



Position Specification

**The Chicago Lighthouse
for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired**

Chief Operating Officer

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Our Client: The Chicago Lighthouse

The Chicago Lighthouse has been a pioneer in innovation across the areas of vision care, rehabilitation, education, employment, and technology for 118 years. Providing services to people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled and Veterans, The Lighthouse serves more than 50,000 people each year.

Founded in 1906 on Chicago's West Side, it is \$60mm in revenue today, with the goal of scaling to \$100mm in revenues over the next 5 years.

The Chicago Lighthouse offers 40 unique programs and services that help clients optimize remaining vision, meet developmental and educational milestones, find employment and lead more independent lives. The Chicago Lighthouse's nationally prominent low vision clinic has become a world-class example of comprehensive rehabilitation and demonstrates the organizations evolving role as a pioneer in vision care innovation.

Mission

The Chicago Lighthouse serves people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled, and Veterans, in order for each to reach their full personal potential.

Our programs build enduring success for our target populations and employees with lifelong knowledge, skills, and employment opportunities, support the discovery of new approaches for the empowerment of our communities, and sustain a social business enterprise that ensures success for our strategic ambitions.

The Chicago Lighthouse Programs and Services

The Lighthouse offers over 40 programs and services to the blind and visually impaired. Signature programs include:

Sandy & Rick Forsythe Center for Comprehensive Vision Care: The Lighthouse's comprehensive approach to low vision care integrates multidisciplinary services in optometry, occupational therapy, psychological counseling, and clinical research. The Forsythe Center provides consulting with a low vision rehabilitation optometrist, followed by an individualized rehabilitation plan which may include recommendations for vision devices, technology, and/or supplementary Lighthouse services.

Forsythe Center Services



Low Vision Examination Bergman Institute for Psychological Support Occupational Therapy Orientation & Mobility

Sandy Forsythe Assistive Technology Center: Assistive Technology help individuals meet their accommodation needs both on and off the job. Tools for Living Store specialists can assist in selecting appropriate equipment and identify funding sources. Assistive Technology Specialists research new advances in

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technology to better address clients' needs.

Children's Development Center (CDC) is a private, non-public, specialized school recognized by the State of Illinois, serving students across Illinois school districts with a variety of educational needs and disabilities including vision loss, traumatic brain injury, autism, intellectual disabilities, and multiple disabilities. This therapeutic day school provides one-on-one attention and a high staff-to-child ratio, offering the support needed for students to

access the common core curriculum and develop capabilities for increased independence.

Employment & Training: More than 70% of people between the ages of 18 and 65 who are blind or visually impaired are not employed. The Lighthouse employment and training programs aim to reduce this staggering statistic by providing support to clients in all aspects of their career development, from finding the right career path to preparing for an interview. In addition to working directly with clients, a dedicated team helps private and public sector employers develop appropriate adaptations when hiring or retaining employees who are blind, visually impaired or disabled.

Job Placement and Retention: Once job ready, staff work with clients on an individualized plan for employment to secure a competitive position, either in The Chicago Lighthouse or an outside business. For the first 90 days of starting a new job, staff meet with clients to discuss their progress and solve any issues that may arise to ensure long term success. The Chicago Lighthouse works with employers to find jobs and educate them about the types of tasks that can be performed by persons with vision impairments, other disabilities and Veterans. In addition, staff can perform work-site evaluations to assess the types of accommodations needed



Adult Living Skills: Adult Living Skills (ALS) focuses on life skills training for adults who are blind or visually impaired with developmental disabilities. Program participants attend daily activities designed to develop self-sufficiency, increase independence and help them actively participate in today's society.

Independent Living: Independent living programs are designed to help clients overcome barriers to living life independently. The Lighthouse specialists on staff provide communication assistance, case management, advocacy, academic tutoring, adjustment counseling, Braille phone instruction and more.

Social Enterprise: The Chicago Lighthouse's Social Enterprise division offers a unique blend of mission and business. With operations in the areas of manufacturing, retail, and customer service they provide meaningful career opportunities for individuals who face barriers to employment. In addition, these operations serve as revenue streams to supplement other Lighthouse programs and services. This double bottom line model of social enterprise creates greater self-sufficiency and sustainability as an organization, allowing The Lighthouse to continually meet the growing and diverse needs of its patients, clients, and employees.

Social Enterprises include the following services:

- ❖ **Chicago Lighthouse Industries:** The Lighthouse began producing wall clocks in 1977 for sale to the federal government. Today, they sell to federal, state, and municipal agencies, as well as to the commercial market. They have hand produced nearly seven million high quality clocks to date - each and every one built with pride by people who are blind or visually impaired.

