



New England Aquarium

Protecting the blue planet

**Associate Vice
President of
Philanthropy**

Position Announcement

 **Boston, MA**



About The New England Aquarium

Located on Boston's historic waterfront, the New England Aquarium is a globally recognized leader in marine science, conservation, and public engagement. Since opening its doors in 1969, the Aquarium has inspired generations of visitors while advancing solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing ocean ecosystems. Today, the Aquarium remains a trusted scientific institution and cultural landmark, connecting millions of people to the importance of ocean health and environmental stewardship.

Science and conservation are at the core of the Aquarium's mission. The Aquarium's research arm, the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life, uses cutting-edge science to study and help protect marine species and habitats. The Center's more than 30 marine scientists conduct research that informs policy, supports conservation solutions, and helps industries operate in ways that are more sustainable. Among the Center's most recognized contributions is its long-standing leadership in protecting the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale. Center scientists maintain the only comprehensive right whale identification database and provide scientific data that informs vessel speed regulations and other protective ocean management measures. This work bridges scientific discovery with real-world conservation outcomes, advancing solutions that protect endangered species and strengthening biodiversity.



Scientific Leadership in Action

The Anderson Cabot Center uses cutting-edge science to study and help protect marine species and habitats.

A cornerstone of the Aquarium's global conservation impact is the Marine Conservation Action Fund (MCAF). This program connects and supports emerging conservation leaders working in marine environments around the world, strengthening local capacity and empowering these leaders to implement locally driven conservation solutions. Since 1999, MCAF has awarded over 300 grants and disbursed more than \$2 million to support locally led ocean conservation in low and middle income countries across the globe.



Innovation continues to shape the Aquarium's future through collaborative initiatives where scientists and partners work to advance practical solutions to complex ocean challenges. A major recent milestone includes the expansion of the Center's BalanceBlue Lab, made possible through a transformational \$9 million gift from Phil Schiller and Kim Gassett-Schiller—the largest private contribution in the Aquarium's history. This investment reflects strong philanthropic confidence in the Aquarium's scientific leadership and its ability to translate research into real-world solutions for conservation impact.

Behind the scenes at the Aquarium and in our Animal Care Center in Quincy, our team works to ensure animals in our care are thriving, and our veterinary medicine and science-based enrichment and training methods are at the leading edge of animal care in zoos and aquariums. This work also includes raising juvenile fishes to help promote sustainable aquariums and aquaculture, as well as rehabilitation of approximately 500 sick and injured sea turtles each year.

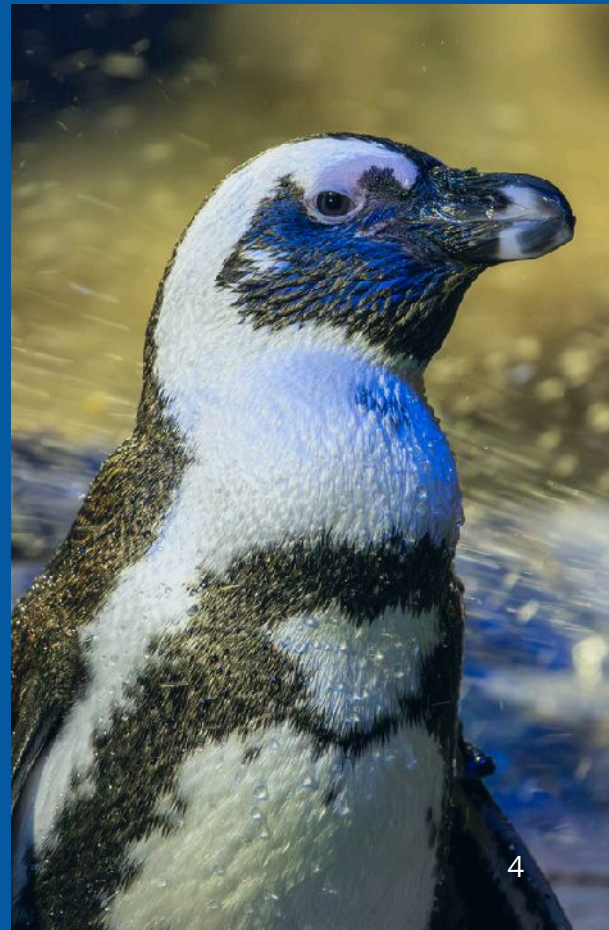
While science drives its mission, public engagement remains central to the Aquarium's impact. Each year, the Aquarium welcomes approximately 1.3 million visitors, offering immersive experiences that foster curiosity, deepen understanding of marine ecosystems, and inspire responsible environmental choices. Through exhibits, educational programs, and community partnerships, the Aquarium plays a vital role in cultivating the next generation of ocean stewards.

