



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

President & CEO
Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte
LaPorte, Indiana

"Empowering La Porte County residents to live healthy and well."

– Mission of Healthcare Foundation of La Porte

The Opportunity

Over the past seven years, a true treasure has evolved in La Porte County, Indiana, where northwestern Indiana meets the southeastern tip of Lake Michigan: the [Healthcare Foundation of La Porte](#), known locally as HFL.

Created from the proceeds of the 2016 sale of IU Health La Porte Hospital to Community Health Systems, one of the nation's leading healthcare providers, Healthcare Foundation of La Porte quickly established itself as a force for good. HFL's guiding force since inception has been Maria Fruth, a 20-year veteran of La Porte Hospital who had been both Executive Vice President of the hospital and Chief Operating Officer of its foundation. Ms. Fruth and HFL's founding board of enlightened leaders were determined to capitalize on the opportunity of this new community asset to promote health and wellness across the county in new, exciting and impactful ways.

This summer, Ms. Fruth informed HFL's Board of Directors of her intention to retire, once her successor is named and a smooth transition is underway. In August, HFL retained BoardWalk Consulting as its search partner. This Leadership Profile is the public manifestation of the confidential executive search underway to identify and appoint the next President & CEO of Healthcare Foundation of La Porte.

The Organization

For a foundation still in its early years, HFL has created a record of community support and engagement that many of its more mature philanthropic peers might envy. From a standing start, the founding CEO and her small but ambitious staff (now numbering six full-time employees and three fractional employees) have partnered with nonprofits, governmental units,



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A HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION OF LA PORTE INITIATIVE

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of information for
La Porte County**

business interests and other philanthropic entities. The result is a multiprong strategy focused on grants in [three key areas](#):

- **Healthy Children:** Children in La Porte County are healthy, well, and safe.
- **Healthy Living:** La Porte County residents are healthy and well, can access nutritious foods, and enjoy active living.
- **Healthy Minds:** La Porte County residents experience positive mental health and can access support and treatment for mental health conditions, including substance use disorder.

For each of the program areas, HFL has defined the results it hopes to obtain. The dashboards in the [HFL Priority Tracker](#), part of the foundation-funded [Ten2030](#) portal, flag the county's progress in some 32 different areas, from infant mortality to food insecurity, to heroin treatment rates, in most cases showing how La Porte County's performance compares to all of Indiana and the entire US. As one staff member put it, "We're a learning organization, and we're about measurable results."

In addition to its core grantmaking, HFL's **Healthy Partners** grants are designed to help community organizations strengthen the skills, abilities and resources of their own teams. In addition to these invitation-only capacity-building grants, HFL partners with Indiana University's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs to bring best-in-class training to La Porte County.

Lastly, HFL recognizes that there are compelling community health and wellness needs that fall outside its stated priorities. **Healthy La Porte** provides a vehicle to support such initiatives, whether they be pilots of new programs or extensions of existing ones.

The graphic nearby shows HFL's priorities and examples of major initiatives in each of the five areas:



HFL's [website](#) is replete with information on these programs and other aspects of the foundation's work.

As another staffer noted, "Our large endowment," just over \$200 million at this writing,¹ "means huge opportunity—and huge responsibility." Both aspects inform the foundation's work on a daily basis. "The chance to make real impact in a community we love is a privilege," commented a board member.

¹ Unaudited estimate. Per the 2022 IRS Form 990, HFL's total assets at year-end 2022 were \$203,768,479.



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Here are just three examples of how HFL is making a difference:²

- [Partners for Healthier Babies](#) has shown significant gains in just four years³ for La Porte County’s experience across such critical risk factors as smoking during pregnancy, teen pregnancy birth rates and infant mortality rates.
- HFL’s [Housing Initiative](#), undertaken in partnership with the City of La Porte, began with a study that showed significant unmet needs in a city where only 21% of the 10,000 existing housing units were built after 1980. What began as a project to identify solutions for a specific underserved neighborhood has developed into an evolving housing strategy for the entire city (which has no housing authority). The next step is a potential impact investing venture to be spun off as a free-standing nonprofit.
- HFL’s purpose-built Conference & Learning Center was specifically designed to reinforce the foundation’s role as community partner, convener and collaborator, by providing state-of-the-art conference facilities to the region’s nonprofits at no charge. Usage has skyrocketed as the pandemic’s grip has lessened: Through the first seven months of 2023, the center hosted over 200 meetings with more than 3100 attendees, well north of twice last year’s year-to-date numbers. HFL’s flexible, dividable spaces supported by full audiovisual and videoconferencing capabilities and a warming kitchen have proven most inviting.

HFL is governed by an eleven-person volunteer board comprising leaders from a variety of contexts across the county. Board members are

² See HFL’s [2022 Report to the Community](#) for a full summary of the foundation’s work through the last fiscal year as well as a list of all grants made in 2022.

³ 2017-2021, latest data available.

elected for three-year terms, and they may serve for a maximum of three terms. Because of the way initial terms were staggered at the foundation's inception, all founding members have termed out.

The Mandate

HFL's next CEO will inherit a foundation with a record of significant early impact, gratifying momentum in a number of important areas, and clarity that the most exciting—and the most demanding—work is yet to come.

HFL is well established as a credible, intentional partner on the path to a healthier La Porte County. Informed by its early successes, both the board and the staff are ready for strategic, visionary thinking, bold(er) community investments and the challenge of higher expectations.

