President & Chief Executive Officer
Rochester Museum & Science Center
Rochester, New York

THE SEARCH

The Rochester Museum & Science Center (RMSC, the museum) seeks a visionary President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to lead one of the most distinctive cultural and educational institutions in New York State and the Northeast through a transformational period of growth. For more than a century, RMSC has inspired curiosity through science, history, and the natural world, and today the institution encompasses a dynamic museum, a renowned planetarium, and an 850-acre nature center. RMSC sits at the heart of one of the nation's most historically significant technological centers, with ties to major research institutions and industries that have shaped the world. It stewards more than 1.2 million objects and artifacts, including the largest and most comprehensive Seneca-Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) collection on earth, along with a diversity of exhibits unmatched under a single roof anywhere in Western New York. Its span of activities, its stewardship of Rochester's cultural and economic heritage, and its significance to the future of the region make it a singular force for education and influence.

RMSC enters this search at a moment of real momentum. Recent strategic and campus planning efforts have set a clear direction for the institution's future, one that calls for meaningful investment in facilities, exhibits, collections stewardship, community building, and the visitor experience. RMSC's key stakeholders and leadership, together with Rochester's civic and private sectors, are enthusiastically aligned behind these efforts. The President and CEO will join RMSC as it moves from planning to implementation, advancing an ambitious agenda while building on the energies and efforts already underway.

The President and CEO will work alongside an engaged Board of Trustees, a staff deeply committed to RMSC's mission, and a network of supporters invested in the institution's future. Success in this role will require a relationship-oriented leader who can navigate complexity while maintaining focus on the

RMSC's mission and long-term priorities. The next President and CEO will bring strategic judgment, sound financial acumen, and the ability to move ambitious initiatives from concept to execution. Equally important is a leadership style characterized by transparency and collaboration, which builds trust, values expertise, and creates space for diverse perspectives. The successful candidate will be a strong communicator and powerful advocate for the RMSC, able to connect with staff, trustees, donors, community leaders, elected officials, and public audiences.

To assist in this important search, the Rochester Museum & Science Center has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT ROCHESTER MUSEUM & SCIENCE CENTER

Founded in 1912 as Rochester's Municipal Museum, the RMSC has spent more than a century evolving alongside the community it serves, growing from a single natural history collection into a tripartite institution encompassing the Museum & Science Center, the Strasenburgh Planetarium, and the Cumming Nature Center. Throughout its history, RMSC has been shaped by significant community investment and partnership, from Edward Bausch's early gift of land on East Avenue to more recent capital campaigns that have funded new galleries, laboratories, and collections facilities. Its ties to the Rochester community remain embedded in its governance structure, with voting trustees appointed by both the Mayor of Rochester and the Monroe County Executive.

At its main campus on East Avenue, the museum offers three floors of hands-on exhibits exploring STEM, natural science, and the region's cultural heritage, drawing on a collection of 1.2 million artifacts that document Rochester's history of innovation. RMSC tells the story of a region that helped shape the nation's scientific, industrial, and technological development. The museum's collections preserve and interpret the stories, discoveries, and cultural traditions that have shaped Rochester and beyond, including the display of the optical system from a once-classified Cold War spy satellite, built with Eastman Kodak camera and film technology.

Adjacent to the museum, the Strasenburgh Planetarium has served as a hub for astronomy education since 1968, when it opened as a gift from Edwin and Clara Strasenburgh under what was then the most advanced dome in the world; the 65-foot dome theater was recently renovated with digital visualization technology. The planetarium continues to offer astronomy programming, immersive full-dome experiences, laser shows, educational presentations, and community events for visitors of all ages.

Roughly forty miles south, the Cumming Nature Center, located on approximately 850 acres in the Finger Lakes Region, extends RMSC's mission beyond the museum campus through environmental education and outdoor experiences. The Nature Center features twelve miles of hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing trails, public programs, camps, seasonal events, and hands-on opportunities for visitors to explore and better understand the natural world. It plays a central role in RMSC's efforts to promote environmental stewardship, experiential learning, and access to nature.

