



Chief Executive Officer

Remote, US

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Chief Executive Officer

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About The National Association for Interpretation

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) is a 501(c)(3) professional association dedicated to advancing the field of heritage interpretation. The organization serves approximately 5,000 members across the United States and more than thirty countries, representing a wide range of roles and settings, including parks, museums, nature centers, zoos, aquariums, historic sites, and commercial tour operations.

NAI was formed in 1988 through the merger of the Association of Interpretive Naturalists (founded in 1954) and the Western Interpreters Association (founded in 1969). The organization is headquartered in Fort Collins, CO, with staff located across the US. Its membership includes interpreters, naturalists, historians, rangers, educators, guides, academics, and volunteers, as well as institutions that support the field.

NAI's core offerings include training and certification programs, conferences, regional workshops, publications, and digital resources. These include *The Journal of Interpretation Research*, a peer-reviewed publication advancing scholarship in the field, as well as other member communications. The organization also maintains a publishing imprint, InterPress, along with an online store and additional member services.

For more than five decades, NAI and its predecessor organizations have supported the profession by encouraging collaboration, advancing standards of practice, and promoting leadership in heritage interpretation.

What is Interpretation?

NAI defines interpretation as a purposeful approach to communication that creates meaningful, relevant experiences that deepen understanding and inspire engagement.

In practice, interpretation is not about language translation. It is about how people connect to ideas, places, and stories. It takes place in parks, museums, zoos, aquariums, historic sites, and cultural institutions, where professionals use storytelling, exhibits, guided experiences, signage, and digital media to help audiences understand and care about natural, cultural, and historic resources.

At its best, interpretation shapes how people understand, experience, and value the world around them. It is often present in everyday experiences, even when it goes unnoticed.

The Opportunity

NAI is a respected organization with a clear mission, strong credibility in the field, and a set of meaningful assets to build upon. It is also at a point where a focus on infrastructure and strategic improvements to its operating model will position the organization for its next phase of growth.

The organization's primary value driver is its training and certification portfolio. These programs are central to both mission delivery and revenue generation and continue to hold strong relevance in the field. At the same time, there is an opportunity to further strengthen their impact through a more defined and forward-looking strategy, particularly around delivery models, pricing, ownership, and long-term positioning.

Membership, as seen across many associations, has declined from pre-pandemic levels and has since stabilized. The annual conference remains an important component of community and engagement, though participation patterns have evolved. Across the field, expectations for flexible, high-quality, and accessible professional development continue to increase, particularly in digital and hybrid formats, creating opportunities for thoughtful expansion and innovation.

NAI places emphasis on broadening inclusion, accessibility, and representation within the interpretation profession and the communities it serves. The organization recognizes that interpretation shapes how people understand stories, places, cultures, and histories, and believes the field is strongest when a diversity of perspectives and lived experiences are reflected in that work. Its next leader will be expected to continue advancing these efforts thoughtfully, credibly, and in alignment with NAI's mission and professional standards.

Internally, NAI operates with a lean and deeply committed team, though organizational systems, role clarity, and operational infrastructure will require continued strengthening to support the organization's next phase.

NAI is at a meaningful inflection point. The organization enters this next chapter with a strong mission, respected reputation, and deeply committed community, while also recognizing the need for greater operational clarity, financial resilience, organizational alignment, and long-term strategic focus. The next CEO will inherit an organization with significant strengths and opportunities for modernization, prioritization, and sustainable growth.

This is a leadership role defined less by organizational scale and more by judgment, influence, and the opportunity to shape how a respected national organization evolves to meet the changing needs of its field.

The next leader will also play an important role in strengthening NAI's long-term financial sustainability through partnership development, philanthropic strategy, sponsorship cultivation, and board engagement. Fundraising and partnership development capabilities remain relatively early-stage, and the organization sees significant opportunity to strengthen long-term revenue diversification and external engagement.

The Board recognizes that the organization's next phase will require disciplined focus, thoughtful pacing, and strong partnership between board and staff leadership. The Board is seeking a leader who can help shape organizational direction while also engaging the Board more actively in governance, fundraising, and long-term stewardship responsibilities.

Position Summary

NAI seeks a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) responsible for leading the organization through a period of organizational focus, modernization, and long-term strategic evolution in partnership with the Board of Directors.

This is a hands-on role in a national professional association where the CEO will operate across strategy, operations, revenue, and external engagement. Success will depend on the ability to assess the organization's current model, make clear decisions about priorities, and lead implementation in a resource-constrained environment with steadiness and discipline.

A central responsibility of the role is establishing direction and strategy for NAI's training and certification portfolio as its primary value driver. This includes evaluating how programs are developed, delivered, positioned, and priced to ensure alignment with both market demand and long-term sustainability.

