



## **Chief Finance & Operations Officer**

Leadership Profile

July 2021



***WittKieffer***

## Executive Summary

The Everglades Foundation's commitment to restore and protect the Everglades is driven by science. Founded in 1993 by two outdoor enthusiasts — the late George Barley and Paul Tudor Jones II — The Everglades Foundation works energetically and with a sense of urgency to bring people together and provide a powerful voice for Everglades restoration at the state and national levels. The Everglades Foundation is now seeking a strategic leader to be their Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CF&OO).

The Everglades Foundation supports the science and public funding efforts needed to restore and protect America's Everglades. The Everglades Foundation is dedicated to restoring and protecting one of the world's unique natural ecosystems — providing economic, recreational, and life-sustaining benefits to millions of people who depend on its future health. The ecosystem is home to 2,000 species of beautiful and fascinating wading birds, mammals, fishes, reptiles, amphibians and plants. It is home to 78 threatened or endangered species, provides freshwater to nine million Floridians and is an international destination. However, America's Everglades is on life support. More than 100 years of ditching and draining have reduced the wetland to half its original size; its wading bird population has diminished by 90%; and pollution and other impacts have harmed much of the remaining ecosystem resulting in toxic algae outbreaks and regional environmental and economic loss.

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer and serving as an integral member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CF&OO) is responsible for overseeing the Foundation's financial interests and day-to-day operations. The CF&OO will assist the Foundation's Chief Executive Officer, Chief Programs Officer, and Vice President of Development with high-level organizational decisions and strategy. The CF&OO is responsible for the Foundation's fiscal activities, including annual budgeting, planning, reporting, and auditing; and will identify and address financial risks and opportunities, supervise financial reporting and departmental budgeting, evaluate financial activities for efficiency and effectiveness, and coordinate with the CEO and Executive Leadership team in the implementation of the Foundation's Strategic Plan. Additionally, the CF&OO will oversee administrative staff to effectively meet the administrative and operational needs of the organization and to maximize productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness.

The new CF&OO will come to the role with a distinguished record of advanced leadership in finance and administration, as well as demonstrated successes in meeting (or exceeding) strategic goals and objectives, in not-for-profits or a similarly complex organizational setting. The CF&OO will be a superb communicator with exceptional analytical skills who works collaboratively with colleagues; understands and respects shared governance; and advances an environment of inclusive decision-making, as well as show understanding of the importance of the educational philosophy and mission while addressing financial challenges. A demonstrated ability to work with diverse communities is required. A nuanced understanding of emerging needs and trends in finance and investments is highly desirable.

The CF&OO can be based in Miami or elsewhere in South Florida, with a strong commitment to spending significant time in the Palmetto Bay office, a suburb of Miami. The Foundation's new CF&OO will have the opportunity to play a key role in the Foundation's evolution to national and international prominence for its critical and cutting-edge scientific research and education programs dedicated to ensuring a strong and secure future for America's Everglades. As the leading voice in Everglades restoration, The Everglades Foundation is a responsible employer that seeks to recruit and retain outstanding, high-

performing professionals who are at the top of their fields, to thrive in a dynamic, mission-driven culture committed to excellence, innovation, collaboration, and diversity. To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see "Procedure for Candidacy" at the end of this profile.

## Role of the Chief Finance & Operations Officer

The new CF&OO will serve as an essential strategic advisor to the CEO, working collaboratively with the Board of Directors, the senior leadership team, and staff to ensure a successful and stable financial future for the Foundation. The CF&OO supports and staffs the Board of Directors' Finance, Investment, Audit, and Development Committees and has primary responsibility for the development and implementation of the Foundation's annual operating budget of approximately \$10 million. The CF&OO provides leadership for, and has managerial oversight of, finance and operations.

The following represent some of the immediate opportunities that the new CF&OO will address during the first two to three years of tenure. They are presented here in no particular order of priority.

