



## **President + Chief Executive Officer**

*Kalamazoo, MI*

**Kathy Kraushar**  
Vice President, Executive Search

[kathy@coopercoleman.com](mailto:kathy@coopercoleman.com)

# About The Kalamazoo Nature Center

The Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to create relationships and experiences that welcome and inspire people to discover, enjoy, value, and care for nature. KNC envisions a resilient community where all people have strong interconnections with the natural world. Founded 64 years ago, it is recognized by its peers as one of the top nature centers in the country. KNC is located on 1,100 acres of wooded, rolling countryside and includes over 15 miles of hiking trails winding through some of the most magnificent habitats in Michigan. It also includes the Heronwood Field Station, Nature's Way Preschool, Nature Center Camp, DeLano Homestead and Farms, the Urban Nature Park, and the Stryker Nature Preserve.

The Kalamazoo Nature Center's team consists of ~40 full-time, ~20 part-time, and ~60 seasonal employees and includes the following departments and programs:

**The Conservation Stewardship Department** leads KNC's scientific and land management activities. Specialties include bird banding, community science, conservation work for endangered species, and managing wildlife habitats. The Conservation Stewardship Department is comprised of several teams and departments dedicated to advancing our understanding and protection of the environment. These include:

- » **The Ecological Services Team:** The team works with private and public landowners on surveys, planting, treatments, or monitoring to find more sustainable solutions for their land management needs.
- » **KNC's Research Team:** Partnering with local, national, and international organizations, this team conducts scientific research that supports the restoration and conservation of native habitats and species. Their projects range from short-term actions that address critical conservation needs to multi-decade population studies. KNC's research program aims to deepen the collective understanding of Michigan's natural communities and provide information to guide the activities of land managers, policymakers, and others who care for nature.
- » **Community Science Team/Program:** The team comprises professional scientists and any member of the general public interested in collaborating to protect our environment. Through volunteering as a Community Scientist, people of all ages, experience levels, and interests work to help gather data about nature.
- » **KNC Land Management Teams:** Funded by grants and private donors, these teams protect, conserve, and restore our ecological heritage through a variety of sustainable land management practices.

**The Learning + Engagement Department** provides schools, community groups, and organizations with one-of-a-kind experiences and educational programs. The department encompasses several key programs and facilities:

- » **Nature's Way Preschool:** Established in 1982, the Nature's Way Preschool has been connecting young children and families with nature. Initially housed in a one-room log cabin, Nature's Way Preschool is one of the longest-running environmental preschool programs in the nation. In 2011, the Kalamazoo Nature Center built a new

facility, expanding the enrollment to 128 students. Students enjoy daily hikes on 30 wooded acres, including a beautiful wetland area along the west fork of Portage Creek.

- » **Heronwood Field Station:** A 5,000-square-foot ecological field station on over 60 acres in Alamo. Heronwood is home to several projects and programs, including high school Conservation Biology courses.
- » **Fair Food Matters Program (FFM):** Provides food and garden-based education to connect, educate, and empower youth experiencing systematic oppression through food and garden-based hands-on learning experiences. Over 300 students are involved in learning activities in the garden each year.
- » **KNC Camp Program:** A camp program that strives to provide safe experiences that allow all children to grow into active and respectful community members through exploration of the natural world.
- » **DeLano Farms:** A working, educational farm whose initial purpose is to serve as a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model for the community. CSA is a farming model based on a mutually beneficial relationship between farmers and eaters (members).
- » **The Exhibits Team** is responsible for presenting self-curated and traveling exhibits as well as for the daily care and upkeep of all indoor and outdoor interpretive exhibits.

**The Development Department** leads fundraising efforts for KNC and oversees memberships and grants. The department works with donors and funders to develop relationships and cultivate major gifts, as well as submit grant proposals to foundations for funding. They also engage with members at key KNC and community events.

**The Marketing/Communications Department** creates ongoing awareness of the Kalamazoo Nature Center and its value to the community. KNC maintains a robust website and digital presence, along with targeted print materials for fundraising and membership retention.

**The Finance and Administration Department** manages several key teams, programs, and facilities:

- » **Finance** provides planning and financial oversight for the stability and growth of the organization.
- » **The Facilities Management Team** provides upkeep of KNC's many onsite and offsite properties, including the iconic Visitor Center, and maintains KNC's 15-mile trail system and vehicle fleet.
- » **The Visitor Services Team** are the frontline ambassadors, highly trained to welcome visitors and answer all of their questions, ensuring they have the best possible experience.
- » **Trailhead Gifts + Books Shop** enhances the experience of the individual/family visit by providing a souvenir or educational item, creating a lasting connection.