Indigenous Collections

The Native American Collections at the RMSC (estimated 725,000 items) comprise more than half of the RMSC's collection and represent hundreds of Indigenous Tribes, Nations, communities, and individuals across Turtle Island (North America). These large and exceptionally significant collections also carry important responsibilities. Guided by its obligations under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the RMSC works closely with the Haudenosaunee nations and representatives from other Tribes and Nations across the country to support the care, interpretation, and stewardship of these materials. This includes previous and ongoing work in consultation with tribal representatives to repatriate ancestral remains, funerary objects, and other culturally significant items.

The RMSC also works with Indigenous knowledge keepers to advance new models for collaboration and stewardship. RMSC's newest permanent exhibition - *Hodinöšyö:nih Continuity | Innovation | Resilience* is curated by Jamie Jacobs (Tonawanda Seneca, Turtle Clan), Managing Curator of the Rock Foundation collections at the RMSC, in partnership with the RMSC and Hodinöšyö:nih artists. It features contemporary artists whose works are inspired by their own ancestors and traditions. The exhibition was a years-long collaboration aimed at supporting the rights of people to tell their own stories (narrative sovereignty), sharing Hodinöšyö:nih perspectives, and creating a space that helps Hodinöšyö:nih people reconnect with traditional material culture and knowledge (rematriation).

Mission and Strategic Plan

RMSC is guided by its mission to create a better world through inspiring curiosity, exploration, and engagement across history, science, culture, and the natural world. In support of that mission, the institution has developed a comprehensive campus strategic plan that serves as a roadmap for the next decade of growth and investment. The plan is designed to create a more connected and accessible campus while strengthening the museum's ability to serve visitors, students, educators, and the broader Rochester community.

Among the plan's most significant initiatives is the creation of a new connector building that will physically unite the museum, planetarium, and Cunningham House (administrative building), improving connectivity across the campus. Additional priorities include expanded event and program spaces, renewed exhibit experiences, upgraded infrastructure, and improvements to visitor amenities.

Operations and Governance

The RMSC's annual operating budget is $9.5 million annually. Financial support is derived from a combination of earned revenue, memberships, philanthropy, grants, government support, and corporate and community partnerships. Each year, RMSC welcomes more than 285,000 visitors across its three sites, serves approximately 50,000 school-aged children, and engages more than 6,600 member households. The museum receives funding from Monroe County, where it is one of the top five most visited attractions serving children and families. RMSC is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, reflecting its

commitment to the highest professional standards in collections stewardship, governance, education, and public service.

RMSC employs 62 full-time and 141 part-time employees, with more than 500 annual volunteers contributing nearly 20,000 hours of service. RMSC is governed by a Board of Trustees that actively oversees the museum's operations and makes available their experience and expertise to RMSC management. The 25-member Board uses a committee structure to optimize Board members' time, focus, and talents, and Trustees exercise their responsibilities through service on various administrative and operational Board committees.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President and CEO serves as RMSC's chief executive and its most visible ambassador, responsible for the strategic and operational effectiveness of RMSC programs, exhibits, and staff. The role carries broad authority and equally broad accountability, with the responsibility for translating institutional strategy into day-to-day leadership across the organization.

The President and CEO provides strategic and visionary leadership that unites RMSC's museum, planetarium, nature center, collections, and educational programs around a shared institutional identity, while also leading fundraising and philanthropic efforts, including advancement of the current capital campaign in close partnership with the Board and development staff. As RMSC's primary spokesperson, the President and CEO builds and sustains relationships with donors, community leaders, government officials, regional partners, educational institutions, foundations, and other key stakeholders, making a robust case for the institution as essential to the region's civic and cultural life. The role also carries responsibility for financial planning and organizational sustainability, ensuring that resources align with institutional priorities.

