

# Chief Executive Officer Opportunity Guide



[mutualground.org](http://mutualground.org)

# About Mutual Ground

Founded in 1975, Mutual Ground is the premier provider of victim services and substance use treatment in Southern Kane and Kendall Counties. Mutual Ground's mission is to create a safe environment where individuals impacted by domestic violence, sexual violence, and substance use are able to reclaim their power. They support the healing of our community through education, awareness, and life changing services as a commitment to equity for all.

In February 2021, Mutual Ground expanded its mission through the strategic acquisition of Breaking Free, a respected agency founded in 1977 to help rebuild the lives of those impacted by substance use disorders. This merger transformed Mutual Ground into a comprehensive human services organization capable of addressing the complex intersections of trauma, violence, and addiction. By uniting Mutual Ground's expertise in victim advocacy with Breaking Free's legacy of addiction treatment, they now offer a "whole person" approach to recovery and healing.

Mutual Ground offers free, confidential, and culturally sensitive services designed to empower clients. Their robust continuum of care encompasses 24/7 crisis intervention through bilingual hotlines and emergency shelter staffed 365 days a year. Additionally, they offer comprehensive substance use recovery services, including Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP), Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), and specialized co-occurring disorder support. The organization also provides essential advocacy and counseling, ranging from individual and family therapy to legal advocacy for protective orders and hospital emergency response. Mutual Ground prioritizes prevention through proactive community and school-based education aimed at eliminating the root causes of violence before they start.



Serving a community of over 450,000 residents, Mutual Ground continues to meet critical needs.

In the 2025 fiscal year, they delivered:

- 12,775 nights of emergency shelter to survivors.
- 14,633 hours of counseling and advocacy for victims of domestic and sexual violence.
- 3,362 hours of assessment and treatment for substance use disorders.
- Prevention and education services for domestic and sexual abuse to over 68,000 students, with an additional 7,900 students given substance use prevention education.

# The Opportunity: Chief Executive Officer



Mutual Ground seeks its next Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to lead the organization in its commitment to create a safe environment where individuals impacted by domestic violence, sexual violence, and substance use can reclaim their power. Reporting to the Board of Directors, the CEO will serve as the organization's chief ambassador, strategist, and operational leader, ensuring programmatic excellence and long-term financial sustainability.

Managing a complex budget of \$6M, the CEO will be responsible for ensuring the financial health and sustainability of the agency while navigating compliance and reporting requirements of diverse funding streams. The next leader will partner closely with the Board to develop and execute a clear strategic plan and spearhead a capital campaign. The CEO will also play an active role in fundraising, donor cultivation, grant development, and sustaining positive relationships with state and local agencies to ensure continued contractual awards and organizational viability.

Leading a team of around 90 employees, with 5 direct reports, the CEO will foster a culture of accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement across all levels of the organization. Externally, the CEO will serve as Mutual Ground's primary spokesperson and advocate, representing the organization's programs and perspective to government agencies, community partners, funders, and the general public. Internally, the CEO will partner with the COO to ensure smooth operations, quality programming and services, and a culture of positivity for all members of the team.

The successful candidate will lead with integrity, empathy, and vision, balancing big-picture strategy with operational detail. This role requires a hands-on, visible leader who is committed to professional development, continuous learning, and advancing Mutual Ground's mission in a complex and evolving service environment.

# Performance Objectives

## Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Drive the creation and execution of a long-range strategic plan that achieves the mission of Mutual Ground, ensuring consistent progress is made toward organizational goals.
- Develop and implement measurable objectives, strategies, budgets, funding strategies and timelines.
- Provide collaborative leadership in maintaining a positive and productive working relationship among the Board of Directors, partner organizations, and volunteers.
- Provide strategic direction and oversight for the organization's capital campaign for an additional facility, and collaborate with the Board to identify, cultivate, and solicit major gifts to support facility expansion and long-term sustainability.
- Ensure that programs are mission-driven, in line with strategic plan goals
- Lead, develop, motivate, supervise, and maintain a highly effective, productive, and cohesive staff with both professional/technical expertise and operational talent. There is a team of 5 direct reports.
- Encourage staff and volunteer education, helping them relate their specialized work to the organization's total program. Conduct regular all-staff meetings to foster communication.
- Maintain a working knowledge of significant developments and trends in the field to advise the Board and guide the organization effectively.

## Financial Management and Resource Development

- Collaborate with staff, the Finance Committee, and the Board to prepare the annual budget and implement sound financial practices.
- Maintain consistent reporting on the organization's financial position and outlook and ensure fiscal responsibility and compliance.
- Provide comprehensive financial oversight by understanding and managing complex public and private funding streams. Ensure the organization operates within budget guidelines.
- Actively participate in fundraising events, cultivate new donors, and ensure adequate funds are available for the organization's viability.
- Maintain positive relationships with state and local offices to secure continued funding for programs, with primary partnerships including the City of Aurora Mayor's Office and state representatives and senators across the service area.

## Community Engagement, Advocacy, and Outreach

- Advocate on behalf of Mutual Ground at the local and state levels, representing the programs and points of view of the organization to agencies and the general public.
- Create new and innovative marketing and outreach strategies using technology and social networks to increase visibility of the organization for diverse, new audiences.
- Maintain current and establish new working relationships and cooperative arrangements with community groups and organizations.
- Promote active and broad participation by volunteers in all areas of the organization's work.

