

Position Profile

Chief Executive Officer Higher Ground USA

Ketchum, ID



About Higher Ground USA

Higher Ground USA (HG) empowers individuals of all abilities to discover their potential, expand their boundaries, and realize what can be. Our mission at HG is to enhance the quality of life through therapeutic recreation and education. HG thrives on our five core values: Passion, Innovation, Service, Teamwork, and Integrity. We look for people who can envision, collaborate, and inspire. Our culture rewards imagination, embraces diversity, and is powered by a shared commitment to changing lives through the outdoors, community, and purposeful connection.

Since 1999, Higher Ground has delivered enriching therapeutic recreation programs for adults, teens, and children with physical and developmental disabilities as well as for veterans and first responders navigating physical and mental health challenges. From single-day activities to transformative week-long experiences, our certified therapeutic recreation specialists and program teams serve more than 1,000 participants each year. Our programming strengthens social connectedness, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, leisure education, and skill progression.

Learn more about Higher Ground USA
at www.highergroundusa.org



Location

This position is based at Higher Ground's headquarters in the heart of **Ketchum, Idaho**, within the stunning Wood River Valley community. While Higher Ground's leadership is rooted in this remarkable mountain town, its impact extends far beyond it. Programs come to life through dedicated teams operating across Idaho, Arkansas, California, Colorado, and Montana, and are supported by more than 300 committed volunteers nationwide. The CEO will collaborate closely with staff, volunteers, and partners across all roles and regions, ensuring that every Higher Ground experience reflects excellence, connection, and mission-driven impact.



Higher Ground USA: Today's Opportunities and Challenges

Higher Ground USA enters its next chapter from a position of real strength. Its programs are credible, impactful, and deeply trusted, delivered by an exceptional team that is highly engaged, mission-driven, and unwaveringly committed to participants. Even during a period of leadership transition and organizational evolution over the past year, programs and fundraising met or exceeded goals, partnerships expanded, and community trust remained strong both locally and nationally. The core work is solid, stakeholders believe wholeheartedly in the mission, and the organization's brand is respected across the field.

As Higher Ground has grown from a grassroots organization into a \$5.8M nonprofit with a national footprint, the organization has reached a natural inflection point. This growth creates an opportunity to further strengthen internal systems, fundraising infrastructure, data and metrics, and cross-team alignment to fully support the quality and scale of the programs. Continued integration across Adaptive and Veteran programming, thoughtful resource alignment, and a more unified fundraising strategy will enhance organizational effectiveness and sustainability, while preserving the deeply human, relational culture that defines Higher Ground.

The Board is aligned around the importance of long-term sustainability, clear performance expectations, and the development of a strategic plan to guide the organization's next phase of growth. This is an energizing moment for Higher Ground USA, calling for steady, unifying leadership that can bring clarity, strengthen relationships, and position the organization to build on its strong foundation and expand its impact.



Leadership Opportunity

The CEO will serve as the face of Higher Ground USA, responsible for advancing the organization's strategic and operational goals, elevating its strong national reputation, and expanding its capacity to serve more individuals nationwide. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the CEO will lead a passionate staff of 27 and directly manage the Chief Finance Officer, Chief Development Officer, Associate Director, Director of Veteran and First Responder Programs, Director of Adaptive Programs, and Director of Special Projects.

This role offers a rare opportunity to steward a mission-driven organization with deep heart, hard-won credibility, and significant untapped potential into its next era of impact. The next CEO will establish a clear North Star and strategic roadmap for the coming years, formalize fundraising and development efforts, strengthen internal systems and infrastructure, and ensure the organization has the people, tools, and plans needed to expand programs, serve more participants, and care well for its staff.

Equally important, this role requires humility, presence, and hands-on leadership. Higher Ground's culture is collaborative and deeply relational, and staff want to feel heard, valued, and connected to the bigger picture. The CEO must build trust by rolling up their sleeves, honoring expertise across the organization, and leading with empathy and clarity. Working closely with an evolving Board, the CEO will strengthen governance, rebuild cohesion, and align leadership around shared goals. For the right leader, this is an opportunity not only to grow the organization, but also to help ensure it thrives for the people and communities it exists to serve.



Key Responsibilities

- Set and drive Higher Ground USA's strategy, culture, and operational success, ensuring programs continue to set the standard for transformative, therapeutic recreation
- Prioritize trust-building, listening, and humility in the first year, leading growth in partnership with staff and honoring the organization's collaborative culture
- Partner with the Chief Financial Officer to develop annual operating budgets for Board approval and ensure timely, accurate financial reporting
- Oversee investments, financial controls, and compliance to safeguard fiscal health and long-term organizational stability
- Provide oversight of all programs and services in close collaboration with the Director of Adaptive Programs and the Director of Veteran and First Responder Programs
- Ensure consistently high-quality program delivery and continuous improvement through participant feedback, operational efficiencies, and innovation
- Champion new ideas, methods, and approaches that elevate the participant experience and expand organizational impact



Candidate Profile

Candidates will bring a minimum of five years of experience serving as a CEO, Executive Director, or C-suite executive in a nonprofit or mission-aligned organization. A bachelor's degree and master's degree preferred. The ideal candidate will have the following professional and personal competencies, skills, and characteristics:

Collaborative and Empathetic Leadership with High Emotional Intelligence

Higher Ground USA seeks a collaborative and empathetic leader with very high emotional intelligence who can hold people accountable while inspiring excitement for the future. This leader brings people along through change, ensures individuals feel heard and supported, and builds trust through authenticity, self-awareness, and openness to feedback. The successful CEO will inspire teams, cultivate a strong, values-driven culture, and model professionalism and compassion while breaking down silos, integrating teams, and making collaborative, value-first decisions that elevate innovation from the field and strengthen organizational alignment.

