



BELIEVE IN ARTISTS

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200 W Madison St, Fl 3  
Chicago, IL 60606  
(312) 436-0493

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## Position Specification: United States Artists President and Chief Executive Officer

### United States Artists: An Overview

United States Artists (USA) was founded in 2005 with an unwavering belief in artists and their essential role in society. In 2003, the Urban Institute conducted a study which revealed that 96% of Americans valued art in their lives, while only 27% valued artists. Motivated by the study and in response to the NEA's severe cuts in individual artist grants, four inspiring leaders of the Ford, Rockefeller, Rasmuson, and Prudential Foundations spearheaded the launch of an independent organization to provide unapologetic and direct support to outstanding artists across the nation to recognize their contributions and address their economic needs.

USA began its signature fellowship program in 2006 for artists and collectives working throughout the United States and its territories. Each year, multiple USA Fellowships of \$50,000 each are awarded with no strings attached in all disciplines – Architecture & Design, Craft, Dance, Film, Media, Music, Theater & Performance, Traditional Arts, Visual Art, and Writing – and at all career stages – emerging, mid-career, and established. Recipients, who are identified through an equitable and rigorous nomination and panel selection process, decide for themselves how to best use the money – whether it is creating new work, paying rent, reducing debt, getting healthcare, supporting their families, or sharing with other artists. Since its founding, USA has awarded Fellowships to an exceptionally diverse group of more than 700 artists and cultural practitioners, totaling over \$33 million of unrestricted support.

In 2015, with the purpose of showcasing the Fellows in ways that are meaningful to them, USA launched its Artist Assembly, an annual convening intended to cultivate lasting relationships between the latest class of USA awardees and connect them with national arts funders and leaders. Awardees are also featured in Anthology, USA's annual intern-produced publication that examines artists' relationships with the world around them in unexpected ways.

USA took its impact to the next level in 2019 with the inaugural Berresford Prize – a \$25,000 award given annually to a cultural organizer who has contributed significantly to the advancement, well-being, and care of artists in society. This award, named for USA's Founding Chair Susan Berresford, acknowledges the remarkable curators, administrators, scholars, and producers who catalyze and enrich our cultural landscape – reinforcing USA's commitment to supporting a robust and thriving arts ecosystem.

Most recently, in response to the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on artists throughout America, USA spearheaded the Artist Relief project. A coalition of national arts nonprofit and funders came together via Artist Relief to provide emergency grants to artists practicing across ten disciplines and in nearly every state and US territory who are facing dire financial circumstances due to COVID-19. Starting in April 2020, Artist Relief distributed thousands of \$5,000 grants for a total of more than \$24.3 million.



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Experienced in providing resources to artists across disciplines and geographies, USA is increasingly sought after to advise foundations, philanthropists, and other field partners seeking to create or expand programs that support individual creative practitioners. In carefully selected initiatives, the USA team works closely with partners to administer funds, design programs, and conduct research in response to their mission, goals, and strategy.

USA fundraises each year from a broad range of foundations, companies, and individuals committed to cultivating contemporary culture. Its Board of Trustees, and its extensive network of rotating nominators and panelists also offer invaluable support. It is through the intersection of these relationships and in the spirit of collaboration that USA is honored to serve the country's most compelling artists and cultural practitioners.

USA has an annual operating budget of approximately \$7M and a team of seventeen full time staff. The organization is governed by a fourteen-person Board. In addition to the funds raised annually, USA has two endowment funds that are managed together, one for the exclusive support of operations and one to support Fellowships and other grants. The total endowment funds under management are approximately \$32 million.

## The Opportunity

For the right leader, the position of President & Chief Executive Officer of the United States Artists (USA) is an opportunity to advance innovation, collaboration, inclusion, and impact in artist support that will resonate throughout the nation.

USA has benefitted from strong executive leadership. The organization was originally established in Los Angeles by founding CEO Katharine DeShaw in 2005, and then moved its headquarters to Chicago in 2014 under the leadership of Carolina García Jayaram. During Deana Haggag's tenure as President and CEO, from 2017 until 2021, USA saw unprecedented growth, expanding its Fellowship award program, launching the Berresford Prize, and developing multi-year partnerships with foundations and other nonprofits to advance support for individual artists and the field.

USA understands that our nation undervalues – to its detriment – that artists are a legitimate workforce, community builders, and creators of culture, heritage, and human legacy. The organization knows that, to build a better future, our society will need artists for chronicling, critique, reflection, innovation, connection, and healing. The story of artists' role and impact in society can and needs to be told differently and more effectively to those who have power to distribute resources in support of artists, the media, and beyond.

USA is poised to play a critical national leadership role in artist support in the United States. USA's authentic grounding in direct and unrestricted artist support – and key assets of the USA Fellows and a network of artists and panelists – demonstrate the organization's unique capacity and voice to speak on behalf of artists in America. USA's activities over the last three years have laid the groundwork for a successful mobilization of national assets to expand beyond its core Fellowship Program to champion and develop unconditional



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support for artists and their practice. With the success of the Artist Relief Fund and its demonstrated collaborative leadership, USA is destined to be a driver – and perhaps the network leader – of a national effort to support and sustain artists.

