



President & Chief Executive Officer

The Board of Directors of Cortex Innovation Community (www.cortexstl.com) seeks to appoint the organization's second President & CEO to continue the organization's distinctive success as the best-resourced and fastest-moving innovation district in St. Louis and one of the most noted urban innovation districts in the country. The new President & CEO, with the enduring support of the anchor institutions that came together to found Cortex in 2002, will build on the legacy of its first executive officer to pursue its tri-partite mission: to (1) create, attract, and support new, tech-based or tech-supportive jobs; (2) generate new tax revenue for the City of St. Louis; and (3) maximize equity and inclusivity in all facets of its work.

Cortex is a 200-acre urban innovation and technology district located in St. Louis' Central West End, strategically positioned adjacent to leading research universities and a major medical center. Founded through a collaborative effort of Washington University in St. Louis, Saint Louis University, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, BJC Healthcare, and the Missouri Botanical Garden with the strong support of the City of St. Louis, it is the largest anchor of a growing regional ecosystem of innovative startups and established technology companies in St. Louis. It has been cited by the Brookings Institution and the Global Institute of Innovation Districts as a model of Best Practice among [global urban innovation districts](#).

To date, Cortex has developed 2 million square feet of office, lab, meeting, maker, and social space that is home to nearly 450 established tech companies, startups, research facilities, university academic units, support businesses, and retail establishments. With 6,000 employees currently working in the District, it is a lively work- play- learn innovation community. Employees working at Cortex generated over \$1B in direct economic activity in 2018 as well as approximately \$250M in state and federal tax revenues. The intensity of Cortex's development has catalyzed other entities – institutional, public, and private – to invest in the neighborhoods that surround it. There are currently over 30 development projects within a mile radius of Cortex that are attributable to the place that Cortex has become and the activities it stewards.

Cortex thrives because it has strong and trusted institutional founders, strong board leadership and professional staff, development powers and land-use control, a vibrant innovation community that is far more dynamic and engaging than a business park can be, a commitment to growing and supporting startups, a focus on placemaking, and a strong commitment to equity and inclusion.

The President & CEO serves as the executive leader of Cortex, appointed by and accountable directly to its Board of Directors. The President & CEO conceives, leads, and directs overall strategic planning with the Board and oversees staff operations to implement both the physical and program development plans. As the face of the organization, the President & CEO plays a leadership role in interpreting Cortex to a broad community that includes regional universities, civic leadership, neighboring communities, startup companies, mature corporations, entrepreneurs, researchers, development partners, and entrepreneur support organizations.

The Board expects to appoint a visionary, innovative, and action-oriented leader who will build on the foundation laid by Cortex's inaugural President & CEO, Dennis Lower. The new President & CEO will be a committed, wise, collaborative, and inclusive leader who desires to make a difference in the economic trajectory of the St. Louis region, galvanize development, catalyze the ongoing creation and recruitment of companies and new jobs, and continue the development of the Central West End, Midtown, and Forest Park Southeast as Cortex continues to grow. The successful candidate will be able to work nationally as well as locally with connections to potential partners – entrepreneurs, company leaders, investors, and leaders in development broadly defined – and will have the capability to succeed by making Cortex visible and attractive at a national and international level.

Candidates will have experience and expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Innovation and entrepreneurship with a focus on gathering and deploying the resources needed to start and attract companies
- Economic development broadly defined, especially initiatives related to job-creation
- Real estate development and operation, preferably with institutional/non-profit experience encompassing an array of city, state, and federal redevelopment incentives and vehicles
- Attracting and recruiting new companies – including national or international companies – to center-city (as opposed to office-park) locations

Professional experience in and professional and personal commitment to diverse urban settings is expected.

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Opus Partners is assisting Cortex with this search. Please contact Craig Smith, Partner, or Katie Dean, Associate Partner, for additional information: craig.smith@opuspartners.net / katie.dean@opuspartners.net.