

POSITION PROFILE
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS
DENVER, CO



MANEVA

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW: DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

Denver Botanic Gardens, founded in 1951, is one of most visited botanical gardens in the United States, annually welcoming more than 1.4 million onsite visitors and more than 34 million digital visitors. In addition to its scientific excellence, the Gardens is a vibrant cultural destination, hosting art exhibitions, education programs, original short films, and seasonal events including outdoor concerts, plant sales, Halloween events, and the internationally celebrated Blossoms of Light® that make it a beloved gathering space for the Colorado community and beyond.

With four locations across the Denver area, the Gardens promotes relevance, sustainability, transformation, and inclusion across all facets of its mission. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the American Public Gardens Association and the Smithsonian Affiliates, the Gardens is nationally recognized for leadership in plant conservation and water-wise landscaping.

The 23-acre York Street campus serves as the primary location and features more than 50 curated gardens with more than 40,000 plants, a hands-on children's garden, the Boettcher Memorial Tropical Conservatory, the Science Pyramid, and the Freyer-Newman Center for Science, Art and Education. It also houses a library, herbaria for plants and fungi, genetic labs, the School of Botanical Art & Illustration, and art galleries

The Gardens also operates Chatfield Farms, a 700-acre native plant refuge and working farm in Jefferson County. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025, the property recently completed the first phase of a master development plan that includes a new Welcome Center, Market Square, expanded accessible parking, and newly curated gardens. Regenerative agriculture is a key focus of Chatfield Farms. In 2024, more than 72,000 pounds of produce were grown, with over 18% distributed at low or no cost through partnerships with local nonprofit organizations. Additional sites include Mount Goliath, a subalpine location along the Mount Blue Sky Scenic Byway, and the Plains Conservation Center in Aurora, Colorado.





ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW: DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

Mission & Values

The Gardens' mission is to connect people with plants, seeking to educate, inspire, and transform how people engage with the natural world. Its four core values - transformation, relevance, diversity, and sustainability - serve as a guiding framework for its future direction.

Education & Programs

The Gardens offers year-round learning opportunities at York Street, Chatfield Farms, and other locations:

- **Children & Families:** Hands-on camps, discovery days, and interactive workshops.
- **Schools & Teachers:** Field trips, virtual programs, and teacher training with transportation and scholarship support. The Gardens' also provides student internships from high school to graduate level.
- **Adults:** Courses in gardening, herbalism, and botanical art, plus lectures and travel opportunities.
- **School of Botanical Art & Illustration:** A globally recognized certificate program and in-person/online courses led by world-class instructors.

Conservation & Sustainability

The Gardens plays a key role in plant science and ecological stewardship through initiatives such as:

- Water-wise gardening and other water conservation initiatives throughout the campuses.
- Native plant restoration and propagation.
- Green infrastructure, including solar and green roofs.
- Long-term conservation research through the natural history collections housed in the herbaria.
- Seed banking, rare plant monitoring, and habitat restoration.

For more
information visit
the Garden's
[website.](#)



ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW: DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

Arts, Events & Community Engagement

Signature events like **Blossoms of Light®**, **Trail of Lights**, **Glow at the Gardens™**, **UMB Summer Concert Series**, **Lavender Festival**, and **Pumpkin Festival** draw thousands of visitors annually. Art exhibitions span indoor and outdoor galleries, featuring artists such as Dale Chihuly, Salvador Dalí, Ursula von Rydingsvard, and Alexander Calder. Community outreach, led by the Gardens' Marketing & Social Responsibility team, engages more than 250 local partners, including through the Go2Gardens Free Shuttle that works to remove barriers for the regional community to visit and engage with the Gardens.

The Gardens' urban agriculture, food access, and horticultural therapy programs further its reach, providing inclusive, community-centered ways for people to engage with nature.

Leadership & Future

The next CEO will follow in the footsteps of **Brian Vogt**, who led the Gardens from 2007 until his unexpected passing in 2025. Under his visionary leadership, the Gardens experienced transformational growth - most notably the completion of a ten-year master development plan that concluded with the opening of the Freyer – Newman Center in 2021, expansion of community access programs, and advancement of regional and international conservation work.

