



POSITION PROFILE

# Executive Director Chicago Run

Chicago, IL



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# ABOUT CHICAGO RUN

Since 2007, Chicago Run has empowered thousands of Chicago’s young people, from Pre-K through high school, with access to inclusive running and physical activity programs.

Chicago Run’s programs meet young people where they are, partnering with schools and community organizations to provide regular opportunities for trauma-informed and non-competitive physical activity. Through these partnerships, Chicago Run’s program utilizes the power of sport to improve academic performance, positive relationships, development of social-emotional skills, and growth in physical and mental health.

The need for Chicago Run’s work – providing equitable access to inclusive, high-quality running and physical activity programming – stems from pre-existing systemic inequities in Chicago communities. Nearly half of all youth in Chicago live in “low child opportunity areas”, meaning they lack access to resources for healthy development. Chicago Run is committed to centering equity across all facets of the organization’s work to better partner with Chicago communities and create lasting impact and social change. You can read more about Chicago Run’s equity philosophy [here](#).

In addition to Chicago Run’s equity philosophy, the organization utilizes the following core values as operating principles across internal operations, program implementation and partnerships, and strategy creation to set the foundation for achieving the organization’s critical mission.



## Thoughtful Impact

We believe meaningful impact should guide our strategy.



## Curiosity

We value growth and a commitment to ongoing learning –from program evaluation, to staff professional development, to a culture of providing feedback.



## Collaboration

We believe that fostering relationships and working collaboratively is critical to our work, both internally and externally. We believe in the agency of our communities, and we work to actively partner with youth and communities in program implementation. We also believe that effective communication is critical to collaboration.



## Equity

We understand that the need for our work, providing inclusive access to running and physical activity programming, stems from fundamental inequities in our communities, and are committed to promoting equity across all facets of our work.



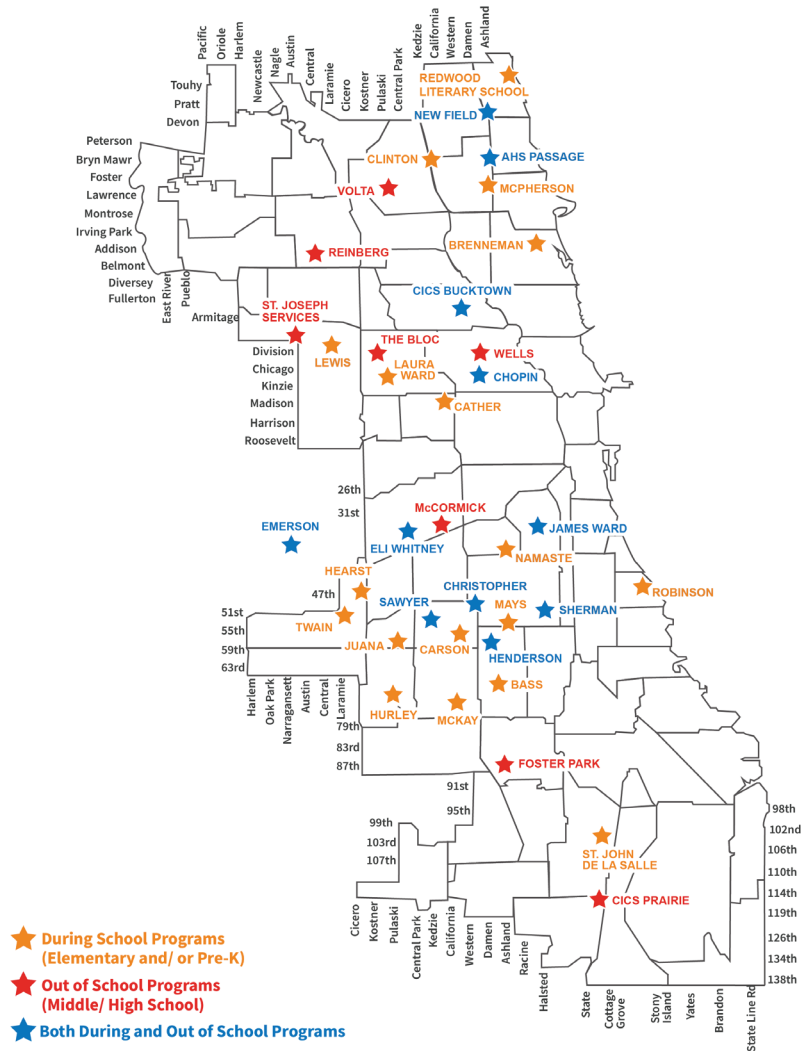
## Health

We are invested in the health and well-being of our youth, staff, and broader communities. We believe in addressing every aspect of wellness inclusive of mental health and social and emotional well-being.





