



CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER

POSITION PROFILE

*Organization: **Aspire***

*Location: **Hillside, IL***



MANEVA

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW:



Aspire's mission is to connect people with disabilities to ever-greater possibilities for learning, jobs, and safe places to call home.

Since 1960, Aspire, a non-profit organization, has been providing services and support for people with disabilities. Aspire provides 24/7 services to 300 adults with disabilities across 23 community homes in Lake and Cook Counties and two Academies (Hillside and Waukegan, IL), including innovative services to help adults with disabilities develop the necessary skills to live a full and rewarding life.

8 in 10 people with disabilities are unemployed. 85% of people with disabilities live in poverty.

Aspire addresses these challenges with a host of services including:

- **Learning:** Art. Exercise. Social skill building. Computer training. Community involvement. Our daytime learning programs help create new possibilities. Virtual program opportunities are available to accommodate a variety of needs and circumstances.
- **Living:** Experience is life's greatest teacher. So, experiences are what our Living programs offer. Options include homes shared with friends in the community or support as people explore living on their own, which helps people build confidence, interact with others, and thrive.
- **Working:** Many adults with disabilities also want to advance in the workforce. Aspire offers job skills training and placement programs to achieve competitive employment.
- **Aspire's Employment Training Program:** Distribution: A ten-week training program in a simulated warehouse environment, followed by an eight-week paid internship designed to provide the necessary skills for people with disabilities to secure competitive employment at one of Aspire's warehouse partners.
- **CoffeeWorks:** In partnership with Metropolis Coffee Company and Canteen-Vending, adults with and without disabilities work side by side to make freshly roasted coffee that is sold to businesses across Chicagoland and to coffee consumers who purchase from the website.

These programs work. 91% of people who enter Aspire's job support program are placed into jobs, and 94% of people who are placed in jobs are retained for at least 12 months.

To learn more about Aspire and their services, please visit their [website](#).



ROLE SUMMARY:

CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER

Aspire is seeking an entrepreneurial, mission-driven Chief Program Officer (CPO) to drive the organization's growth strategy and strengthen the delivery of high-quality services for people with developmental disabilities. As an inaugural role, the CPO will oversee Aspire's largest programmatic and operational teams, more than 200 staff and a \$22M budget, while providing strategic leadership to expand Aspire's nationally recognized employment training initiatives, enhance service quality, and cultivate new partnerships and funding streams to broaden impact. The portfolio of services includes Residential Programs, the Aspire Academy Day Program, Clinical Services, Nursing, Employment Training and Community Employment, Life Skills Coaching, Admissions, and Quality Assurance and Compliance.

Reporting to the COO with a dotted-line to the CEO, this is a unique opportunity to step into a C-suite role designed to blend hands-on leadership with high-level strategy. In the first six months, the CPO will roll up their sleeves and directly lead the Operations team- initially assuming the duties of Vice President of Service Line Development and then the Vice President of Operations. After building a strong understanding of people, programs, and systems, the CPO will hire successors into each VP role, transition into oversight role, and begin reporting to the CEO- ensuring these teams are aligned, high-performing, and positioned for impact. This immersive onboarding will give the CPO a 360-degree view of Aspire's services and the opportunity to shape a high-performing program portfolio from the ground up.

The ideal candidate is a dynamic leader who thrives at the intersection of vision and execution. They will bring a disciplined, growth-oriented approach to evaluating programs—identifying where to invest, expand, or sunset—and will foster innovation in funding and partnerships to ensure long-term sustainability. As both strategist and operator, this leader must be comfortable engaging with hourly frontline team members one day and advising the CEO and Board the next. With a proven ability to align teams, access and develop leaders, sharpen systems, and scale mission-driven impact, the CPO will play a pivotal role in ensuring Aspire's programs deliver excellence today while evolving to meet the needs of tomorrow.



