

Position Description | 2026
for the position of
Chief Development Officer



Position Description

Position	Chief Development Officer (CDO)
Organization	Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York
Reports to	Chief Executive Officer
Location	New York, NY – with responsibility for supporting the full Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York chapter footprint, including Metro New York, Long Island, Buffalo, Rochester, and surrounding communities.
Website	wish.org/newyork

Table of Contents

Organization Overview.....	03
Position Summary & Context for Recruitment	05
Candidate Profile.....	08
Search Team.....	10



Organization Overview

Make-A-Wish is the largest wish-granting charity in the world with 57 chapters throughout the United States and its territories, and 40 international affiliates on six continents. Make-A-Wish America, the national office, is located in Phoenix, Arizona.

Founded in 1983, Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York has granted the wishes of over 21,000 children with critical illnesses. The organization serves children in the five boroughs of New York City, on Long Island, and in 17 counties in the Buffalo and Rochester areas.

Over 600 volunteers make wishes possible for the children the chapter serves.

Right now, there are more than 1,000 children in the communities the chapter serves waiting for their wish to be granted. Every one of these kids needs a wish to give them strength and help them heal.

Wish kids are not necessarily terminal. In fact, the majority of children who receive a wish overcome their medical conditions or learn to live with them and go on to lead strong, vibrant lives.

A wish is not simply a wish. In the fight against a critical illness, a wish serves as a catalyst for renewed strength and encouragement for every child and family on their journey. In fact, wishes have proven physical and emotional benefits that can give children with critical illnesses a higher chance of survival. And wishes not only help these children – they also have far-reaching, positive impacts on their families and communities.

Mission

Together we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses.

Vision

To grant the wish of every eligible child.

*I wish to meet
Lionel Messi with
the Inter Miami CF*

Yeser, 6
leukemia





Trauma Relief 9 out of 10 wish kids reported that the wish experience relieved them from traumatic stress.	Emotional & Mental Well-Being 9 out of 10 wish parents saw their child's emotional well-being improve with a wish.	Turning Point 9 out of 10 medical providers say a wish increased compliance with treatment.	Strength to Fight 8 out of 10 wish kids reported that their wish gave them the strength to fight their critical illness.	Long-Term Impact 9 out of 10 medical providers observed that the wish experience has a positive impact on a child's physical well-being and overall quality of life.
--	--	---	--	--



Leadership

John M. Healey | Chief Executive Officer & President

John M. Healey is a seasoned executive leader with more than three decades of experience building, transforming, and scaling organizations across nonprofit, healthcare and life sciences, consumer products, manufacturing, and global business environments. He currently serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York, where he leads mission delivery, fundraising, operations, staff leadership, board engagement, and long-term strategy for one of the country's major Make-A-Wish chapters.



Previously, John held senior leadership roles at Incite Health Life Sciences, FlowMetric Life Sciences/KCAS Bio, Sabert Corporation, and Johnson & Johnson. His career includes leading large P&Ls, driving profitable growth, launching new products, improving operations, integrating major acquisitions, and developing high-performing teams in the United States, Canada, and France.

John earned an MBA from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and a Bachelor of Civil Engineering from Villanova University, and he has served on multiple nonprofit, education, and business boards.

Sarah Pontius | Chair, Board of Directors | CEO & Founder, Artisan

Sarah Pontius has been in the real estate industry since 2004, completing complex transactions across leasing, development, acquisitions, dispositions, and corporate M&A worldwide.

Prior to co-founding Artisan, Sarah was Global Head of Partnerships at WeWork, where she worked closely with the company's founder on strategic initiatives. Sarah started her career at Brookfield working in their New York and London offices for 10 years before joining CBRE as Senior Vice President in Advisory Services.



Sarah has a bachelor's degree from Union College, where she is currently a member of the Board of Trustees and chairs the Facilities & Environment Committee. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York and an active Wish Granter.

Position Summary & Context for Recruitment

The Chief Development Officer (CDO) is responsible for leading all fundraising strategy and execution for Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York. This includes developing and implementing an integrated development plan that increases contributed revenue, diversifies funding streams, deepens donor engagement, strengthens Board fundraising participation, and expands the chapter's base of major donors and individual supporters.

The CDO serves as a senior member of the executive leadership team and is responsible for shaping, leading, and executing a comprehensive revenue strategy that advances the chapter's mission: *Together, we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses*. This leader will partner closely with the CEO, Board of Directors, senior staff, volunteers, donors, and community leaders to strengthen a culture of philanthropy, grow philanthropic support, strengthen donor relationships, and ensure the chapter has the resources needed to grant wishes at scale.

The CDO provides executive leadership to the chapter's multi-channel fundraising program and oversees an overall team of approximately 19 team members responsible for major gifts, individual giving, corporate partnerships, foundation relations, planned giving, annual giving, donor stewardship, special events, community fundraising,

Position Description

Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York | Chief Development Officer

research, development operations, and regional development activities. The role is responsible for building a high-performing, collaborative, accountable, and mission-driven development team across the chapter's geographic footprint.

Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York closed FY2025 with \$13.7 million in cash revenue and forecasts \$14.6 million for FY2026, up from \$11.5 million in FY2023. The chapter's special and external events programs anchor that base, generating close to \$6 million annually and representing roughly 40 percent of total revenue. A local and national corporate partnership program contributes approximately \$1.5 million, and planned giving represents a growing area of strategic focus. All areas are supported by an overall donor file of approximately 25,000.

The chapter's growth opportunity lies in major gifts. Major gift revenue has risen from \$1.9 million in FY2023 to a forecast of more than \$3 million in FY2026 (part of a forecast of \$5 million overall in individual giving in FY2026) – meaningful progress, yet still roughly one-fifth of total revenue. The primary responsibility of the CDO is to expand and professionalize the chapter's major gifts and individual giving program. The CDO must lead the chapter in building the major gifts pipeline, portfolio, and cultivation infrastructure required to compete for seven- and eight-figure philanthropy in the nation's densest market for private wealth. The CDO will be expected to increase the number of qualified major gift prospects, deepen relationships with current donors, identify new high-capacity supporters, and create giving opportunities that connect donor passion to wish impact.

Under CEO John M. Healey, who joined in 2025, and Board Chair Sarah Pontius, the chapter is entering a defining planning cycle. FY2027 serves as a bridge year while the organization completes a multi-year strategic plan for FY28–FY30 that must demonstrate growth in both wishes granted and revenue raised. The CDO will be recruited into that planning process with the opportunity to help shape it, rather than inherit it.

The chapter currently grants wishes to approximately 65 percent of eligible children in its territory. Closing that gap is the organization's central strategic priority, and mission delivery capacity is an area of organizational focus. The CDO will be a full partner in that work, building the philanthropic capacity that makes expanded wish granting possible and articulating to donors a credible, data-grounded case for growth.

The CDO will bring strategic discipline, relationship-building excellence, and strong management practices to the development program. The role requires a leader who can balance long-term revenue growth with near-term fundraising performance, inspire staff and volunteers, steward transformational donor relationships, and embed a culture of philanthropy throughout the organization.

The CDO will work closely with the CEO, Board Chair, Development Committee, and individual Board members to clarify fundraising expectations, identify opportunities for engagement, and equip Board members to be effective ambassadors, connectors, cultivators, and solicitors where appropriate.

The following describe the essential duties of the position and are not intended as a comprehensive list of all responsibilities required.



Essential Job Functions

- ⌞ Develop and execute a comprehensive annual and multi-year fundraising strategy aligned with the chapter's strategic plan, budget, wish-granting goals, and regional priorities.
- ⌞ Lead, coach, and manage the development team to achieve clearly defined revenue, activity, stewardship, and donor engagement goals.
- ⌞ Personally manage a portfolio of high-capacity donors and prospects, with emphasis on major gifts, transformational gifts, and individual giving growth.
- ⌞ Partner with the CEO to identify, cultivate, solicit, and steward top donors, Board members, corporate leaders, foundations, and community stakeholders.
- ⌞ Strengthen moves management, prospect research, donor segmentation, pipeline development, gift strategy, and stewardship practices across the development function.
- ⌞ Ensure fundraising plans are data-informed, measurable, and supported by clear accountability, accurate forecasting, timely reporting, and disciplined use of donor records.
- ⌞ Oversee strategies for signature events, community fundraising, corporate partnerships, foundation giving, annual giving, planned giving, and regional development efforts, ensuring each channel is aligned to pipeline growth and feeds the chapter's major gift funnel.
- ⌞ Collaborate with mission, marketing, finance, and operations teams to ensure donor communications are compelling, accurate, brand-aligned, and connected to mission impact.
- ⌞ Serve as the chapter's senior philanthropy partner to Make-A-Wish America, coordinating with the national leadership giving and corporate partnership teams on shared prospects, joint foundation strategies, national partner activation in the New York market, and enterprise-wide fundraising initiatives, while advocating effectively for chapter priorities within a federated model.
- ⌞ Represent the chapter externally with donors, volunteers, corporate partners, civic leaders, families, and community stakeholders in a manner that reflects the values and reputation of Make-A-Wish.
- ⌞ Develop and manage the development department budget, monitor fundraising performance, and ensure revenue goals are achieved in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.

Focus on Major Gifts & Individual Giving

- ⌞ Strengthen and scale a disciplined major gifts program with clear portfolio expectations, donor stages, cultivation plans, solicitation strategies, and stewardship standards.
- ⌞ Personally cultivate, solicit, and close major gifts (\$10,000+), leadership annual gifts (\$50,000+), multi-year commitments, planned gifts, and campaign-style gifts when applicable.
- ⌞ Develop compelling donor opportunities tied to wish granting, regional needs, mission delivery, innovation, and chapter growth priorities.
- ⌞ Partner with the CEO and Board members on donor strategy, including preparing leadership for high-level cultivation and solicitation conversations.
- ⌞ Increase individual giving revenue through improved donor retention, upgrades, reactivation, segmentation, personalized stewardship, and clear pathways from annual giving to major giving.
- ⌞ Use data and prospect research to identify giving capacity, philanthropic interests, engagement history, and next-best actions for donors and prospects.

