

Job Opening: Executive Director

South Cumberland Partnership invites applications for the position of Executive Director.

Please read the full job description and organization background before applying at <https://www.southcumberlandpartnership.org/jobs/executive-director>

Review of applications will begin on September 9; if you are advanced in the process you will hear from SCP by September 30th.

Executive Opportunity

The [South Cumberland Partnership](https://www.southcumberlandpartnership.org/), Inc. (SCP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, seeks a candidate to serve as its Executive Director—the organization’s chief executive—responsible for providing top-level leadership, strategic direction, and operational oversight to ensure that SCP achieves its mission and goals, working collaboratively with its Board, staff, and external resources, both at the governmental and philanthropic levels, as well as community stakeholders. SCP is at an exciting junction, with a fresh strategic direction, established base funding, and incoming grants. Candidates are invited to learn more and apply online below.

Characteristics of our Ideal Candidate

Essentials

- Bachelor’s degree in nonprofit management, marketing, economic development, business administration or related areas and a minimum of three years’ experience in economic development and/or destination marketing, or an equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Effective leader of staff, board, committees and community stakeholders
- Strong advocate for the organization, its mission and goals
- Authentic and emotionally mature; able to inspire trust
- Strong interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills
- Strong operational management skills
- Strategic, long-range thinker
- Demonstrated experience in economic development, destination marketing, destination management, or rural tourism development/management
- Strong networking skills, public speaking skills, and local government negotiation skills (for annual budget)

Able to successfully raise funds/pursue grants/form alliances

- All levels of government, plus philanthropic entities
- Ability to direct and/or prepare grant applications
- Develop strong working relationships w/ resources (e.g., ARC, TVA, TDTD, TDEC, etc.)
- Strong financial skills (budgeting, money management, reporting)
- Experience interpreting tourism and economic impact data, visitation trends, occupancy metrics, and other performance indicators
- Ability to use tourism research and analytics to guide marketing investments, strategic planning, and organizational priorities

Effective at managing people and projects

- Demonstrated ability to operate independently with limited day-to-day direction while maintaining strong accountability to a governing board
- Proven ability to establish priorities, execute strategic initiatives, and effectively manage organizational operations with minimal oversight
- Able to drive productivity
- Effective at directing and managing Partner, Committee and Board meetings
- Effectively connect SCP with the local community through in-person interactions
- Successfully recruit and utilize new staff hires and volunteer talent

Collaborative, “servant” persona

- Able to work collaboratively and effectively with governmental, philanthropic and other external organizations
- Comfortable with Rural America lifestyle and personalities
- Deep commitment to the organization's mission and values
- A relentless learner

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership & Planning:

- Works with the SCP Executive Committee and Board of Directors to implement and evaluate, and update the SCP Strategic Plan
- Ensures consistent progress toward SCP’s mission and programmatic impact

Financial Management & Fundraising:

- Oversees SCP's budgeting, financial reporting, and fiscal integrity
- Ensure SCP's financial health, including grant writing and donor cultivation

Operations & Program Oversight:

- Manages SCP's daily operations, ensuring efficient program delivery service quality
- Develops and implements sound SCP policies and procedures

Board Relations & Governance:

- Reports to and takes direction from the Board of Directors and Executive Committee
- Collaborates with the SCP Board on policy, strategy, and fundraising
- Provides regular reports to the SCP Board & Exec Cttee on operations, performance

Staff Leadership & Development:

- Recruits, hires, supervises, and provides professional development for SCP's staff
- Fosters a positive and values-driven work environment within SCP

External Relations & Communications:

- Serves as the primary SCP spokesperson and face of the organization
- Builds and maintains SCP's strategic partnerships and community awareness

Compensation Package

- Salary range: \$70,000 - \$80,000, commensurate with education and experience.
- Candidate must live in, or relocate to, a location within daily commuting distance of Grundy County, TN (which includes Nashville and Chattanooga, TN; and Huntsville, AL)
- PTO: 15 days annually (as accrued, in years one and two), to include vacation, illness, bereavement, etc.
- Compensation will initially include 15 days of annual PTO (this could be vacation, sick leave, bereavement, or any combination), which may increase with time.
- 12 paid holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, two days at Thanksgiving, two days at Christmas, New Year's Eve, and 3 floating holidays.
- Flexible scheduling may be used in limited increments for minimal time out-of-office
- Additional benefits negotiable

Administrative details

- Anticipated schedule is 40 hrs/weekly, with a hybrid schedule (70% office in Tracy City, TN / 30% remote) permitted.
- Occasional evening or weekend work is anticipated.
- Flexible schedule is permitted, with a focus on in-person presence for community events, community outreach, meetings with local government officials, funders, and partners, and coordination with SCP Board.
- Position will include travel within Tennessee, principally to Nashville or Chattanooga to meet with funders and government officials.
- Valid Driver's License required.