- Serve as part of the Foundation's Executive Leadership Team to develop, implement, and enforce an organizational financial plan and strategy that supports the Foundation's strategic objectives
- Manage and oversee accounting and finance functions of the organization; plan, direct, control, implement, evaluate, monitor, and forecast budgets in each department to achieve financial objectives
- Directly supervise accounting and administrative staff including the Controller, Operations Manager, IT Manager, and administrative assistants
- Define and implement key performance indicators and strategic objectives for the organization and facilitate implementation and measurement of those objectives
- Develop, in coordination with executives and programmatic department heads, the Foundation's annual budget
- Partner with department heads to ensure implementation of and adherence to annual budget
- Provide sound financial guidance and advice to Chief Executive Officer, other executives, and program directors
- Provide financial reporting to Chief Executive Officer, other executives, Chairman of the Board, and chairs of Audit, Finance, and Investment Committees
- Staff the Board of Directors' Finance, Investment, Audit, and Development Committees and supervise reporting mechanisms on a regular basis
- Seek opportunities to reduce organizational costs and enhance mission critical objectives
- Maintain knowledge of developments and trends in finance and administration, including technological advances

- Ensure compliance with federal, state, local, and organizational laws, regulations, guidelines, and best practices, including but not limited to tax laws, generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), federal acquisition regulations (FAR), and cost accounting standards (CAS)
- Work closely with the Director of Board & Employee Relations to oversee and facilitate Human Resources functions including hiring, training, performance evaluation, discipline, and termination of employees, and to ensure work environments are adequate and safe
- Oversee external accounting, auditing, and investment firms and other contracted administrative services
- Oversee contracts related to administrative services, including property and equipment leases, IT, business insurance policies, and when necessary, temporary administrative assistance
- Oversee daily office operations, including developing and implementing standard operating procedures and processes
- Oversee network administration, phone, data management/storage systems, and computer inventory
- Ensure availability of adequate and appropriate equipment, staffing, and systems; recommend new or additional staffing and services when necessary

## Expectations and Opportunities for Leadership

The Chief Finance & Operations Officer will be responsible for addressing the following critical leadership issues, among others:

- **Continue leadership, visioning, and strategic planning:** The Everglades Foundation has long held the objective of achieving financial equilibrium while sustaining its commitment to the institution's mission. The Foundation has remained fiscally solvent through a combination of careful planning and prudent decision-making. The CEO and Board are now seeking an entrepreneurial, confident, and experienced leader to address the current financial landscape, the challenges the Foundation will face in the future, and the decisions, tradeoffs, and opportunities to position them for the future. The CF&OO will be expected to bring long-term vision and future thinking to the division as it looks beyond budget cycles to support and advance the Foundation's strategic objectives. The new leader will provide input and expertise across all areas related to the operations, infrastructure, and facilities and contribute substantively to the strategic planning and execution.
- **Provide operational creativity and innovation:** The Foundation seeks opportunities to increase the impact and diversity of its resources in the coming years. This may be achieved through a variety of methods, including the ongoing analysis of expenses and cost-saving measures. The Everglades Foundation has grown significantly in size and complexity over the last decade while retaining a personal, relational culture that values individual contributions. The CF&OO will bear significant responsibility for continuing the efforts to analyze, improve, and scale

up operations to meet and anticipate the needs of a major modern not-for-profit that works with state and federal policies.

- The CF&OO will oversee IT and will need to advise on the implementation of a new integrated and coordinated IT strategy. In general, there is a desire for consolidation, modernization, and recommendations on how to best streamline systems, databases, and software and help integrate total cost of ownership for capital planning and beyond.

## Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

### Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Personal Attributes

- Strong analytical skills and attention to detail
- Excellent and effective written and oral communications skills, especially in high pressured situations
- Capability to assess, manage, and successfully complete multiple competing priorities
- Ability to effectively communicate status of finances and projects to leadership in a timely manner
- Strong organizational and interpersonal skills with the ability to build relationships
- Skilled in exercising a high degree of initiative, integrity, and judgment
- Ability to handle sensitive and confidential information with discretion
- Ability to be flexible and work under deadlines and time constraints
- Ability to thrive in a high-energy, fast-paced work environment as part of a team of ambitious, high-functioning, goal-oriented professionals
- Must possess leadership ability, courage, and humility to drive outcomes that are in the best interest of the organization
- Must be flexible, resourceful, and able to troubleshoot while maintaining a sense of urgency and focus
- Must possess the highest level of professionalism and ethics
- Tech savvy and organized
- Ability to proactively solve problems and think analytically
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Punctual, reliable, and self-directed

- Polished in personal appearance and interactions
- An optimistic outlook and enthusiastic attitude

### **Accountability**

The CF&OO reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer and coordinates closely with the other members of the Executive Leadership Team and the Program Directors.

The Foundation's main office is in Palmetto Bay, Florida, in southern Miami-Dade County.

### **Qualifications**

- Bachelor's degree in Accounting, Business, or Finance required; MBA preferred
- Certified Public Accountant status required
- Thorough and demonstrable knowledge of tax laws and generally accepted accounting principles required
- Proficiency with QuickBooks and other accounting software required
- Minimum of 10 years' experience in a company's financial sector required; experience in non-for-profit accounting preferred
- Experience in administrative roles preferred
- Supervisory and management experience required

## **About The Everglades Foundation**

### **Overview**

The Everglades is a vast watershed that has historically extended from Lake Okeechobee 100 miles south to Florida Bay (a third of the southern Florida peninsula). The Greater Everglades Watershed refers to the interconnected ecosystems of water, land and climate spanning nearly 18,000 square miles which began near Orlando. This is a large, diverse, and complex region including 16 counties, from Orlando in the north to the Florida Keys. The watershed includes Biscayne National Park, Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, and a variety of other federally protected lands. This ecosystem supports mangrove forests, nursery, and nesting habitats for many species of birds, fish, and invertebrates, and sustains seagrasses and aquatic life. This Everglades also provides the drinking water for nine million Floridians and countless tourists.

Today, The Everglades Foundation stands as a well-respected authoritative source for scientific research on the Everglades. Our renowned Ph.D. scientists are passionate about conducting and communicating peer-reviewed research to inform and guide Everglades restoration efforts. By coupling sound science with policy expertise, the Foundation is positioned as one of the most credible and influential players in the fight to preserve and restore one of the world's most unique wetlands.

### **The Everglades Foundation:**

- Partners with diverse stakeholders to form coalitions, set priorities, share information, and devise strategies to unite and strengthen the voices for Everglades restoration.

- Monitors local, state, and federal government policies and actions that affect Everglades restoration efforts.
- Articulates the threats to the Everglades and offers the best possible science-based solutions.
- Advocates on behalf of the Everglades with policymakers in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. who affect the future of the ecosystem and provide the resources to implement Everglades restoration projects and programs.
- Supports litigation when government or private entities act to harm the Everglades, or when there is a failure to enforce the laws passed to restore and protect this ecosystem.
- Awards grants to the best local and national non-profit organizations to focus professional staff and members on Everglades restoration.

## Mission

The Everglades Foundation works to restore and protect America's Everglades through science, advocacy and education.

## Vision

An Everglades with abundant freshwater for consumption, enjoyment, ecological health, and economic growth for generations to come.

## The Everglades Foundation – Four Pillars of Dedicated Efforts

The Everglades Foundation makes strides towards restoration through Science, advocacy, and education.

The Foundation has six Ph.D.'s on staff, conducting world-class research in water quality, economics, hydrology and hydrologic modeling, wetland ecology, and engineering. Their research drives the policy and advocacy efforts of the Foundation and supports the groundbreaking Everglades Literacy education program while inspiring innovation to solve the challenges surrounding freshwater bodies and excess nutrient pollution.