- » **Facilities Rentals + Event Planning Team** provides increased visibility of KNC and event planning and coordination.
- » **The Volunteer Team** is critical to the operation of the organization to maximize resources and provide KNC with a broad range of people and experiences to draw upon as needed. In turn, KNC seeks to provide meaningful educational experiences for its volunteers.
- » **The Human Resources Team** manages employee relations, policy updates, benefits, recruiting, and onboarding.

The Kalamazoo Nature Center holds responsibility for over 1,500 acres of land. These properties embody a history of deep historical injustices that have produced inequity in access to nature that continues today. KNC occupies the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of the first peoples, the Anishinaabek. Also known as the Council of the Three Fires, the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Bodewadmi people ceded land in the 1821 Treaty of Chicago and lost lands through forced removal in 1833. Additionally, they acknowledge the complex racial inequity contributing to steep disparities in land access and ownership for Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities. This gives weight to KNC's charge to their community. They are committed to becoming an organization led by and in service to all of their community and to honoring their complex history in all they do. KNC is committed to healing these relationships between people and land in their work.

## Opportunity

Over its 64-year history, the Kalamazoo Nature Center has been led by three President + CEOs. The opportunity now available for the fourth President + CEO to foster significant foundational growth for this well-resourced organization is tremendous.

KNC is one of the largest nationally recognized nature centers in the country and a strong organization with a strategic plan and a talented, dedicated, mission-driven staff and volunteers. They have a large endowment, brand recognition, and public support.

## Position Summary

**The Kalamazoo Nature Center seeks a President + Chief Executive Officer** to lead the organization. The President + CEO is responsible for all financial, operational, administrative, and legal/compliance aspects of organizational management, including but not limited to public relations, financial management, fundraising, organizational development, and staffing. This executive leader liaises with and coordinates the contributions of diverse groups of trustees, donors, staff, volunteers, and community groups. The President + CEO works under authority granted by the Board of Trustees and will have the full support of this active and engaged Board.

KNC's ideal President+ CEO is a decisive, charismatic, mission-driven executive leader, a proven fundraiser, and a seasoned people manager. They are inspiring, authentic, and diplomatic; financially and operationally savvy; experienced in managing and overseeing complex programs, including those funded by grants.

They possess a well-developed executive presence and an ability to externally represent KNC confidently, skillfully, and strategically, elevating the organization's profile throughout its various communities of current and prospective funders, clients, and partner organizations.

They have the humility and curiosity first to observe and learn the vastness of its programs and services, recognizing the strength and effectiveness of the professionals leading those various departments and programs. They are resilient in the face of challenges, ambiguity, and adversity; they are adaptable and decisive.

The next President + CEO is a systemic thinker and problem-solver who exercises irreproachable integrity and judgment when addressing organization-level challenges and opportunities. They are a transformative thinker, a compelling, long-term visionary who inspires, motivates, and empowers those in their charge.

## Essential Job Functions

The Kalamazoo Nature Center is a dynamic organization responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. The duties and responsibilities of the President + CEO are likewise dynamic and may change from time to time as business requires and as directed by the Board of Trustees. The President + CEO's essential duties and responsibilities include but are not limited to those identified below.

### Strategic Leadership + Organizational Development

- » Work in partnership with the Board, Executive Team, and staff to provide strategic direction, insight, and pragmatic vision to achieve desired outcomes and mission growth
- » Serve as the board liaison, particularly for interdepartmental strategic initiatives, including Indigenous Peoples/cultural land stewardship, Urban Nature Park, Stryker Nature Preserve, climate action plan, and facilities management
- » Guide the development, prioritization, implementation, and tracking of the overall organizational strategy, goals, and outcome metrics
- » Ensure that the mission and core values of KNC are centered in the work
- » Lead staff in the planning, development, implementation, evaluation, and evolution of programs that align with KNC's strategic vision and values and ensure impact
- » Ensure the organization has the resources, technologies, operations, and policies in place to work efficiently and meet the highest standards for financial controls, HR policies, fund development, legal, and federal and state compliance

- » Advance and enhance KNC's organizational profile by cultivating strategic organizational partnerships and networks

### **Financial Oversight, Organizational Management, + Administration**

- » Manage operations and personnel, including hiring and organization restructuring/staff role changes; oversight of contracts, grants, land leases, legal consultation, and federal and state permits; and general administrative tasks
- » Propose, obtain approval of, and implement KNC's annual budget in cooperation with the Board of Trustees, addressing current operating budget issues
- » Ensure robust financial management of the organization, making appropriate decisions on strategic priorities and providing general financial oversight
- » Ensure all operational activities are consistent with KNC's annual budget
- » Oversee activities of outsourced firms and vendors
- » Ensure the evaluation, maintenance, and upgrades (as needed) of IT infrastructure and systems, including the donor database

