



BENWOOD

PRESIDENT

Position Prospectus

Chattanooga, TN



About the Benwood Foundation

For over 80 years, the Benwood Foundation has been deeply committed to both people and place and has been a catalyst for transformative change in Chattanooga. Established in 1944, the Foundation has grown into one of the city's most respected and trusted civic institutions. Benwood plays a far more dynamic role in the community that spans beyond grantmaking — functioning as a convener, a long-term investor and strategic partner in shaping a stronger future.

What sets Benwood apart is its unique ability to bring together multifaceted groups including but not limited to public agencies, private institutions, grassroots leaders, nonprofit partners, and civic stakeholders. The Foundation's focus is to build trust, align strategies, and pursue collective progress. Benwood doesn't merely respond to challenges; it helps the community envision what's possible and moves with intention toward that vision.

From a vibrant downtown and beloved parks to strong neighborhoods, affordable housing, and equitable access to broadband, Benwood champions initiatives that make the city more livable and inclusive. It supports education-to-career pathways that prepare residents for meaningful work and invests in the outdoor spaces and cultural assets that make Chattanooga a place people are proud to call home. In all of this, Benwood works hand-in-hand with strategic partners across sectors to build the best version of Chattanooga – a city where all people can thrive.





In addition to its high-impact investments, the Foundation strengthens the broader civic ecosystem. It supports demonstration projects, amplifies promising models, and strategically concentrates resources where deep lasting changes is achievable. As part of its commitment to developing civic leadership, Benwood serves as the anchor partner for Chattanooga's participation in Harvard Business School's Young American Leaders Program. Many of Chattanooga's most influential changemakers are alumni, forming a growing network that fuels cross-sector collaboration and future-focused leadership across the community.

Benwood's flexibility is one of its greatest strengths. It can shift funding across strategic priorities, responsive needs, and ecosystem development while maintaining long-term commitments and disciplined focus. Its willingness to reflect, evaluate, and adapt in real time has become a hallmark of its effectiveness. The Foundation has learned how to catalyze momentum even outside moments of crisis, proving that the right mix of timing, leadership, and vision can unlock sustained progress.

Over the past eight years, Benwood has awarded nearly \$40 million in strategic grants and investments to the community, with an ambitious horizon ahead. The next President of the Foundation will inherit not just a respected institution, but a powerful platform with a city-wide expectation to help shape what's next for Chattanooga.

About the Opportunity

This is a unique and compelling opportunity to lead a highly respected foundation at a moment of strategic inflection. As Benwood prepares to define its next chapter, the incoming President will have the chance to shape new approaches to civic investment and community leadership in Chattanooga.

This position requires a visionary and collaborative leader, someone who thrives in complex environments, values deep partnerships, and brings both strategic insight and operational discipline. Working alongside a deeply engaged Board and a committed, mission-driven staff, the President will guide the Foundation's next era of impact across areas such as education, workforce development, housing, civic engagement and potentially yet to be uncovered opportunities.

This is an ideal role for a leader who thrives in complexity, values cross-sector collaboration, and brings a systems perspective to community change. The President will be expected to guide the Foundation with both bold vision and steady execution, leveraging relationships, insights, and strategic investments to help shape what's next for Chattanooga. In addition to stewarding resources and partnerships, the President will help sustain Benwood's role as a civic thought leader by raising the right questions, surfacing new ideas, and helping the community see not only what is, but what could be.





Position Description

Key Responsibilities

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Lead the development of a new strategic framework for the Foundation in partnership with the Board.
- Identify emerging opportunities and risks across Chattanooga's civic and economic landscape.
- Ensure alignment of all programs and partnerships with Benwood's vision of shared prosperity.
- Champion a culture of continuous learning, transparency, and adaptive leadership.

PHILANTHROPIC STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS

- Guide all aspects of the Foundation's grantmaking strategy, emphasizing high-impact, equity-centered investments.
- Foster relationships with grantees and partners across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.
- Collaborate with the Board and investment committee to steward the Foundation's endowment with sound fiduciary judgment.
- Ensure full compliance with private foundation rules and reporting requirements, including IRS regulations and grantmaking standards.
- Evaluate outcomes, gather community feedback, and refine strategies based on learning.
- Oversee financial planning, budgeting, and the development of internal policies that promote ethical, transparent, and mission-aligned use of resources.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

- Serve as a trusted community leader and relationship-builder, advancing Benwood's role as a convener and changemaker.
- Represent the Foundation in public settings, ensuring visibility and accessibility.
- Build partnerships with leaders in education, affordable housing, workforce development, downtown design and development.

Candidate Profile

Required Qualifications

- At least 10 years of senior leadership experience in philanthropy, nonprofit management, or related sectors.
- Demonstrated ability to lead strategic planning, manage high-impact initiatives, and foster multi-stakeholder collaboration.
- Deep knowledge of at least one of Benwood's core focus areas.
- Proven commitment to community-driven work and inclusive economic or educational advancement.

Strongly Preferred Qualifications

- Experience leading a foundation, major initiative, or civic organization in a comparable community.
- Familiarity with Chattanooga or cities undergoing similar economic, demographic, and political transformations.