The Board is primed for HFL to be a true catalyst for progress in its footprint. Accordingly, the CEO can expect overlapping mandates with the following themes:

- **Proactive leadership.** Responsive grantmaking has been a major part of HFL's approach, and grants in response to specific requests will always be an important part of its portfolio. Some of the foundation's most gratifying work, however, has been on transformational opportunities that fell outside traditional approaches, and the appetite for greater impact is very real. The CEO must be a proactive, evolutionary leader fully comfortable with such pursuits, building on existing relationships and trust to foster new paths to lasting impact.
- **Strategy:** HFL's current strategic framework evolved from an early understanding of pressing needs and opportunities for early progress. The foundation is ready to take the time to be fully thoughtful about the nature of investments, in intent and structure, that only a private foundation with deep roots



One configuration of HFL's conference facilities

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La Porte County Courthouse

in the community might undertake. There is no dissatisfaction with the work presently underway; in fact, it is the success of that work that feeds the appetite for bolder bets with potentially bigger long-term impact on the health of the people and communities being served. In short, a thorough review and updating of HFL’s mission, vision and strategic plan are in order.

- **Culture:** HFL prides itself on being a fun, engaging place to work, and the staff is excited about the opportunities ahead, if a bit nervous about the current leadership transition. To a person, they want to be of greater service to the mission, and they would like to be challenged to expand both their value and their responsibilities. How the CEO frames expectations and capitalizes on staff capabilities will be major determinants in their collective impact. The mission will be well served by a culture that includes broad ownership in relationships and a cohesive leadership structure.
- **Governance.** Understandably, much of the Board’s work is done in committee. The CEO must balance the need for reports with the board’s desire for more engagement in strategic discussions, including evaluation of efforts in light of the strategic plan.
- **Operations.** HFL’s processes, especially its grant processes, have evolved over the past seven years, informed by the experience of the team and experiences shared by other grantmakers. A rethinking of the overall approach would be timely, encompassing both strategic and visionary thinking as well as tactics. Again, there is no sense anything is amiss, but there is a healthy desire to ensure that current operations reflect the higher expectations of a visionary strategy.

The Relationships

<p>The CEO reports to</p>	<p>The HFL Board of Directors</p>
<p>And works closely with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees of the Board • A cross-section of regional leaders and organizations with a vested interest in a healthier La Porte, including those from the nonprofit community; academia; the business sector; the faith community; local, regional and state government; public health; and other grantmakers, funders and allies
<p>And directs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full-time staff, presently six, responsible for programs, operations, communications and administration • Three fractional staff responsible for investment management, finance & accounting
<p>While stewarding other key relationships, such as:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program partners, co-funders and collaborators • Grantees (actual and potential) • Local leaders and neighborhoods not accustomed to having a voice • Thought leaders on issues relevant to HFL’s priorities • HFL’s consultants, program advisors, legal and investment counsel and auditors

The Candidate

HFL’s CEO must be a proven leader, an approachable manager and an active listener who embraces collaboration, community and continuous learning.

While a leader invested in community-based grantmaking would hold great appeal, the committee welcomes interest from those with diverse experiences, including experiences gained in the private sector. HFL is proud of its entrepreneurial roots, and the candidate who combines a spirit of entrepreneurship with the practicalities of community-grounded work will likely prevail.

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Change is exciting,
nerve-wracking work.

– A member of HFL’s staff



Michigan City Lakefront

Candidates of greatest interest will have a compelling mix of the following experiences and characteristics:

Expertise: The ideal candidate will offer...

- A record of impactful, proactive leadership in a significant community-based context, one characterized by creativity, innovation and what HFL refers to as “noble intent”—or, as one board member put it, a leader who can “bring the awe”
- A balance of strategic and tactical leadership, informed by relationships of mutual trust with strong colleagues, board members and community partners
- Respect for the power of data, while never losing sight that data represents people
- Experience working with boards and staff relatively new to the work and, in some cases, new to each other; a leader confident enough to delegate responsibly
- The skills of a general manager, the passion of a community activist, and the commitment of an engaged resident who shows “This is my community too.”

Culture: The Foundation seeks a CEO who is...

- Personable, inspiring and empowering; someone who invites participation and ownership in initiatives and decisions
- Accustomed to living, working and facilitating lasting change in smaller communities, especially ones in the Midwest
- Intellectually curious and open to new ideas; someone for whom the questions can be as important as the answers
- Culturally adept, meeting all people where they are

- Comfortable leading by influence rather than authority; a natural collaborator who nevertheless is okay making the tough calls
- A respectful, empowering executive with the confidence to lead a team of smart, capable colleagues with transparency and candor
- Invested in the larger community, not simply as the head of one of the region's largest foundations, but as an engaged, participating citizen.
- A compelling communicator—direct, clear, impactful—who builds enduring relationships
- Humble yet confident
- A compassionate manager, emphasizing team over self and collaboration over hierarchy, even while maintaining the disciplines required to sustain operational excellence
- A leader who can connect with authenticity at multiple levels and in multiple contexts, navigating easily among HFL's various constituencies.

The Location

The Healthcare Foundation of La Porte is based in beautiful purpose-built facilities in La Porte, Indiana, about 30 miles west of South Bend (home to Notre Dame University), 90 miles east of Chicago and ten miles from the southeastern shores of Lake Michigan.

The City of La Porte is the second largest city in the county of the same name. About 22,000 people live in La Porte City and 31,000 in Michigan City; the balance of the county's 112,000 residents lives in 19 other townships.

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The Foundation seeks a compelling communicator—direct, clear, impactful—who builds enduring relationships.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email relevant materials to HFL@BoardWalkConsulting.com or call **Sam Pettway, Patti Kish** or **Michelle Hall** at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).