The Aquarium's engaged membership community provides an important foundation for philanthropic growth. With approximately 14,500 member households, the organization maintains strong relationships with families and supporters who are deeply invested in its mission. Philanthropy supports critical work across conservation science, animal care, education, and public engagement, with annual fundraising totaling over \$29 million in 2025.

Today, the New England Aquarium is entering an exciting period of growth and momentum. With expanding conservation initiatives, increasing philanthropic investment, and a strengthened focus on building fundraising capacity, the organization is positioning itself for future campaign readiness. New leadership roles, including the Associate Vice President of Development, will play a pivotal role in advancing mission-driven priorities and strengthening the philanthropic engine that supports the Aquarium's work around the globe.

Selected Institutional Highlights - 2025 in Review

- *Supported **34 conservation projects in 20 countries** through the Marine Conservation Action Fund*
- *36 peer-reviewed publications in 2025*
- Rehabilitated nearly 500 rescued, cold-stunned sea turtles*
- *Welcomed nearly **1,300,000 visitors***
- *Engaged approximately 14,500 member households*
- *Received the **largest private gift in institutional history** to expand the BalanceBlue Lab*
- *Recognized as a leading center for marine science, conservation, and public engagement*
- *Continues to expand global partnerships advancing ocean protection and sustainability*



Vision & Strategic Priorities

Guiding the New England Aquarium's Future Impact



Our Pillars



About the Opportunity

The Associate Vice President of Development role at the New England Aquarium represents a rare opportunity to help shape the future of philanthropy at one of the nation's most respected marine science and conservation institutions. As the Aquarium continues to expand its conservation leadership and strengthen its philanthropic capacity, this newly structured role has been created to build and lead a high-performing frontline fundraising team positioned to support the organization's next era of growth.

Reporting to the Vice President of Development, a highly successful fundraiser executive who recently stepped into this leadership role after many years of fundraising consulting partnership with the Aquarium's executive and scientific leadership, the Associate Vice President will serve as a central leader in strengthening the Aquarium's fundraising infrastructure and driving sustained philanthropic growth. This continuity of leadership, combined with the organization's intentional investment in new frontline roles, reflects a strong institutional commitment to building a modern, collaborative, and high-performing advancement program.

Equally compelling is the opportunity to shape and lead a team during its formative stage. Several key leadership roles within the development structure are newly created, including Directors of Individual Giving and Institutional Giving, along with expanded prospect management and donor engagement functions. Depending on the timing of hire, the Associate Vice President may play a role in recruiting members of this new team and will be responsible for mentoring, developing, and shaping the performance culture that drives strong fundraising results. Internal stakeholders consistently describe a highly collaborative environment grounded in deep commitment to mission, and success in this role will require building strong relationships across the enterprise, partnering with scientists, program leaders, and executive colleagues to translate complex work into compelling philanthropic opportunities. The Associate Vice President will serve as a connector and trusted partner across departments, helping to align fundraising strategy with the organization's most important mission priorities. This role will also partner closely with senior leadership and board members to advance key donor relationships and strategic philanthropic initiatives. The Associate Vice President will establish clear performance expectations, reinforce pipeline discipline, and ensure consistent progress toward ambitious revenue goals across fundraising programs.



