LEADERSHIP PROFILE

President & Chief Executive Officer
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta
Atlanta, GA

“Connecting passion with purpose”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta is one of the 20 largest community foundations in the country and a major force in metro Atlanta, itself one of the nation’s most generous and dynamic areas. This important anchor institution is about to experience its first President & CEO transition in over four decades.

After serving for 42 years and growing the Foundation to an impressive $1.2 billion in assets, the Community Foundation’s President, Alicia Philipp, has announced plans to retire in 2020. Her successor will inherit an organization rich in community partnerships and respected by donors, grantees and knowledgeable observers alike.

The leader invited to become the Community Foundation’s next President & CEO will have the opportunity and the mandate to help shape the very future of the
metro Atlanta region. Building on the Foundation’s exceptional reputation and resources, the President will be asked to leverage its full range of assets—human, reputational and financial—in pursuit of four over-arching priorities:

- Marshal the energy of a diverse and inclusive organization to deliver a rich and operationally excellent experience for donors, grantees and community members and organizations;
- Build trust with donors and community partners, both those already engaged with the Foundation and those yet to become involved;
- Inspire philanthropy in the Foundation’s principal impact areas; and
- Advance equity of opportunity for all residents in the region.

The ideal candidate will be a proven leader with relevant experience in philanthropy who can tap into Atlanta’s rich and diverse community, working collaboratively with others (both within the Foundation and beyond) to drive sustainable change with dexterity and respect. Strong communications skills, demonstrated experience of commitment to addressing issues of disparities in race and equity, and the proven ability to develop, lead and inspire a high performance team are key criteria, as is the ability to attract resources from traditional quarters while expanding the Foundation’s reach to new audiences and new relationships.

THE CONTEXT

Founded in 1951, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta has helped the Atlanta region prosper by consistently connecting passion with purpose. Its growth in assets and influence has mirrored that of the region it serves. Now one of the 20 largest community foundations in the country, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta is privileged to have over $1 billion in assets and a reputation for impactful, collaborative leadership, both locally and nationally. For over forty years, the work of CEO Alicia Philipp, an evolving staff, a succession of influential board members, and innumerable donors and partners has resulted in an entity that is Atlanta’s first stop and prime resource for community philanthropy.

The numbers are telling: In 2019, the Community Foundation distributed nearly $133 million in grants, three-quarters of them through donor advised funds (DAFs). That represents over 11,000 grants to over 3000 grantees; over 70% of the grants stayed within the Foundation’s 23-county service area. Over its history, grants through and by the Foundation have exceeded $1.8 billion.

As a catalyst for philanthropy, the Foundation also influenced gifts to nonprofits by corporations, other foundations, public sector entities and individuals. (A fuller summary of the Foundation’s activities and impact areas is available [here](#).)

1 Preliminary estimate, based on unaudited data
Atlanta’s record of civic philanthropy and engagement is impressive, and significant challenges persist. Despite consistently ranking among America’s most generous cities in numerous surveys and reports, Atlanta exhibits the worst economic disparity among large US cities.

According to Bloomberg’s 2019 analysis of data from the US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, Atlanta is “the capital of US inequality,” a city where the highest 20 percent earned more than $256,000 annually and the lowest 20% earned less than $10,000. Additionally, a child born into poverty in Atlanta has little chance—just 4.5%, according to Brookings Institution researchers—of moving into the middle class.

The adjacent clickable map from Opportunity Atlas illustrates the wealth divide in Atlanta. A separate report in the Stanford Social Innovation Review opened with a stark declaration: “In Atlanta a person’s ZIP code is often the biggest predictor of his or her health status.”

As the region’s fortunes have risen, many area residents have not benefitted proportionately, and disparities of opportunity persist, particularly among urban and rural communities of color. These are important issues, and a city with Atlanta’s strengths needs to leverage its capacity to resolve them—a charge the Foundation’s board and staff have embraced.

In anticipation of the major leadership change to take place at the Foundation in 2020, the Board of Directors, in tandem with the CEO, has over the past two years undertaken a rigorous examination of the Foundation’s governance, strategy and plans for succession. Guided by consultants and data from BoardSource and extensive conversations with a cross-section of donors, partners, grantees and other stakeholders, the Foundation affirmed its strategy for 2019-2021 and solidified a comprehensive succession plan. In brief, the agreed-upon strategy features:

- An explicit focus on closing opportunity gaps and fostering equity of opportunity, both at the Micro (neighborhood) level and regionally;

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2 The data is for the City of Atlanta, not the Foundation’s full 23-county service area, and thus describes only about 10% of the region’s overall population of nearly 6 million. Nevertheless, the issue is a critical indicator of pervasive inequality and one of great concern for the Foundation.