## Leading Science Initiatives

### Hydrology

Water is fundamental to the Everglades and to Florida's economy. Over 40% of Floridians rely on the Everglades for their daily water supply. Native plants and animals across the ecosystem also depend on the annual water cycle. The Everglades Foundation's hydrologists use hydrologic models to simulate water conditions in the past and in the present to understand how the Everglades has changed and to develop viable restoration scenarios to fix it. Our hydrologic expertise is widely recognized, and our input is often incorporated into the development of restoration project plans and the rules for operating them.

## Ecology

Ecological research at The Everglades Foundation seeks to understand how stressors ranging from nutrient pollution and invasive species to drought and hurricanes impact the health of the Everglades. We track changes in ecosystem health, we collaborate with agency and academic scientists on new ecological research and modeling, and we evaluate the latest scientific information and peer-reviewed research. Our ecological expertise is essential to optimizing restoration planning efforts, forecasting how climate change and sea level rise will affect Everglades habitats, and understanding the impact of policy decisions that may offset the current health of the Everglades or thwart progress of the Everglades restoration.

## Water Quality

Restoring the Everglades is more than just about getting the *quantity* of water right. It is also about ensuring the necessary *quality* of water to protect Everglades habitats. Degraded water quality is increasingly resulting in toxic algae blooms that not only impact the health of our water bodies (lakes, rivers, bays, and estuaries), but also pose a threat to our health and to Florida's tourism-based economy. At The Everglades Foundation, we conduct research on the various sources of water pollution and determine what actions are needed to correct those problems. Our water quality expertise has helped advance the cleanup of pollution throughout the greater Everglades ecosystem.

## Planning and Project Implementation

No single entity is tackling or can tackle all of these issues surrounding the \$16 billion Everglades restoration program. Research and ideas alone will not restore the Everglades. These ideas must be converted by the state and federal governments into specific actions and projects. The science and policy teams at the Foundation work together with government agencies and stakeholders to implement science-based restoration initiatives and projects. Our scientists contribute modeling information, review research and analyses, provide technical input to restoration and water quality projects, and work to educate decision makers and the public on the issues. This helps to build consensus and get things done.

## Education – The Everglades Literacy Program

The Everglades Literacy Program empowers the next generation of conservation stewards by investing in teachers to drive cultural change within schools for the benefit of local and ecological communities. As the vital efforts of Everglades restoration takes center stage, it is important to recognize the key to long-term sustainability rests on the shoulders of the next generation understanding the ecological and economic value of the Everglades. The Everglades Literacy Program gives teachers the tools and knowledge to teach and move forward in educating current and future generations. The program provides teachers, students, schools, and families with: 1) STEM-based professional development through Everglades Literacy Teacher Trainings, 2) Free lessons and materials for each teacher who attends a teacher training, 3) Free, online K-12 Teacher Toolkits with 36 comprehensive Everglades lesson plans that align with Florida State Standards, 4) Distance learning resources for the classroom or virtual classroom, 5) A K-12 Everglades Champion Schools Program, designed to showcase and recognize exceptional Everglades literacy efforts in a school, and 6) Classroom presentations, participation in science nights, field trips, and other school events.

For more information on Everglades Literacy please visit: <https://www.evergladesliteracy.org>

## Advocacy and Communication

Serving as an influential powerhouse in the environmental advocacy space, The Everglades Foundation has a history of influencing environmental policy by providing bipartisan solutions backed by sound scientific research.

Rooted in science and driven by its results-oriented corporate culture, The Everglades Foundation takes a high-level advocacy approach when advocating for the restoration of America's beloved wetland. By joining forces with like-minded environmental, conservation, and business-minded organizations, the Foundation seeks to influence the executive and legislative branches of both the state and federal government to the benefit of America's Everglades.