Externally, the Associate Vice President will play a highly visible role in cultivating relationships with major donors, institutional funders, and philanthropic partners who share a commitment to ocean conservation and scientific advancement. The Aquarium's work, from protecting endangered species to advancing ocean policy and global conservation, provides compelling opportunities to engage donors who are motivated by meaningful, measurable impact. Candidates who bring intellectual curiosity, strong listening skills, and the ability to connect mission priorities to donor interests will be particularly well positioned for success.

This role comes at a pivotal moment of organizational momentum. With strong scientific leadership through the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life and increasing philanthropic investment (including record-setting gifts supporting innovation) the Aquarium is strengthening its fundraising infrastructure and preparing for future campaign readiness. The recent appointment of the Vice President of Development, along with the addition of new frontline leadership roles, reflects a clear institutional commitment to building long-term philanthropic capacity. The Associate Vice President will also contribute to annual and multi-year fundraising planning, helping translate strategic priorities into disciplined execution and measurable results. The Associate Vice President will play a central role in advancing this momentum, helping to build the systems, relationships, and philanthropic partnerships necessary to support sustained growth and further the mission of a globally respected institution.



Position Description

The Associate Vice President of Philanthropy is a senior advancement leader responsible for shaping and executing high-impact philanthropic programs across foundation, corporate and individual major, principal gifts and planned gifts.

Reporting to the Vice President of Development, the AVP provides strategic and operational leadership for frontline fundraising programs, drives revenue performance across multiple philanthropic channels, and ensures disciplined execution of strategies that grow philanthropic support in alignment with the Aquarium's institutional priorities. This role manages a team of five fundraising professionals.

This role serves as a key member of the Development leadership team and partners closely with executive leadership to strengthen the Aquarium's philanthropic pipeline, donor and board member engagement strategies, and long-term fundraising capacity.

In addition to overseeing program and staff performance, the AVP maintains a personal portfolio of high-capacity donors and prospects capable of making six- and seven-figure commitments, positioning donors for principal gift investment and long-term institutional partnership.

The AVP plays a critical role in annual and long-range fundraising planning, revenue forecasting, and execution, serving as both a strategic partner and execution leader across philanthropic initiatives.





Key Responsibilities

Fundraising Leadership and Execution

- Provide strategic leadership for philanthropy programs to ensure alignment with institutional priorities and revenue objectives.
- Partner with the Vice President of Development to establish annual and multi-year philanthropic revenue goals and strategies.
- Develop planned giving strategy and work closely with Annual Fund team and front-line fundraisers to execute and grow planned gift revenue.
- Participate in executive planning related to major initiatives, future campaigns, and long-range development strategy.
- Develop annual expense and revenue budgets as well as multi-year financial projections.
- Lead execution and performance of philanthropic strategies for individual giving major and principal giving, corporate giving and sponsorships, and foundation fundraising, in alignment with organizational priorities.
- Cultivate, solicit, and steward a personal portfolio of ~50 high-capacity donors and board members, with a focus on securing six-figure and seven-figure philanthropic commitments.
- Partner with direct reports to ensure fundraising and donor outreach KPIs are met and to create coordinated and strategic donor engagement across portfolios, moves management, and timely solicitations.
- Strengthen donor stewardship efforts to ensure recognition and engagement programs are seamless and impactful.
- Foster synergy between senior leadership, frontline fundraisers, and volunteer partners. Provide support for these cultivation and solicitation strategies as appropriate.
- Collaborate with senior leadership and board members to advance major and principal gift opportunities.
- Expand the pipeline of prospective donors and enhance prospect identification and research capabilities.

Team Leadership and Management

- Recruit, mentor, develop, and evaluate high-performing fundraising team members including Director of Corporate & Foundation Relations, Director of Individual Giving, ADOD Individual Giving, Manager of Donor Strategy and Development Operations and Manager of Donor Engagement.
- Contribute to building a culture of accountability, collaboration, and donor-centered fundraising excellence.
- Set clear expectations, revenue targets, and portfolio goals for each program area and direct report.
- Ensure regular pipeline reviews to monitor portfolio health, donor progression, and engagement results.
- Foster a collaborative, results-oriented culture that prioritizes strategic thinking, donor excellence, and professional growth.