3 SSIR, Spring 2016
• A commitment to co-invest and engage with others to leverage and align assets at scale; and
• The development of a fundraising campaign built around the Foundation’s 75th anniversary in 2026, with a corresponding shift in focus to building its endowment to provide unrestricted grant resources for the needs of current and future generations.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta has been both catalyst and beneficiary of the region’s generosity from its very beginning. Today, the Foundation’s points of pride are many, including:

• A deep and growing group of committed donors;
• An energized staff dedicated to community vitality;
• Numerous Foundation alumni/ae leading significant institutions and initiatives in Atlanta and beyond;
• Innovative partnerships working collaboratively on the region’s most difficult issues; and
• A collective desire to strengthen the Foundation’s reach and relevance in support of a vibrant, equitable and nurturing community.

“Inspiring philanthropy” is at the heart of the Community Foundation’s multifaceted work. Here are just four ongoing initiatives of note:

• Achieve Atlanta, created by the Community Foundation in partnership with the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, “supplements the academic preparation [Atlanta Public Schools] students receive with the financial and social/emotional supports they need.” By the end of just its third full year, Achieve Atlanta had already provided over $11 million in scholarships to 2235 students attending 209 different colleges and universities.

• The Foundation’s GoATL fund, established in 2018, is Georgia’s first impact investment fund. Recently, the fund announced $1.5 million in investments that align with efforts to build equity of opportunity across the region.

• The Foundation’s CEO and the CEOs of three core strategic allies—Atlanta Regional Commission, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and United Way of Greater Atlanta—have created a four-way relationship that may be unique
in the country and is emblematic of the power of effective community collaboration to which the Foundation is committed.

The four CEOs meet regularly to examine regional challenges and align behind common goals. Among the public fruits of this important alliance are Neighborhood Nexus, an online community information platform providing up-to-date metro-area data and research at both the macro and micro (neighborhood) levels; and Learn4Life, a regional education partnership of school districts, communities, businesses and nonprofits addressing academic achievement and workforce readiness for 600,000 public school students.

- The Foundation’s partnership with Catchafire was launched in 2018, providing an online platform that provides select nonprofits with ready access to the skilled volunteers who fit their needs best. Early results have been most gratifying for nonprofits and their volunteers, and the Foundation’s partnership with Catchafire is expanding.

The Foundation’s financials are solid, as evidenced by its multiple four-star ratings by Charity Navigator, and the balance sheet is strong; growing the endowed assets that support discretionary grants is a key continuing objective.

The Foundation has invested significantly in its own operations and infrastructure in recent years. The effort to align organization, processes and technology more fully with strategy and the changing needs of stakeholders has paid dividends, but the work is not yet complete. A next iteration includes a user-friendly technology platform that supports more efficient and effective communications with current and potential donors, especially those for whom technology is an expected tool.

Operationally, there are threats and opportunities to address. Commercial gift funds and public foundations attuned to a specific issue or donor group compete aggressively for donor attention. Philosophically and culturally, the Foundation’s established success with traditional donors does not necessarily translate into relevance with other pockets of wealth, such as minority-owned businesses and professional athletes who have retired to Atlanta after successful careers elsewhere. Similarly, Atlanta is home to major personal and institutional successes in television (think CNN and its progeny), film, music and technology. The

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4 The Community Foundation has received Charity Navigator’s four-star rating in 15 of the last 16 years
5 In recent years, Georgia has become one of the movie industry’s six global centers, along with Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, Vancouver and London. The State of Georgia tracked 399 film productions in 2019, and more full-length films
Foundation has a timely opportunity to develop and deepen its philanthropic relationships with leaders in these burgeoning sectors.

Additionally, the very premise of donor advised funds is regularly challenged by policymakers; as a leader among such foundations nationally, the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta has a responsibility to be a visible and compelling advocate for the sector.