## Leadership

### **Carlos M. de la Cruz, Jr.** **Chairman of the Board**



Carlos de la Cruz, born in Philadelphia, but raised in Madrid, Spain, has years of experience in M&A, start-ups, and operations in the beverage and automobile industries in Florida and Latin America. For almost 10 years, he was President of Eagle Brands, Inc., the exclusive Anheuser-Busch wholesaler for Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. He also became president of Miami Honda, Central Hyundai, Sunshine Ford, and Maroone Chevrolet. Mr. de la Cruz is a founding member of the Americas Gateway Chapter for Young Presidents Organization. He has served as Chairman of the Board of Ransom Everglades School and Our Kids of Miami-Dade and Monroe, the community-based care provider for foster children with over 4,500 children in care. He obtained his B.S. in Accounting from Boston College and his M.B.A. from the University of Miami. Mr. de la Cruz is fluent in Spanish and French and has been a resident of Miami since 1975.

### **Eric Eikenberg** **Chief Executive Officer**



Eric Eikenberg is a seasoned political strategist and environmental policy expert who leads one of the country's most prestigious and respected environmental non-profits – The Everglades Foundation, which has an annual operating budget of more than \$10 million.

As CEO, Eikenberg oversees a team of nationally recognized scientists, educators, lobbyists, communications, and development professionals, all working together to achieve a decades-long campaign to restore America's Everglades – roughly three million acres of endangered habitat that is vital to Florida's economic and environmental viability.

Appointed CEO by the Foundation's board of directors in 2012, Eikenberg has extensive policy and political experience in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., and served as Chief of Staff to former Gov. Charlie Crist and former U.S. Rep.

E. Clay Shaw, Jr., the latter who authored the landmark Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

A sought-after public speaker on the importance of preserving one of America's most unique natural

habitats, Eikenberg is a regular Op-ed columnist and a widely quoted source for national and local media outlets, including *National Public Radio*, *CNN*, *The Associated Press*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *Politico*, *The Miami Herald*, and many others. Eikenberg was named one of Florida's most influential business leaders by *Florida Trend* and selected to the 2019 panel of 50 Influential Floridians as part of an initiative launched by *The Miami Herald*, *El Nuevo Herald* and *The Bradenton Herald*, where he opines on issues facing the State. Recently, Eikenberg was recognized by *South Florida Business & Wealth* magazine with a 2019 APOGEE Award for his leadership in the Non-Profit sector.

Eikenberg also served on Governor Ron DeSantis' Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Transition Team where he participated in a process that led to Governor DeSantis outlining a bold, comprehensive environmental agenda. On Earth Day 2019, he was named Chair of the *Ocean to Everglades* campaign by the Miami Host Committee for Super Bowl LIV. In this role, Eikenberg led a diverse group of partners focused on educating the public South Florida community on the issues facing the ocean and America's Everglades.

Eikenberg has been a long-time champion for expediting Everglades' restoration, with a knack for innovation and engaging partners in the corporate, philanthropic and political arenas. This included, most recently, leading an intense public awareness campaign that ultimately led to the passage of critical state and federal legislation authorizing construction of a \$1.6 billion reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee – a key component of CERP.

During his tenure as CEO, Eikenberg has helped bring widespread national and international attention to the perennial toxic algae crisis in Florida that threatens the state's waterways and tourism industry; launched the world's largest water incentive prize – the \$10 million George Barley Water Prize; expanded the Foundation's Everglades Literacy Program to reach over one hundred thousand students across Florida; and provided scientific, technical, and policy support to numerous decisionmakers in executing the aforementioned CERP.

A graduate of The American University and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Eikenberg, his wife Tonya, and their four children reside in Palmetto Bay, Florida.

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## Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume, and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting The Everglades Foundation in this search, which will remain open until an appointment is made. Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

Mercedes Chacón Vance and Jessica Herrington  
[EvergladesFoundationCFOO@wittkieffer.com](mailto:EvergladesFoundationCFOO@wittkieffer.com)

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