Position Specification

Helen Keller Intl
President and Chief Executive Officer
Our Client

Helen Keller Intl (or Helen Keller) is a global health and human development organization working to improve the health and well-being of people around the world. Helen Keller herself overcame tremendous obstacles to her health and wellbeing – and helped millions of others to do the same. Guided by her remarkable legacy, Helen Keller partners with communities that are striving to overcome longstanding cycles of poverty. For over 100 years, Helen Keller has delivered the essential building blocks of good health, sound nutrition, and clear vision, helping millions of people create lasting change in their own lives. Together with a global community of supporters, they are ensuring that every person has the opportunity – as Helen did – to reach their true potential.

Today, Helen Keller provides support for more than 83 million children and family members in more than 20 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the United States – helping them to grow and eat nutritious food, stave off malnutrition, build strong immune systems, access life-saving medical treatments, and prevent and treat blindness and vision loss. By providing the right support at the right time, they help millions of families and communities overcome longstanding cycles of poverty, helping them create lasting change in their own lives.

Inequities and dysfunctions in food and health systems rob more than one billion people around the world of their health and the opportunity to see, thrive, and discover their true potential. Improving those systems is the only way to improve lives on a large scale and for the long term. Helen Keller helps people create lasting change in their lives in the following ways:

**Food systems:** the organization helps communities shape the entire food chain, including growing nutritious foods through climate-smart home gardens and small-scale animal husbandry, and using light food processing techniques to improve shelf life and value of products and providing training on marketing so families can earn more from the food they sell and improve their livelihoods.

**Health systems:** Helen Keller helps shape elements of health systems that often overlook the wellbeing of the most vulnerable, lowest income communities. By focusing on effective, evidence-based services, Helen Keller makes dramatic differences in people’s health. This includes distributing life-saving and preventive drugs and nutrients, integrating vitamin A and other essential practices into routine visits to the health clinic, and going door-to-door to provide education, diagnosis, and treatment of malnutrition.

**On-the-ground experience:** Helen Keller has deep roots in the countries where they work, with most staff being from regions and communities in which they work. Their work is reinforced by their shared experience, motivation to serve their neighbors, and desire to ensure that every child has the chance to discover their true potential.

**Science and evidence shape the work:** Helen Keller’s solutions are based on an effective combination of research, evidence, technical expertise, and on-the-ground experience. Their staff collaborates on dozens of research projects each year with trusted academic institutions and educates the next generation of public health practitioners and scientists.

**They never work alone:** Partnering with donors, government health officials, ministries of health, and local community leaders, Helen Keller convenes a community of people at different levels of society and with different strengths to work together, giving them the best chance at building long-term resilience and systemic change.

**Women are at the center of their work:** Evidence has shown that when women earn a living, they spend this income to support the health and wellbeing of the family. And when a family is suffering from not
Helen Keller’s solutions are evidence-based and cost effective, and include, among others:

- Distribution of vital nutrients like vitamin A to build immunity and forestall vision loss.
- Timely diagnosis and treatment for malnutrition to save lives and secure healthier futures.
- Healthcare and nutrition counseling to ensure mothers can keep their infants and themselves strong.
- Farming tools and supplies for women to foster healthier families and build livelihoods.
- Free-of-charge vision screenings and prescription eyeglasses for low-income students so they can learn, make friends and develop their mind.
- Prevention and treatment for blindness, vision loss, and debilitating diseases.

Helen Keller is a 107-year-old global organization with a professional staff of 1,000 people with the majority serving in the countries in which they work, many hailing from and with deep roots in those countries and regions. The organization’s corporate seat is New York, and their budget is approximately $95 million. The organization is guided by the fierce optimism of their co-founder, Helen Keller, who advocated for people who would have otherwise been left behind.

For more information on Helen Keller, please visit [https://helenkellerintl.org](https://helenkellerintl.org).

The Role

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer of Helen Keller will be an experienced and inspiring leader of stature able to build upon the strong legacy of the organization’s current CEO who will retire from the organization this year. The CEO will be responsible for the strategic, programmatic, financial, and operational leadership of the organization and will ensure Helen Keller’s reputation as a trusted partner working across governments, multilaterals, philanthropic partners, the private sector, and local communities to mobilize resources and achieve measurable outcomes in improving lives in lasting ways. This leader will work in collaboration with the Board on all matters of governance, mission, and strategic objectives and will ensure that the Board is kept fully informed on the operating and financial condition of the organization and of important internal and external influencing factors.

The CEO will shepherd the organization and broader non-profit community into the next generation of global and human development. To do so, they will need to steward and nurture a unique and inclusive organizational culture, one that at its very foundation embraces passion, accountability, excellence, equity, humility, and empathy for all stakeholders, staff, and partners. The CEO will ensure that staff across all country offices and global positions feel enfranchised in their work. In doing so, the CEO will bolster the potential of the organization and staff, further strengthen the broad network of partners, and ensure that all activities and programs meet the highest standards of quality, ethics, and integrity.

The successful candidate will possess the ability to gain the confidence of a broad and diverse array of stakeholders. They will grow and diversify sources of and approaches to funding, while at the same time bolstering Helen Keller’s relationships with long-standing supporters.

