



Seattle Aquarium President & Chief Executive Officer



PREPARED BY:

Mary B. Gorman
Jason Baumgarten
Susan J. Clifford

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About the Seattle Aquarium

Established in 1977, the Seattle Aquarium was owned and managed by the City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation until 2010. At that point, the nonprofit Seattle Aquarium Society took over its operations, a model common among leading zoos and aquariums nationwide. A nonprofit 501c3 organization, the Seattle Aquarium functions under a long-term agreement with the City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation.

Guided by a visionary approach and the collaborative efforts of its 51-member board of directors and a diverse range of public, private, and philanthropic partners, the Seattle Aquarium embarked on a 20-year strategic plan in 2011. Our mission, *Inspiring Conservation of Our Marine Environment*, became the foundation of this plan, leading the organization to become a respected authority on Puget Sound, the Salish Sea, and global oceanic matters, as well as a top attraction for local and visiting families and individuals throughout the Puget Sound region. Surpassing the strategic plan's goals ahead of schedule, the Aquarium now looks beyond conservation, striving to pioneer regeneration efforts to restore ocean health and mitigate the impacts of climate change and human activity. To achieve our mission, the Aquarium's staff actively engages with various Pacific Northwest organizations, coalitions, and advisory boards, contributing to state legislation, research, and strategic initiatives within the region. We also participate in committees and task forces on national and international platforms like the Aquarium Conservation Partnership, American Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commissions. The Aquarium's operations are guided by its Salish Values:

SUSTAINABLE: Adopting and promoting, internally and externally, practices that improve ocean health.

AWE INSPIRING: Creating captivating experience for all audiences.

LEARNING & IMPROVING: Fostering, evaluating and applying knowledge and discovery.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY: Recognizing that diversity is critical to achieve our mission.

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY: Ensuring our credibility with evidence-based practices.

HONORING PLACE: Using our location and history as a lens for larger understanding.

Renowned for its extensive experience and dedication, our passionate team works tirelessly to heighten awareness and instigate the change necessary to safeguard our marine environment through a wide range of programs and initiatives. These include: conservation education programs catering to individuals of all ages and backgrounds; inspiring visitor experiences and events enhanced by our exceptional volunteers; research that advances understanding of animals in our care and their counterparts in the wild; impactful marketing and communications campaigns; and advocacy and policy work.

Rooted in our S.A.L.I.S.H. Values and Cultural Stewardship principles of Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Relationality, Responsibility, Reconciliation, Representation, and Regeneration, the Seattle Aquarium's Culture, Equity, & Diversity endeavors form the bedrock of our commitment to shaping a more inclusive future. Along with our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives aimed at ensuring the Aquarium remains accessible and welcoming to all, the Aquarium team actively works with more than 500 community partners to develop and deliver programs that advance inclusion and equity for both marine science education and conservation action.

Recognizing that the well-being of our ocean, cultures, and lives hinges upon the manner in which we honor each other and our work today, the Aquarium is taking steps to steadfastly uphold the following principles:

- **People:** We recruit, hire, and recognize practices to foster a diverse community of leaders, staff, and volunteers.
- **Commitment:** We demonstrate unwavering commitment and accountability, beginning with leadership, and invest our resources to translate our values into outcomes.
- **Accessibility & Inclusion:** We cultivate an organization characterized by warmth, inclusivity, representation, and equity across our infrastructure and cultural fabric.

With a steadfast dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion, combined with a focus on education and sustainability, and strong connections to indigenous communities, the Seattle Aquarium is positioned to inspire joy, wonder, and a profound connection between people and the ocean.

On a Mission

An important aspect of the Aquarium's vision has been the transformation of its waterfront campus in Seattle into a hub to engage, educate, and inspire conservation efforts. Major expansions in 2007 and the recent addition of a state-of-the-art animal care center have significantly enhanced the facility's capabilities. Last year, the Aquarium achieved record attendance (857,000 visitors) and to date has raised more than \$150 million through its One Ocean, One Future campaign to build and open the new Ocean Pavilion.