In a typical year, Chicago Run reaches approximately 10,000 youth participants by working with 45+ schools within Chicago Public Schools (“CPS”) and 7 community partners/parks, across 30+ diverse Chicagoland neighborhoods, with a focus on programming in historically disinvested communities on the South and West sides.







By partnering with existing stakeholders who are deeply rooted in these communities, Chicago Run is able to reach more young people and deepen its impact in partner neighborhoods. Chicago Run offers a customized set of programs designed to meet the needs of each student and community, including:

### In-School Programs

- The *Little Strides* program is designed to provide high-quality physical activity breaks to youth in early childhood classrooms. Its curriculum uses games and activities that focus on developing vital gross motor skills that students need upon entering elementary school.
- The *Chicago Runners* program is designed for youth in kindergarten through 5th grade. This program provides equitable access to physical activity breaks to promote well-being and improve concentration in the classroom.

### Out-of-School Programs

- The *Running Mates* program utilizes running and physical activity to improve social and emotional well-being of young people in middle school and high school. This program provides an inclusive and non-competitive environment in which young people work towards completing a local 5k race, while developing a positive self-image, promoting goal setting, and building relationships with peers and positive mentors. The *Summer Strides* season of *Running Mates* brings youth and community members together in a safe and healthy environment to develop their physical and mental health during the summer months.
- The *Alumni Program* provides opportunities for volunteering, career exploration, and paid peer coaching and mentoring (Junior Coaches). Participants develop leadership skills while continuing to build their physical and social and emotional well-being.

For more information on Chicago Run's diverse set of programs, please visit [chicagorun.org/ourprograms](https://chicagorun.org/ourprograms)







As a result of Chicago Run's programming in schools, participants have reported the following outcomes:

- 90% improved in at least one social emotional learning capacity
- 80% improved in physical fitness as measured by the PACER Test
- 60% increased grit, social capital and social skills
- 300,000+ minutes of additive physical activity during school day
- 96% of participating teachers reported that their students "had improved attention after participating in Chicago Run programs"

### Chicago Run by the Numbers

**11.5**

FTE Staff

**100+**

Volunteers

**25±**

Coaches

**\$1.4M**

Budget

**20**

Board Members

For more information,  
please visit [chicagorun.org](http://chicagorun.org)



# WHAT'S NEXT

In the summer of 2019, Chicago Run completed a landscape assessment with a wide range of stakeholders, including youth, program partners, funders, and experts in the field. Following that assessment, Chicago Run brought on Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to conduct a macro-level analysis inclusive of 25+ thought partners and partner organizations.

Through these assessments, and as a result of gathering more robust programmatic data, Chicago Run developed a Strategy Overview in 2021, which was adapted in late 2023. This ongoing strategic plan is focused on the following priorities:

**1. Maintaining overall programmatic reach, but deepening impact by shifting resources.**

- Focusing more heavily on fewer, more intentionally prioritized neighborhoods.
- Partnering with existing community anchor institutions and local stakeholders for more responsive programming and deeper collaboration with pre-existing efforts.

**2. Building out more robust, accessible continuum of programming.**

- Maintaining the current curriculum focus on running and physical activity, embedded with social and emotional learning.
- Creating more intentional program continuity from Pre-K through high school.
- Increasing reach and/or age ranges of deeper-touch out-of-school programming.

**3. Utilizing a train-and-support-the trainer model, supported by technology, to maintain current partnerships and strengthen fidelity and data measurement for during-school programming across the city.**

- Maintaining commitment to providing equitable access to high-quality physical activity for all young people.
- Utilizing a stronger online platform, strengthen communication, evaluation, and implementation of during school programming.







# THE OPPORTUNITY

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the next Executive Director (“ED”) will serve as the primary leader and strategist, fundraiser, internal and external champion, organization builder and manager for Chicago Run, building on the strong track record and success the organization has achieved since its founding.