# The Qualified Candidate



Mutual Ground seeks its next Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to lead the organization in its next period of growth. The ideal candidate will be a charismatic and visionary leader who can seamlessly translate high-level strategy into actionable results. As a natural connector, this individual will possess a self-motivating energy and a deep passion for the mission, allowing them to advocate for the organization and network within the community effectively.

The next leader will bring a diverse organizational skillset, including a deep understanding of finance and revenue (earned, granted, and philanthropic) fundamentals. A proven people leader, the CEO will have a track record of building, mentoring, and retaining diverse teams of staff and volunteers while fostering an inclusive, ethical workplace culture. The ideal candidate will be an effective partner to the Board of Directors and a credible external ambassador, skilled in advocacy, community engagement, and relationship-building.

## Specific Requirements Include:

- Unwavering commitment to the mission and services provided by Mutual Ground. Demonstrated experience with CARF accreditation standards and processes. Familiarity with funding and regulatory bodies, including ICADV (Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence), ICASA (Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault), and DHS (Department of Human Services), is highly desirable.
- Unwavering commitment to high ethical standards, integrity, and professionalism in all interactions with staff, clients, donors, volunteers, and community members.
- Superior verbal and written communication skills, with the ability to represent the organization effectively to diverse audiences, internally and externally.
- Proven ability to manage complex organizational goals while attending to operational detail.
- Excellent interpersonal skills with the ability to establish successful professional relationships and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Success in building strong and productive work teams with a focus on mentoring and nurturing staff development. Understanding that a full team effort is needed on certain organizational aspects, while remaining focused on their distinct functions, everyone is actively involved when needed.
- Experience within nonprofit social services and mental health organizations is preferred but not required.
- Career track record that shows stability with an organization and capacity to develop and nurture relationships, culminating in overall success.
- Strong fundraising acumen with specific experience in capital campaign management is desired.
- A minimum of 8 years of progressive experience in leadership and management, with documented ability to manage staff and lead teams.
- Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, social work, Psychology, Nonprofit Management, or an equivalent field is required. An advanced degree is strongly preferred.

# The Qualified Candidate



The successful candidate must possess, or be willing to obtain immediately upon hire, the following state-mandated certifications to ensure compliance with industry standards:

- 60-Hour Training: Completion of the Illinois 60-Hour Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Training certificate (must be completed post-hire if not currently held).
- Mandated Reporter: DCFS Mandated Reporter certification (must be completed post-hire if not currently held).
- Professional Certification: Maintenance of the Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professional (ICDVP) certification is a requirement of this role. Candidates who are not yet certified will be expected to work toward this credential upon employment.

Don't check off every box in the requirements listed above? Please consider applying anyway! Studies have shown that underrepresented communities - such as women, people of color, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and immigrants - are less likely to apply to jobs unless they meet every single qualification. Mutual Ground is dedicated to building an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible workplace that fosters a sense of belonging – so if you're excited about this role but your experience doesn't align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we encourage you to still consider applying.

# How To Apply

The compensation for this position was recently benchmarked by Mutual Ground and KEES, and it falls within the fair market range. This position offers a competitive salary with strong benefits and is based on depth of experience. The salary range for this position will be \$155,000-\$175,000.

It is the policy of Mutual Ground, Inc. to afford equal opportunity in all aspects of employment to all persons without discrimination based on race, color, religion, physical disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, military status, marital status, age, national origin, ethnicity, political affiliation, medical condition, pregnancy, immigration status or based on genetic information. This policy applies to all employees, applicants for employment, board and committee members, and volunteers and extends to all phases of hiring, selection, promotion, transfer, pay, benefits, tenure, discharge, and discipline.

Employment at our agency may qualify you for federal student loan forgiveness programs. We do not pay or forgive student loans; however, our status as a non-profit organization under section 501(c) (3) makes us an eligible employer. There may be other determining factors for one to qualify. It is the employee's responsibility to apply for the loan forgiveness program that fits their situation.

To ensure confidential tracking of all applicants, no applications will be accepted via email. ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

All candidate-submitted materials and credentials will be reviewed for consistency and accuracy. Candidates can expect that KEES will verify employment/academic/ background information both in the screening process and for the finalist(s) in a formal background check. KEES utilizes a 4-step screening process, the first of which is the formal Candidate Application. Applications are reviewed by the KEES team and advanced through various stages of inquiry and confirmation. Applications with specific cover letters will be given priority consideration, on a rolling basis, by February 15. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the search. Based on the timing of your specific application, you are welcome to reach out for information on the timeline.

This search is being managed by Heather Eddy, President and CEO and Randi Blasutti, Senior Project Manager of KEES. Questions may be addressed to [rblasutti@kees2success.com](mailto:rblasutti@kees2success.com).

**APPLY HERE**

## About KEES

KEES (formerly Alford Executive Search) is a certified woman-owned nonprofit executive search firm dedicated to creating diverse teams with dynamic leadership in the nonprofit and public sectors. We offer a comprehensive range of services, including executive search, leadership development, compensation analysis, interim staffing, and HR support.

Launched in 2013, based on decades of prior work by the Founders, KEES is a leader and noted pioneer in DEIB-focused executive search and culture building. KEES is noted for bringing dynamic and under-radar candidates to the table, regularly placing industry veterans and first-time leaders alike. Recognized for two years in a row on the Hunt Scanlon Nonprofit Top 65, KEES leaders are sought-after experts in search, leadership development, and often first-time roles. To learn more, visit us at [www.kees2success.com](http://www.kees2success.com).