Today, the Seattle Aquarium is the ninth largest aquarium in the U.S. by attendance, and is the largest marine science education platform in the Pacific Northwest. Since our opening, we've welcomed more than 28 million visitors and provided marine conservation education to over two million school children. We're proud to be accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) for another five years as of March 2024. We are also a proud member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Our newly expanded campus, the Ocean Pavilion, is located in the middle of one of the largest public-private civic revitalization projects in the country. As an institutional anchor of this revitalization effort, the Ocean Pavilion and its rooftop are poised to be a central attraction to the estimated 15 million annual waterfront visitors. The Ocean Pavilion, which opened on August 29, is a living classroom that reflects the exquisite biodiversity of Coral Triangle reef ecosystems that face similar challenges as marine life in the Puget Sound and Salish Sea regions. Visitors come face-to-face with tropical reef sharks, rays, schooling fish, mangroves, seagrasses, and nearly 30 species of coral. The Ocean Pavilion complements habitats in the Aquarium's Piers 59 and 60 dedicated to life in the Salish Sea, including marine mammals, birds, fish, and invertebrates found in the temperate local waters of the Pacific Northwest. The extraordinary plants and animals in these three buildings draw visitors into their world to deliver a profound message: by working to regenerate their homes, in Earth's one world ocean, we'll save our own.

We're on a mission and looking for the next President and Chief Executive Officer to continue strengthening the Aquarium's ability to support a healthy ocean and shape a world where all living beings thrive.

The Seattle Aquarium is seeking a dynamic, empathetic, and visionary executive to lead the Aquarium at this pivotal time of growth and transition. With the newly opened Ocean Pavillion and the deep commitment to ocean conservation, the next President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will possess an abiding belief in the importance of protecting the oceans and will work with the board and staff to set an ambitious vision for the next decade, including a timeline for completing Phase 2 of the long-range capital plan. As the executive leader, the next CEO will possess the business and political acumen to drive institutional effectiveness, ensuring that the goals and priorities are aligned with the Aquarium's mission and resources. As the key spokesperson and ambassador for the Aquarium, the CEO will be an energetic and intellectually curious leader, raising the profile of the Aquarium locally, nationally, and internationally. A magnet for resources and talent, the successful candidate will have the creative leadership and collaboration skills required to lead a complex organization effectively and to attract philanthropic and funding support to ensure its sustainability and future success.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be visible and accessible internally. Inspire and engage all members of the staff, board, and community of volunteers.
- In partnership with the board of directors and the senior leadership team, develop, communicate, and implement a strategic vision for the Seattle Aquarium that guides its growth at this key moment with the opening of the Ocean Pavilion. Strengthen its leadership as an aquarium, a conservation organization, and as a key constituent in the City of Seattle. Balance near-term needs while looking to the future and laying the groundwork for the Aquarium to have greater reach and impact in fulfilling its mission.
- Expand the Aquarium's financial resources and ensure its financial viability. As the lead fundraiser for the organization, build and leverage relationships with individuals and philanthropic organizations as well as city, county, state, and federal agencies, ensuring that they view the Seattle Aquarium as a key priority. Also, identify and realize opportunities for the Aquarium to grow and diversify its revenue streams and generate additional earned revenue.
- Pursue greater efficiencies within the organization. Meet the operational metrics of success (visitor attendance, engagement and experience, animal health, conservation initiatives, educational programming, etc.). Build and nurture a high-performing leadership team that values operational excellence, collaboration, transparency, and systems.
- As a high-profile leader in the Seattle region, continually invest the time to build relationships with individuals and institutions that are vital to supporting the Aquarium and its mission.
- Steward and leverage its unique programs and collections to ensure that customer engagement, science, animal care, and conservation remain at the heart of the Aquarium's activities.
- Establish a unified culture that inspires and aligns staff to our mission and incorporates a vision for how diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility is critical to all aspects of the Aquarium's operations and practices.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

Organizational Leadership

Has provided strategic and executive leadership to support an organization's progress, raise its profile, and elevate its impact in a financially sustainable manner. Has built a strong and healthy organizational culture and is able to motivate a high-performance team in an organization that has experienced significant growth.

Fiscal, Operational, and Political Acumen

Has demonstrated experience and political acumen managing a complex, multi-source budget, and a multi-stakeholder (guests, member, civic, governmental, philanthropic, etc.) operation.