Cross-functional and Institutional Partnerships

- Work collaboratively with Marketing & Communications, Finance, and program leadership to develop compelling funding opportunities and accurate messaging.
- Support engagement of board members and key volunteer leaders in philanthropic efforts, in coordination with the Vice President of Development and Director of Development Strategy.
- Represent the organization professionally with donors, partners, and community stakeholders.
- Ensure consistent use of the donor CRM across managed teams and personal portfolio activities, including accurate documentation and reporting.





Qualifications

Required

- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree preferred.
- Minimum of 10 years of progressive fundraising experience in a complex nonprofit environment with increasing leadership responsibility.
- Demonstrated capacity to manage a high-performing team of front line fundraisers and to elevate performance and accountability.
- Proven ability to cultivate, solicit, and close six-figure and seven-figure philanthropic gifts.
- Strong strategic, analytical, and organizational skills, with the ability to translate strategy into execution.
- Excellent communication ability and interpersonal confidence with donors, staff, volunteers, and senior leadership.
- Proficiency with fundraising databases and CRM systems (Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT preferred).
- Ability and desire to travel as needed to meet with donors, up to 15% of the time.

Preferred

- Experience in organizations with campaign fundraising, major gifts, and institutional giving at scale.
- Demonstrated success in developing and coaching high-performing fundraising teams.
- Familiarity with comprehensive pipeline design and revenue forecasting practices

Leadership Competencies & Attributes

The successful candidate will exhibit the following competencies and attributes:

Enterprise-Level, Multi-Channel Fundraising Leadership:

Ability to lead a fully integrated fundraising program, brings knowledge across individual, institutional (foundation), and corporate channels, ensuring alignment of strategy, messaging, and execution.

Pipeline Development, Revenue Accountability & Operational Discipline:

Builds and enforces a metrics-driven fundraising culture, ensuring consistent pipeline growth, portfolio movement, and goal attainment across the team.

Team Leadership, Performance Management & Capacity Building:

Recruits, develops, and leads a high-performing team of frontline fundraisers, while building long-term organizational fundraising capacity.

Principal Gift Strategy & Personal Fundraising Leadership:

Maintains a personal portfolio of ~50 high-capacity donors and demonstrates the ability to cultivate, solicit, and close 6–7+ figure gifts, while strategically advancing donors toward principal-level investment.

Strategic Planning, Revenue Forecasting & Execution

Discipline:

Leads annual and multi-year fundraising planning, including revenue forecasting and financial modeling, and ensures disciplined execution against those plans.

Executive Partnership and/or Board Engagement & Cross-Functional Leadership:

Serves as a key strategic partner to senior leadership and effectively engages board members and cross-functional teams to advance fundraising priorities.

Low-Ego, Collaborative, High-Accountability Culture Builder:

Builds and models a culture where high performance, accountability, and cross-functional collaboration coexist, ensuring the development team is seen as a trusted, strategic partner across the organization.



New England Aquarium Executive Leadership



Vikki N. Spruill

President and CEO

Vikki N. Spruill is President and CEO of the New England Aquarium, an ocean conservation organization that educates and inspires more than a million visitors a year on Boston's Central Wharf; conducts applied research through its Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life; and rescues and rehabilitates threatened and endangered sea turtles in its Sea Turtle Hospital in Quincy, Mass.

Ms. Spruill previously served as President and CEO of the Council on Foundations, the largest association of philanthropic grant-making organizations, and Ocean Conservancy, a science-based advocacy organization dedicated to the ocean. She also founded the Trash Free Seas Alliance, was the founding director of SeaWeb, and helped found COMPASS, which empowers scientists to better engage in public discourse on environmental issues.

Ms. Spruill is on the Board of Directors of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Foundation. She is a Trustee of the New England Aquarium, the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, and the Water Institute of the Gulf, as well as an active member of Boston's Green Ribbon Commission and the Massachusetts Women's Forum. She also serves as Co-chair of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Climate & Energy Leadership Council and as a member of M&T Bank's Director's Advisory Council.