The Foundation’s 50-person staff includes a mix of long-serving colleagues and a good number who are new to the organization in recent years. The staff is understandably nervous about the transition, but they are clear in their ambition for even stronger connections to the community and vested in their role in the CEO transition. They are also vocal in their desire to see the Foundation’s stated commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity of opportunity translated into specific action, expanded relationships and demonstrable progress towards lasting impact.

The 19-person Board of Directors is at its strongest ever, an increasingly diverse mix of philanthropists, corporate and professional leaders and community activists with a variety of life experiences and perspectives.

As noted, the Board has been especially intentional and engaged the last couple of years as it readied the organization—and itself—for the Foundation’s first CEO transition in 42 years. The Board is fully committed to a future characterized by financially sound operations; expanded trust relationships with a multifaceted, multigenerational donor base; and empowered employees ambitious for their community, respected for their responsiveness, and supported in their own professional development.

For additional information on the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, visit the extensive website, filled with many resources of interest to donors, grantees and partners. Additional context on community foundations can be found at

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6 A dominant national factor in hip hop for over a decade, Atlanta has a long history of leadership across the musical spectrum.

7 For example, TAG, the Technology Association of Georgia, is the largest technology association in the country, with over 35,000 members from 2000 technology companies. For another indication of the region’s vibrancy in technology, see “Atlanta fast becoming a mecca for African Americans in tech,” Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 16, 2020.
Community Foundation Public Awareness Initiative, CFLeads and Southeastern Council of Foundations, among other sites.

**THE MANDATE**

The CEO will inherit a strong platform of leadership, trust, accomplishment and infrastructure, and the CEO will have the opportunity and the mandate to lead the Foundation to its next level of impact with vision, strategy, innovation and influence. Among the next CEO's key priorities:

- Embrace and creatively address the challenges of metro Atlanta with the full resources of the Foundation and the community;
- Strengthen engagement with and service to current donors while being proactive in developing relationships with a diverse cadre of new donors and the broader community; and
- Fully leverage the Foundation’s leadership platform, credibility, voice and resources to achieve greater good, especially at the intersection of race, poverty and equity of opportunity.

By engaging Atlanta’s diverse perspectives, audiences and considerable resources, the CEO will enable the Foundation to make an even greater difference for metro Atlanta—bridging its various communities, coalescing shared vision and clout and creating a fairer, more equitable and thriving community.

**THE CANDIDATE**

The next CEO must be a nuanced and confident leader with the experience and passion to attract, engage and inspire philanthropy; the maturity to head one of Atlanta’s major philanthropic institutions; the confidence to model collaborative engagement; the resourcefulness to attract supporters and partners in pursuit of bold goals—and the humility to undertake it all with grace and a generous spirit.

In sum, the Board seeks a leader who can focus the Community Foundation’s aspirations, expand its capabilities and deepen its relationships in an ongoing effort to elevate the Foundation from transactional facilitator to strategic force.

The search committee is open to a variety of career paths. A record of impactful leadership across communities, organizations and sectors will be of special interest, as will evidence of an abiding commitment to closing the opportunity gap.
Experience leading a complex, multifaceted organization with transparency and accountability would be decidedly additive.

**Competence: The Foundation for Greater Atlanta expects to appoint a CEO who is...**

- Ambitious for the community, not just for the Community Foundation
- Experienced in strategic thinking and the successful design, implementation and evaluation of strategies that address the toughest community issues
- A nimble leader, fully comfortable heading an organization for which collaboration and commitment to community are fundamental to success
- Demonstrably experienced in and committed to addressing issues of disparities in race and equity
- Focused on solutions, supportive of an atmosphere of high expectations, cohesive teams and individual accountability
- A tested CEO at ease with the public demands of such a leadership role, representing the Foundation and its mission in all relevant contexts and doing so with authenticity, integrity and good humor; a great communicator
- Sufficiently experienced with boards and staff to know how to attract, leverage and learn from the best talent possible while building a superb team
- A nurturing, accessible and empowering leader who supports staff development and donor engagement with equal fervor
- A financially savvy executive, attendant to the Foundation’s own business affairs; someone who understands the criticality of sound internal practices, balanced budgets and the value of responsive, solutions-oriented support for donors
- A truly effective champion for the mission; an experienced spokesperson, joyful storyteller, intentional relationship-builder and exceptional fundraiser
- A practical visionary and fascinated learner in the ongoing quest for relevance
- An innovative thinker and bridge-builder who can energize support for shared goals among players (individuals or institutions) not always accustomed to working together
- Relentless in the focus on impact—and realistic in efforts required to achieve it
- Fundamentally comfortable working with donors and their professional advisors, both of which are core to the Foundation’s success and potential for impact.