With an annual operating budget of approximately \$46 million, Denver Botanic Gardens is a leading part of Denver's rich arts and culture ecosystem. The Gardens is a Tier 1 cultural institution within the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), a seven-county, voter-approved tax district that supports nearly 300 organizations.

With exceptional public support, strong community engagement, financial stability, and national recognition, Denver Botanic Gardens is poised for continued growth, relevance and leadership in horticulture, conservation, sustainability, and cultural programming.

POSITION SUMMARY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Denver Botanic Gardens seeks a dynamic, visionary, and collaborative leader to serve as its next Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This is a rare opportunity to steward one of the nation's top public gardens, recognized for its cultural impact, scientific contributions, and community-centered programming, into its next era.

The Gardens' next CEO will look with fresh eyes at all areas of the Gardens' operations, further elevating a successful, well-recognized institution and will have the opportunity to expand its footprint locally, nationally and internationally. They will lead the development of a new strategic plan that extends and evolves the work outlined in the current plan.

The next CEO will be expected to deepen the Gardens' connection to the diverse communities of Denver and the broader region, ensuring programs, partnerships, and spaces remain inclusive, accessible, and responsive to community needs. With a current endowment of \$55 million and a history of strong financial stewardship, the Gardens is well-positioned for continued growth and sustainability. The incoming leader will play a key role in expanding philanthropic support, growing the endowment, and ensuring long-term financial resilience aligned with the Gardens' mission and ambitions.



POSITION SUMMARY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The CEO will directly supervise the senior leadership team, which currently includes 15 department directors across horticulture, education, research and conservation, marketing, operations, philanthropy, visitor experience, and more. The structure is expected to evolve under new leadership, with strong staff support for modernized systems, leadership tiers, and shared goal setting.

The Gardens is known not only for its stunning horticultural displays but also for its leadership in conservation, education, research, and community engagement. With a welcoming, committed and long-tenured team, a culture of abundance and collaboration, and a passionate community of supporters, the Gardens is poised for continued growth and impact. The next CEO will bring strategic clarity, joyful leadership, and operational savvy to help guide an already thriving organization.

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the CEO oversees all aspects of the Gardens' operations, including strategic planning, community partnerships, external relations, fundraising, capital projects, and leadership of over 300 full and part-time employees and 2,000 volunteers. The successful candidate will be a charismatic and grounded leader who brings strong people instincts, political savvy, creative vision, and deep respect for the Gardens' mission and culture.



POSITION SUMMARY: KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Visionary Leadership & Strategic Planning

- Develop and implement a bold, forward-looking strategic plan that builds on the successes of the current plan and guides the organization's next chapter.
- Foster a high-performing, inclusive, and mission-aligned environment that strengthens and builds upon the Gardens highly regarded organizational culture.
- Use a systems-thinking approach to align organizational structure, culture, and processes with strategic goals.
- Serve as a trusted thought partner to senior leadership, creating space for innovation and creativity while ensuring accountability.

External Affairs & Advocacy

- Be a visible and inspiring spokesperson for the Gardens locally, nationally, & globally.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with civic leaders, donors, the media, and peer organizations, including other Tier 1 SCFD institutions.
- Champion the Gardens' role in environmental education, climate resilience, public health, and cultural enrichment.
- Lead advocacy efforts for the 2028 SCFD reauthorization, leveraging relationships with policymakers and other cultural institutions.

Organizational Stewardship & Operational Oversight

- Oversee the operating budget, endowment and complex financial portfolio, including grants, earned revenue, and capital campaign funds.
- Partner with senior staff to manage major capital initiatives, including the next phases of the Chatfield Farms Master Development Plan and participation in the upcoming city bond proposal.
- Provide strategic oversight of facilities, visitor services, human resources, and institutional risk management.
- Ensure operational excellence through clear goals, strong internal communications, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

POSITION SUMMARY: KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Fundraising & Resource Development

- Lead efforts to grow and diversify the Gardens' philanthropic revenue, with a focus on major gifts, endowment support, and public-private partnerships.
- Partner with development staff, Board Members, and key volunteers to build a robust pipeline of support.
- Serve as a compelling ambassador to donors, articulating the Gardens' mission and impact with clarity and passion.

