



City of Philadelphia

Chief Executive Officer of Aviation





The Position

The City of Philadelphia is seeking a dynamic, visionary executive to serve as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Aviation (the Department), overseeing Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) and Northeast Philadelphia Airport (PNE). As a member of the Mayor's Cabinet, the CEO reports directly to the Mayor and operates at the intersection of municipal government, commercial enterprise, and federal regulatory compliance, making this one of the most complex and consequential airport leadership roles in the country.

The CEO is charged with planning, organizing, directing, and controlling all airport functions and activities for both facilities. This includes setting the strategic direction for the Department, representing the City in all airport-related matters, and driving business and commercial development initiatives that keep PHL and PNE competitive and visitor-friendly. The Department operates both airports as commercial enterprises to the greatest extent feasible under City ownership, meaning the CEO must balance the discipline of a private sector operator with the accountability of public sector governance. The airports are subject to extensive federal regulation by the FAA, TSA, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Bureau of Aviation Regulation, and the CEO must be equally fluent in navigating those relationships as in driving internal operational excellence.

The CEO oversees a department of approximately 800 to 950 FTEs, comprising both exempt and union employees across 24/7 operations. Direct reports include a Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Operating Officer, among others. This is an always-on leadership environment that demands an executive who is present, decisive, and unflappable in a crisis.



Priorities

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of terminal energy systems and identify opportunities for optimization, cost reduction, and long-term sustainability, while advancing the Department's established sustainability goals and positioning PHL as a leader in environmentally responsible airport operations.
- Build and sustain a productive working relationship with the FAA to address airfield pavement conditions, resolve outstanding compliance requirements, and proactively manage the regulatory obligations associated with operating a major commercial service airport under federal oversight.
- Ensure full and ongoing compliance with FAA and TSA regulations across all airport operations, establishing internal systems, accountability structures, and staff training that keep both PHL and PNE consistently audit-ready and operationally sound.
- Evaluate expansion opportunities at PHL and PNE with a data-driven, long-range lens, engaging airline partners, the Mayor's Office, and key stakeholders to assess feasibility, advance master planning efforts, and position the airports for future growth in passenger and cargo capacity.
- Launch and grow a robust workforce development program that invests in employees at every level, strengthens the Department's talent pipeline, and builds a culture of learning, advancement, and engagement across both exempt and union classifications.
- Advance the Department's sustainability commitments by setting measurable goals, tracking progress transparently, and integrating sustainable practices into capital planning, procurement, and daily operations in alignment with the City of Philadelphia's broader environmental priorities.

The Successful Candidate

The City of Philadelphia's next CEO of Aviation is a front-line, hands-on leader who leads from the front and brings both the strategic vision and operational depth that a 24/7 international airport demands. This executive thrives under pressure, knows how to function effectively in a crisis, and can implement systemic change within a large, complex organization without losing sight of the people and relationships that make change possible.

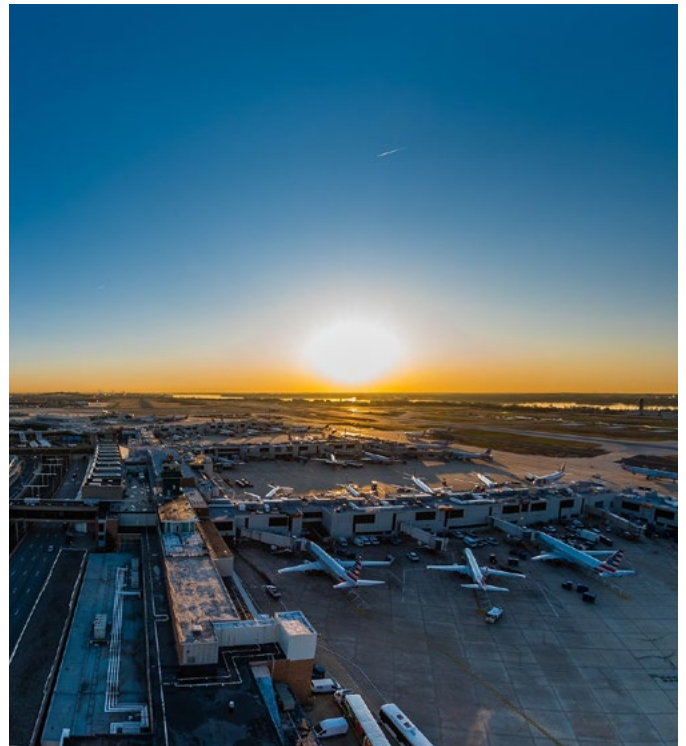
The ideal candidate brings a background that spans airport management, commercial operations, and enterprise leadership, ideally with experience in tourism and hospitality that sharpens their guest experience instincts. They are as comfortable negotiating with federal regulators and major airline partners as they are walking terminal floors and engaging frontline staff. Working within a strong mayor form of government, this leader understands how to advance an agenda through politically engaged elected officials, build trust with labor, and sustain momentum across a large and diverse workforce.

Strong candidates will demonstrate deep knowledge of domestic and international passenger and cargo aviation industries, airport infrastructure, commercial development, and the federal regulatory environment including FAA and TSA requirements. They communicate clearly and persuasively with diverse audiences and are willing and able to travel domestically and internationally to represent PHL in meetings, conferences, and negotiations.

