



President and Chief Executive Officer
Position Specification
2026



A National Partner for Student-centered Learning

KnowledgeWorks is a nationally recognized leader advancing the future of learning that ensures each student graduates ready for what's next.

We bring a distinctive combination of strategic foresight, policy expertise, and teaching and learning supports. KnowledgeWorks prepares communities for the future of education, works to create policies that support innovative teaching and learning and develops the capacity of educators and leaders to lead national transformation.

By strategically deploying our investment portfolio and education experts, KnowledgeWorks propels approaches and partnerships that transform education systems. Through evidence-based practices and a commitment to equitable outcomes, we're creating the future of learning, together.

Vision

Advancing the future of learning where students of all races and ethnicities, incomes and identities pursue the kinds of learning experiences that enable them to uncover their passions and thrive in an evolving world.

Mission

We help our partners in states and schools work together to align policy and practice, reimagining what education can do through personalized, competency-based learning - and what it must do to prepare students for a lifetime of learning.

Core Values

Passion: we inspire others to act

Courage: we take bold actions to transform education

Empower: we believe in everyone's potential

Partner: we achieve more together

Inclusion: we celebrate the strength of all voices

Board of Directors

Our Team

Financials (FY25): \$13.6M operating budget; \$120M investment portfolio

Location: Headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, with a hybrid workforce



Creating Future-ready Systems of Education

By looking ahead to the future of learning and work, transforming policy, and growing educator impact, KnowledgeWorks helps policymakers and communities create a foundation for systemic change.

We anticipate and prepare for the future of education.

KnowledgeWorks [explores the future of learning](#) to help education leaders and innovators prepare for what's ahead. Through strategic foresight, we examine critical education issues and translate insights about the future into action today. Read our seventh anchor forecast [here](#).

We create policies that support innovative teaching and learning.

KnowledgeWorks informs policymakers, educators, business leaders and community members to further policies that promote transformation in education systems. Through [collaborative policy briefs and policy solutions](#), we advance more equitable and flexible approaches that pave the way for personalized, student-centered learning in the classroom. In 2025, 43 bills were enacted across 26 states in support of student-centered learning.

We develop the capacity of educators.

KnowledgeWorks has developed a community of practice, partnering with school districts and states to deliver innovative, collaborative personalized learning opportunities for students through competency-based education.

Our team helps administrators and educators create a community-wide plan to [achieve their vision](#), understand opportunities for [professional development](#) and system alignment and build capacity to [sustain personalized learning practices](#). Our on-the-ground work provides a learning platform and credibility to advise on systems-level change and helps us to connect communities to better collaborate and advance this work.

Advancing Student-centered Learning

Every child deserves a personalized learning experience.

At KnowledgeWorks, we believe learners deserve educational experiences that center their needs, interests and passions. They deserve to feel like they belong and have the power to make choices about their futures – not just about what they'll be, but who.

Personalized, competency-based learning is how we make this happen.



What is personalized, competency-based learning?

The KnowledgeWorks approach to personalized, competency-based learning relies on four essential things:

- Transparent learning outcomes that everyone can understand
- A focus on student mastery rather than seat time
- Making learning real and relevant so that learners are future-ready
- A shared vision for learning that incorporates perspectives from educators, learners, families and the broader community

KnowledgeWorks has Evolved with the Education System

Since its founding in 2000, KnowledgeWorks has evolved from restructuring large, impersonal high schools into small schools that offered personalized education, to using data and continuous improvement at the district and school levels, to partnering with states, districts and communities to help them realize their vision for personalized learning today.

2000–2008

Founded; early work included high-school restructuring and the Ohio High School Transformation Initiative. In 2006, KnowledgeWorks launched its first Future Forecast.

2009–2013

Incubated and accelerated education innovation: New Tech Network and StriveTogether became important parts of the organization’s national systems-change work.

2014–2017

Personalized, competency-based learning became stated elements of the vision and mission; New Tech Network and StriveTogether spun off as independent organizations.

Today

KnowledgeWorks drives education innovation, in collaboration with local philanthropy and corporations. We partner with states, districts and communities to align policy and practice around personalized, competency-based learning.



The Moment in Time

For more than two decades, KnowledgeWorks has invested in and operated at the forefront of K–12 education innovation, helping states, districts and schools reimagine learning so that every student can thrive.

Today, KnowledgeWorks brings a distinctive combination of strategic foresight, policy expertise and direct partnership with education systems to advance personalized, competency-based learning.

The organization is midway through a focused strategic plan that pairs thought leadership and a robust national network with the development of place-based “proof points,” demonstrating that these approaches to teaching and learning can produce measurable results and providing a foundation from which they can spread.

This work comes at an important moment for public education. Persistent gaps in student outcomes, financial pressures on states and districts, declining enrollment in many communities, political polarization and rapid advances in technology and AI are challenging longstanding assumptions about how schools operate and how students learn.

At the same time, these forces create an opportunity to accelerate a broader implementation of personalized, competency-based learning, centered on what students actually know and can do, rather than traditional measures, such as seat time.