The new leader will lead the development and implementation of the overall organizational strategy, which will include further defining and charting the path forward for the organization while guiding and empowering Helen Keller’s team to develop the new business and delivery models required for success. The CEO will lead the continued growth and evolution of the organization and its impact, while enabling Helen Keller to increase its capacity, effectiveness, operational excellence, and tenacity with results and execution. They will ensure the organization is nimble and ready to effectively operate in a rapidly changing world.
As ambassador and thought leader of, as well as an advocate for Helen Keller’s mission, the CEO will be the driving force of a powerful brand. The CEO will build awareness of the organization and invite more people to join the organization. The CEO will steward a growing community of donors and partners, involving them in the mission, vision, and legacy of Helen Keller. The CEO will be an active participant and leader in the press, thought leadership opportunities, and international convenings. It is key that the CEO possess charisma, eloquence, and cultural sensitivity in delivering key messages not only at the global leadership level, but also on the ground and in the diverse day-to-day interactions with the people and communities that Helen Keller serves.

**Candidate Profile**

Helen Keller seeks an experienced and respected leader with the vision, commitment, and values that align with fulfilling the organization’s mission. They will have the necessary global outlook and management expertise to work effectively across the organization’s programmatic delivery in 20+ countries. They will bring to the role business acumen, operational excellence, intellectual bandwidth, and pragmatic knowledge of how to effectively convene and partner across the non-profit, philanthropic, government, and business sectors.

The successful candidate will be an experienced leader with the capacity to manage a global, field-centric organization with an extensive network of partners and programs. This individual will bring strong fundraising experience, including a successful track record of securing philanthropic support, institutional grants and/or contracts. They will be confident and comfortable with internal and external stakeholders and have a demonstrated ability to engage a diverse set of audiences. They will have a proven ability to lead and develop a dynamic and high-performing leadership team and promote constructive dialogue and collaboration among people and across organizational structures to work toward new possibilities.

This leader will have intimate knowledge of the global development community, current trends in the sector, and financial structures, including demonstrated understanding of business models, their strengths and weaknesses, how they are structured and conduct business, and how to work within them.

A talented relationship builder and spokesperson, the successful candidate will be capable of readily convening and partnering with donors and other key stakeholders to understand the future of global development and help define the agenda. This individual will have a track record of building bridges and developing relationships in a variety of settings as demonstrated through a broad and deep professional network. As a curious and forward-thinking leader, this individual will bring a fresh perspective and passion for addressing the challenges within public health in this complicated time in our history.

In terms of the competencies and qualifications required for the position, we would emphasize that the ideal candidate bring:

**Strategic Vision:** The successful candidate will have a demonstrated record of setting priorities and leading organizations to success. They will be a strategic thinker who will empower Helen Keller staff to achieve their mission while providing the strategic direction necessary to evolve the organization and bring proven interventions and programs to scale. With deep intellect, this individual will bring a demonstrated body of work that signals an interest in results-oriented, creative thinking and will be capable of working with Helen Keller staff to develop differentiated strategies with multifaceted approaches to address disparate audiences, cultures, and political contexts. This individual will have the ability to identify areas for change, create consensus and buy-in, and lead Helen Keller through consistent evolution. They will foster an environment that encourages collaboration and creative thinking, and that also maintains grit, focus, and persistence.
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**Fundraising:** The next CEO will have a record of success, or demonstrated capacity for, cultivating donors and raising funds in support of the full mission, institutional goals, and the ability to diversify revenue-generating and fundraising activities to support existing and future programs and operations. This individual will have the ability to activate the new private donors, and provide thought leadership in pursuit of their collective impact goals.

**Passion and Shared Values:** The successful candidate will have a passion for creating a world in which all individuals and communities have the opportunity to reach their highest potential, and where accessible, equitable, and quality health care and nutrition are the norm. To this end, they will have demonstrated the necessary fortitude and resilience for mission-driven work across their career and be implicitly anchored by the collective mission to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. The successful candidate will be a person whose lived experience informs their vision and whose commitment to social justice, gender and racial equity, and a commitment to challenging the status quo are demonstrated by sustained and significant contributions in those areas. This individual must be able to relate to and understand constituent groups living in a wide diversity of conditions.

**Relationship Building and Partnership Development:** The CEO will have experience working effectively with diverse constituencies, including its Board, staff, funders and external partners. The candidate will be a strong listener, be able to build consensus and navigate complex situations with grace and flexibility and will have the credibility to influence the sector and provide critical thought leadership.

**Organization Management:** The successful candidate will have the ability to set priorities decisively, delegate responsibilities, assure and value accountability, and allocate resources appropriate to achieving desirable results. They will have the capacity to establish metrics by which to manage the operations of Helen Keller while working closely with the Board to contribute to and deliver on organizational vision and strategy.

**Leadership Style and Culture:** The new CEO must have the ability to attract and recruit top talent, motivate the team, delegate effectively, celebrate diversity within the team, and manage performance. The successful candidate will be viewed as a strong developer of others. They will be able to ask the right questions across a range of topics in order to understand strategic gaps and assemble teams to address and solve those gaps. The next CEO will demonstrate good judgment and instincts about the best course ahead in ambiguous situations, while also exhibiting the self-confidence to change course when proven wrong. They will be responsible for translating the organization’s equity and inclusion commitments into specific strategies and actions. The right candidate will demonstrate an inherent “partner-like” leadership style to be effective in an organization where influence results in strong partnership, service, and outcomes.

**Interpersonal Acumen and Integrity:** The successful candidate will exhibit self-awareness, high emotional intelligence, and an understanding of others that enhances interpersonal communication and management abilities. They will be a resilient optimist with unquestioned personal and professional integrity. The next CEO will have personal chemistry with and be able to collaborate effectively while earning 100% trust and confidence from the Board, staff, funders and external stakeholders.

**Nomination and application process**

Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to: helenkellerintl@russellreynolds.com.