Personal Characteristics

- A visionary and courageous leader who balances ambition with humility.
- An inclusive relationship-builder who listens deeply and leads with integrity.
- Entrepreneurial thinker with a systems orientation and a bias toward action.
- Passion for place-based philanthropy, and the power of local leadership.





Key Leadership Attributes

Strategic Systems Thinker

Sees the big picture across sectors, policy, and political dynamics. Understands how disparate players and systems intersect and can execute bold ideas with precision and adaptability.

Exceptional Convener, Trusted Advisor and Relationship Builder

Brings gravitas, trust, and diplomacy to every table. Operates effectively both behind the scenes and in visible leadership roles to unite diverse perspectives and advance collective progress.

Visionary and Conceptual Leader

Can imagine what's possible and turn it into action. Brings creativity, courage, and entrepreneurial thinking to catalyze transformative initiatives that "punch above their weight."

Humble and Collaborative

Leads with humility, prioritizing mission over recognition. Builds inclusive coalitions and inspires shared ownership, credit, and accountability.

Inclusive

Deeply committed to economic mobility, not just economic growth. Navigates civic and institutional divides with courage and care to advancing better outcomes for all.

Locally Grounded (or Rapidly Adaptive)

Possesses deep familiarity with Chattanooga's history, networks, and dynamics, OR demonstrates the ability and commitment to learn them quickly and authentically engage.

Experienced in Philanthropy and Community Investment

Brings a strong grasp of foundation operations and high-impact philanthropy. Understands how to balance being a grantmaker with being a catalyst and convener.

The Board of Trustees and Staff Leadership

The Benwood Foundation is governed by a dedicated Board of Trustees committed to the organization's mission of promoting shared prosperity in Chattanooga. The Board brings deep expertise in civic leadership, philanthropy, public policy, business, and education, and plays an active role in strategic planning and organizational stewardship.

In addition to the Board, Benwood is led by a small, talented, and highly respected professional staff with a strong track record of collaborative, equity-centered work. Known for their humility, creativity, and deep knowledge of the Chattanooga community, the staff serve as both stewards of the Foundation's values and catalysts for new ideas and partnerships.

Together, the Board and staff reflect Benwood's core belief that lasting community impact comes through thoughtful collaboration, courageous leadership, and a deep commitment to inclusive change.

Board of Trustees

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Unum

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Chattanooga Quantum Collaborative

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Lori Quillen

Program Officer

About Chattanooga

Tucked between the mountains of Southeast Tennessee and the banks of the Tennessee River, Chattanooga is a city that blends natural beauty, creative energy, and civic innovation. Known for its scenic landscapes, thriving entrepreneurial scene, and rich cultural history, Chattanooga has become one of the most livable and forward-looking cities in the Southeast. Whether you're raising a family, launching the next chapter of your career, or seeking a more balanced pace of life, Chattanooga offers an ideal place to plant roots and make an impact.

Chattanooga's renaissance over the past two decades has been driven by bold investments in public space, economic development, and civic engagement. The city is home to a dynamic downtown, award-winning waterfront, and some of the fastest internet in the world thanks to its municipally owned fiber-optic network. With a strong ecosystem of nonprofits, foundations, and cross-sector partnerships, Chattanooga has become a nationally recognized model for place-based collaboration and inclusive growth. For families, the city offers a wealth of options—including neighborhood schools, magnet programs, and experiential learning environments—as well as access to parks, greenways, and outdoor activities. Chattanooga is a haven for hikers, cyclists, paddlers, and climbers, with the Great Smoky Mountains, Cumberland Plateau, and countless rivers and trails nearby. For those more drawn to arts and culture, the city boasts a strong creative community, with institutions like the Hunter Museum of American Art, the Tivoli Theatre, and a year-round calendar of festivals and events.

Empty nesters and mid-career professionals alike find Chattanooga appealing for its balance of opportunity and quality of life. With no state income tax, a moderate cost of living, and a walkable downtown filled with local restaurants, markets, and cultural amenities, it's a city that rewards those looking to engage deeply with the community while enjoying a slower pace than larger urban centers. If you are passionate about education, equity, the arts, the outdoors, or civic innovation, Chattanooga offers the space and spirit to lead a life of meaning and connection.



Desired Start Date

Fall 2025

Location

Benwood Foundation is located in Chattanooga TN and this role requires an in-office work schedule and the individual needs to live in the community. Relocation assistance is available.

Compensation

The Benwood Foundation offers an annual salary ranging from \$200,000 to \$325,000. The salary offered will depend on several factors, including but not limited to years of relevant experience, training, educational qualifications, and performance in previous roles.

Benefits

The Benwood Foundation will offer the new President relocation assistance and a highly competitive and comprehensive benefits package.

For More Information & To Apply

Benwood Foundation has retained Kay Linder, Partner within ThinkAhead's Executive Search's Nonprofit Division to serve as our recruitment partner. If you are interested and qualified, [please apply here.](#)

Questions can be directed to:

Kay Linder

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