Qualifications

Minimum requirements include any combination of education and experience equivalent to a bachelor's degree in aviation management, public administration, business administration, or a closely related field, and seven years of progressively responsible experience in airport management, with at least three years in a senior leadership role at a major commercial airport. Thorough knowledge of the laws, rules, and regulations governing civil airport operations—including FAA, TSA, and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requirements—as well as demonstrated experience in commercial development, infrastructure planning, and airline negotiations, is required.

Preferred qualifications include an advanced degree in a related field, executive leadership coursework, and relevant professional certifications. Candidates with direct experience managing a large commercial service airport—including domestic and international passenger and cargo operations—with a demonstrated record of driving operational performance and capital project delivery in a complex, unionized, 24/7 environment, are strongly preferred.



The successful candidate must establish residency within the City of Philadelphia within six months of hire. The City offers relocation assistance up to a certain amount.

The City of Philadelphia is most interested in finding the best candidate for the job, and that candidate may come from a less traditional background. If you are passionate about this work and meet many of the key criteria, we encourage you to apply.

Inside the Organization

The City of Philadelphia operates under a strong mayor-council form of government, established by the Home Rule Charter. This affords Philadelphia some autonomy from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The City also operates under a consolidated city-county governance, meaning the City of Philadelphia and Philadelphia County are governed by the same structure. The mayor serves as the chief executive, responsible for setting priorities and driving initiatives that affect the daily lives of more than 1.5 million residents. City Council functions as the legislative branch, shaping policy, passing laws, and approving the budget that guides City operations. For leaders within City government, this means working at the intersection of executive direction and legislative oversight. Beyond the Mayor and City Council, Philadelphia's government also includes independently elected officials—such as the City Controller, City Commissioners, and District Attorney—as well as numerous boards and commissions that provide expertise, oversight, and community input.

As an appointed leader, you will play a critical role in advancing the City's mission: delivering essential services, improving quality of life, and ensuring equity across neighborhoods. This requires collaboration across departments, accountability to the public, and a commitment to building on Philadelphia's long history as a place of innovation, resilience, and civic pride.



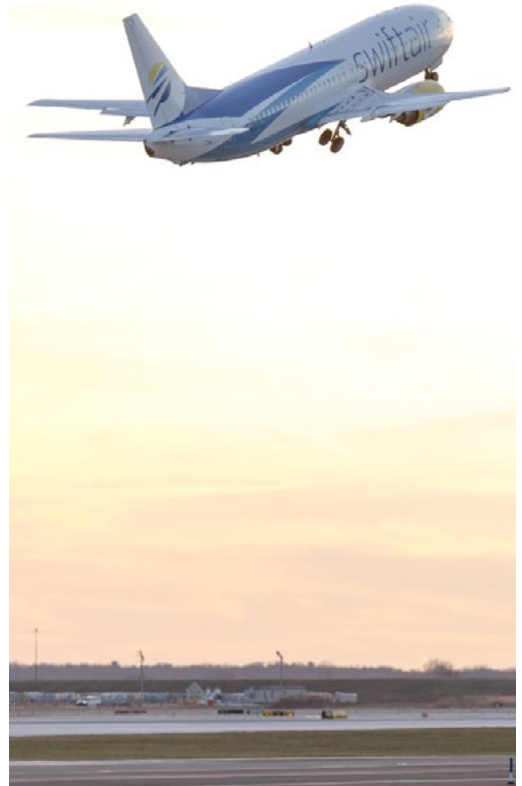
The Community

Located in southeastern Pennsylvania, Philadelphia is the state's largest city and home to over 1.5 million residents. As the sixth most populous city in the United States and the birthplace of American democracy, Philly remains a significant historic, cultural, and economic hub for the region—without the high price tag of other major east coast cities! We combine relative affordability with world-class cultural offerings and a rich urban character that is uniquely Philly.

Philly is perfect for those looking to play tourists in their own city. It was voted “Most Walkable City” by USA Today for the third year in a row and offers vibrant neighborhoods where history and modern life intersect. From Independence Hall in Old City to the developing contemporary skyline, Philadelphia seamlessly blends past and present.

The City's food scene reflects its diversity and depth, with flavors spanning from the bustling streets of Chinatown to the historic Italian Market, and of course, the many locations to sample the world-famous Philly cheesesteak. Philly is also the mural capital of the world, with more than 4,000 public artworks, and boasts a thriving arts landscape anchored by the iconic Philadelphia Museum of Art and its surrounding cultural institutions.

Philly is a city unlike any other, but what truly sets us apart is our spirit of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection—rooted in resilience, creativity, and community pride. To live and work here is to join in shaping a city that honors its past while building a brighter future, improving life for its residents, and adding to its already remarkable story.



Compensation and Benefits

The City of Philadelphia offers an annual salary range of \$310,000 to \$330,000 for this position, depending on qualifications and experience, along with a comprehensive benefits package that includes: Medical, Prescription, Dental, and Vision coverage; Backup Care, FSA, Pet Insurance, and a range of voluntary benefits; 15 days of vacation leave; 5 days administrative (personal) leave; 15 days sick leave; 13 paid holidays per calendar year; a defined pension contribution retirement plan; and a City vehicle with premium parking placard.



How to Apply

Applications will be accepted electronically by Raftelis at raftelis.com. Applicants complete a brief online form and are prompted to provide a cover letter and resume. The position will be open until filled with a first review of applications beginning **July 17, 2026**.



Questions

Please direct questions to Pamela Wideman at pwideman@raftelis.com and Kelsey Batt at kbatt@raftelis.com.