### **Program Development + Delivery**

- » Develop programs to fulfill KNC's mission, ensuring contractual compliance for all KNC programs and initiatives
- » Provide a current perspective on funding models that will build the capacity of the successful programs
- » Establish a balanced approach to addressing educational needs and financial sustainability
- » Maintain ultimate oversight of all KNC's programs and initiatives

### **Fundraising**

- » Ultimately responsible to the Board of Trustees for oversight and execution of fundraising operations adequate to support KNC's mission and to fulfill annual, short-, and long-term budget requirements
- » Provide leadership in developing and implementing a fundraising strategy, including individual, foundation, and corporate major giving, planned giving, and grants
- » In partnership with the Director of Development, implement a sustainable fundraising strategy that ensures KNC has the financial resources necessary to implement and grow its work
- » In coordination with the Board, evaluate the feasibility of a capital or major Campaign
- » In partnership with the Director of Development and Grant Manager, identify appropriate grant opportunities
- » Develop and cultivate deep and meaningful relationships with key KNC supporters and financial donors

## External Relations + Communications

- » Be a passionate thought leader in the community and spokesperson for KNC, clearly and fervently communicating and advocating for its mission
- » Cultivate strong relationships at the state and local levels; among peers and partner organizations; among donors, grant-makers, and government entities; with the media; and with the community at large
- » Develop strategic partnerships and alliances that broaden KNC's reach and effectiveness
- » Act as the face and voice of KNC, including in media and among financial supporters
- » Bear ultimate responsibility to the Board of Trustees for executing a public relations and communications plan to support KNC's programs, mission, and vision in accordance with the organization's strategic plans

## Team Development + Personnel Management

- » Create a strong, inclusive, and supportive internal culture that engages, inspires, develops, and retains a diverse community of staff, volunteers, consultants, and community partners
- » Lead the Executive Team in interdepartmental decision-making processes, major program changes and restructuring, capital planning, and expenditures
- » Act as an effective leader, listener, delegator, and decision-maker for collaborative, team-wide projects, tasks, and meetings, ensuring that they are handled efficiently, inclusively, and respectfully
- » Develop future leadership within the organization by ensuring staff receive the professional development, growth opportunities, and support needed to succeed
- » In collaboration with the Board, lead the organization in a major priority of developing a compensation study and plan
- » Ensure that onboarding, recruitment, retention, development, and staff management are professional, positive, and productive
- » Lead the organization's hiring strategy to ensure KNC has the right competencies and an inclusive and equitable process

## Board Relations + Communications

- » Support the Board in executing its governance responsibilities by keeping them fully informed of and advised about relevant issues through ongoing communication
- » Partner with the Board Chair and Executive Committee to continuously improve the experience, knowledge, and capabilities of the Board of Trustees to ensure organizational success
- » Assist the Board Chair in planning Board meetings, agendas, and material

# Qualifications

With the understanding that no one person will offer every desired skill and characteristic outlined below, compelling candidates will offer much of the following:

## Education + Experience Requirements

- » Bachelor's degree is required; master's or Ph.D. in environmental sciences, conservation, or other aligned fields preferred
- » Five or more years of nonprofit executive management experience with proven leadership and strategic planning abilities and ten years of professional work experience
- » Preference for experience and passion in the following areas: ecology, natural resources, environmental education, stewardship, justice, advocacy, and access
- » The capability to envision and chart meaningful organizational growth while maintaining a strong, sustainable foundation
- » Experience managing multiple lines of services and programs
- » A demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and a strong understanding of the integration of EID considerations into all aspects of a social purpose organization's work.
- » Knowledge and practice of professional principles/ethics (e.g., client and staff confidentiality, board/staff interrelations, nonprofit, tax-exempt agency operations)
- » Proven development strategy and fundraising experience with the ability to cultivate authentic, meaningful relationships with major constituencies

## Skills + Competencies

- » Proven experience in financial management with an organization of comparable size and complexity; exceptional skills in budgeting, cash flow management, and financial analysis
- » Exceptional interpersonal and management skills working with staff and volunteers to build teams, manage effectively, and motivate them toward success
- » Proven project management experience
- » Experience developing and implementing a fundraising strategy/plan, with proven skill in fund development through various methods, including corporate and institutions, individual and major gifts, planned giving, grants, and event management
- » Exceptional ability to cultivate and maintain effective relationships with diverse stakeholders, such as donors, community organizations, local and state officials, and board and community members
- » Proven success in developing and supporting an organizational, professional development program