ROLE SUMMARY:

CHIEF PROGRAM OFFICER

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Key Responsibilities Include:

- **Immersive Onboarding & Transition Leadership:** In the first six months, assume the responsibilities of Vice President of Service Line Development and then the Vice President of Operations; recruit successors into these roles and transition into executive oversight.
- **Program Strategy & Evaluation:** Assess program portfolio to determine which services to continue, expand, or sunset; present findings and recommendations to the CEO and Board to guide long-term direction and census growth.
- **Revenue Growth & Development Partnership:** Collaborate with the development team to identify and grow new revenue streams, including private pay models, corporate partnerships, and untapped public resources that strengthen long-term sustainability.
- **Operational Leadership:** Provide oversight and strategic guidance to the operations team, ensuring systems, processes, and practices are in place to deliver high-quality services, strong compliance, and measurable results.
- **Employment Training & Partnerships:** Expand employment training programs beyond the distribution industry into food and beverage and then into a third industry; cultivate partnerships with corporate employers to create diverse, inclusive workforce opportunities.
- **Financial Oversight & Compliance:** Partner with the COO and CFO to oversee program budgets, monitor financial performance, and ensure compliance with contracts, licensing, and regulatory requirements.
- **Team Development & Alignment:** Evaluate organizational structure and talent; ensure the right people are in the right roles; provide coaching, set performance expectations, and hold staff accountable while fostering professional growth.
- **Data & Impact Measurement:** Build and oversee systems to track outcomes and measure program impact; use data to drive continuous improvement and communicate results to funders, partners, and the Board.
- **Thought Leadership & External Voice:** Serve as a visible ambassador and thought leader in disability services and workforce development, strengthening Aspire's credibility and influence with policymakers, funders, and community partners.



LEADERSHIP & COMPETENCY EXPECTATIONS

The ideal candidate will be outcomes oriented and have a deep commitment to Aspire's mission, demonstrating genuine care for the well-being of the populations served.

While it's understood that no single candidate will bring every single competency, strong candidates will offer the following skills, characteristics, and experiences:

Entrepreneurial and Curious

The Chief Program Officer will be a builder at heart- someone who thrives in shaping new ideas into reality. They will bring a spirit of curiosity and exploration, eager to roll up their sleeves, ask bold questions, and challenge assumptions. This leader sees possibility where others see barriers, approaching each challenge as an opportunity to innovate. Energized by growth, they will inspire Aspire to think creatively about its programs, funding streams, and partnerships. Aspire values leaders with varied and blended backgrounds, including nonprofit, private sector, or consulting experience, who bring fresh perspectives and creative approaches to advancing its mission.

Disciplined & Outcome- Driven

Grounded in a results-oriented mindset, this leader will combine vision with rigor. They will establish clear structures and expectations, ensuring the team is aligned around shared goals while providing coaching and resources needed for success. They will measure progress with discipline and hold themselves and others accountable to delivering meaningful outcomes. Calm under pressure, focused on execution, and relentless about excellence, this leader will give Aspire confidence that its services are not only mission-driven but consistently high performing.



LEADERSHIP & COMPETENCY EXPECTATIONS

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Connector & Relationship Builder

This leader will have a natural gift for connection. They will move seamlessly between conversations with corporate executives, community partners, families, and hourly staff—bringing energy, credibility, and warmth to every interaction. With strong communication skills and an ability to articulate a compelling vision, they will open doors to new partnerships, strengthen existing relationships, and galvanize support for Aspire’s mission. By uniting people around common goals, they will strengthen Aspire’s network of allies and ensure the organization is well-positioned for growth and sustainability.

Authentic & Mission-Centered

With empathy and humility, this leader will embody Aspire’s mission in every action and decision. They will be approachable and genuine, honoring the dignity of team members, people living in Aspire homes, and their families. By listening deeply and valuing the voices of those closest to the work, they will foster a culture of respect, inclusion, and trust. Their authenticity will build bridges across all levels of the organization, from frontline team members to the people supported and their families to the Board, and their passion for equity and access for people with developmental disabilities will inspire confidence and commitment in others.



LOCATION, COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

This position is based in Hillside, Illinois, with flexibility for a hybrid schedule. While some work can be done remotely, this leader is expected to spend significant time out in the community and in the field, engaging directly with team members and programs. The Chief Program Officer will regularly visit Aspire Academy North (Waukegan) and Academy South (Hillside), where the majority of staff and services are based, while also maintaining a presence at the Shannon Center, Aspire's administrative office.

The salary range for this role is **\$155,000 – \$170,000**, commensurate with experience and qualifications. Aspire offers a comprehensive benefits package, including medical, dental, and vision insurance, life and disability coverage, a retirement plan with employer contributions, paid time off and holidays, and other employee support programs that foster balance and well-being.

HOW TO APPLY

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**.