alaskan philanthropy.

Just what form that leadership might take is likely to evolve over time. As one donor said, "ACF is the only organization with a broad enough mission and public charity status to [be] an effective platform for multi-funder coalition work." Another volunteered, "ACF's tendrils reach wide and far; let's leverage them!" Other stakeholders suggest ACF sponsor convenings on major issues important to the statewide community or its regions. One supporter seemed to speak for many: "We need time to dream!"

Some community foundations view donor service and community leadership as an either/or choice, whereas ACF sees community



leadership as a natural outgrowth of donor service. The next CEO will be expected to explore the foundation’s opportunities for broader community leadership so that donor dollars and the foundation’s other assets—reputational and relational—might be leveraged to even greater effect.

- **Strategy and focus.** ACF is proud of its “Say yes” orientation, and its willingness to tackle almost any challenge has earned kudos from many quarters. What has been lacking is a strong focus on agreed-upon priorities to inform the choices the foundation faces throughout the breadth of its work.

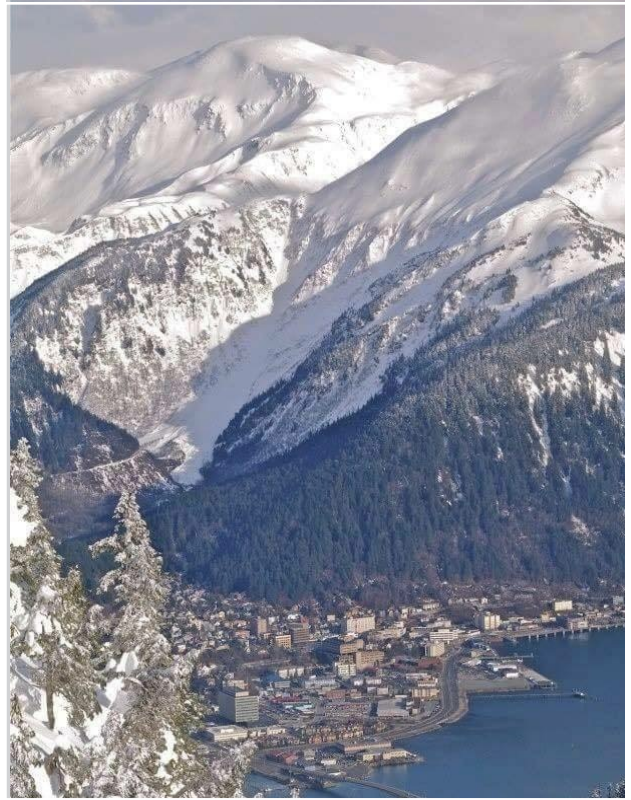
ACF’s current scale and recent performance have created significant new opportunities for increased impact. What is needed is a truly cohesive strategy. As one staff member stated, “We can expand permissions to say yes, even as we get better at saying no.”

Capitalizing on a broad-based desire for greater strategic clarity, the next CEO must ensure the intentional setting of priorities within the context of an evolving strategy, one that inspires stakeholders, invites support and informs the foundation’s work in real time.<sup>10</sup>

- **Internal culture, systems and processes.** ACF’s extraordinary growth in recent years resulted in additional challenges and complexity. The staff, half of whom have been added in the last year, have met those challenges with determination, but the stresses were real, on both individual staff members and the overall operating culture.

ACF’s systems and internal practices must be updated to reflect the scope and scale of evolving needs. A high volume of transactions may be inescapable at ACF, given the special

<sup>10</sup> A strategic review begun last year was suspended this year, given the leadership transition.



View over Juneau

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ACF has made real strides in recent years, but there are still opportunities to connect even more strongly to the broader community as its mission warrants.



*The Matanuska Glacier, about 100 miles northeast of Anchorage*

dynamics at play in such a large and sparsely populated state. The combination—growth and high transaction volume—makes the updating of systems and processes all the more important.

To minimize the silos that plague many foundations and to promote teaming, the new CEO must lead with transparency, combining a collaborative attitude with respect for team members' abilities. Reinforcing a spirit of community within the community foundation itself will be an important ingredient in lasting success.

The Interim President has begun to address each of these areas, and his efforts have contributed significantly to the operating culture. Systems change is not a one-and-done proposition, and thus efforts to support operational excellence will continue to be a priority.

- **Relationships and connectivity.** Relationships and connectivity are fundamental to community foundations, but they are especially important at ACF. As one long-time supporter put it, "In Alaska, everything is personal."

The foundation does not wish to be a personality-driven organization, but it will be critical for the CEO to respect, understand, and embrace the multiplicity of relationships necessary for truly effective leadership in Alaska.

ACF has made real strides in recent years, but there are still opportunities to connect even more strongly to the broader community as its mission warrants. That is certainly true in the remotest outposts, but it is also true in the urban areas, where for many The Alaska Community Foundation remains a mystery. "We've been tiptoeing rather than bold," noted one observer. "The CEO has to build relationships across the full spectrum," noted another.

Building trust with the staff, board and donors is a must, of course, and doing so with peers in the foundation's home city of Anchorage should come relatively easily. The more challenging need is for effective relationships in and with other communities, from governmental leaders in Juneau to tribal leaders in remote communities. ACF itself is still learning how to optimize its engagement with the Affiliate community foundations, an essential ingredient in statewide philanthropy.

- **Diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.** The Alaska Community Foundation is committed to being a diverse, equitable, inclusive and just organization, and it understands (on a macro level for some and intuitively for others) just how important such qualities are in a state with the country's largest indigenous population and a history of colonization.

The board and staff look quite a bit different from their counterparts of just a few years ago, and yet the organization is still discovering the actions that give its commitments teeth. The CEO will be expected to guide the foundation to a fuller future, in which ACF not only funds DEIJ efforts but serves as a model in its own behavior.