The CEO will also improve financial visibility and organizational decision-making across a revenue model that would benefit from greater diversification and long-term resilience, including training, membership, conferences, and philanthropic support. This includes creating greater clarity, accountability, and transparency around how financial realities, tradeoffs, and organizational priorities are understood across the organization.

The role requires a candid, productive, and steady partnership with the Board of Directors. This includes building trust, clarifying roles, improving governance effectiveness, and engaging the Board more consistently in strategic and fundraising

responsibilities while maintaining appropriate boundaries between governance and management. Over the next several years, key areas of focus will include:

- Defining and advancing a clear strategy for training and certification as the organization's primary value driver.
- Improving financial sustainability and diversification across all revenue streams.
- Activating a more consistent and shared approach to fundraising, including greater board engagement.
- Aligning organizational structure, staffing, and priorities to support execution.
- Establishing a more proactive and rigorous approach to planning, prioritization, and decision-making.
- Strengthening the board-staff partnership and improving governance effectiveness.

Progress in these areas will position the organization to make more intentional decisions about growth, partnerships, and its role within the broader field.

What Success Looks Like

The Board understands that organizational progress will require sequencing, prioritization, and disciplined execution over time rather than simultaneous transformation across all areas of the organization. The next leader will be expected to assess where focused attention is most needed, establish organizational clarity and momentum, and help position NAI for greater long-term sustainability, alignment, and impact.

While the exact pacing and prioritization of work will ultimately be shaped by the incoming CEO in partnership with the Board, the organization generally envisions success unfolding across three broad phases: stabilization and focus, strengthening the business model, and positioning NAI for long-term relevance and resilience.

Year One: Stabilize and Focus

- Establish trust with staff, Board, members, and key stakeholders.
- Clarify organizational priorities, decision-making roles, and near-term operating needs.
- Build stronger visibility into finances, revenue drivers, and organizational capacity.
- Begin aligning staff structure, Board engagement, and internal systems around a clearer path forward.

- Identify early opportunities to strengthen training, certification, fundraising, and member value.

Year Two: Rebuild and Strengthen the Business Model

- Advance a clearer strategy for training, certification, and professional development.
- Strengthen pricing, program performance, sponsorships, partnerships, and fundraising systems.
- Build greater Board participation in revenue generation and external relationship stewardship.
- Improve organizational sustainability through better planning, clearer priorities, and diversified revenue.

Longer-Term: Reposition NAI for the Future

- Strengthen NAI's visibility, relevance, and leadership within the interpretation field.
- Deepen partnerships across parks, museums, cultural institutions, education, public agencies, and related sectors.
- Position NAI as a more focused, financially resilient, and strategically aligned national association.
- Create the conditions for sustainable growth beyond initial stabilization.

Essential Job Functions

Success in this role will depend less on advancing all priorities simultaneously and more on exercising sound judgment about where to focus first. The scope of the role is intentionally broad, but progress will require sequencing, prioritization, and disciplined execution over time rather than parallel transformation across all areas at once.

The CEO is expected to assess the organization's most immediate needs, gain an early understanding of the organizational context, and move a focused number of priorities forward at any given time. This includes making difficult tradeoffs, pacing change appropriately, and aligning the Board and staff around a clear and sustainable path forward.

The CEO will be empowered to evaluate organizational structure, operational systems, strategic priorities, and resource alignment in partnership with the Board. Success in this role will require the ability to balance inclusivity and collaboration with decisiveness, prioritization, and organizational accountability.

The responsibilities below are organized around the broad sequence of work the Board anticipates: first stabilizing and focusing the organization, then strengthening the business model, and ultimately positioning NAI for greater external relevance and long-term resilience.

1. Stabilize and Focus the Organization

Organizational Leadership & Stabilization

- Bring focus, clarity, and direction to an organization balancing many competing priorities.
- Make thoughtful decisions about what moves now, what waits, and where the organization should concentrate its energy.
- Create stronger alignment, accountability, and operational consistency across the organization.
- Evaluate systems, workflows, and structure with an eye toward long-term sustainability, not just short-term fixes.
- Lead through ambiguity, change, and organizational complexity with steadiness and sound judgment.
- Evolve NAI intentionally rather than reacting from one challenge to the next.

Financial Management & Revenue Model

- Take full ownership of budgeting, forecasting, and financial planning.
- Build a clearer understanding of what is driving revenue, where resources are stretched, and where the organization is most vulnerable.
- Improve visibility into financial realities so decisions are grounded, timely, and transparent.
- Guide difficult tradeoffs around pricing, programs, staffing, and priorities.
- Help position NAI for greater long-term financial resilience and sustainability.
- Communicate financial realities directly and credibly to staff and Board.