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- ❖ **Contract Management Services:** The Contract Management Services Program (CMS) provides federal certification in contract administration, and high-growth professional career opportunities as contract specialists, for people who are legally blind. Employees of the CMS program fulfill contract closeout support services to federal government contracting offices that facilitate the return of unused contract funds to the government.
- ❖ **Call Centers:** The Chicago Lighthouse comprehensive in-bound contact centers cover a variety of industries including medical scheduling, payment services, Veteran services, business compliance, and state contract services. These multiple customer care centers fulfill up to 20,000 customer calls each day, while making an impact by employing individuals who are blind, visually impaired, disabled, and Veterans.



The Chicago Lighthouse Huber Vision Rehabilitation Center expands the mission by bringing comprehensive vision care services to patients and clients in the north and northwest suburbs. The facility features state-of-the-art Christine & John S. Gates Family Low Vision Clinic offering optometry, psychological counseling, and occupational therapy services; a retail store offering the latest in assistive products and independent living aids, and an array of enrichment programs for all ages including classes and events specifically for children and seniors.

The Foglia Residences: Opening in September 2024, The Foglia Residences at The Chicago Lighthouse, is a 76-unit development offering studio, one-, and two-bedroom apartments for income-eligible households. The property was designed to accommodate individuals



and families with a priority for those who are disabled, including those who are blind and visually impaired. The Foglia Residences is the first residential project serving people who are blind or visually impaired to be financed through Low Income Housing Tax Credits in the United States



BlindSight Delaware Enterprises (BSDE) is a social business enterprise partnership, launched two years ago, between The Chicago Lighthouse and BlindSight Delaware (a 75-year-old organization serving people who are blind in the country's First State), BSDE employs 15 customer care agents, 20% of whom are mission-based, handling calls for the City of Wilmington and the state's Beebe Healthcare system. The vision is for BSDE to become the leading provider of contact center services in the region and for it to be a model for other social enterprises around the country.

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The Opportunity

A newly defined role, the Chief Operating Officer will plan, direct, coordinate, and oversee operations activities across the Social Business and Social Services Enterprises of The Lighthouse, ensuring development and implementation of efficient operations and cost-effective systems to meet current and future needs of these divisions.

Commitment to the mission of providing opportunities for people who are blind, visually impaired, disabled, and Veterans is essential.

Duties & Responsibilities:

- Establishes, implements, and communicates the strategic direction of the organization’s Social Business and Social Services Enterprise divisions.
- Collaborates with executive leadership to develop and meet Agency goals while supplying expertise and guidance on operations projects and systems.
- Collaborates with other divisions and departments to carry out the organization’s goals and objectives.
- Identifies, recommends, and implements new processes, technologies, and systems to improve and streamline processes and use of resources and materials within the Social Business and Social Services Divisions.
- Ensures that departmental decisions and project plans such as those for staffing, development, organization, material efficiency, hardware acquisitions, and facilities are in line with the organization’s business plan and vision.
- Establishes, communicates, and implements operations-related policies, practices, standards, and security measures to ensure effective and consistent support and execution.
- Reviews and approves cost-control reports, cost estimates, and staffing requirements for projects.
- Establishes and administers the divisional department’s budgets.
- Presents periodic performance reports and metrics to the chief executive officer, other leadership, and the Board of Trustees, as needed.
- Maintains knowledge of emerging technologies and trends in operations management.
- Provides constructive and timely performance evaluations.
- Handles discipline and termination of employees in accordance with Agency policy.
- Identifies training needs and ensures proper training is developed and provided.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

3 Direct and 20+ indirect reports in the Social Business and Social Services Enterprise divisions include the following:

<p>Chicago Industries Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Senior Vice President of Industries Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inventory Control Manager ○ Program Manager ○ Plant Manager ○ Manager, CMS ○ Project Manager ○ Supervisor, Housekeeping <p>Call Center Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Senior Vice President of Call Center Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ VP, Transportation Contact Center Operations ○ VP, Medical Contact Center Operations ○ Contact Center Data Analyst 	<p>Employment & Rehabilitation Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Senior Vice President of Employment & Rehabilitation Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SVP, Public Policy ○ VP, Educational Services ○ VP, Partnerships Forsythe ○ Senior Director, Adult Living Skills ○ Director, Adult Living Skills ○ Job Placement Counselor / Scholarship Coordinator ○ Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor ○ Job Placement Counselor ○ Transitional Employment Specialist
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Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate for the COO role will be fully dedicated to the mission of The Lighthouse, highly energetic, and have excellent leadership skills. They must have an ability to navigate and manage a mission-driven institution, but must also be strongly service- and customer- oriented. They should have strong business acumen and be comfortable using data and metrics to drive decisions that impact the management of the institution. The ideal candidate approaches challenges from a practical, yet optimistic, standpoint. This executive must be a team player with the ability to work in a large, complex organization with an environment of transparent and collegial communications, and be comfortable in a public role.