*Creek Street at low tide, Ketchikan*

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# The Relationships

<p><b>ACF's CEO reports to</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Directors</li> </ul>
<p><b>And manages a staff of about 30, 20 of them fulltime, through four direct reports:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Financial Officer</li> <li>• VP of Development &amp; Communications</li> <li>• VP of Programs &amp; Grants</li> <li>• VP of Administration &amp; Innovation</li> </ul>
<p><b>While stewarding other important relationships, such as</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and potential fundholders, donors and supporters</li> <li>• Grantees and program partners</li> <li>• Affiliate board members and grantees</li> <li>• Philanthropic peers and partners</li> <li>• Wealth advisors</li> <li>• Leaders from across Alaska's business, academic, faith, indigenous, governmental, nonprofit and professional services communities—those who have (or ought to have) an interest in the Foundation's work, its impact, or the constituencies it serves</li> </ul>

## The Candidate

The next CEO of The Alaska Community Foundation will be a seasoned community leader broadly experienced in creating and leading collaborative efforts that address tough issues across diverse communities of interest.

The search committee is open to a variety of career paths, but two would have particular appeal:

- Prospects with deep leadership experience gained within progressive community foundations experiencing significant growth and evolving strategies; and
- Leaders of consequence with relevant, impactful experience in Alaska itself, whether or not that person is currently living in Alaska.

In all cases, the board will be most receptive to those whose leadership has been shaped by community-based challenges in diverse operating environments serving diverse constituencies. Experience in fostering and sustaining public/private partnerships would be highly additive.



**Competence: Among the traits being sought, ACF expects to hire**

- A nurturing CEO with the stature, confidence and credibility to lead a complex, multifaceted organization serving a complex, multifaceted mission—and the humility to share responsibility and credit.
- A leader comfortable with calculated risks in pursuit of bold goals set in partnership with engaged constituencies, an informed board, and an empowered staff.
- A CEO with an ear for strategy and an eye for detail; a leader/manager with the commitment and the capability to ensure that operational excellence is itself a strategic priority, and that everything ACF undertakes is done efficiently and effectively.
- A bridge-builder with a variety of nonprofit experiences, ideally including large donors and small communities.
- A compassionate executive who leads by listening; someone comfortable with difficult conversations and tough decisions; a leader who takes pride in others' successes.
- A board-savvy manager capable of engaging with people of different generations, economic circumstances and ethnicities as the foundation develops investors, co-founders, and partners beyond its historic focus.
- A magnet for resources; someone who builds confidence and attracts both people and supporters to the mission.
- A manager and mentor who values people skills as much as subject-matter expertise; someone who respects (and models) the power of relationships in leadership, whether within community or the foundation's own team.



*BP Energy Center in Anchorage, a multipurpose facility owned & managed by ACF for use by nonprofits*

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ACF's CEO should embody a genuine commitment to equity, and the experience with practical approaches to ensure real diversity and inclusion.



*Click image to view 2022 Annual Report*

- A CEO who leads by influence rather than authority.
- A broad-based general manager—financially literate, intellectually astute and culturally attuned—with hands-on experience in a significant multifaceted community or grantmaking context.
- A compelling communicator who builds enduring relationships; a superior ambassador for ACF's mission, whatever the context; a leader who excels at the 'why' as much as the 'how' of ACF's work.

### **Culture—ACF's CEO should embody**

- A genuine commitment to and love for Alaska. Prospects without lived experience in Alaska will be expected to demonstrate their facility for adapting to the state's special operating environment.
- A heart for the work and a sense of adventure.
- Creativity, candor, empathy and authenticity.
- A genuine commitment to equity, and the experience with practical approaches to ensure real diversity and inclusion.
- Trust, value and respect for a staff eager for mentoring and a board primed for engagement.
- Experience with the systems and protocols appropriate to ACF's scale and ambitions.
- Genuine respect for donors, grantees, and the constituents they serve
- An expansive view of resource development; a fearless fundraiser who is nonetheless nuanced in dealings with donors.
- Cultural and social dexterity; an executive comfortable with the special demands of foundation leadership in an expansive community.

- Strategic, innovative thinking; a leader who can help evaluate and navigate the choices a robust strategy requires.
- The courage to be bold, the patience to connect, the humility to learn, the confidence to lead, and the sense of humor to make it all a pleasure.

## The Location

The Alaska Community Foundation is based in the [Municipality of Anchorage](#), where the CEO and most of the Foundation’s full-time employees are located. Eleven part-time employees live and work in outlying communities served by the eleven [Affiliate community foundations](#).

Anchorage is Alaska’s most populous city, home to about 40% of the state’s population of 730,000. It is also a highly diverse city. Some 40,000 Alaska Natives live there, and the city has the most ethnically diverse schools in the US, including the [three most-diverse public high schools](#) in the entire United States and four of the ten [most-diverse public elementary schools](#).<sup>11</sup>

[Visit Anchorage](#) has a current listing of area cultural attractions, including the [Alaska Native Heritage Center](#), [Anchorage Museum](#) and [Alaska Botanical Garden](#). [Alaska Daily News](#) is the area’s leading newspaper, and [University of Alaska Anchorage](#) has the largest university presence.

<sup>11</sup> In a recent year, 20% of Anchorage School District students came from homes in which the most common first languages were Spanish, Hmong, Samoan and Filipino; collectively, ASD students speak 99 languages other than English.



*Downtown Anchorage*

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## The Compensation

A competitive compensation package of salary and full benefits will be offered to attract an outstanding candidate. The anticipated range for total compensation is \$260,000 to \$300,000.

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For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email

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or call **Sam Pettway** or **Patti Kish** at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).

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