KnowledgeWorks has the expertise, relationships and innovative agility to help shape what comes next. The organization is exceptionally positioned to advance our mission and national impact by amplifying our value proposition, delivering compelling proof points and expanding our relationships with education leaders and partners.



The Position

Title	President and Chief Executive Officer	Reports To	Board of Directors	
Location	Flexible, with regular travel	Direct Reports	EVP & Chief Program Officer VP, Business Development Sr Manager, Executive Services	EVP & Chief Operating Officer VP, Marketing and Communication VP, Policy & Strategy Advancement

Position The next President & CEO will build on KnowledgeWorks’ strong foundation, bringing urgency and ambition to promote the organization’s strategy and work, driving broader influence and measurable impact.

The President & CEO will be a visionary leader and credible voice in the K–12 education space, with the ability to articulate KnowledgeWorks’ compelling vision for the future of learning, particularly the role of personalized learning and competency-based education practices. This leader should also bring a demonstrated commitment to addressing issues of system inequity in public education, an appreciation for the connection of policy and practice in education transformation, and a leadership style that encourages partnership-building in support of the organization’s strategic, programmatic, and operational efforts.

They will navigate an increasingly complex education landscape with a nonpartisan focus on students, building relationships with districts, states, policymakers, funders and partners. They will help create the conditions for personalized, competency-based learning adoption by elevating KnowledgeWorks’ visibility and demonstrating the value of this approach to influential partners, collaborators and decision-makers.

Equally important, the President & CEO will be an engaged people leader who partners with a highly capable, collaborative team and brings the organization’s different strengths together under one compelling narrative. An entrepreneurial, innovative thinker, the President & CEO will lead with strategic focus and passion for KnowledgeWorks’ mission.

Role & Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Build on KnowledgeWorks' current strategic direction to advance innovation in education through personalized learning and competency-based education, exploring and advancing outcomes and results to achieve this goal.
- Work with staff to set and deliver clear plans, goals and metrics.
- Ensure alignment around how we achieve and measure impact.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Represent KnowledgeWorks externally with partner organizations, potential funders, policymakers and community leaders.
- Be the public face of KnowledgeWorks, strengthening its brand, expanding its local, statewide and national reputation and growing its funding base.
- Navigate deep political divides and project a nonpartisan commitment to child learning at the federal, state and community level.
- Message the KnowledgeWorks vision crisply and compellingly.
- Build and articulate a position on AI in education, which may include a strategy and integration approach.

Organizational Leadership

- Build on KnowledgeWorks' strong culture of shared purpose and collaboration, leading an engaged and connected team that includes both Cincinnati-based and remote employees.
- Lead the organization's commitment to addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion with confidence and empathy, both within KnowledgeWorks and in the education sector.

Our Criteria

Pivotal Expertise and Experiences

Education Sector Experience

Highly credible leader within the K-12 education and systems transformation sector. A passion for KnowledgeWorks' mission and commitment to personalized, competency-based education experiences to support students of all races and ethnicities, incomes and identities.

Stakeholder Engagement & Visibility

An ability to develop new and existing relationships with states, policymakers, foundations, partner organizations and other external stakeholders. Navigates policy environments with savvy and represents organizational priorities with clarity and conviction. A storyteller and compelling ambassador with demonstrated experience promoting an organization's capacities and impact.

Impact Oriented

Ability to demonstrate the value and impact of personalized, competency-based learning and effectively engage and galvanize education leaders, partners and funders on its meaningful adoption.

Strategic Organizational Leadership

Proven success developing and executing strategic plans, shaped by market insight and future-forward, innovative approaches. Ability to distill and effectively communicate an organizational vision and value proposition. Experience leading an organization of relevant scale, managing priorities and developing people, processes and budgets, while delegating effectively and confidently to their team.

Our Criteria

Culture Impact

Collaborative

Leads with strong emotional intelligence and communication that builds trust and collaboration across a hybrid workforce. Fosters an organizational culture that values teamwork and a shared mission and purpose.

Inspirational & Impact Oriented

An inspirational advocate for educational transformation with the ability to compellingly articulate an organization's vision and path forward; aligns and energizes teams and partners around ambitious goals. Supports an organizational culture of high performance, collaboration, and accountability, focused on student and school impact.

Adaptive & Innovative

Champions a culture of innovation that remains forward-looking and thoughtfully responsive to an evolving K-12 education landscape.

The Engagement Team

KnowledgeWorks has engaged the Social Impact Practice at Heidrick & Struggles to conduct the search for its next President and Chief Executive Officer.

J.J. Cutler
Philadelphia
jcutler@heidrick.com

Jackie Zavitz
Philadelphia & Miami
jzavitz@heidrick.com

Alissa Fernandez
Washington, DC
alfernandez@heidrick.com

Nominations, interest, and applications can be directed to: KnowledgeWorksCEO@heidrick.com

Compensation for the role will be determined based on experience and skill set, with a salary range of \$325,000 - \$375,000 annually.

KnowledgeWorks prohibits discrimination against qualified individuals based on their status as protected veterans or individuals with disabilities and prohibits discrimination against all individuals based on their age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or national origin. Moreover, KnowledgeWorks takes affirmative action to employ and advance in employment individuals without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or veteran status.