Board Partnership & Governance

- Build a candid, productive, and high-trust partnership with the Board of Directors.
- Strengthen clarity around governance, decision-making, accountability, and organizational roles.
- Support the continued development of the Board as a strategic governing body rather than solely an operational one.
- Navigate the realities of a volunteer-led national organization with professionalism and political judgment.
- Balance collaboration and inclusivity with decisiveness and executive leadership.
- Maintain healthy boundaries while keeping the organization aligned and moving forward.

Staff Leadership & Organizational Capacity

- Lead a geographically distributed team with clarity, empathy, accountability, and consistency.
- Strengthen communication, expectations, ownership, and follow-through across the organization.
- Align staffing, structure, and internal systems with organizational priorities.
- Build operational systems that support execution without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Approach modernization thoughtfully while respecting the organization's culture and history.
- Foster a culture grounded in professionalism, adaptability, mission commitment, and trust.

2. Rebuild and Strengthen the Business Model

Training & Certification Leadership

- Treat training and certification as core strategic assets central to NAI's future relevance and sustainability.
- Evaluate what programs should grow, evolve, simplify, or operate differently.
- Align offerings with member needs, market demand, and the changing landscape of the profession.
- Strengthen the connection between programming, accessibility, pricing, and financial performance.
- Ensure programs remain mission-driven while also contributing meaningfully to organizational sustainability.

Fundraising & Revenue Diversification

- Build a more diversified and sustainable long-term revenue model.
- Strengthen partnerships, sponsorships, and external relationships that expand NAI's reach and support.
- Increase Board engagement in fundraising, relationship stewardship, and external visibility.
- Build greater consistency and structure around development efforts over time.
- Create a healthier long-term balance between earned revenue and philanthropic support.

3. Reposition and Strengthen NAI's External Leadership

External Engagement & Field Leadership

- Serve as a visible and credible national leader for both NAI and the interpretation profession.
- Build strong relationships across the field, including members, partners, sponsors, and peer organizations.

- Clearly communicate NAI’s mission, value, and relevance to a broad range of audiences.
- Help ensure NAI’s programs, partnerships, leadership, and professional engagement efforts reflect a broad range of perspectives, communities, and lived experiences across the field.
- Strengthen the organization’s visibility, credibility, and long-term influence within the profession.
- Stay attuned to broader trends and challenges shaping the future of interpretation.

Qualifications

The ideal candidate will bring senior leadership experience in a nonprofit, association, or similarly complex organization, along with demonstrated success leading through change, complexity, and organizational transformation. They will also have:

- Experience leading organizations, divisions, or major functions supported by earned revenue, programs, services, and diversified funding streams.
- Strong financial and operational leadership skills, including budgeting, forecasting, pricing, resource allocation, and organizational decision-making.
- Experience evaluating and evolving programs, services, or business models to improve relevance, sustainability, and market alignment.
- Demonstrated ability to lead effectively in environments requiring prioritization, sequencing, change management, and strategic execution.
- Experience working closely with boards and navigating governance dynamics with professionalism, political judgment, and accountability.
- Familiarity with fundraising, strategic partnerships, and revenue diversification, including engaging boards and stakeholders in external relationship development.
- Evidence of steady, low-reactivity leadership and sound judgment in complex, evolving, or ambiguous environments.
- Demonstrated commitment to fostering inclusive organizations and advancing accessibility, representation, and belonging across programs, teams, partnerships, and professional communities.
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills, with the ability to represent an organization externally with credibility and clarity.

Experience in membership-based organizations, associations, or network-driven environments is preferred. Familiarity with interpretation or adjacent sectors such as museums, parks, education, environmental organizations, or cultural institutions is helpful but not required.

Leadership & Key Colleagues *(Please do not contact NAI or its leaders directly)*

Parker McMullen Bushman, Board President

Parker McMullen Bushman is an environmental educator, advocate, and national leader in interpretation and public engagement. She currently serves as Founder and CEO of Ecoinclusive Strategies, a consulting practice focused on equity, inclusion, and environmental engagement. Parker has held leadership roles with the U.S. Forest Service and other national organizations and is widely recognized for her work advancing inclusion and representation within outdoor and environmental spaces.

Amy Roell, Board Treasurer

Amy Roell is Director of Programming at Great Parks of Hamilton County in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she has spent more than three decades leading education, interpretation, recreation, and public engagement programs. Her work has included oversight of interpretive naturalists, adventure recreation, special events, exhibits, and community programming focused on regional natural and cultural history.

Terry Joyce, Board Secretary

Terry Joyce is an Education Specialist at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, where she develops and delivers interpretive and educational programming for the public and helps train staff and volunteers in customer service and interpretation. She previously worked in first-person historical interpretation at a living history museum. Terry is a Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG), Certified Interpretive Trainer (CIT), and Certified Interpretive Host Trainer (CIHT). Her career reflects a longstanding commitment to public engagement, education, and advancing excellence within the interpretation profession.