**Culture—the Foundation’s CEO should exemplify...**

- A genuine respect for equity, diversity and inclusion; someone mobilized to seize opportunities to advance opportunity, not as an add-on, but as a central component of organizational and community vitality
• Emotional self-awareness; an executive who continually develops the personal qualities that build positive energy and self-awareness

• An imaginative and curious spirit, respectful of open dialogue, appreciative of constructive feedback and supportive of an environment where both are welcomed

• A generative operating style, quick to capitalize on the team’s collective creativity while promoting innovation among the Foundation’s grantees

• Equal respect for those who fund the work, those who do the work, and those who benefit from it, whatever their role or station

• Humility and authenticity in action

• An accessible management style, emphasizing team over self and collaboration over hierarchy, while ensuring the disciplines and accountability required to reinforce operational excellence

• Cultural and social dexterity; an executive comfortable with the special demands of leadership in a complex and multifaceted region with deep-seated challenges

• A sense of the possible and a willingness to take—and encourage—smart risks.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

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<th>The CEO reports to</th>
<th>Board of Directors, Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta</th>
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<td>And manages a staff of about 50 through four direct reports:</td>
<td>SVP, Philanthropy</td>
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<td>VP Capacity &amp; CFO</td>
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<td>VP, Marketing &amp; Communications</td>
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<td>Interim VP, Community</td>
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<td>While stewarding such other important relationships as</td>
<td>Donors and fundholders</td>
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<td>Program partners</td>
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<td>Peer foundations, locally and nationally</td>
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<td>The region’s leadership, including corporate, academic, governmental, philanthropic, professional, and faith-based organizations, operating nonprofits and the media</td>
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THE LOCATION

The Foundation serves a 23-county area that is home to nearly six million people, the world’s busiest airport, one of the country’s best music scenes and a vibrant entrepreneurial culture. Atlanta pulses with civil rights history, incubates a strong tech sector and serves up terrific barbeque.
From 2010-2018 metro Atlanta experienced the fourth-highest population growth out of all 392 Metropolitan Statistical Areas across the US.\(^8\)

Any list of Atlanta’s leading organizations and institutions would be necessarily incomplete, but here are some examples:

- Sixteen *Fortune 500* companies, including Delta Air Lines, The Coca-Cola Company, The Home Depot, ICE (parent of the New York Stock Exchange) and UPS;
- Such global nonprofits as [American Cancer Society](https://www.cancer.org), [Boys & Girls Clubs of America](https://www.bgca.org), [CARE](https://www.care.org), [The Carter Center](https://www.cartercenter.org), [Habitat for Humanity International](https://www.habitat.org) and [the Task Force for Global Health](https://www.thetaskforce.org);
- The [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)](https://www.cdc.gov), the only major federal agency to be based beyond commuting distance from Washington, DC.

The region is known for its highly respected and historically-significant colleges and universities\(^9\), a commitment to the arts, multiple professional sports teams (including [Atlanta United](https://atlantaunitedfc.com), which has broken all MLS attendance records in its short history), abundant outdoor recreational amenities and an urban tree canopy that covers nearly 48% of the city, the highest percentage in the nation.

The most notable part of the region is its people. The Atlanta area is full of colorful, vibrant neighborhoods that are ever-changing. Within the last year or two, Atlanta has been named Penske’s #1 Moving Destination, WalletHub’s Most Affordable Big City, the #1 City for Filmmakers and the #1 City for Startups outside San Francisco and New York.

The region welcomes immigrants, refugees and the LGBT community and is inhabited by people who embrace southern hospitality and a spirit of generosity. Atlanta is the fourth most giving city in the nation (by average percent of income donated to charity) following Memphis, Salt Lake City and Birmingham.

An extensive profile of Metro Atlanta’s people, institutions and influence is available here.

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\(^9\) Metro Atlanta has 54 two-and four-year colleges and universities, including [Emory](https://www.emory.edu), [Georgia Tech](https://www.gatech.edu) and the [Atlanta University Center Consortium](https://www.auc.edu), the world’s oldest and largest association of HBCUs, including [Morehouse College](https://www.morehouse.edu) and [Morehouse School of Medicine](https://www.msm.edu).
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