

AJWS grantee Thoughtshop Foundation designs games, charts and other tools to help young people in Maharajganj, India discuss deeply taboo topics like gender-based violence and child marriage. Photo by Ranita Roy.

Position Specification

President and Chief Executive Officer
American Jewish World Service
(AJWS)



About American Jewish World Service (AJWS)



Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, American Jewish World Service (AJWS) works to realize human rights and end poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

AJWS works to build a more equitable world and responds to pressing global issues—from authoritarianism and the climate crisis, to the persecution of women and minorities—by supporting hundreds of grassroots social change organizations on three continents and advocating for U.S. and international policies protecting human rights. AJWS supporters are primarily members of the Jewish community in the United States, but their work helps people of all religions, races, and ethnicities. AJWS is the leading Jewish organization dedicated exclusively to this goal.

How AJWS Makes Change

Funding human rights organizations

AJWS makes grants to 500+ grantees in 14 countries, offering flexible, long-term funding so they can tackle complex challenges and pivot as on-the-ground conditions change.

Accompanying them to scale up the impact

In each country, expert local staff help grassroots organizations grow and strategize, bringing them together to collaborate and build social movements that mobilize the public to fight for their rights.

Advocating to shift global policy

AJWS advocates in Washington, D.C. to amplify their grantees' voices and build momentum for widespread change.

Each of these things is important alone, but when AJWS puts them together, it multiplies the impact exponentially. With Jewish values and a global reach, AJWS is making a difference in millions of lives, striving to bring a more just and equitable world closer for all.

AJWS: Strategies and Issues

AJWS uses its grants-multiplier model to make demonstrable human rights progress. In 2024, AJWS invested \$37.3M in these grantmaking and social change strategies, with more than half a billion dollars granted in total since AJWS was founded in 1985. AJWS's international grantmaking, accompaniment, and advocacy, focus on four central issues that they believe are key to securing human rights and ending poverty in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean:

Sexual Health and Rights

AJWS supports organizations empowering women, girls and LGBTQI+ people to promote equality, stop violence and discrimination and live with dignity, safety and health.

Civil and Political Rights

AJWS invests in organizations fighting for civil and political rights around the globe—promoting justice under the law for all and the right to be heard, vote and participate in political life.

Land, Water and Climate Justice

AJWS supports organizations slowing climate change and protecting the land, water and natural resources that rural and indigenous people depend on for survival.

Disaster and Humanitarian Response

AJWS supports organizations that save lives and build more equitable societies in the wake of earthquakes, hurricanes and epidemics.



AJWS convened 21 Guatemalan grantees for a three-day retreat where activists formed bonds that will strengthen their growing movement to confront authoritarian leadership in their government and bolster justice and equality in the country. Photograph by Christine Han

AJWS: Core Values

AJWS's values are rooted in the Jewish imperative to pursue justice for all people and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

DIGNITY

We embrace and defend the inherent worth of every human being.

HUMILITY

Recognizing our privilege and power, we listen free of judgment and acknowledge we alone cannot change the world.

INCLUSIVITY

We work in partnership to elevate the voices and perspectives of those who are marginalized, underrepresented or excluded.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We act with integrity and transparency to honor our commitments.

COURAGE

We stand in solidarity with one another as we strive for innovative change and remain hopeful in the face of challenges.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Racial Justice (DEIRJ)

AJWS's leadership is deeply committed to enhancing our organizational culture, policies, and practices to ensure that they are equitable and inclusive. AJWS is committed to fighting racism, antisemitism, and other forms of oppression so that freedom and human rights can be realized for all. We strive to build a culture in which each member of our team is welcomed in their full humanity, treated equitably and with respect, and able to lead and thrive at AJWS. We see our continued exploration of what DEIRJ means to our staff and our Board as intimately tied to the values that drive our work and will help define our success as an organization moving forward.



