



Senior Director of
Government Affairs

Mystic Aquarium

Mystic, Connecticut | Spring 2024

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BOSTON | NEW YORK

Mystic Aquarium seeks a new Senior Director of Government Affairs to build and maintain relationships with civic, government and political stakeholders to advance the mission of Mystic Aquarium



About Mystic Aquarium

Founded in 1973 as a “living laboratory,” Connecticut’s world-famous Mystic Aquarium is home to thousands of marine mammals, fish, invertebrates, and reptiles that are central to its mission of marine conservation, research, and education. The 18+ acre campus provides a broad array of environments for different animals as well as research and care facilities, educational exhibits, and playful learning areas for children and families. In 2023, the Aquarium hit a record number of 850,000 visitors to campus and 1.9 million followers on TikTok who are transported through diverse environments like the Arctic; North America’s Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coastal waters; and tropical, and marine ecosystems. Mystic Aquarium underscores global concerns to both their in-person and virtual guests by elevating their mission to inspire people to protect our ocean environments through conservation, education, and research.

The Aquarium is a division of Sea Research Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, and is counted among the nation’s leading aquariums with its 300+ species and extensive collection of marine mammals, including New England’s only beluga whales.

The Aquarium also houses a Veterinary and Animal Health Center, an 18,000 sq-foot Ocean Science and Conservation Center that was recently completed, state-of-the-art classrooms, conference facilities, and a \$1.5M aquaculture lab and animal holding area. Other highlights include interactive exhibits where visitors can experience the animals up close at the shark, ray tank, penguin pavilion, and jellyfish gallery.

Mystic Aquarium is a member of the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA) and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). With an annual budget of \$30M, 250 full-time and part-time staff, and 600 volunteers, Mystic Aquarium enjoys prestigious local, national, and international partnerships with premier educational and academic research institutions.

As a leading research organization located in the beautiful coastal town of Mystic, Connecticut, Mystic Aquarium employs a full staff of scientists, trainers, and specialists engaged in projects focused on the conservation and sustainability of our ocean planet.

About the Senior Director of Government Affairs

A new role and reporting to the Chief Advancement Officer, Tina Couch, the Senior Director of Government Affairs will plan and coordinate government affairs strategy for Mystic Aquarium, advocating for the organization with elected and appointed leaders at the city, county, state and federal level. This person will cultivate and maintain relationships with government, civic and political stakeholders, as well as identify and implement engagement initiatives that advance Mystic Aquarium and its mission. This person will manage and coordinate the state and federal lobbyists currently working with Mystic Aquarium.



The ideal candidate will be able to work with diverse external audiences, employing creative approaches to find common ground to create change. Internally, the Senior Director will collaborate closely with various teams including Animal Care, Science and Conservation Research, Marketing, Design and Exhibits, Finance, Legal, and Advancement. As a highly visible representative of Mystic Aquarium, the Senior Director must possess strong community awareness, sensitivity, and sound judgment.

The Senior Director will be expected to stay informed on government issues potentially affecting Mystic Aquarium, as well as represent Mystic Aquarium as needed at events throughout the state and country. This person must be committed to Mystic Aquarium's mission in critical research to advance the knowledge about marine life.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop and implement Mystic Aquarium's comprehensive government relations, legislative and policy agenda
- Oversee the activities of the Aquarium's lobbying and government relations firms and other consultants
- Represent Mystic Aquarium as required with agencies, legislative bodies, and community groups, individually, and alongside relevant subject-matter experts or leaders
- Work directly with elected and appointed officials to share Mystic Aquarium's impact and advocate on behalf of the organization
- Organize one-on-one meetings and other forms of engagement with aquarium leadership to engage officials, stakeholders, and corporate and civic leaders to advance priorities and partnerships
- Work across teams to develop, manage, and execute multiple annual legislative campaigns and other strategic communications
- Work closely with the Chief Advancement Officer and other development colleagues on fundraising priorities for the institution as they relate to government affairs
- Keep senior leadership informed of key issues, opportunities and threats and related action plans



Key Qualifications

- Minimum 5 years' experience in community engagement, government affairs and/or public policy
- Strong working knowledge of political, regulatory, and legislative processes and effective means of influencing policy
- Understanding of the Connecticut political landscape is highly desirable and experience with Federal government also plus
- Excellent written and verbal communication and persuasion skills, with an ability to effectively present to a variety of internal and external constituencies
- Demonstrated ability to represent the institution at the highest level of professionalism and integrity and effectively interact with government officials and senior executives
- Well-organized and deadline-oriented, with exceptional attention to detail and follow-through
- Experience working to advance the mission of a non-profit organization is a plus
- Emotionally mature and self-possessed; patient and tactful with a sense of humor
- Grant writing experience or exposure a plus
- Interest in the mission of Mystic Aquarium to inspire people to care for and protect the ocean planet through conservation, education, and research



Diversity and Inclusion: Mystic Aquarium embraces the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in its business and conservation practices. They strive to foster a sense of belonging within their organization, our guests, and the communities that they serve and are committed to dismantling systemic inequities.

Please submit your application [here](#)

For more information, please visit www.developmentguild.com.

For more information about Mystic Aquarium, please visit: <https://www.mysticaquarium.org/>

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About Development Guild DDI

For 45 years, Development Guild DDI has consulted to leaders across the nonprofit spectrum. We have successfully collaborated with more than 650 clients nationwide in the sectors of health & science, education, environment, the arts, and social justice. We are experts in executive search and fundraising and are at the forefront of delivering best practice in these services.

With each engagement, we work in teams tailored to a client's particular needs, providing sector-specific intelligence, cross-sector insight, and hands-on functional expertise. We combine our perspective on nonprofit leadership with our knowledge and experience in both fundraising and executive search. This distinct perspective enables us to deliver the most strategic and measurable impact.