Specifically, the COO will have:

- Exceptional strategic management skills with experience in the oversight of financial matters, the application of technology, the exploitation of the internet and social networking applications, marketing and external communications, and facility resource management;
- Proven experience initiating and leading short- and long-range financial planning, including the development of operating budgets as well as other objectives and strategies necessary to ensure successful completion of those plans;
- Demonstrated success leading a complex organization through challenging times;
- A record of hiring, mentoring, and delegating to exceptionally talented people;
- The ability to represent The Lighthouse effectively with various important constituencies, including Trustees, donors, government officials, and other institutions both profit and nonprofit. This requires exceptional interpersonal and relationship-building skills as well as the ability to listen to and work with others;
- The ability to work closely and in partnership with the CEO and President, who is responsible for the overall leadership of The Lighthouse.

Strong candidates for this COO opportunity will possess the following professional and personal qualities, skills and characteristics:

Setting Strategy

- *Aligns with the Mission of The Lighthouse.* Passion for helping others, in particular providing opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired to live their full potential.
- The ability to create and articulate an inspiring vision for the organization, not only for the areas they are directly responsible for, but the enterprise as a whole.
- The inclination to seek and analyze data from a variety of sources to support decisions and to align others with the organization's overall strategy.
- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will stretch the organization and push the boundaries within the industry.
- The ability to effectively balance the desire/need for broad change with an understanding of how much change the organization is capable of handling, to create realistic goals and implementation plans that are achievable and success

Executing for Results

- *Embraces Innovation and Transformation.* Creates and fosters an environment that advances innovation, transformation and calculated risk-taking and demonstrates unwavering commitment to the clients served.
- *Leverages Data in Decision-Making.* Understands what to ask for and how to interpret and leverage data and technology to make sound decisions.
- *Drives Results.* Consistently achieves desired results, even under challenging circumstances. Leads and drives high performance.
- *Collaborates and Integrates.* Recognizes the importance of partnerships, builds relationships (internally and externally), and works collaboratively with others (individuals and organizations) to meet shared goals.
- The ability to set clear and challenging goals while committing the organization to improved performance; tenacious and accountable in driving results.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; the ability to adapt nimbly and lead others through complex situations.

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- A risk-taker who seeks data and input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended circumstances from decisions; someone who takes smart risks.
- A leader who is viewed by others as having a high degree of integrity and forethought in their approach to making decisions; the ability to act in a transparent and consistent manner while always taking into account what is best for the organization.

Leading Teams

- *Leads with Vision.* Anticipates future possibilities and translates them into strategies for The Lighthouse. Has the ability to look beyond the organization's current context for opportunity.
- *Visible and Engaged Leader.* Exhibits comfort in any and all settings. Engages easily with individuals across the organization.
- *Promotes Diversity & Inclusion.* Respects and appreciates what makes people different and looks for that in their team. Intentionally creates an environment where employees feel they can safely express themselves and where specific concerns can be raised with transparency and confidence.
- The ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance; widely viewed as a strong developer of others.
- The ability to persevere in the face of challenges, and exhibit a steadfast resolve and relentless commitment to higher standards, which commands respect from followers.
- A leader who is self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and self-improvement.

Relationships and Influence

- *Instills Trust.* Gains the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity, authenticity, and consistency of actions. Acts in ways that others experience as forthright, genuine, and authentic and demonstrates a high degree of emotional intelligence.
- *Acts with Courage.* Possesses the internal fortitude to address difficult decisions and circumstances. Able to manage through conflict and to be comfortable with ambiguity.
- *Communicates Effectively and with Transparency.* Active listener who seeks ideas and input from others and has an accessible, relatable style. Encourages open, timely and transparent communication and the dynamic exchange of ideas.
- Naturally connects and builds strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- An ability to inspire trust and followership in others through compelling influence, powerful charisma, passion in their beliefs, and active drive.
- Encourages others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrates and supports the success of the team.
- Creates a sense of purpose/meaning for the team that generates followership beyond their own personality and engages others to the greater purpose for the organization as a whole.

Driving Sustainability

- Firmly believes that both sustainability and profit are in the organization's best long-term interest.
- Integrates economic, societal, and environmental factors into a purpose-driven strategy, turning sustainability into a competitive advantage.
- Understands and incorporates viewpoints from all key stakeholders to drive decision making and share the benefits.
- Delivers breakthrough innovations and business models that create value for all stakeholders, continually challenging traditional approaches.
- Sets audacious business and sustainability goals, driving concerted action and investments, and stays the course in the face of setbacks or push-back from short-term oriented stakeholders.

Education and Experience

- Bachelor's degree in Business Administration or other industry-related field required; MBA preferred.
- At least 10 years of industry-related experience including three years in upper management required.

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Russell Reynolds, the global search and leadership advisory firm, has been exclusively retained for this search. All inquiries and recommendations can be directed to the team below and will be kept confidential.

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