## The Role

Reporting to the Board, the President & Chief Executive Officer is responsible for leading and managing the United States Artists' strategic, programmatic, financial, and management operations. The CEO will build upon the organization's strengths and continue to raise USA's profile and reputation as one of the leading organizations supporting artists in the country. They will champion USA's mission and continue to chart the course for a strong, ambitious, and inclusive future. The CEO will work in close partnership with the Board and staff to determine and implement USA's strategic objectives.

The CEO will play the primary role in representing USA to stakeholders nationally, including artists, fellows, patrons, foundations, and others who support the organization. As such, they will build upon the network of artists and supporters who have contributed to USA's ongoing strength, impact, and reputation. The CEO will be expected to provide intellectual leadership and insight in developing future direction and programs.

Critical to the CEO's success will be the ability to fundraise effectively, in coordination with the Board and the staff. The successful candidate will have a track record of resource-building with significant creativity and clarity of purpose. By ensuring that a wide range of donors feel included and involved, the CEO will increase and diversify financial support.

Another key aspect of the CEO's role will be to recruit, manage, and nurture a talented and diverse staff to oversee all aspects of USA's development, growth, and ongoing programs and operations. They will ensure that the right people are in the right roles with the bandwidth and expertise to take responsibility for their respective functions, and that they function highly in a team. The CEO will create a culture that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive, and actively foster a collegial and collaborative environment internally. As the primary liaison to the Board, they will develop a highly productive and effective partnership with Board members in service to USA's mission.

## Candidate Profile

United States Artists seeks an innovative, inclusive, inspirational, and broadly connected leader who is passionate about the arts and supporting artists across disciplines, and who is captivated by the opportunity to successfully lead and advance a nationally-recognized funding organization. The CEO will be a person of deep curiosity, whose professional experience and personal characteristics inspire confidence and trust among internal and external constituencies. In addition to exhibiting clear management acumen, this person must have a passion for leadership and must understand the role of artists across disciplines in society and in constantly evolving environments throughout this country.

The successful candidate will have demonstrated success contributing to a compelling strategy for an organization, building financial and ideological support for its implementation, and skillfully balancing and aligning the needs of



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multiple interests. They must possess the business acumen, management capacity, and skills necessary to lead USA strategically into the future, building on its strong accomplishments to date.

The CEO will be a strong public speaker who can communicate effectively and build strong relationships that inspire the confidence of a wide variety of individuals, both internal and external to the organization. This includes working in close productive partnership with the Board. As a steward of USA's resources, this individual will be adept at listening, informing, and contributing to strategic vision, and also willing to be accountable for the oversight of implementation.

This individual will have a proven ability to create and foster an atmosphere of inclusion, equity, teamwork, and mutual respect among staff. The CEO will demonstrate the highest degree of personal responsibility, accountability, and honesty. The ideal candidate will be self-reflective and aware of their own limitations. They will lead by example and drive the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and personal development. They will encourage others to share the spotlight and celebrate the success of the team.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

- **Vision & Strategy:** The successful candidate will be a creative and passionate leader with the ability to articulate USA's mission and vision for its future. The CEO will have a demonstrated record of setting priorities and leading organizations to success. They will be a strategic thinker who will work with the Board and team to establish and pursue goals in support of USA's mission.
- **Leadership & Credibility with Artists:** The successful candidate will possess the intellectual rigor, curiosity, and breadth to fulfill the CEO's role in the artist community. In this role, the CEO will engage leading artists and supporters nationally and internationally on behalf of the organization. Both in USA's current capacity and looking ahead, the successful candidate will have the ability to inspire the Board, staff, artists, and the community writ large.
- **Resource Development:** The successful candidate will possess the ability to work with USA's team and Board in growing the organization's funding base and diversifying its financial support. They will be adept in cultivating relationships and will be able to inspire loyalty to and support of USA as well as elevate the reputation and visibility of the organization. Further, they will engage their professional network to substantively further USA's mission.
- **Management of Teams & Resources:** The CEO must possess the ability to recruit, develop, and lead teams, engage them in USA's mission and vision, and manage them towards the effective implementation of those goals. They will have the ability to set priorities decisively, build consensus, delegate responsibilities, assure accountability, and allocate resources to ensure results.



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- **Diversity, Equity, Access, & Inclusion:** The CEO must bring deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion. They will endeavor to ensure that this is reflected in all aspects of USA's work, both internally and externally. They must seek to build an organization that is substantively diverse and reflective of the diverse communities USA serves.
- **Communication & Relationship Building:** The successful candidate will be an articulate, dynamic, and effective communicator who can persuasively articulate USA's mission, impact, and direction, both internally and externally, and inspire current and new constituents. They will possess the ability to tell the story of artists' contribution to society, and they will be as effective at engaging wide audiences as they are at communicating one-on-one.

## Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search, and prospective candidates are invited to contact Russell Reynolds Associates directly. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential. For more information or to apply for the role, please reach out to [UnitedStatesArtists@russellreynolds.com](mailto:UnitedStatesArtists@russellreynolds.com). All applications should include a resume and cover letter.

United States Artists is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.