Kimberly Fontes

Chief of Staff and
Business Operations

Kim's marketing and product development management career of 25 years spans across for-profit Fortune 500 companies, as well as non-profit organizations. She has extensive experience in developing and implementing successful marketing programs, developing products, and developing strategic partnerships with industry leaders. Currently, she is the Chief of Staff and Business Operations for the New England Aquarium.

In this position, she supports and advises the President and CEO to work effectively with internal and external stakeholders and fulfill commitments to the Aquarium's partners, donors, and Board of Trustees. She received her B.S. in Gerontology from King's College and her M.A. in Psychology from Farleigh Dickinson University. She currently sits on the board of the New England Chapter of the American Lung Association and Bunker Hill Community College's Fire Protection and Safety Program. Kim has served on the board of directors for Safe People Safe Pets (Vice President), the Boston Gay Men's Chorus, and the Braintree Girls Softball League.



Dr. Letise LeFeir

Chief of Conservation
and Stewardship

Dr. Letise LaFeir is the Chief of Conservation and Stewardship, overseeing Animal Care, Conservation Learning and Community Engagement, Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life, and Conservation Policy. Letise most recently served as a day-one Biden-Harris Administration appointee in the role of Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Before holding that position, Letise was a Program Officer and later Director of Federal Policy at Resources Legacy Fund; California Ocean Policy Manager at Monterey Bay Aquarium; Policy Analyst and later National Outreach Coordinator for NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries; and Director of Government Relations and Education Program Coordinator at the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. She also spent one year as a Sea Grant Knauss Marine Policy Fellow for now-retired Congressman Sam Farr of California. In 2014, Letise founded and still co-owns Upwelling Consulting, LLC. During her career, she has been honored with several awards, has had countless public speaking engagements, and has served on several professional advisory boards. In addition to authoring or co-authoring several scientific publications and a book of poetry, she is a certified scuba diver (Advanced and Nitrox) and has traveled to all seven continents and the seafloor. Letise holds a B.S. in aquatic biology and a B.A. in English (with honors in creative writing) from Brown University, and a Ph.D. in Marine Biology from the University of Delaware—College of Marine Studies.



Katie McConnell

Chief People Officer

Katie McConnell is an organization development professional with over 15 years of experience primarily working in the environmental conservation and animal welfare sectors. She has been partnering with executives and teams to help them realize their highest potential impact through mission-driven strategy development and organization design initiatives. Working at the nexus of strategy and operations, Katie enjoys working with leaders to bring strategy off the page and into organizational practice by using a variety of organizational development interventions and people-centered techniques to build resiliency and change-ready teams. Her internal and external consulting engagements have given her the opportunity to work across Europe, Asia, and the Americas for a variety of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and consumer product industries. Katie holds a Master of Science in Organization Development from Pepperdine University and sits on the Board of Directors for the Toronto Organization Development Network (TODN).



Barbara Bailey

Vice President -
Animal Care

Barbara Bailey is the Vice President of Animal Care. With over 37 years of experience in the aquarium industry, Barbara was formerly overseeing the Fishes Department at the New England Aquarium and The Quincy Animal Care Center. In her Vice President role, Barbara provides overall leadership for the Aquarium's animal care departments including Fishes, Pinnipeds and Penguins, Animal Health, Rescue and Rehabilitation, and Environmental Quality, as well as program oversight for Dive Operations and Sustainability.

She also serves as an advocate for animal care across the Aquarium. Barbara is responsible for developing a vision for animal well-being within the context of the Aquarium's mission, overseeing collection planning and regulatory compliance, coordinating efforts across program areas, providing oversight for relevant departments, and thought leadership for the wider international animal care community. Externally, Barbara is involved in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and currently leads the Aquatic Collections Sustainability Larval Programs Committee. The objective of this committee is to develop a consortium of institutions that will advance larval fish culturing, with the vision of reducing the impacts on wild populations for high priority species and expanding accessibility to aquacultured fish species within the AZA membership. Barbara earned a B.S. in environmental science from the University of Massachusetts. She is a certified PADI SCUBA instructor and enjoys diving and teaching, swimming, biking and home renovation projects.