Key responsibilities of the next Executive Director include:

## Strategic Leadership

- Provide visionary and values-based leadership of the organization; serve as a thought leader in all areas to inform and guide strategy development, fundraising initiatives, program development and operations.
- Lead and implement strategic planning processes and ensure long-term vision and plans are informed by, and have buy-in, across Chicago Run’s diverse constituencies, including board, staff, funders, children, families, school districts and partners.
- Identify and explore new programming opportunities; integrate innovations that sustain Chicago Run’s ability to deliver high-quality, relevant programs, and services; support the development of program partnerships (primarily driven by program staff).
- Stay abreast of developments in the fields of play equity, youth development, nonprofit management, governance, fundraising, etc. to ensure Chicago Run evolves accordingly.
- Lead staff in consistent and meaningful program innovation; ensure that programs are aligned to mission, vision and community priorities; assure program outcomes are achieving mission, vision and intent and that a method of evaluation is active across all programs.

## Ambassadorship & Fundraising

- Serve as a visible and approachable community organizer, catalyst and convener. Act as a public spokesperson and advocate for Chicago Run and the sports/play equity field through collective local, citywide and regional efforts.
- Advance the integration of Chicago Run into the communities it serves through tailored and authentic engagement strategies.
- Lead the development and execution of fundraising strategies in partnership with the Board of Directors and Development team.
- Lead and evolve an ambitious fundraising program; develop and maintain relationships with donors and prospects, including individuals, foundations, and corporations; ensure continued commitment from current contributors while engaging new individual, corporate and foundation donors.
- Cultivate and steward relationships with a broad range of constituents, including donors and funders, community and civic leaders, educational institutions, foundations, cross sector partners, international relationships, etc.
- Build and advance Chicago Run’s visibility and brand locally and regionally.
- Engage and inspire the Board as active brand ambassadors and in their critical role in fundraising.



## Organizational Leadership and Management

- Build strong and effective relationships with staff while investing in a leadership development culture; continue to cultivate a work environment that recruits, retains and supports quality staff consistent with Chicago Run's mission and core values. Advance processes related to hiring and professional development.
- Develop long-term financial strategies and plans in support of vision and strategic initiatives in partnership with the Finance and Operations teams. Ensure staff and Board are informed and engaged in budget development and budget decisions; support and inform financial transparency and literacy across the organization.
- Maximize organizational efficiency and effectiveness by optimizing cross-departmental collaboration, communication, operations, budgets, and performance.
- Ensure program quality and organizational stability through development and implementation of standards and controls, systems and procedures, and evaluation.

## Board Governance

- Support and empower the Board to act as governors, fundraisers, advocates, and responsible fiscal stewards.
- Work with the Board Chair and Executive Committee to foster effective Board and committee work and build and diversify board participation, ensuring the skills, perspectives, and resources it needs to serve the Chicago Run community are available and accessible.
- Work with the Board of Directors to develop and implement strategies that balance short-term and long-term needs and resources, with an eye towards continued institutional relevance and sustainability.
- Assure the staff is organized to serve as advisor and resource to the Board in all areas of finance, policy, programs and governance.
- Partner with the Board leadership to identify, cultivate, recruit and engage new board members.







# CANDIDATE PROFILE

The ideal candidate will have the following professional and personal qualities, skills, and characteristics:

## A Strategic and Visionary Leader

The Executive Director will be a thought leader and problem solver with a solid understanding of the strategies needed to advance the work of a mission-based organization, from funding to mission delivery. Curious and entrepreneurial by nature, the ED can lead the staff and Board to seek opportunities to grow and evolve, co-create, increase impact, build visibility, and promote engagement. The ED will offer creative, yet practical, ideas to continue to scale Chicago Run's programs, while staying focused on outcomes, impact and cost-effectiveness. The ED brings experience leveraging the skills of a staff and board to execute a strategic plan, while working closely with the organization's various constituents on the plan's implementation and evaluation. The ideal candidate is an experienced advocate and coalition-builder who actively and strategically seeks out partnerships to advance the mission and strategic priorities. Experience cultivating relationships with Chicago Public Schools (or similar entity) and/or recruiting volunteers would be advantageous but is not required.