The President and CEO has eight direct reports: Vice President of Finance and Operations, Vice President of Marketing and Guest Experience, Vice President of Exhibits and Education, Senior Director of Grants, Government Relations, and Strategic initiatives, Senior Director of Human Resources, Senior Director of Collections and Curation, Director of the Cumming Nature Center, and an executive assistant.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Position RMSC as a leading community resource for science, history, and culture.

RMSC is navigating important conversations about how its mission, collections, educational offerings, and public programs are understood and experienced by audiences across the region. History, culture, science, technology, and environmental education all have a home within the institution. These are not separate areas competing for attention, but interconnected expressions of the RMSC's mission. Recent strategic and campus planning efforts were developed collaboratively and enjoy broad support across the

organization. The staff are excited about the RMSC's direction and eager for continuity alongside fresh energy and ambition.

The next President and CEO will be responsible for carrying that vision forward: aligning marketing, fundraising, and public programming around a coherent institutional identity; responding to audiences whose expectations and modes of engagement continue to evolve; seeking new and enhancing existing relationships, including with the many respected local colleges and universities; and articulating with clarity what the institution represents, at a moment when that clarity will shape its relevance across the region for years to come.

Advance a transformative capital campaign and strengthen long-term financial sustainability.

The next President and CEO will play an instrumental role in leading RMSC's fundraising and philanthropic efforts and will need to tell the RMSC story with equal skill to longtime supporters and to audiences who have yet to discover what the museum offers. Strategic planning has already identified a clear set of long-term priorities, among them facility improvements, exhibit renewal, expanded collections storage, accessibility enhancements, and continued investment in both programs and people. Advancing this agenda will call for a coordinated approach to fundraising, revenue generation, and resource development, one that treats donor engagement not as a separate function but as part of how RMSC tells its story and the important impact it has in the community. That work comes at a moment when philanthropic strategies and competition for support continue to shift across the nonprofit sector, making it all the more important that RMSC's next leader can connect individual donors, foundations, and elected officials to the institution's mission in ways that feel personal and lasting.

Strengthen organizational connectivity across a complex institution.

The museum, Strasenburgh Planetarium, Cumming Nature Center, collections, educational programs, community partnerships, and public events each contribute to a shared mission. Yet, they operate from different locations, serve different audiences, and have developed their own ways of working over time. As with many organizations of RMSC's size and scope, staffing across some areas is lean, and responsibilities are often redistributed among existing team members as roles evolve. This presents an opportunity for the next President and CEO to strengthen communication and knowledge sharing across departments, to break down silos, and to build on the shared services and best practices already in place across the institution.

The Cumming Nature Center's distance from the main campus and its location in Ontario County add a further dimensionality to this work, given its distinct operating context relative to the rest of the institution. Strengthening relationships and coordination across departments and locations has been an important focus for several years, and the next leader will be expected to build on that progress, bringing greater alignment and consistency to communication and organizational practices as RMSC's strategic initiatives continue to move forward.

Modernize facilities, collections, stewardship, and visitor experiences.

RMSC's physical assets reflect generations of investment in science education, collections care, and cultural stewardship, and many of the institution's most significant priorities today are tied directly to its spaces, collections, and visitor experience. The museum cares for more than one million objects and artifacts, all while maintaining facilities that support exhibitions, educational programs, and public events. Deferred maintenance, aging exhibits, and long-term capital needs increasingly compete for attention alongside that work. Planning around collections storage has taken on particular importance as RMSC considers the future of its off-site facilities and long-term preservation needs. Many exhibits and visitor amenities would benefit from renewal and modernization, and these investments are closely tied to broader conversations about the role it has as a "third place of learning", audience engagement, repeat visitation, and the visitor experience. The next chapter of institutional planning will call for balancing highly visible improvements with the essential, behind-the-scenes investment that sustains RMSC's collections, facilities, and operations.

Support and empower a talented, mission-driven team.

