



LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Chief People Officer

Earthjustice

San Francisco, CA

"We wield the power of law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change."

The Opportunity

Earthjustice seeks a Chief People Officer (CPO) to serve as a defining architect of its people strategy. Internally, the role carries the title Vice President, People; a reflection of the organization's deliberate culture around titles and its deep respect for the communities it serves.

Since its founding in 1971, [Earthjustice](#) has built an unparalleled legacy of environmental impact. Behind nearly every landmark environmental legal victory in the United States, you will find Earthjustice fighting with urgency, precision, and purpose; powered by exceptional leadership and a workforce united by a shared belief that justice for people and the planet is not optional.

The incoming CPO will find much to build on. Earthjustice brings a well-earned reputation as a great place to work: exceptional compensation and benefits, high retention, a deeply engaged culture, and a long-standing [commitment to justice](#) that runs through everything it does. Rapid growth has outpaced some of its systems and structures, and the organization is ready for a leader who brings the vision, discipline, and momentum to build what comes next.

This is not primarily a turnaround. It is an invitation to lead. Earthjustice is looking for a CPO who can teach, challenge, and help the organization see what it cannot yet see – someone who leads it forward even when the destination isn't yet fully mapped. The CPO will shape how Earthjustice works by building structures, practices, and a culture that empowers staff, enables scale, and advances impact without sacrificing the human connection that defines the organization at its best.

Reporting to the Chief Operating Officer, the CPO will serve as a strategic partner to the President, the Executive Leadership Team, and the Operations Leadership Team, with the full organizational backing needed to lead with authority and impact.

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Earthjustice welcomes candidates from mission-driven and high-performance private sector environments alike. What matters most is a proven ability to deliver results in complex, dynamic organizations; and a genuine commitment to the values that make this work matter.

The Organization

Earthjustice is the nation's largest and most influential public-interest environmental law organization. Driven by [core values](#) of justice, inclusion, partnership, and excellence, the organization has spent more than five decades proving that the law, wielded with skill and determination, can protect people's health, preserve magnificent places and wildlife, advance clean energy, and confront climate change.

Earthjustice partners with thousands of communities, tribes, individuals, and advocacy groups to confront the environmental crises of our time – going to court against powerful interests with deep pockets, and winning.

Scale & Reach

Earthjustice has grown to a team of 670, including more than 230 litigators operating across the country. Thirty percent of staff are remote; the remaining 70% work a hybrid schedule from one of its offices. Headquartered in San Francisco, the organization maintains offices in Anchorage, Bozeman, Chicago, Denver, Honolulu, Houston, Juneau, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, Tallahassee, and Washington, D.C. Its impact extends further through partner organizations like Earthjustice Action and a network of global partners.

Earthjustice is here
because the Earth
needs a good lawyer.

An Employer as Exceptional as Its Mission

Earthjustice's reputation as an outstanding place to work is well-documented. On [Glassdoor](#), the organization ranks 20% above the nonprofit and NGO industry average, with standout scores across work-life balance, culture and values, career opportunities, and compensation and benefits. Ninety-eight percent of employees say they would recommend Earthjustice to a friend. [Charity Navigator](#) awards Earthjustice its highest four-star designation – a rare combination of mission integrity and operational excellence.

The Mandate

Earthjustice has built something worth building on: a people-centered culture that has sustained remarkable growth, retained exceptional talent, and earned deep employee trust. The incoming CPO will lead the evolution of that foundation, honoring what works, reimagining what doesn't, and bringing the strategic vision to take the organization where it hasn't yet been.

Shape Culture and Organizational Effectiveness

The CPO will be Earthjustice's cultural compass – not a guardian of the status quo, but a thoughtful and confident voice on who the organization is, how it works, and what it aspires to become. This means:

- Holding a clear, informed point of view on culture and organizational health, and offering leadership candid perspectives and recommendations grounded in both internal knowledge and external best practice
- Helping Earthjustice understand what the best-run organizations are doing, and recognizing when its values and mission call for a different path



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- Elevating performance and talent management as organizational priorities: building systems that develop people, support managers in leading high-performing teams, and address disengagement with skill and directness
- Developing managers and leaders as a core strategic investment and equipping them with the tools, frameworks, and coaching to lead inclusively and effectively at every level
- Stewarding the culture of respect, dignity, and empathy that defines the Earthjustice community – ensuring that as the organization grows and evolves, it never drifts toward mere compliance or hollow satisfaction

Build a Best-in-Class People Function

The CPO will assess, build, and advance a modern people operation capable of serving a complex, fast-moving organization at scale while delivering world-class service across organizational and performance management, compensation and benefits, talent acquisition, learning and development, employee relations, compliance, HR systems and metrics, and the Ombuds program.

Key priorities include:

- Developing a clear strategic roadmap: what to preserve, what to redesign, and what to build from scratch
- Building processes that are clean, efficient, scalable, and aligned with Earthjustice’s strategy and values, without sacrificing the human touch that defines its culture
- Establishing a total rewards philosophy that is holistic, competitive, and equitable
- Sustaining and evolving Earthjustice’s employee listening infrastructure – a comprehensive biennial Employee Satisfaction Survey, twice-yearly pulse surveys, and AI-assisted qualitative

analysis – ensuring it remains a genuine feedback loop that drives responsive action at every level of the organization

Elevate the People Team

The CPO will lead a team that colleagues across the organization view as trusted, indispensable partners; assessing structure and capabilities, modeling a culture of delivery and accountability, and benchmarking externally to ensure Earthjustice’s practices reflect the best of what leading organizations are doing, while remaining grounded in what makes the organization distinct.