This team of lawyers, therapists and community organizers from grantee National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) in Nairobi protects LGBTQI+ people from discrimination and false charges while building a community across Kenya. Photo by Lameck Ododo

The Opportunity to Lead AJWS



In a time of extraordinary global challenges and rising attacks on human rights, AJWS seeks a seasoned and strategic President and CEO to lead and guide the organization through its next chapter of building a more just and equitable world for all. The next CEO has a generational opportunity to fight poverty, defend human rights, and respond to pressing global issues, while building upon the flexibility and innovation inherent in AJWS's unique grants-multiplier model.

AJWS and its supporters are deeply committed to *tikkun olam* – the Hebrew phrase for “repairing the world.” As their grantees work to stop injustice that threatens the lives and human rights of people worldwide, AJWS and their supporters are by their side: providing financial support, advocacy, activism, and an unwavering commitment to justice. Together, they strive to bring about a future in which all people can live full and productive lives in democratic, peaceful, and equitable societies. The next CEO will engage with current supporters, as well as bring new funders into the work of AJWS.

As it enters its fifth decade, AJWS is poised and ready to meet the moment and accelerate its impact. The next CEO will build on the strength of the organization and its history of accomplishments, driving the organization to be ever more innovative and dynamic, and always centering its commitment to its values, mission, partners, and communities.

The AJWS team, Board, and supporters bring a deep and unflinching resolve to meet the moment and promote lasting change in championing human rights around the world. The next CEO of AJWS will embrace the opportunity to shape the organization's present and future impact by bringing their own unique perspective, vision, and experience. They will work closely with a cohesive and committed Board; a talented, diverse, and dedicated staff; and lead a well-resourced institution poised for greater impact.

The President & CEO Role

Reporting to and working closely with the Board of Trustees, the CEO of AJWS has responsibility and accountability for leading and inspiring the vision for the organization, as well as the strategic, programmatic, fundraising, financial, and management operations. Specifically, the CEO will:

- Partner with the Board and Executive Leadership Team to provide vision, leadership, and strategic direction for the organization.
- Drive organizational fundraising and a financial sustainability strategy to deliver on AJWS's mission and programs.
- In partnership with the Executive Leadership Team, drive implementation of the organization's current strategy and ensure ongoing accountability to the organization's vision, mission, and values; its strategic plan; and its benchmarks and outcomes.
- Lead with humility and a high degree of emotional intelligence, inspiring internal and external partners around a shared vision and continuously driving for impact.
- Inspire a committed, diverse, and creative staff, fostering a culture of trust, accountability, equity, inclusivity, constructive dialogue, and leadership that empowers innovation and excellence.
- Building on the organization's foundation, invite new perspectives and innovation to inform the future of AJWS.



Girls gather and support each other in Mewat, India in an education and tutoring center run by grantee Alwar Mewat Institute of Education and Development (AMIED). Photo by Ranita Roy.

Critical Skills and Competencies for the Role *(1 of 2)*



The CEO of AJWS will be a visionary leader who can honor the organization's 40-year legacy, ensure its unwavering commitment to building a more just and equitable world, and galvanize the community around the pursuit of lasting change. They will bring the emotional intelligence and self-awareness required to build trusting relationships with staff, Board, grantee-partners, and communities to amplify AJWS's impact. The candidate will bring experience working with grassroots organizations and a depth of understanding of a rights-based approach to social change and global human rights.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following (while recognizing that no one candidate is likely to have all of these strengths):

- **Strategic Vision, Adaptive Leadership, and Innovation:** The CEO will bring a demonstrated capacity to lead an inspiring vision for AJWS. They will be a skilled strategic thought partner to the Board, staff, grantees, partners, and other stakeholders in advancing the impact of AJWS. They will bring a capacity to lead in a rapidly changing environment within the existing strategic plan, as well as a track record of seeing around corners with regard to new opportunities for impact and evolution. They should respond creatively and effectively to threats and risks and be unafraid of taking action to pursue creative and innovative opportunities.
- **Capacity to Build Authentic Relationships and Nurture Key Partnerships:** The CEO must bring strong interpersonal skills and lead with humility, curiosity, diplomacy, and empathy. The right candidate will travel across the U.S. and around the globe to authentically connect, communicate, listen, influence, and motivate action from a wide range of constituents, including Board, staff, grantees, funders, government officials, partner organizations, philanthropic institutions, and beyond. They will bring a demonstrated capacity to actively partner with AJWS's Board of Trustees, playing an active role in Board stewardship and recruitment, and to build relationships and trust with AJWS's global staff.
- **Effective Articulation of AJWS's Vision and Impact:** An excellent communicator internally and externally, the right candidates will be able to skillfully articulate AJWS's vision and unique impact model to broad and diverse communities, across geographies, languages, and cultures.