Proven Fundraiser

Has experience raising significant financial support for operations and capital projects from individual and institutional donors and governmental agencies, adapting successfully to a changing philanthropic and governmental landscape.

Passion for the Mission

Brings knowledge, curiosity, and sincere interest in oceans, conservation, and climate, and has the ability to communicate effectively and credibly their importance.

External Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Has served as the ambassador for an organization with broad awareness and a wide range of audiences, ideally including public officials as well as corporate, community, and philanthropic leaders.

Demonstrated Commitment to the Values of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion

Has had a meaningful impact on diversity and inclusion within a complex organization serving a large and varied set of stakeholders.

Strong Communicator

Brings strong communication skills and can effectively communicate the Aquarium's mission, programs, and impact to diverse audiences, including staff, local visitors, media, and international stakeholders.

Board Experience

Has reported to or interacted substantively with a board, successfully building a dynamic, positive relationship that keeps the board engaged and effective. Demonstrates an ability to align with board priorities, presenting insights and updates in a manner that supports informed, strategic decision-making.

CRITICAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Strategic Leadership

With the recent opening of the Ocean Pavilion, a robust conservation agenda, and the remarkable transformation of the Seattle Waterfront, the Aquarium is at a key inflection point, and the next CEO will build an ambitious yet pragmatic organizational plan to ensure the success by:

- Charting a course to leverage recent investments, set clear priorities, and continue to build its reputational, human, physical, and financial assets.
- Creating a long-term strategy that is true to its legacy but also leans into the future, ensuring the Aquarium's relevance, impact, and role in the city.
- Providing clear direction for the changes necessary to execute the strategy, including actionable and measurable goals for individuals and departments.
- Engaging in scenario planning that incorporates new information and/or disruptive thinking to gain significant advantage and impact.

Leading Change and Driving Impact

At a time of profound, transformational growth, the deepening of the Aquarium's conservation program, and the increased complexity of its primary role as a scientific and cultural institution, the CEO will drive financial and operational sustainability by:

- Working with the staff and board to build organizational performance across multiple dimensions – processes, practices, and systems – to ensure accurate, timely financial information and to lead decisions about operations and investments.
- Developing new benchmarks and metrics to understand operations, measure impact, and create best-in-class solutions and implement them across the organization.
- Fostering new ways of working or making necessary organizational changes such that the Aquarium achieves greater impact and staff members are energized by what they can accomplish.
- Being a prolific fundraiser and profile builder within the Seattle region, the nation, and beyond.

Collaborating and Influencing

Leading with empathy, transparency, and consistency, the CEO will foster a sense of community internally and externally, leveraging talent within the organization, building partnerships, and creating excitement about the Aquarium's impact and direction by:

- Communicating the vision and purpose of the organization with enthusiasm and passion. Being visible and accessible to staff members at all levels of the organization, creating a sense of engagement and presence.
- Inculcating a spirit of teamwork both internally and with the city of Seattle.
- Enlisting the senior leadership team to recommit to the organization's purpose, culture, and values, and empowering them to execute their strategic objectives.
- Engaging with external stakeholders, spending the time needed to understand the history, the current situation, and the ethos of Seattle culture, and always seeking paths that support multiple needs and are viewed as smart and fair.

SEARCH PROCESS

The Seattle Aquarium is being assisted in this recruitment by the international leadership advisory firm Spencer Stuart and welcomes nominations or expressions of interest. To submit comments, nominations, or expressions of interest, please send an email with any supporting materials to the confidential address:

SEAQPresident@SpencerStuart.com.

The Seattle Aquarium is committed to expanding a diverse, equitable, and inclusive conservation movement. We are invested in building an Aquarium with a wide variety of backgrounds, identities, languages, cultural ways of knowing, and life experiences. We know research shows that society has conditioned communities of color, trans and gender non-conforming people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and other marginalized candidates to more frequently not apply to a job because they don't feel that they meet all of the qualifications listed even if they are qualified. If you meet some of the requirements and you are passionate about our mission and our ocean, we encourage you to apply and look forward to learning more about you.



Young visitors in awe as they meet an Indo-Pacific leopard shark as part of the Aquarium's recovery initiative.