Modernize Systems and Drive Data-Informed Decisions

Earthjustice currently operates 18 people systems with limited integration – a compelling opportunity for a tech-forward leader to rationalize and transform. The CPO will lead a thoughtful review of the technology infrastructure, design systems that work together and eliminate manual processes, and establish the metrics and analytics needed to identify trends and make decisions with confidence. Equally important, the CPO will help the organization navigate AI adoption thoughtfully; bringing sophistication about how AI will reshape work, talent, and organizational design, and harnessing its potential in ways consistent with Earthjustice’s mission and values.

Navigate Risk with Judgment and Confidence

The CPO will be Earthjustice’s leading voice on people-related risk, bringing a strategic, human-centered lens that enables the organization to act boldly without unnecessary exposure. This means sophisticated judgment in the gray areas, command of employment law and compliance, and the ability to present balanced analysis of reputational and cultural risk so that leaders can make well-informed decisions.



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The ideal candidate is an experienced, strategic, and action-oriented people leader with a genuine heart for people, a bias toward execution, and the confidence to lead from a clear point of view.

Lead the Workforce of the Future

The CPO will help Earthjustice think expansively about how it builds, supports, trains, and deploys its workforce, including creative surge capacity models and flexible staffing strategies. The organization is unwavering in its commitment to a workforce that reflects the communities and issues it serves, and the CPO will build the systems, policies, and practices that advance an inclusive organization at every career stage, with equity centered in every process that evolves.

The Candidate

The ideal candidate is an experienced, strategic, and action-oriented people leader with a genuine heart for people, a bias toward execution, and the confidence to lead from a clear point of view. Formed in high-performance environments, this person brings both the operational discipline and the human touch required to elevate Earthjustice's people function.

Experience & Qualifications

- 15+ years of progressive HR leadership, including significant tenure in a senior people leadership role in an organization of comparable scale and complexity
- Deep expertise across all HR disciplines: compensation, legal compliance, benefits, talent acquisition, learning and development, employee relations, and workforce planning; strong expertise in compensation is desired, and experience managing a self-insured health plan is a plus
- Proven success leading people functions through significant organizational growth and change, ideally in a matrixed environment

- Experience implementing and optimizing HR technology systems
- Background in employee relations required; labor relations experience is a plus
- Experience in mission-driven or nonprofit organizations
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred
- SHRM-SCP, SPHR, GPHR, or equivalent certification required

Strategic Capabilities

- A systems thinker who sees the connections across compensation, talent, culture, and organizational design – and understands how a decision in one domain shapes outcomes in others
- A decisive leader who brings a clear point of view, is not afraid to offer candid recommendations, and can hold a position under pressure while remaining genuinely open to input
- Skilled at translating organizational strategy into people priorities, with strong business acumen and the ability to zoom out to the bigger picture
- Motivated by organizational excellence and mission impact, not by avoiding conflict or maximizing retention as an end in itself
- Tech-forward and analytically minded, with the ability to use data and integrated systems to drive insight and action



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The CPO will understand the culture and pace of mission-driven organizations, and know how to drive meaningful change within them without losing the community that makes the work possible.

Communication & Personal Style

- An exceptional communicator, equally effective in one-on-one conversations and large group settings
- Able to go toe-to-toe with sharp, sophisticated colleagues and executive peers with credibility, confidence, candor, and grace
- Skilled at building trust and influence quickly and authentically across diverse stakeholders
- Transparent and approachable leader who invites feedback, acknowledges it, and responds with integrity

Values Alignment

- Leads with genuine care and authenticity – never performative, never hiding behind HR lingo
- Deeply aligned with Earthjustice’s mission and understands that advancing justice is not a program or initiative but the throughline of everything the organization does
- Brings deep empathy as a professional strength and a leadership orientation, not an afterthought
- Understands the culture and pace of mission-driven organizations, and knows how to drive meaningful change within them without losing the community that makes the work possible
- Demonstrates emotional intelligence, resilience, confidentiality, and sound judgment in navigating sensitive and complex situations
- Equipped to build systems that structurally advance equity and inclusion

The Relationships

The Chief People Officer is a fully integrated member of Earthjustice’s senior leadership and a strategic partner in organizational decision-making at the highest levels.

Reports to:	COO (Internal title, Senior Vice President of Operations)
Works closely with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President • Executive Leadership Team • General Counsel
Key member of:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations Leadership Team • Senior Management Team
Direct Leadership:	<p>The CPO leads a people team of 21 through three direct reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate Vice President, People – Talent Management • Associate Vice President, People – Partnership & Strategy • Director, Compensation & Metrics
Key Organizational Roles:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident Response Team (staff work across 260 locations nationwide) • Board Executive Compensation Committee • 403(b) Retirement Committee and 457(b) Deferred Compensation Committee

Location

Earthjustice is headquartered in San Francisco and prefers that the Chief People Officer be based in the Bay Area to facilitate close collaboration with senior leadership.

The organization employs a “team-centered” approach to hybrid work, where teams collaboratively shape their workflow, including what work location is best for them and the tasks at hand.

Compensation

Earthjustice offers competitive and comprehensive salaries and benefits, reflecting its commitment to attracting and retaining top talent. The culture is a major draw: an exceptionally collegial environment, a casual dress code, and a shared sense of purpose that is rare in any sector.

Learn more about Earthjustice's benefits at earthjustice.org/about/jobs/benefits. Salary is based on experience and location. Starting salary range for San Francisco: \$303,500 - \$337,200.

For potential consideration
or to recommend a prospect, please
email appropriate materials to
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or call **Patti Kish, Terri Kohan** or **Michelle Hall**
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