Board & Stakeholder Engagement

- Collaborate closely with the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, ensuring a clear delineation between governance and management.
- Foster a culture of transparency, learning, and trust across the board-staff relationship.
- Support board development and succession planning, working intentionally, and transparently, to develop a culture of trust and reliability with the Board.
- Serve as liaison to key government agencies, ex-officio representatives, affiliate groups, community members, and strategic partners.

People & Culture

- Lead with empathy, humility, and a people-first mindset that reinforces the Gardens' distinctive culture.
- Prioritize staff well-being and engagement following a period of transition and organizational strain.
- Evaluate and restructure the senior leadership team as needed to support cross-functional collaboration and institutional growth.
- Embrace and enhance the Gardens' values of inclusion, belonging, and shared leadership.



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES & PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

While no candidate will possess every qualification, the most competitive leaders will bring a combination of the following qualities, experiences, and attributes:

STRATEGIC VISION & SYSTEMS THINKING:

A reflective and forward-looking leader who can set a bold vision, develop and implement strategic plans, and navigate complexity with creativity, pragmatism, and intention. Comfortable balancing long-term planning with immediate needs, especially in the context of organizational growth, capital projects, and public funding cycles.

MISSION-DRIVEN & COMMUNITY-CENTERED:

Deeply aligned with the Gardens' mission to connect people with plants. Brings a passion for environmental stewardship, public education, and inclusive community engagement, recognizing the Gardens' role as both a civic anchor and global thought leader.

CULTURALLY FLUENT & POLITICALLY SAVVY:

Adept at navigating political ecosystems and civic landscapes with diplomacy and tact. Understands how to build trust across sectors and communities and has the credibility to represent the Gardens with policymakers, funders, and peer institutions.

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES & PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

INSPIRING COMMUNICATOR & PUBLIC AMBASSADOR:

A compelling storyteller and confident spokesperson who can engage audiences ranging from elected officials and major donors to schoolchildren and scientists. Brings authenticity, curiosity, and clarity to every interaction.

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT & INCLUSIVE LEADER:

Leads with kindness, humility, and care. Models accountability, builds consensus, and fosters a culture of transparency, collaboration, and shared success. Committed to developing others, reducing silos, and sustaining a healthy and high-performing team.

OPERATIONAL & FINANCIAL ACUMEN:

Brings experience leading complex, facilities-based institutions with sizable budgets and multi-stakeholder funding models. Comfortable with scaling systems, overseeing capital projects, and ensuring long-term financial health.

INNOVATIVE & JOYFUL:

Holds a bold vision for the Gardens' future while appreciating the power of play, wonder, and creativity. Leads with optimism and imagination, fostering a dynamic and welcoming culture that inspires staff, visitors, and partners alike.





COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary is based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to skill set and years of applicable experience. The total compensation range for this role is \$450,000–\$550,000 (all-inclusive) with a generous benefits package, with the base salary portion anticipated to be up to \$500,000.

HOW TO EXPRESS INTEREST

To express your interest in this opportunity, please submit your resume and cover letter [here](#).

All inquiries and discussions will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. This position is available immediately, and applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the role is filled.

We look forward to hearing from you!



ABOUT MANEVA GROUP

Maneva Group is a leading woman and minority owned executive search firm dedicated to connecting exceptional talent with organizations committed to making a meaningful impact. Through a consultative and client-focused approach, Maneva Group partners with mission-driven organizations to build transformative leadership teams.

Our name, Maneva, comes from the combination of two Sanskrit words: “**Mānav**” meaning mankind & “**Sevā**” meaning service. We are driven by the ideal of our name - **service to humanity**.