Critical Skills and Competencies for the Role (2 of 2)



- **Fundraising:** The majority of AJWS's supporters come from the American Jewish community. Along with a skilled and dedicated Development team, the CEO will lead the stewardship and growth of the organization's fundraising efforts, including developing new and diverse sources of revenue for the organization. They will bring a track record of raising funds and/or a demonstrated capacity to raise funds from both individuals and institutions, as well as bring a vision for the future of development for the organization.
- **Stewardship of Inclusive, Mission-Driven Leadership in Alignment with AJWS's Values:** AJWS is anchored in an unwavering belief in universal human rights, and by the Jewish tradition that each of us was created *b'tselem Elohim*—that each one of us has inherent and infinite value. The next CEO of AJWS should recognize that one of the organization's strengths is the diversity of experiences, viewpoints, and backgrounds of the staff. They will bring not only demonstrated experience in nurturing diverse teams where everyone feels heard, represented, and respected, but also a leadership that embeds equity and inclusion practices across the organization. The CEO will lead with compassion, mutual respect, humility, and a willingness to listen deeply and engage in difficult conversations.
- **Empowerment and Leadership of High-Performing Teams and Organizational Culture:** The right candidate will have relevant experience in managing people and institutions and the capacity to partner with a variety of constituents, including the Board of Trustees and a globally distributed staff. They will bring the capacity to develop and maintain a high-performing and collaborative organizational culture by galvanizing the team and embodying a culture that is courageous and mission-driven, while ensuring staff can find joy and fulfillment in their work. They will be comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, and leading others through complex situations with the highest degree of integrity.
- **Demonstrated Commitment to Grassroots Movements, Human Rights, and Justice:** Strong candidates for the role will bring a depth of understanding and a demonstrated commitment to grassroots movements and global human rights – with an unwavering belief that the people who are most affected by problems are best suited to address them. The CEO will need to be credibly curious across the full range of AJWS's areas of work, and have a strong, well-informed grasp of the complex issues and injustices that threaten the lives and human rights of people worldwide. The candidate will bring a demonstrated passion for, or lived experience with, AJWS's mission and a personal and/or professional alignment with the Jewish tradition of pursuing justice.

Compensation and Contact



Compensation

The estimated salary for this position is approximately \$400,000-\$450,000, although the salary and total compensation of the individual selected for this role will be determined based on various factors, including, but not limited to, level of experience, accomplishments, internal equity, budget, and a reasonableness evaluation for organizational tax purposes. The compensation range listed is a good-faith determination of potential base compensation as a component of the total compensation for the role at the time of this job advertisement and may be modified in the future.

Location

This position is based in AJWS's New York office and will require international and domestic travel.

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively engaged to lead this search. Interested candidates are invited to visit the Russell Reynolds Engage platform, accessible through the following url: <https://bit.ly/4mhC4G1>. Candidates will first be asked to register and create a profile. From the home page, navigate to "Job Post", click "Apply for Position", and enter the following career code: 2505-675NA to submit a resume and cover letter for consideration. All nominations and expressions of interest are welcome and can also be sent to the Russell Reynolds team at ajwsceo@russellreynolds.com. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

Additional Considerations

All qualified applicants, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex, Trans, and Gender non-conforming people; women; differently abled people; and individuals of different religious, spiritual, and cultural backgrounds, are encouraged to apply. As an organization committed to promoting social justice around the world, it is essential that we incorporate a diverse, equitable, and inclusive lens to all aspects of our work at AJWS. As such, we encourage applicants with a global perspective and a commitment to values around equity, inclusion, and diversity of experience, background, and viewpoints to apply. AJWS is an equal opportunity employer.

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