Mission-Driven with Commitment to Adaptive Recreation

The successful leader will be deeply mission-driven and grounded in what it means to lead a community-centered, mission-oriented organization. They will bring a genuine passion for and commitment to serving people with disabilities and the Veteran and First Responder communities, a commitment that is reflected throughout the organization, from Board and staff to programs. The CEO values recreation therapy as a powerful vehicle for impact and understands trauma-informed care, including its guiding principles, cultural and gender considerations, and the realities of working with individuals who have experienced trauma. Experience in adaptive recreation, social services, or work with veterans is a plus. This leader will be present in programs, actively participate in outdoor recreation, and lead alongside the work, using these experiences to build connection, reduce barriers, and support healing, empowerment, and growth.

Organizational and Operational Excellence

The CEO must bring strong nonprofit leadership (or relevant) experience, including leading an organization of 20 or more people, overseeing day-to-day operations, and managing budgets and organizational systems. This leader demonstrates a professional history of consistent achievement in growth, operational excellence, and mission impact. They can assess all aspects of the organization and elevate performance by strengthening operations, infrastructure, and systems aligned with current nonprofit best practices. With an already exceptional program team in place, the CEO will leverage existing strengths while advancing the organization forward and supporting staff development, confidence, learning, and growth.

Fundraising Capability and Ambassador

Strong fundraising capability and relationship development are essential. The CEO must be able to build immediate trust, endear themselves to people, and clearly articulate the impact and importance of Higher Ground USA's work. This leader demonstrates success in securing resources across public and private funding sources and approaches fundraising as deep relationship-building rooted in shared values and impact. Serving as a visible and credible ambassador, the CEO will strengthen existing donor relationships while expanding the organization's reach, partnerships, and long-term sustainability, partnering closely with the Board to elevate expectations and build momentum for growth.



Board Partnership and Governance

Board relations are critical to the success of Higher Ground USA. The CEO must be able to manage up and down and serve as a strong, trusted partner to the Board while running the day-to-day organization. This leader will advise and strengthen the Board, advocate for staff, and support clarity around the respective roles of the Board, CEO, and team. They will take direction from the Board while confidently guiding the organization forward. The CEO will also play a key role in strengthening governance practices, supporting bylaws, and leading efforts to recruit, onboard, and diversify the Board to ensure the right mix of skills, lived experience, and perspectives. This includes helping the Board coalesce around shared goals and fostering productive, sometimes difficult conversations rooted in trust, accountability, and mission in partnership with the Board Chair.

Visionary, Executor, and Community-Centered Problem Solver

The CEO must be a visionary leader and disciplined executor, able to see the organization's full potential while translating ideas into action. Grounded in mission, people, and values, this leader brings clarity to complex challenges and connects long-range vision to effective day-to-day execution. Authentic and relatable, the successful candidate will establish immediate trust and credibility within the close-knit Wood River Valley, including the Sun Valley, Ketchum, Hailey, and Bellevue communities, where presence, relationships, and participation matter. A genuine interest in outdoor recreation, including hiking, biking, and skiing, is important, as leadership, connection, and community integration are often built through shared outdoor experiences.

Communication, Trust-Building, and Change Management

The CEO must be an effective, intentional, and proactive communicator, particularly as the organization evolves and grows. This leader understands the difference between listening and hearing and communicates clearly and confidently to build alignment and trust. An articulate and compelling presence, the CEO connects authentically with diverse audiences, including participants, staff, donors, volunteers, and community members, while creating a safe environment for honest dialogue and the open exchange of ideas, even when perspectives are challenging or unpopular.

Compensation and Benefits

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. The salary range for this role is \$140,000 - \$170,000 with a comprehensive benefits package including:

- Self-managed paid time off
- Subsidized comprehensive health insurance
- Paid medical and family leave
- Cell phone reimbursement
- Gym membership
- Season Pass/Ticket access to Baldy and Dollar Ski Mountains
- IRA matching contributions
- Continuing education funding

TRAVEL

Moderate travel is required.



Contact

DSG | Koya has been exclusively retained for this engagement. Express interest in this role by [filling out our Talent Profile](#) or emailing the search team directly at HigherGround_CEO@koyapartners.com. All inquiries and discussions are strictly confidential.

DSG | Koya is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email NonprofitSearchOps@divsearch.com. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

Higher Ground USA is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+ applicants.

About DSG | Koya

DSG | Koya, a DSG Global company, is the nation's premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, DSG | Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. DSG | Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

DSG Global is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of "America's Best Executive Recruiting Firms" and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

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