One of RMSC's greatest assets is its dedicated staff, whose expertise, creativity, and passion are evident across the institution. Staff consistently step beyond their formal responsibilities to advance programs, support colleagues, and serve visitors, often while operating within constrained resource environments. As the organization pursues its next phase of growth, there is an opportunity to strengthen the systems and structures that support long-term organizational success, such as staff development, workforce capacity building, compensation, onboarding, and internal communication. The next President and CEO will inherit a team that values transparency, trust, and communication.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no person will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional and personal qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent required, master's degree preferred in education, nonprofit management, museum studies, business, science, history, or a related field.
- Ten or more years of senior leadership experience in the nonprofit sector, ideally within a complex, multi-revenue organization such as a collections-based museum or science center, cultural institution, educational institution, visitor attraction, or comparable enterprise.
- Knowledge of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), including applicable federal laws, regulations, and the responsibilities of organizations that hold Native American Collections.
- Demonstrated experience leading large-scale operations that integrate education programs, consumer services, retail, food and beverage, ticketing, events, and facilities management.
- Strong financial acumen, including knowledge of nonprofit financial management practices and experience developing, managing, and monitoring organizational budgets.

- Proven success in fundraising, external relations, and partnership development, including collaboration with donors, sponsors, foundations, and governmental or corporate partners.
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to serve as a compelling public spokesperson, foster collaborative relationships, and build trust with diverse internal and external stakeholders.
- Entrepreneurial mindset, with a demonstrated ability to identify opportunities, develop innovative business strategies, and implement creative solutions.
- Proven success partnering with and supporting a Board of Trustees.
- Dynamic, collaborative leader who enjoys serving as the public face of an organization, inspiring teams, engaging diverse audiences, and representing the organization's mission with credibility, authenticity, and enthusiasm.

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Rochester, New York is the third-largest metro area in New York State. The region between Lake Ontario and the scenic Finger Lakes is rich in cultural and ethnic diversity, and is known for its intellectual capital, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit. Greater Rochester is home to leading companies, high-tech industries, and start-up enterprises in optics, photonics, imaging, advanced manufacturing, engineering, software and IT, food and beverage manufacturing, agriculture, and health care. As of the 2020 census, the metropolitan statistical area had a population of nearly 1.1 million.

Rochester is the birthplace of the modern optics and imaging industry. Companies like Eastman Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch + Lomb were founded in Rochester, and that legacy has grown into more than 150 optics, photonics, imaging, and laser companies employing roughly 19,000 residents in the region.

Rochester is a multifaceted, vibrant city, and the region boasts an exceptional quality of life, with cultural amenities and recreational activities; affordable health care and cost of living; excellent schools; and the arts, culture, sports, and nightlife of a big city with the ease and comfort of a small town. The region has been ranked 6th among 370 metro areas as one of the "Best Places to Live in America" by Places Rated Almanac. At the same time, Rochester has been ranked in the Top 50 for New Tech Hubs by Bloomberg, in the Top 25 for America's Most Innovative Cities by Forbes, and in the Top 10 for Smartest Cities in America by The Daily Beast. Rochester is a thriving culinary destination, a nature lover's paradise, a locale for charming festivals, and an imaginative arts and theatre community.

Rochester is a six-hour drive to New York City and a three-hour drive to Toronto, and its airport offers nonstop flights to 23 cities in the U.S.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

The target salary range is $200,000 to $210,000 and will be commensurate with experience. Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the search process is complete. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website.

Isaacson, Miller
Jackie Mildner, Partner
Vijay Saraswat, Partner
Annah Wells, Senior Associate
Pamela Carty, Senior Search Coordinator

The Rochester Museum & Science Center is committed to ensuring all individuals have an opportunity to apply for positions that they are interested in and qualify for without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, disability, genetic information, or any other protected characteristic.

Isaacson, Miller and the Rochester Museum & Science Center are committed to creating an inclusive environment and welcome applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any accommodation or access needs, we are happy to provide reasonable accommodations.

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