

MYSTIC AQUARIUM

CHIEF PEOPLE & CULTURE OFFICER – JOB PROFILE

***Our Mission:** our mission is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education, and research.*

Mystic Aquarium, a premier conservation, education, and research institution that serves as a leading attraction and asset for the community and state, seeks to achieve this mission by:

- Creating thought-provoking encounters with marine life
- Conducting research that advances aquatic animal husbandry and health
- Serving as an interpreter of marine science discoveries and conservation issues
- Sharing resources and expertise with the scientific and education communities
- Pursuing these endeavors with a commitment to excellence and innovation

The Aquarium is seeking a **Chief People & Culture Officer** who will:

- Provide strategic leadership and vision in **managing talent and organizational development** and enhancing employee engagement.
- Provide consultative guidance, support and direction to leaders in all human resources processes including employee relations, compensation, and employee development.
- Build and implement the **human resource systems and processes** needed for a premier nonprofit organization in the community.
- Foster an inclusive and accountable culture and be part of building a collaborative and engaged team who are working to **make a real difference to global wildlife** preservation and research.
- Work with a **committed and passionate CEO**, a strong leadership team, and an engaged board in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The CPCO will have a strategic focus on the future and maintain a deep understanding and awareness of employee needs and morale. They will help support organizational shifts that align with the Aquarium's new strategic plan and help deliver on achieving the overarching goals of the organization. As a member of the leadership team and reporting to the CEO, the CPCO will contribute their human resources expertise and serve as the senior HR advisor in the organization, providing valuable insights and ideas that maximize operational effectiveness and realize long-term strategy.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

- A **strategic thinker** with a track record of developing and implementing complex human resource systems and policies.
- An HR expert who has the foresight and ability to be proactive and **mitigate risk** for the organization
- A **hands-on professional** eager to interact with all leaders and staff members.
- A leader who can, working with the team, help create a **cohesive and vibrant** organizational culture and a team engaged with the Aquarium's mission.
- An individual with **high emotional intelligence**, who can navigate complex organizational dynamics.
- A leader who further develops the HR team to provide outstanding transactional, **consultative, and strategic** services to the organization and staff members.
- **Someone with adaptability and flexibility** to manage the fast-paced changes within the Aquarium and the broader employment landscape.
- A **passionate** individual who has the confidence to use independent judgment and to make and follow through on difficult decisions.
- A **skilled communicator** with executive presence, who can effectively deliver key and critical information across all levels of the organization.
- A **relationship-builder** who is a good listener and works to promote success across the organization.
- A **team player** who is dedicated to fostering growth with a focus on developing talent.
- A down-to-earth and **service-oriented executive** who demonstrates respect and sensitivity in interactions with others.
- An **accessible and visible**, professional who is an active and positive presence in the daily life of the Aquarium.
- A leader who can recognize and **work with different personality styles**.

Key Responsibilities:

1. Strategic Leadership:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive people strategy that aligns with the Aquarium's mission, values, and business objectives.
- Provide executive leadership and guidance to senior management, ensuring a high-performance culture that supports organizational goals.
- Partner with the CEO and other senior leaders to define organizational priorities and help drive cultural change initiatives.
- Recommend organizational structure and staffing levels to accomplish the Aquarium's mission and goals.

2. Operational Expertise:

- Advise and guide leaders in effectively addressing employee relations issues consistent with organizational philosophy.
- Lead HR staff in further efficiency in transactional services.

3. Human Resources Policies, Procedures, and Systems:

- Build HR processes to reflect enhanced organizational culture and excellent decision making in all people related processes.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of employment law.
- Manage reporting to appropriate employment agencies.
- Recommend policy and procedure revisions and modifications to ensure compliance with federal, state, and local requirements as well as adapt to changing environmental dynamics.
- Ensure positive, productive relationships with any potential vendors that oversee outsourced functions of the people and culture team.
- Oversee the human resources department budget.

4. Organizational Development:

- Lead talent management and development programs, including recruitment, training, succession planning, and leadership development.
- Foster an inclusive and diverse workplace that reflects the communities we serve and supports employee engagement and retention.
- Oversee performance management processes, ensuring clarity in goals, regular feedback, and professional development opportunities for all staff.

5. **Culture & Employee Engagement:**

- Champion and strengthen the Aquarium's culture, creating an environment where employees feel valued, inspired, and aligned with the mission.
- Design and lead initiatives to enhance employee engagement, well-being, and work-life balance, including recognition programs, wellness initiatives, and community-building activities.
- Act as a trusted advisor to leadership on matters of organizational culture, employee morale, and conflict resolution.

6. **Diversity & Inclusion (DI):**

- Develop and implement DI strategies to ensure that diversity is not only valued but embedded in the fabric of the Aquarium's operations and culture.
- Lead efforts to promote equitable opportunities for all employees, ensuring a culture of respect, belonging, and fairness.
- Drive appropriate training and awareness programs related to cultural competency across all levels of the organization.

