

River LA Chief Executive Officer

The Board seeks a politically astute, fundraising executive and movement-builder to transform ideas and design into improvements for all 51 miles of the LA River.

[River LA](#)'s mission is to transform all 51 miles of the Los Angeles River in ways that improve the quality of life in Los Angeles County, while still preserving this highly engineered river's public safety and flood control purpose. The organization seeks **public support** and **financing** at the county, state and federal level for enhancing the river in ways that are sound from environmental conservation, urban planning and community development perspectives. Strong experience in movement building, community and political organizing and public financing of transformative projects in Los Angeles, California and beyond is a requirement.

The CEO will report to the Board of Directors and is accountable for managing all: operations, staff, community outreach, education and advocacy; all budgets, financial controls and the administrative infrastructure; and for advancing support of public and other financing for improvements to the Los Angeles River.

S/he will shape, interpret, enhance and operationalize the strategic initiatives adopted by the Board consistent with the organization's mission and vision; develop the River LA brand while galvanizing public and financial support for changes to the Los Angeles River; achieve fiscal stability; cultivate partners; and increase contributed and earned revenue sufficient to strengthen the organization as it advances its work.

The CEO is expected to work closely with the staff to build the organization's reputation as a voice for positive change along the 51 miles of the Los Angeles River, and be a strong advocate for bringing together diverse and sometimes divergent interests in Los Angeles County in order to redevelop the river. The CEO will have four overarching priorities in the first 18 months:

- Understand all facets of River LA, including its history, advocacy, culture, staff, finances, partners, affected communities, programs, infrastructure, operations and its potential; understand the diverse River LA constituencies and the dynamics among them;
- Significantly improve earned and contributed revenue required to sustain River LA as it pursues its mission; appropriately engage all hands (staff and board) in executing a fund development strategy and appropriate fundraising activities;
- Work with the staff, Board and volunteers to continue the advocacy, support and cohesion among its key partners; use open channels of communication to reinforce a culture of driven excellence and effective pursuit of concrete results inside and outside the organization;
- Concretely and measurably advance public support and financing for large scale projects along the Los Angeles River.

BACKGROUND

The organization was founded in 2009 with the support of the City of Los Angeles to coordinate river policy as part of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan. In 2014 River LA recruited architect Frank Gehry and his firm to develop design ideas for revitalizing the river and its communities. Their initial work resulted in a comprehensive, publicly released study that analyzed multiple public benefits, options, tradeoffs and compromises. Specific design projects

have begun and are currently at early stages of development. In 2018 River LA was chosen by the County of Los Angeles as lead contractor to create their new master plan for the river, which has an expected completion date in 2020. The organization is leading the public engagement parts of the Plan.

Since its inception, River LA has itself evolved from being focused on small, privately-financed opportunistic projects, to being a force for public advocacy and funding rain-making for large scale public infrastructure projects.

Today's River LA is seeking public support and financing at the county, state and federal level for enhancing the river in ways that are sound from environmental conservation, urban planning and community development perspectives. It is an extremely complicated undertaking. There are 17 cities, 23 City of Los Angeles neighborhoods, and 4 unincorporated communities within one mile of the river. Nearly all major City departments from Sanitation to Engineering to Parks have overlapping jurisdictions along the river. There are a huge number of ideas, interests, priorities and perspectives to weigh. There are also multiple property constraints and public safety requirements. There are few places to purchase adjacent lands along the river, few options for alterations in the channel that preserve flood handling capabilities that are so critical to public safety.

In pursuit of its work, River LA has established a series of goals that are of equal importance and that must coexist:

- Reduce flood risk and improve resiliency
- Provide equitable, inclusive and safe parks, open space and trails
- Support healthy, connected ecosystems
- Enhance opportunities for equitable access to the river corridor
- Embrace local arts and culture
- Address potential adverse impacts to housing affordability and people experiencing homelessness
- Speed opportunities for continued community engagement, development and education
- Improve local water supply reliability
- Promote healthy, safe, clean water.

With a 2020 operating budget of about \$1.8m, River LA consists of a small staff of seven staff and two interns. And the organization works with a range of partners, vendors and collaborators that are all intent on improving the public's use and enjoyment of the Los Angeles River. While the organization might double in size and adjust its budget over the next years, the intention is for it to remain focused on advocacy and input to the planning and public financing process.

THE CEO'S ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES

Other specific responsibilities of the CEO include:

LEADERSHIP & GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- Manage the day-to-day business affairs of the River LA with the intent of achieving greater financial independence and sustainability, while advancing on the goal of developing public support and financing for improvements to the Los Angeles River.

- With the Board, refine and interpret the mission and Strategic Initiatives and further articulate its place among like organizations in the region, California and nationally.
- Hire, supervise, motivate, develop and evaluate staff, ensuring that staffing is appropriate and fairly compensated to meet the organization's goals; ensure that approved policies are consistently implemented.

REVENUE DEVELOPMENT, MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

- Serve as the chief fundraiser for River LA; set high expectations for increased financial support from foundations, corporations, individuals (major donors), government and other philanthropic sources for River LA's programs and capital projects; work closely with the staff, the board, volunteers and advisors to expand and diversify revenue streams.
- Serve as an articulate and persuasive spokesperson for River LA; represent River LA to all constituencies and partners; cultivate strong and supportive relationships with other partners in the region and in the community; identify and help recruit new supporters and partners whose talents, interests and commitment will help to further River LA's mission.
- Develop public support and financing for improvements to the Los Angeles River.

GOVERNANCE

- With the Board and under the direction of the Board's President, develop and implement River LA's strategic initiatives; implement Board policies, goals, priorities and objectives; keep the Board informed of all relevant issues; attend all Board meetings and committee meetings as required.
- Identify and help recruit new Board members whose talents, interests and commitment can further River LA's mission, advocacy and programs, and help to expand funding.
- Cultivate a mutually supportive relationship with stakeholders and other groups that are important to the future of the institution.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

The CEO will be an entrepreneurial leader, roll-up-your-sleeves manager, and a politically astute big-picture thinker whose work ideally includes the following experience and qualifications:

- Senior-level managerial, political or community organizing, movement building, public financing, lobbying & advocacy or other related experience, with particular emphasis on large projects in urban areas that impact many groups and communities with diverse and divergent interests; experience with public funding and financing for such projects is important.
- A strong connection to and knowledge of Los Angeles County and California will be a distinct advantage; experience with networked organizations in Los Angeles and Sacramento is desirable.
- Proven ability to gain financial support from diverse sources (foundations, corporations, individuals and government) or, if coming out of the commercial sector, success in obtaining private and government funding for projects.

Position Description
River LA - CEO

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- Familiarity with different tools for movement building would be advantageous, including use of data, web sites, mobile apps, and the services/interactions that can be built with them.
- Advocacy and persuasion experience to build strategically meaningful partnerships and sell ideas to officials, journalists, think tanks, community and public interest organizations, businesses, other advocates, the public, etc.; experience as a problem-solver, facilitator, catalyst for new ideas and leader/influencer.
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills, excellent public speaking skills.
- Experience with effectively managing similarly sized budgets and staff; a competent and confident team builder with strong skills in management and leadership who understands the subtleties of recruiting, motivating, directing and retaining a diverse group of personalities with different work styles.

For more information please contact:

Mark Oppenheim
(415)762-2640 or marko@mOppenheim.com

Patrick Salazar
(310)230-5315 or patricks@moppenheim.com

m/Oppenheim Associates
425 Market Street, Suite 1020
San Francisco, CA 94105