What Executive Director Candidates Need to Know

Since its creation in 2021, the [South Cumberland Partnership](#), Inc. (SCP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, has engaged in tourist development as a means of bolstering rural economic opportunities for the southern Cumberland Plateau region of Tennessee, located midway between Nashville and Chattanooga. Centered on Grundy County, the region extends into portions of surrounding counties as well.

During that time, SCP increased multi-day tourism by over 500% (as measured by local lodging tax collections). SCP has engaged prospective visitors with its "Mountains of Adventure" marketing campaign, [MountainsOfAdventure.com](#) website, and *Vacation Planning Guide* magazine, among other online and traditional media efforts.

While increasing multi-day tourism has been part of SCP's charge since its inception, SCP's mission now encompasses a dual mandate: Grow multi-day tourist visitation, while simultaneously facilitating the creation of locally-based, job-creating economic opportunities that maximize the beneficial impact of future growth in visitor spending.

[The SCP Strategic Plan](#) expresses it this way:

WHAT

SCP exists in order to create a successful outdoor recreation and heritage tourism economy that values and celebrates the traditions of each of its gateway communities, while providing economic opportunity for all of the region's citizens. Its emphasis is on supporting local

businesses and entrepreneurs, and fostering the creation of welcoming places for visitors, while protecting the rural character and authentic nature of the region's communities.

WHY

SCP's purpose is to provide the region's visitors with outstanding hospitality experiences that reflect the welcoming manner and entrepreneurial spirit of the people and communities in the region. As a result, these visitors bring economic benefits to the region by providing added business and tax revenue while creating good jobs for its citizens and, in particular, fostering job skills and career pathways for the region's young adults.

HOW

SCP improves economic opportunity in the region by working with established community resources, business owners and entrepreneurs. SCP advocates for and develops ways to support locally-owned businesses and entrepreneurs that serve the region's outdoor recreation and heritage tourism economy. These efforts are focused on creating jobs, engaging area youth, fostering improved customer and client service, and promoting workforce opportunities in a way that will ultimately improve the effectiveness of SCP's tourism efforts.

According to research from the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, Tennessee's 2023 average per-tourist daily spending is \$212 dollars, but this area's per-tourist daily spending is only \$83 — illustrating a huge opportunity for further economic growth in local business and job creation in an area that has seen only modest economic benefit thus far.

In this rural area (Grundy County's population is approximately 14,000), the region's economy has been slow to rally around tourism as an economic engine. In many instances, this is due to a lack of capital and entrepreneurial knowledge that would foster the creation of local businesses typically associated with tourist visitation; SCP seeks to change this.

The region's history is also relevant here. Historically, the economic engine of this area was powered by extraction industries, principally in coal and timber. The coal industry period extended from the late 1840s to the early 1970s, reaching its peak in the 1890s, with a steady decline thereafter. The timber industry, while still modestly active today, had its peak in the 1880-1920 time-frame. However, this topographically-rugged area has always had an allure to visitors, beginning in the 1850s with an antebellum resort now known as the town of Beersheba Springs.

The South Cumberland region is a vast plateau, 2,000 feet above sea level, deeply incised by deeply-forested and very scenic canyons, flanked by tall sandstone cliffs (or "bluffs", in the local terminology). Atop the plateau, land is still rolling and deeply wooded. The nine towns of the region stand as largely unspoiled examples of rural America, each with extensive and unique histories relating to coal, Swiss resettlement, religion, education or recreation.

In the 1960s, area tourism received a boost with the arrival of Interstate 24. In the 1970s, the region became home to a 35,000-acre Tennessee State Park. The original park has now evolved

into *three* discrete state parks that collectively attract roughly 1.1 million visitors per year. In addition, the historic University of the South, founded on the eve of the Civil War, has a large and scenic campus that attracts not only students and their families, but also visitors who come to attend its various conferences, workshops and seasonal activities. Most recently, *The Caverns*, a unique and very successful music venue located in a large local cave, has contributed to tourism growth. The PBS-TV series “*The Caverns Sessions*”, shot there, on-location, has introduced Tennessee’s South Cumberland to an international audience.

Today, this region has tremendous opportunity to nurture and establish a true outdoor recreation and hospitality economy, thanks to its natural assets, which support world-class rock climbing, hiking, camping, hunting, paddling and related outdoor activities.

At present, SCP is fully volunteer-driven. We recognize that SCP must increase its capacity in order to realize the area’s full potential. That is why we are seeking a collaborative, results-oriented leader to turn SCP into a sustainable organization.

The successful candidate will empower SCP to create and implement sustainable economic development initiatives that result in the establishment of new local businesses and the creation of good, local jobs. This, combined with the continuing growth of SCP’s visitor marketing program, will successfully raise the region’s per-visitor daily spending to the Tennessee state average and beyond, returning significant value to the region’s residents, small business owners, and entrepreneurs.

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