



KORN FERRY

VENTURE FOR AMERICA

Position Specification **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

2021

POSITION SPECIFICATION

Position	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Organization	Venture For America (VFA)
Location	The CEO may be based in NYC HQs or one of VFA's Cities: Baltimore • Birmingham • Charlotte • Cleveland • Detroit • Kansas City • Miami • New Orleans • Philadelphia • Pittsburgh • San Antonio • St. Louis • Tulsa
Reporting Relationship	Board of Directors
Website	https://ventureforamerica.org/

THE OPPORTUNITY

Venture For America (VFA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating economic opportunity in American cities by mobilizing the next generation of entrepreneurs and startup leaders and equipping them with the skills and resources they need to create jobs. By bringing together some of the nation's most aspiring, young, forward-thinking talent to the startup ecosystem, VFA is able to impact and transform emerging cities across the nation through fast-paced startups and entrepreneurial experiences. Fellows acquire the hands-on skills and guidance while companies gain access to a talented pool of start-up future leaders.

Venture for America started in 2011 with little more than a bold vision, a handful of tirelessly dedicated team members, \$200,000 in funding and the audacious belief that these ingredients could create something transformative. After six years in operation, with a budget that had grown over 30x, hundreds of incredible Fellows and Alumni, and a full-time team of over 30, the VFA team set out on a new strategic planning process to assess progress and formally chart a path forward. Vision 2020: Setting Our Sights on the Future resulted in a new mission statement, the identification of three key program pillars to achieve this mission, the creation of a strategy screen used to evaluate all new and existing initiatives, and much more.

Following a period of rapid change and momentum in recent years, the conclusion of the 2020 strategic plan coincided with COVID-19, a resurgence in racial justice, and many other monumental and unprecedented events that have changed the world around us and the way in which we operate. As we've adapted to this new normal, VFA is uniquely poised for significant growth and increased impact, and with this next leader, is now ready to embark on a new strategic planning process and the next chapter in the organization's evolution.

The Board seeks a dynamic and visionary leader to drive an exciting new vision, putting bold ideas into action and fostering evolution that takes VFA to the next level. The next leader will inherit a passionate and driven team and a strong mandate for greater operational and financial strength, future growth, and organizational innovation. This individual will apply business acumen in a nonprofit/social enterprise setting and embrace emerging trends and innovation around entrepreneurship, workforce, and technology to better support aspiring young entrepreneurs and startup leaders, drive economic opportunity in American cities, and build a more diverse and inclusive field.

This is an exciting opportunity for an extraordinary executive to lead the nation's premier fellowship organization for emerging startup leaders and entrepreneurs and have great impact across the nation.

WHO WE ARE

Our Mission: VFA is creating economic opportunity in American cities by mobilizing the next generation of entrepreneurs and equipping them with the skills and resources they need to create jobs.

Our Program: Venture For America is a two-year Fellowship program for recent grads who want to work at a startup and create jobs in American cities. Fellows learn important hard and soft skills at our month-long Training Camp, apply for jobs within our company network, and work as full-time, salaried employees in one of 13 cities. Throughout the Fellowship and after, VFA offers programming to help Fellows grow into startup leaders and grow their business ideas. For Fellows who want to start a company – be it two years after college or ten – VFA has the resources (like local Ideation Sessions and a national Accelerator) and an Evergreen Fund to help make that dream a reality.

Key Program Pillars

- **Cities:** Deepening our impact on the cities in which VFA operates
- **Launch:** Creating the next generation of entrepreneurs
- **Diversity:** Becoming an onramp to entrepreneurship

Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Diverse teams and companies are more productive, resilient, and successful. This is why Venture For America is committed to these efforts across our Team and community of Fellows, and in the companies that hire them. Our program is a unique opportunity for historically-excluded groups – like women and underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities – to begin their careers as entrepreneurs and startup leaders. Even further, our newest class of 2020 Fellows is both majority female and majority minority.

WHAT YOU'LL DO:

In partnership with the Board of Directors, the CEO is responsible for providing vision and strategic leadership to Venture For America's employees, Fellows and alumni. The CEO inspires and motivates internal and external audiences, leads with clarity and purpose, expands the organization's partners and supporters, engenders a positively engaged and inclusive culture, and demonstrates a strong commitment towards the mission. This individual will directly manage a leadership team including the COO, VP of Programs, VP of Strategic Partnerships, VP of Community Partnerships and Director of Marketing, with responsibility for a geographically dispersed team of approximately 30-35 people and strategic oversight across all functions. Specific responsibilities include:

Strategic Leadership & Organizational Development

- Thoroughly understand Venture For America and its mission and values, its history and culture, its network of Fellows, alumni and key partners/stakeholders, its operations and finances, and the market landscape.
- Work closely with the Board to develop, lead and implement VFA's strategic plans.

