



## **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of LightHawk**

### **Organization Overview**

LightHawk is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization that advances conservation through aviation. By leveraging donated flights, volunteer pilots, and strategic partnerships, LightHawk enables scientists, land trusts, Tribal nations, government agencies, and conservation organizations to access remote landscapes, gather critical data, protect wildlife, and steward natural resources more effectively. For over four decades, LightHawk has operated at the intersection of aviation, science, and conservation impact.

### **Position Summary**

LightHawk is seeking an inspiring, strategic, and mission-driven Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to lead the organization into its next chapter of growth and impact. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the CEO will be responsible for overall organizational leadership, strategy, financial sustainability, external relations, and mission execution.

The ideal candidate is a collaborative executive with demonstrated nonprofit leadership experience, strong fundraising acumen, and the ability to translate LightHawk's unique aviation-based model into compelling impact for donors, partners, pilots, and the broader conservation community.

### **Key Responsibilities**

#### **Strategic Leadership & Vision**

- Lead and refine LightHawk's strategic direction to ensure high-quality conservation outcomes and the effective, efficient use of organizational resources
- Develop and execute the organization's strategic plan in close partnership with the Board of Directors
- Evaluate current flight programming and assess emerging opportunities that advance LightHawk's mission through innovative uses of the aerial perspective
- Monitor and respond to emerging trends in conservation, aviation, and environmental policy to position LightHawk as a forward-thinking leader
- Work effectively with diverse constituencies, including board members, staff, volunteer pilots, donors, conservation partners, businesses, and government and regulatory agencies.
- Partner closely with the Board to support governance, strategic oversight, and performance accountability, ensuring transparent and timely communication regarding opportunities, risks, and organizational health
- Engage and support board members in fundraising, advocacy, and ambassador roles

#### **Fundraising & External Relations**



- In partnership with the Chief Advancement Officer, grow contributed revenue from individuals, foundations, corporate sponsors, and partner organizations
- Personally engage in major gift fundraising, foundation relations, sponsorships, and strategic partnerships
- Continue to strengthen LightHawk's brand visibility and storytelling by clearly articulating conservation outcomes enabled through aviation
- Cultivate and sustain relationships across aviation, conservation, and philanthropic communities nationwide

### **Organizational & Financial Management**

- Ensure LightHawk's financial health through sound budgeting, forecasting, and long-term sustainability planning
- Lead, develop, and retain a high-performing team across conservation planning, development, communications, marketing, human resources, and finance
- Foster an inclusive, energized, and collaborative organizational culture that promotes excellence and accountability
- Ensure strong internal controls, compliance, and risk management practices
- Oversee organizational assets, policies, insurance, and legal compliance
- Provide executive oversight of administrative and information systems, including Salesforce and organizational management platforms
- Lead organizational response to crisis events, including aviation-related incidents

### **Program Oversight & Impact**

- Ensure programs deliver measurable conservation outcomes aligned with LightHawk's mission and strategic priorities
- Promote innovation in program design, technology adoption, and data-informed decision-making
- Maintain strong relationships with volunteer pilots and aviation partners, recognizing their essential role in LightHawk's success
- Uphold the highest standards of safety, ethics, and stewardship across all aviation-related activities
- Oversee the development, implementation, and review of flight risk management, flight operations, and safety policies

### **The Candidate**

#### **Qualifications & Experience**

- Deep alignment with LightHawk's mission and a demonstrated passion for environmental conservation. The successful candidate must articulate the transformative power of the aerial perspective and present a compelling vision for scaling impact



- Proven nonprofit executive leadership experience, including building and leading high-performing teams and setting long-term organizational vision
- Strong track record of fundraising success with individuals, foundations, and corporate partners
- Exceptional communication skills, including written, verbal, listening, public speaking, and presentation abilities
- Ability to work effectively with diverse stakeholders, including boards, staff, volunteers, donors, conservation partners, and government agencies
- Ability to relate authentically to pilots, conservation partners, and donors
  - Pilot's license is a plus but not required
  - Professional experience in environmental conservation preferred but not required
- Familiarity with, or ability to quickly learn, FAA regulations, aviation risk management, and safety protocols relevant to LightHawk's operations
- Demonstrated ability to manage a distributed, remote workforce using digital collaboration tools, including Google Workspace, Salesforce, video conferencing, and shared work platforms
- Bachelor's degree required

### **Preferred Attributes**

- Unquestionable integrity and ethical standards
- Sound judgment, humility, and a demonstrated ability to learn from experience
- Leadership by example, with empathy, enthusiasm, and principled decision-making
- Proactive approach to identifying and addressing opportunities and risks
- Strategic, goal-oriented mindset with the ability to translate vision into execution and measurable outcomes
- Comfort with change, innovation, and continuous improvement
- Engaging and inclusive leadership and communication style
- Commitment to maintaining a non-partisan approach to conservation issues

### **Location & Travel**

This role may be based remotely within the United States, with regular travel required for donor engagement, partner meetings, board meetings, and organizational events (20 – 30% of time).

### **Compensation**

Compensation is competitive and commensurate with experience, including a comprehensive benefits package. Expected salary range of \$120,000 - \$150,000.

### **Equal Opportunity Employer**



As an equal opportunity employer, all qualified candidates will be considered for employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, age, sex or gender (including pregnancy, childbirth, lactation and related medical conditions), gender identity or gender expression, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, military service or veteran status, physical or mental disability, or any other legally protected characteristic.

If you have a disability or special need that requires accommodation at any point in the hiring process, please note it in your application.

### **How to Apply**

To apply, please email your resume and a cover letter (see below) to [talent@lighthawk.org](mailto:talent@lighthawk.org). Include your name and the job title in the subject line (i.e., [Your Name] – [Job Title]).

All applications must include a one-page cover letter. The cover letter should clearly state your interest in the position and our organization, outline 2–3 specific skills or accomplishments relevant to the role, and demonstrate how your experience aligns with our mission. We expect concrete examples that illustrate measurable impact and collaborative problem-solving in aviation or conservation. Applications submitted without a cover letter will not be considered.