- » Exceptional written and oral communication skills, including the ability to present and speak publicly on relevant issues
- » Demonstrated experience in leveraging, managing, and collaborating with a nonprofit Board of Trustees
- » Comfort with technology; ability to enhance systems and work with a variety of software and online applications

### Attributes of Success

- » Inspiring, confident, calm, decisive, and pragmatic leader who builds trust
- » Deep commitment to the Kalamazoo Nature Center's mission and vision
- » Passion for issues related to the environment
- » Empathy, compassion, fortitude, and resilience
- » Personal embracement of all identities represented throughout KNC's communities
- » Creativity and flexibility in establishing and aligning strategic goals with organizational capacity
- » Decisive, yet diplomatic, and inclined to employ process, collaboration, and teamwork to achieve results
- » Ability to listen, motivate, inspire, and empower others, as well as to appropriately delegate to achieve efficiency and effectiveness
- » Entrepreneurial energy with proven business acumen and affinity for the mission
- » Solution-oriented approach with exceptional organizational skills
- » Roll-up-your-sleeves mentality; willingness and desire to be in the trenches working alongside staff and community volunteers as necessary

## Reporting Relationships

The President + CEO reports to the organization's volunteer Board of Trustees, represented by the Board Chairperson, and has the following direct supervisory responsibilities:

- » **Director of Marketing + Development**
- » **Vice President Conservation Stewardship**
- » **Vice President Development**
- » **Vice President Finance + Administration**
- » **Vice President Learning + Engagement**
- » **Executive Assistant**

## Location

This position is located in Kalamazoo, MI, and requires the successful candidate to reside in or relocate to the area. Relocation assistance will be considered at the time of offer if the chosen candidate resides outside the area. Relocation to the area is expected within a reasonable time following acceptance of an employment offer.

## Compensation + Benefits

The salary range for this position is **\$130,000 - \$150,000+**. Kalamazoo Nature Center provides a benefits package that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

### KNC Paid

- » Employee Assistance Program
- » Group Life Insurance
- » Group Long-Term Disability
- » Group Short-Term Disability
- » Vision Insurance

### KNC and Employee Paid

- » Medical Insurance
- » Health Savings Account

### Employee Paid

- » Dental Insurance
- » Voluntary Accident Coverage
- » Voluntary Life and AD&D

### Additional Benefits

- » Simple IRA
- » KNC Match up to 3%
- » Student Loan Forgiveness
- » Generous Accrued PTO
- » KNC Household Membership
- » One Free Rental Per Year
- » Employee Discount on KNC Offerings
- » Expert Voice Account
- » Non-Profit Ready Account

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 discriminates against women, people of color, and other historically excluded or de-prioritized populations by causing individuals to negotiate from a disadvantaged starting point.

## EEO + Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Kalamazoo Nature Center provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment and prohibits discrimination and harassment of any type without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local laws.

This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruiting, hiring, placement, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, leaves of absence, compensation, and training.

## Professional References + Credentials Verification

Before sending your resume for this position, please read it over for accuracy. Cooper Coleman verifies its candidates' professional references and employment credentials prior to or at the time of offer and will conduct a background check before finalizing an offer.

## Submission Instructions *(read carefully)*

[Cooper Coleman](#) is leading this search on behalf of the Kalamazoo Nature Center. To apply, please [visit this link](http://www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches) ([www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches](http://www.coopercoleman.com/current-searches)). **Expressions of interest should be made using the online application.** Inquiries and nominations of qualified candidates can be sent to:

Kathy Kraushar

[kathy@coopercoleman.com](mailto:kathy@coopercoleman.com)

Kindly use the position title as the subject line of your email. All inquiries are confidential.

**A cover letter is not required with your initial application but is welcomed to help us understand your fitness for 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 the Kalamazoo Nature Center, and connection to its mission.

*Cooper Coleman LLC is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all qualified candidates and will refer candidates regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or identity, age, ability, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis.*

## Follow the Kalamazoo Nature Center and Stay Engaged



<https://www.naturecenter.org/>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/kalamazoo-nature-ctr/>



<https://www.instagram.com/kalamazoonaturecenter/>

## About Cooper Coleman

Cooper Coleman is a full-service executive and professional recruiting and consulting firm partnering exclusively with nonprofit organizations, foundations, and research and academic institutions to drive meaningful growth. 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.

Learn more and follow us to stay informed of new opportunities.



[www.coopercoleman.com](http://www.coopercoleman.com)



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/coopercoleman>