- Effectively communicate a compelling, shared vision for staff, the Board, Fellow and alumni, and other pertinent external groups, ensuring that the mission and programs are accurately understood.
- Enhance the organizational value and operational effectiveness of VFA as it continues to scale and serve more aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Seek opportunities to enhance program offerings and increase capacity of the organization by building and leveraging the national VFA network.
- Recruit, lead, develop, empower, and grow a high-quality staff of builders and innovators in a unique environment that is part start-up, part traditional nonprofit, and empower them to operationalize the organization's strategy and continued evolution in response to current and future landscapes.
- Embrace and maintain a team environment that is creative, impact-oriented, generative, and highly-collaborative within and across communities within the network.
- Manage and lead the fiscal health of the organization; ensure that the enterprise-wide planning and budgeting process maintains a sound financial basis for the organization and supports both short-term and long-term needs and the objectives of the network.
- Establish enterprise-wide objectives and priorities and strong infrastructural resources and efficiencies to support VFA cities and its national network.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, trust, collegiality, high performance, and that fully embraces values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

External Affairs: Networking and Funding Strategies

- Develop a sound strategy for diversifying and expanding VFA's funding.
- Manage complex stakeholder engagement across diverse constituencies.
- Serve as a chief partnership builder, fundraiser, and creative connector by cultivating and maintaining relationships with key funders and partners and by forging new and innovative strategic partnerships and alliances across the business, venture and entrepreneurship landscape that demonstrate a strong value proposition for mutual benefit and enhance the VFA network for Fellows, alums and prospects.
- Leverage compelling storytelling to build a network of external partners and supporters who are advocates of VFA to advance the organization's opportunities, increase its brand identity, and enhance the VFA experience.
- Ensure that VFA maintains a reputation as a pioneering leader in the startup ecosystem and remains as an "entity of choice" amongst aspiring entrepreneurs/founders and potential partners/funders.
- Identify opportunities for increased network engagement to enrich the experience of Fellows and alumni and attract more prospective VFA Fellows and partners.

Board Governance/Development

- Maintain effective relationships with the Board and work with Board members to set the organization's strategic direction and policies, adapting in the face of a challenging and ever-evolving external environment and advance its mission and impact.
- Ensure transparency and regular communication with the Board around all key governance issues, including strategic planning, financial oversight, staff accountability and performance metrics, and board recruitment and development.
- In partnership with the Board Chair, identify, cultivate, recruit, and effectively onboard new potential board members that meet the values and needs of the organization, supporting its resource generation, networking connections, and diversity initiatives.

WHO YOU ARE:

The CEO will be a dynamic leader with a genuine passion for cultivating and championing the next generation of founders and entrepreneurs. The ideal candidate will likely possess cross-sector experience, whether serving as a founder, entrepreneur, investor, strategy consultant, business leader, or nonprofit executive in a fast-paced, start-up or growth-oriented environment. This individual will be an innovative leader with experience running complex operations, building strategic partnerships, and managing diverse internal and external stakeholders.

The successful candidate will bring sophisticated leadership, strategic vision and agility to evolve the organization with minimal disruption, retaining talent and moving the team forward. The leader will bring a fresh perspective to re-energize organizational culture, inspire the board, staff, Fellows, alumni and partners, and creatively lead a maturing organization into its next chapter.

Additional ideal experience and qualifications include:

- Proven executive experience in senior management and leadership positions working with a startup or high-growth organization, building, scaling and running an innovative nonprofit, business or social enterprise
- Direct experience with and strong understanding of issues of entrepreneurship, founders, venture talent development, and economic opportunity in American cities; credibility and/or reputational clout in this ecosystem
- Ability to develop and drive new and innovative ideas and a culture of entrepreneurship within a traditional organizational structure/sector
- Demonstrated business acumen and results-orientation, including familiarity with budgeting, financial management including oversight, and working with senior leadership to manage fiscal and fiduciary accountability
- Experience creating and executing a strategic plan to develop, maintain, and enhance an organizational infrastructure and systems to build and support growth and increase capacity/impact across an enterprise
- Experience or exposure to board governance
- Expertise managing organizational complexity in a multi-site and/or matrixed structure, especially across locations and remote teams
- Experience balancing diverse perspectives of multi-stakeholders; ability to build trust across all levels of the organization and to gain organizational and partner buy-in
- Established record of building and maintaining strategic partnerships and accessing relevant networks
- Excellent communication and public speaking skills to influence and promote VFA to investors, donors, and other audiences
- Ability to attract, hire, lead, and inspire top talent; track record of empowering a dynamic group of young professionals, entrusting and amplifying the work of others
- Experience and passion serving as a coach and mentor; high comfort levels with giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Demonstrated success building positive, effective, and collaborative cultures and representative teams that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion
- A good manager of assets – people, money, and time
- High level of emotional intelligence, empathy, and humility
- Impeccable character and integrity

EDUCATION

An undergraduate degree from an accredited college or university is required.

COMPENSATION

A competitive compensation package will be offered to attract the most qualified candidates.

KORN FERRY CONTACTS

Rosa Morris

Partner; Global Education and Nonprofit Practice

Telephone: (202) 955-0952

Email: rosa.morris@kornferry.com

Divina Gamble

Managing Partner & Practice Leader; Global Nonprofit, Philanthropy & Social Enterprise

Telephone: (202) 955-0901

Email: divina.gamble@kornferry.com

Cristina Fisher

Senior Associate; Global Nonprofit, Philanthropy & Social Enterprise

Telephone: (202) 955-0910

Email: cristina.fisher@kornferry.com

Sarah Bartlett

Project Coordinator; Global Education and Nonprofit Practice

Telephone: (202) 955-0918

Email: Sarah.Bartlett@KornFerry.com