## An Enthusiastic Ambassador and Fundraiser

The ED is an inspirational leader capable of developing a powerful sense of shared purpose in others. An informed and passionate public speaker, the ED will represent Chicago Run as a thought leader in the fields of sports/play equity, youth development and beyond. The ideal candidate will be able to effectively articulate and convey Chicago Run's mission and priorities to a wide range of constituents including children, parents, donors, funders, public school administrators, governmental representatives, external partners, the Board of Directors and staff. As the primary face and spokesperson of Chicago Run, the ED brings a natural propensity for engagement to the role along with the ability to build and sustain strong support across a wide range of stakeholders. The ideal candidate actively seeks out partnerships and builds coalitions to advance the organization's mission and strategic priorities. The ideal candidate employs entrepreneurial approaches to expanding and deepening new and existing donor support. Finally, the ideal candidate has demonstrated success building brand equity and awareness of their organizations through public speaking opportunities, social media, and other forms of marketing.

## A Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Executive Director will play a critical role in prioritizing equity throughout Chicago Run. This leadership spans Chicago Run's efforts to build a diverse and inclusive workforce, to strategies that create a pipeline for equitable leadership within the field, to investing in programming and strategies that promote diversity and inclusion in all communities it serves. This leader will bring demonstrated experience authentically engaging diverse populations and communities of color and approach their work through a social justice lens. Globally and culturally competent, the ED will have the character and integrity necessary to develop rapport with people of varying experiences, backgrounds, and philosophies. The ideal candidate will bring proven experience and outcomes related to implementing DEI initiatives in their organizations. Finally, the ED will be adept at facilitating conversations around what it means to be an equitable institution, both internally and externally.



## Leadership & Business Acumen

The ED is a leader with strong staff, operational and financial management experience and can communicate fluently around each of these areas with the Board and key stakeholders. The ED brings a track record of motivating and inspiring others to achieve impact through creativity and teamwork while leveraging each individual's strengths to meet organizational goals. The ED can inspire staff and volunteers with diverse sets of skills and provide a productive work environment and professional growth opportunities that result in team cohesion and camaraderie. The ED is a builder with the ability to set priorities, delegate responsibilities, assure accountability and allocate resources to ensure results. This leader will strengthen and retain an empowered team that will work together to implement the course of action for achieving the vision. The ED will model flexibility and adaptability to the team and possess an ability to quickly pivot when needed.

The ED understands and implements best nonprofit management practices and planning, including compelling communication messages and effective marketing strategies, management succession, and most importantly, ensuring that overall day-to-day operations are aligned with strategic goals. This leader will also possess the knowledge and ability to ensure that the Board is achieving its primary responsibilities of best practice governance and fundraising.

## A Passion for the Mission

The Executive Director brings sincere passion for serving families and communities and a commitment to actively promote ways to empower young people through access to physical activity and sport. The ideal candidate brings demonstrated experience authentically engaging diverse populations, students, volunteers and families in their work. The ED possesses self-confidence and an approachable style that will resonate with all communities served by Chicago Run along with a high level of emotional intelligence. This leader will be an individual of impeccable integrity, ethics and values who can be trusted implicitly.







# COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. The salary range for this role is \$130,000 – 150,000 with a generous benefits package including a 401K, comprehensive medical & dental insurance, and winter/summer breaks (in addition to PTO).

## CONTACT

Koya Partners, the executive search firm that specializes in mission-driven search, has been exclusively retained for this engagement. Anne McCarthy, Claire Hunt and Kaley Blasinski are leading the search. To make recommendations or to express interest in this role please email [chicagoruned@koyapartners.com](mailto:chicagoruned@koyapartners.com). All nominations, inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

Koya Partners is committed to providing an accessible search process for all, including individuals living with disabilities. If you need assistance expressing interest online or any aspect of the recruitment process, please email [chicagoruned@koyapartners.com](mailto:chicagoruned@koyapartners.com) or [nonprofitsearchops@divsearch.com](mailto:nonprofitsearchops@divsearch.com).

## ABOUT KOYA PARTNERS | DIVERSIFIED SEARCH GROUP

Koya Partners, a Diversified Search Group company, is the nation's premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

Diversified Search Group is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of "America's Best Executive Recruiting Firms" and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

*Learn more about Koya Partners | Diversified Search Group via the [firm's website](#).*