Relationship with Board of Directors

- └ Support the CEO in engaging the Board around fundraising strategy, revenue performance, donor pipeline development, and major gift opportunities.
- └ Staff the Development Committee and provide clear agendas, metrics, discussion materials, and follow-up actions that support Board-level fundraising leadership.
- └ Help Board members identify and open doors to prospective donors, corporate partners, foundations, family offices, community leaders, and philanthropic networks.
- └ Prepare Board members for donor meetings by providing briefing materials, talking points, solicitation strategies, and stewardship guidance.
- └ Promote meaningful Board participation in giving, getting, thanking, storytelling, event engagement, and long-term donor relationship development.
- └ Ensure Board fundraising activity is tracked, followed up on, and connected to broader development team plans.

Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate is an experienced nonprofit fundraising executive with demonstrated success personally cultivating, soliciting, and closing significant gifts; leading staff teams; partnering with boards; and building systems that support sustainable revenue growth.

While Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York will consider a broad range of backgrounds, the ideal candidate will align with the following:

Qualifications

- Passion for the Make-A-Wish mission and a demonstrated commitment to ethical, donor-centered fundraising practices.
- Minimum of 15 years of progressively responsible nonprofit fundraising experience, especially in the Metro New York City area, including significant leadership experience in major gifts, individual giving, campaign fundraising, corporate partnerships, or comprehensive development programs.
- Demonstrated success personally cultivating, soliciting, closing, and stewarding major gifts and multi-year commitments.
- A track record of success within the New York City philanthropic community – including individual donors, family offices, private foundations, and corporate philanthropy leadership – and the presence, confidence, and social fluency to build new relationships at the highest levels of this giving landscape. Comfort making direct, ambitious asks is essential.
- Experience managing and developing high-performing fundraising teams, including setting goals, coaching staff, creating accountability, and building collaborative team culture.
- Proven ability to partner effectively with a CEO, Board of Directors, senior leadership team, volunteers, donors, and external stakeholders.
- Strong understanding of moves management, donor pipelines, prospect research, portfolio management, stewardship, revenue forecasting, and development operations.
- Experience operating successfully within a federated, chapter, affiliate, or similarly complex structure, including navigating shared systems and collaborative revenue relationships with a parent organization.

Position Description

Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York | Chief Development Officer

- Excellent written, verbal, presentation, and interpersonal communication skills, with the ability to translate mission impact into compelling donor engagement.
- Strategic thinker with strong execution skills, sound judgment, high emotional intelligence, and the ability to manage multiple priorities in a fast-paced environment.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and the ability to build authentic relationships across communities, cultures, and regions.
- Demonstrated judgment in aligning philanthropic partnerships with organizational values, including the discernment to structure donor opportunities that honor mission integrity and the chapter's commitment to serving every eligible child equitably.
- Experience with CRM and donor database systems; ability to use data to guide strategy, assess performance, and improve fundraising outcomes.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree, CFRE certification, MBA, or equivalent professional experience preferred.
- Ability and willingness to travel throughout Metro New York and Western New York and to attend evening and weekend donor meetings, Board activities, and chapter events as needed.



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commitment Statement

Make-A-Wish is committed to championing diversity, equity, and inclusion, fostering an organization that is accessible and welcoming to all. Our vision to serve every eligible child is not only an aspiration; it is a strategic intent. In order to reach every eligible child, we need to continually evaluate and evolve along with our demographic environment. It is only through our mosaic of different cultures, perspectives and experiences that we can grant life-changing wishes to every eligible child.

Compensation

The annual base salary for this role is expected to range from \$240,000 to \$280,000, commensurate with experience.

Search Team

Make-A-Wish Metro New York and Western New York has retained DSG Fundraising & Advancement of DSG | Koya to assist in this confidential search process. Inquiries, nominations, and applications (current resumes and cover letters) may be submitted via the following link or directed to one or more members of the search team.

<https://talent-profile.dsgco.com/search/v2/23213>

Gerard F. Cattie, Jr. (he/him)

Global Managing Partner and Practice Founder
DSG Fundraising & Advancement
gerard.cattie@dsgco.com | 212.542.2587

Beth Reeves (she/her)

Vice President and Senior Search Associate
beth.reeves@dsgco.com | 212.542.2584

Manuel A. Gongon, Jr. (he/him)

Vice President and Senior Search Associate
manuel.gongon@dsgco.com | 215.837.7854

Tammy Schillin (she/her)

Director, Search Process and Strategy
tammy.schillin@dsgco.com | 212.542.2579