7. **Talent Acquisition & Retention:**

- Oversee the recruitment process to attract top-tier talent for all departments, ensuring the Aquarium is staffed with individuals who share the mission and values of the organization.
- Provide expertise, advice, and insight throughout the hiring process and advise teams on best practices
- Work closely with managers to create and sustain an employee-focused retention strategy, addressing career development, growth opportunities, and compensation packages.
- Leverage data and industry best practices to optimize hiring, onboarding, and retention processes.

8. **Compensation & Benefits:**

- Ensure that compensation and benefits strategies are competitive, equitable, and aligned with industry standards and are designed to enhance recruitment and retention
- Regularly assess and adjust benefit offerings to support the needs and well-being of employees.
- Provide direction on compensation decisions, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and fairness across the organization.

9. Compliance & Risk Management:

- Ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal labor laws, regulations, and industry best practices.
- Manage HR-related risk, providing guidance on employee relations, conflict resolution, and compliance-related issues.
- Continuously evaluate and improve policies, procedures, and practices to mitigate legal and organizational risks.

10. Communication & Advocacy:

- Serve as the primary spokesperson for people and culture initiatives, advocating for employees at all levels of the organization.
- Develop clear and consistent communication strategies related to HR policies, programs, and initiatives.
- Promote the Aquarium as an employer of choice in the community and across the industry.

Qualifications:

- Proven experience (10+ years) in senior human resources or organizational development roles, preferably in mission-driven organizations or those with a focus on conservation, education, or public service.
- At least three (3) years of executive experience advising C-suite and employee leaders
- Extensive knowledge of HR practices, including talent management, employee engagement, performance management, and DEI initiatives.
- Experience in driving cultural change and leading diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.
- Demonstrated ability to build strong relationships and influence senior leadership in a collaborative environment.
- Excellent organizational skills and the ability to respond to multiple, competing demands.
- Extensive knowledge of local, state, and federal employment laws and regulations.
- Excellent coaching and conflict resolution abilities.
- A passion for environmental conservation and the Aquarium’s mission to inspire and educate the public about marine life.
- Strong strategic thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal, and conflict resolution skills.
- Ability to navigate ambiguity and adapt to a fast-paced, dynamic environment.
- A Master's degree in Human Resources, Organizational Development, Business Administration, or related field and advanced certifications, (e.g., SPHR) preferred.

TO APPLY:

Mystic Aquarium has partnered with **Canopy Strategic Partners** to manage this search. To be considered for this unique opportunity, please forward a single PDF document that includes your detailed resume and a cover letter to Lauren David at ldavid@canopysp.com. Questions about the role can be directed to David Walsh at dwalsh@canopysp.com.

Who We Are

Mystic Aquarium is one of the nation's leading aquariums, offering exemplary animal care to a variety of species while also serving as the Northeast's premier marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation center. Home to over 300 species of animals, the Aquarium features state of the art indoor and expansive outdoor exhibits. Each year, the Aquarium draws more than 800,000 visitors and is a top tourist destination in Connecticut and the 4th most visited cultural attraction in New England.

Mystic Aquarium is a leader in protecting marine ecosystems and resources, specializing in research and conservation efforts with the goals of enhancing the health and welfare of animals in our care, improving our understanding and protection of wild animals and their environments, protecting our fragile marine resources and fostering a greater appreciation for our oceans and its animals. Mystic Aquarium is an accredited Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) member.

Features of Mystic Aquarium include:

- Largest outdoor beluga habitat in the United States.
- Home to the only Steller sea lions and spotted seals in the continental United States.
- Home to over 300 species of animals.
- Home to a colony of more than 30 African penguins, a critically endangered species.
- The Arctic Coast habitat, where guests can view the beluga whales in both above and underwater viewing areas, with three pools holding more than 750,000 gallons of water.
- Animal Rescue Program rescues, rehabilitates, and releases sick, injured, and stranded marine animals along 1,000 miles of coastline in CT, RI, and Fishers Island, NY.
- Up-close animal encounters where guests can experience behind-the-scenes with animals from penguins, seals, sea lions, jellies, reptiles, and more.

The Aquarium Features –

- An indoor exhibit gallery featuring:
 - A central 35,000-gallon Caribbean reef habitat with thousands of fish and invertebrates.
 - JELLIES: Motion in the Ocean, one of the most diverse jelly exhibits in the country.
 - The Weird and Wonderful gallery with fascinating animals such as the giant Pacific octopus, Japanese spider crabs, and a live coral reef ecosystem.
 - SHARKS!, an interactive touch-tank experience where guests can safely touch live sharks and rays, and the Ray Touch Pool, where guests can touch and feed cownose rays.
 - Discover Long Island Sound, an interactive experience that teaches guests about the Sound and the animals that inhabit it, including rare species like the blue American lobster and yellow American lobster.
 - Marine Theater, home of California sea lions, features daily shows incorporating animal enrichment, natural behaviors, education, and entertainment.
- Multiple educational programs for preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students, and a Research Education for Undergraduates program.
- A robust research program with projects dedicated to health and physiology of marine mammals, African penguins, deep sea coral reef habitats, sustainable fisheries, and the impact of alternate energy sources on marine life.