Mary Loan, Board Vice President for Administration

Mary Loan is an aviation training specialist with the U.S. Department of the Interior and brings more than two decades of leadership experience across public lands, interpretation, fire management, and federal operations. Her career has included roles with the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service, where she led aviation programs, safety training, and operational coordination in complex field environments. Her background reflects a strong commitment to interpretation, public service, organizational leadership, and professional development within the field.

Jessica Moore, Board Vice President for Programs

Jessica Moore is Superintendent of Sinks Canyon State Park in Wyoming and brings more than two decades of experience in interpretation, education, and public engagement. Her career includes service as a National Park Service Interpretive Ranger, nearly eighteen years as a zoo educator, and leadership within Wyoming State Parks beginning in 2022. Her work has focused on connecting people to natural and cultural resources through meaningful educational and interpretive experiences, with a strong commitment to public service and professional development within the field.

Reporting Relationships

The CEO reports to the Board of Directors and leads a geographically distributed national team responsible for advancing NAI's operations, programs, member engagement, and strategic priorities. Current direct reports and key staff partners include:

- **Information Systems & Digital Networking Manager**
- **Corporate Engagement & Partnerships Manager**
- **Events & Engagement Manager**
(contractor)
- **Certificate Program Administrator**
- **Professional Development & Education Coordinator**
- **Membership Coordinator**
- **Visual Branding Specialist**

The CEO works closely with Board leadership and engages regularly with members, volunteers, institutional partners, sponsors, and stakeholders across the field. The role requires a leadership style grounded in communication, accountability, collaboration, and operational clarity within a fully remote organizational environment.

**Bold indicates a direct report within the current structure.*

Location & Travel Expectations

This is a full-time, remote position based in the United States. NAI's headquarters is located in Fort Collins, CO; however, its building has been listed for sale in anticipation of the organization moving to a fully remote operating model.

Regular national travel is expected, including conferences, board meetings, partner engagement, and organizational events.

Compensation & Benefits

Compensation includes a base salary range of \$120,000 to \$130,000, along with performance-based incentive compensation tied to mutually established organizational and revenue goals. NAI recognizes the scale and importance of this leadership opportunity and is committed to supporting the next CEO through strong

board partnership, organizational investment, and thoughtful prioritization of goals and expectations. NAI offers a generous benefits package, which includes:

- Medical (Anthem BCBS), Dental (Kansas City Life), and Vision (VSP) insurance
- Basic Life and AD&D insurance (Hartford)
- Long-term disability insurance (Hartford)
- Employee Assistance Program (Anthem)
- Premium Conversion Account
- Health Care Reimbursement Account
- Employer contribution of 5% to SARSEP
- Non-ERISA 403(b) for employee contributions
- Paid time off beginning at 10 days based on tenure
- Four personal holidays
- Eight observed national holidays

As a reflection of our firm’s commitment to equity and equal pay for all, Cooper Coleman requires that salary ranges or salary starting points be published for every search we conduct. The practice of not posting salaries perpetuates the gender and racial wage gap and is unfair to historically excluded populations by causing individuals to negotiate from a disadvantaged starting point.

Submission Instructions *(read carefully)*

[Cooper Coleman](#) is leading this search on behalf of the National Association for Interpretation. **To apply, please [visit this link](http://www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches)** (www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches). **All expressions of interest should be made only through the online application**, and all inquiries will be held in confidence.

A cover letter is not required with your initial application but is welcome to help us understand your fitness for and interest in this role during our initial evaluation. Candidates invited for interviews will be asked to provide a thoughtful letter of interest indicating their specific qualifications for the opportunity, desire to join NAI, and connection to its mission.

Cooper Coleman LLC is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all qualified candidates and will refer candidates without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or identity, age, ability, veteran status, or any legally protected basis.

Background Checks & Credentials Verification

Before sending your resume for this position, please read it over for accuracy. Cooper Coleman verifies its candidates' employment and academic credentials at the time of offer, and NAI may conduct background checks before finalizing an offer.

EEO & Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

NAI believes interpretation is strongest when it reflects the fullness of the communities, histories, cultures, and perspectives it seeks to engage. The organization is committed to fostering an inclusive, welcoming professional community advancing accessibility, representation, and belonging throughout the field of interpretation. Candidates from all backgrounds, experiences, identities, and lived perspectives are encouraged to apply. NAI is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any protected characteristic under applicable law.

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About Cooper Coleman

Cooper Coleman is a nationally ranked executive search firm partnering exclusively with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and cultural, research, and academic institutions. We move organizations forward by placing the right leaders in the right roles at the right time, and we help to strengthen management and fundraising capacity to amplify their mission and impact.



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