Piper Hollis

Vice President,
Development

Piper Hollis is a fundraising leader with a 20-year history of guiding teams to increased revenue and improved efficiency. Through her work with nonprofits from Massachusetts to California and in Europe, Piper has experience with securing major gifts, fundraising campaigns, mid-level giving, board development, moves management, world-class stewardship, and legacy giving. Prior to joining the Aquarium, Piper built a global fundraising team at the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and spent 17 years with the organization. She also worked in higher education as Director of Development at Case Western School of Law. Piper holds a bachelor's degree from Bucknell University and a master's from The Ohio State University.



Suzanne Liola Matus

Vice President,
Marketing, Sales, and
Visitor Experience

Suzanne Liola Matus has worked in leadership roles at mission-driven organizations for more than 20 years. As Vice President of Marketing, Sales, and Visitor Experience for the New England Aquarium, her portfolio includes marketing and communications, group sales and reservations, event sales and retail partnerships, and visitor experience and the Simons Theatre. Before coming to the Aquarium, she was Associate Dean for Strategic Initiatives and External Relations at the Boston College School of Social Work, she oversaw marketing and communications, and developed and implemented the school's strategic plan.

Previously at Boston College, Suzanne led the University's central marketing communications team, which provided strategy, design, writing, videography, photography, web services, and more to eight schools and various revenue-generating units. At the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, she oversaw marketing and communications for the Museum School and served as the school's spokesperson. At the National Geographic Society, she worked closely with members of the media to secure placements in local, regional, and national news outlets, and, at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, she directed the Virginia Festival of the Book. Suzanne holds a Bachelor of Arts in English magna cum laude from James Madison University, and a Master of Business Administration from the Boston College Carroll School of Management.



Brian Walsh

Vice President,
Financial Planning
and Analysis

Brian Walsh joined the New England Aquarium in June 2022 as the Vice President of Financial Planning and Analysis. Brian comes to the Aquarium with 30 years of financial management experience. Most recently, he was a finance executive at National Fire Protection Association, a nonprofit organization based in Quincy, Mass., that is dedicated to eliminating injury, death, and financial losses due to fire and electrical related hazards. He has built his career on supporting mission-based nonprofits with strategic business planning and financial acumen while championing the vision and mission of organizations.

Brian holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Stonehill College and a Master of Business degree from Suffolk University. In his spare time, he enjoys long-distance runs as well as boot camp workouts. He has run four marathons and now rides a bike. He grew up in Needham, lives in Roslindale, and is a Red Sox and New England Patriots fan.

Current Development Team Senior Leadership

Piper Hollis

Vice President, Development

Jennifer Pires

Director, Development, Operations

Christine McCarthy

Director, Development Strategy

Pam Morris

Director, Membership and Annual Giving



Compensation, Benefits & Work Environment

Compensation

The anticipated base salary range for this position is \$162,000 to \$182,000, commensurate with experience and qualifications.

The New England Aquarium is committed to offering a competitive and equitable compensation package that reflects the importance of this leadership role and supports long-term organizational success.

Benefits

The New England Aquarium offers a comprehensive and competitive benefits package.

Work Environment & Leadership Presence

The New England Aquarium maintains a collaborative, team-oriented work culture that values leadership visibility, accessibility, and strong internal relationships.

This position is expected to operate within an in-office/hybrid work environment, with regular on-site presence in the Quad Cities equaling two days a week either in the NEAQ offices or donor in-person meetings.

For More Information & To Apply

The New England Aquarium has retained Kay Linder, Partner within ThinkingAhead Executive Search's Nonprofit Division to serve as our recruitment partner. If you are interested and qualified, [please apply here](#).

Questions can be directed to:

Kay Linder

Partner, Nonprofit Division
klinder@thinkingahead.com

Heather Campbell

Partner, Nonprofit Division
hcampbell@thinkingahead.com



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