



***Special Olympics***  
*Illinois*

**PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**CANDIDATE PROFILE**



## Summary of Opportunity

Regarded as one of the most innovative and impactful Special Olympics state chapters in the United States and known for its excellence globally, Special Olympics Illinois seeks a new President and Chief Executive Officer to serve more athletes and their families in Illinois.

Special Olympics transforms the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, allowing them to realize their full potential in sports and in life. Special Olympics programs enhance physical fitness, motor skills, self-confidence and social skills, and encourage family and community support. This global organization unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, every day, around the world.

The mission of Special Olympics Illinois (SOILL) is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Illinois athletes and the community. Started in 1968, SOILL today serves 18,912 athletes, hosts 190 competitions a year across the state of Illinois, has 18 Olympic sports, and works with 31,984 volunteers and coaches. SOILL also provides health programming and leadership development programming to its athletes. Special Olympics Illinois does not charge athletes or their families to participate in the program. Special Olympics Illinois is well-managed financially. The budget for FY21 was \$15.2 million (earned revenues and in-kind support), up from \$12.6 million in FY20, and the net surplus was \$2.2 million, up from \$1.2 million. Net assets also increased from \$8.7 to \$10.9 million during the same period. The 39-person board is very engaged and committed.

SOILL's board seeks a relational, humble, strategic and resourceful individual to become its next leader. The person must connect with athletes in an authentic way, engage a broad array of constituencies, represent SOILL to internal and external stakeholders and strengthen SOILL's brand and reach across the state of Illinois. The individual must be able to raise money, and possess an innate capacity to connect with others, including athletes, families, volunteers, staff, elected and appointed officials and civic leaders. The person must have a proven track record of leading, managing and inspiring staff. Most importantly, the next leader must fully embrace SOILL's mission.

The person can be based in either Normal (SOILL's headquarters) or in Chicago, with frequent and regular travel around the state.



**Athlete Oath: “Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”**

## Overview of the Position

Reporting to the board of directors, the President and Chief Executive Officer develops and manages SOILL's strategy and vision, building and maintaining SOILL's culture, guiding an effective leadership team, continuing to secure financial stability and overseeing the development of meaningful programs reflecting its mission. Managing the operational and financial success of the organization, the President and CEO leads the management team in creating, executing, monitoring and evaluating the strategies needed to generate long-range success and to achieve the goals outlined in the 2020-2025 strategic plan, which is focused on improving the athlete experience, reaching more athletes and raising more resources. The President and CEO manages a total of 92 employees and oversees the following direct report:

- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief Operating Officer
- Chief Development Officer
- Senior Director for Strategic Planning
- Senior Director for Advancement & Government Relations
- Senior Director, Marketing & Communications.

An overview of responsibilities for the President and CEO includes:

- Maintaining an active and engaged relationship with the Special Olympics Illinois Board of Directors
- Engaging various stakeholders and constituencies such as athletes, families, volunteers, staff, elected and appointed officials, corporations, foundations and civic leaders
- Overseeing staff administration and program management
- Spearheading resource development and fundraising
- Fostering community and public relations
- Ensuring sound fiscal and risk management
- Managing the overall organization

SOILL's next President and CEO must relate to athletes in an authentic, genuine and humble manner. The individual needs to be nice, empathic, friendly, accessible, happy, passionate, down-to-earth, compassionate and kind-hearted, with a desire to engage with and to listen to athletes. The most compelling candidates will possess a proven track record of success as an executive leader, preferably with a complex organization that serves individuals with intellectual disabilities. Experience or familiarity with Special Olympics would be valued. The ability to raise money from events, individuals, corporations, foundations and governmental sources is vital. The next leader will have a seamless capacity to connect with others, including athletes, families, volunteers, staff, elected and appointed officials and civic leaders. The individual will serve as a strong brand ambassador, be the visible public face of SOILL, and be an excellent communicator. Candidates must have a proven track record of leading, managing and inspiring staff. Most importantly, the next leader must fully embrace SOILL's mission.



# Responsibilities

## Strategic Leadership

- Collaborates with SOILL’s board to fulfill the organization’s vision, mission and organizational objectives, creating policies that facilitate smooth operations between divisions and departments
- Provides vision and strategic direction of SOILL’s short- and long-term objectives

## Fundraising, marketing, and external affairs

- Partners with the board’s development committee and the Vice President, Development, to develop, implement and evaluate strong, sustainable, multi-source revenue-building initiatives
- Represents SOILL to current and prospective funders, donors and partners
- Works closely with the Senior Director, Marketing and Communications, to promote SOILL’s brand to stakeholders and donors
- Represents Special Olympics Illinois to the public as its chief spokesperson, reflecting passion for and essence of the mission, goals and outcomes

## Board governance

- Partners with the board’s chair, vice chair and other members of the executive committee
- Provides information to the board and supports the governance committee in identifying, cultivating and recruiting new board members

## Financial management

- Oversees the operating budgeting process and financial reporting, to ensure SOILL meets its goals and the board fulfills its fiduciary responsibility. Partners with the CFO to keep the board finance committee informed and engaged
- Develops long-term budget plans to ensure the financial health of the organization

## Staff management

- Hires, manages, leads and inspires executive members to achieve SOILL’s mission and strategic objectives
- Promotes career paths and provides professional development opportunities to staff

## Operations

- Attends competitions and events across the entire state. The new President and CEO will travel frequently.
- Continues to promote organization-wide diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging initiatives.



## Key Selection Criteria and Requirements

The most compelling candidates will demonstrate:

- Mission Commitment and Athlete-Centric: Visible and genuine passion for SOILL's ethos and authentic embrace of SOILL's mission. This involves having the personality to develop meaningful relationships with athletes.
- Relevant Experience and Domain Expertise: At least 10-15 years of demonstrated leadership experience managing a comparably complex and dispersed organization. Experience could come from the nonprofit sector, especially with organizations serving individuals with intellectual disabilities, or the corporate arena. Direct experience with Special Olympics would be valued.
- Strategic Thinking: Relevant experience developing and implementing a formal strategic plan that has measurable quantitative and qualitative metrics and objectives. Experience using data and information to make sound decisions.
- Staff Leadership: A proven track record of attracting and mentoring staff and inspiring employees to perform at their highest level. A collaborative, transparent, mature and decisive leadership style. The President and CEO must lead by example, set a tone of excellence, responsiveness and integrity, and encourage risk taking. An ability to inspire confidence.
- Revenue and Fundraising: Proven track record raising resources from individual, institutional and governmental donors. This involves thoughtfully cultivating, soliciting and stewarding donors.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging: Demonstrated leadership practices that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion and belonging within an organization, and a history of promoting such initiatives holistically.
- Business Savvy, Financial Acumen and Sound Judgment: Strong business planning skills and fiscal acumen, exercising good judgment and discernment.
- Interpersonal and Relationship-Building Skills: The ability to develop relationships with internal and external constituencies. The person must be astute and thoughtful and have relevant experience navigating complexity, conflict and different personalities. The individual must be an active listener and a proactive and responsive communicator.








## Other Qualities and Characteristics

- Capacity to work effectively with a committed board
- A strong understanding of the importance of marketing and communications
- A high level of emotional intelligence, with the ability to adapt to changing circumstances, respond to internal and external stress constructively and manage conflict
- An accessible, visible and involved leadership style accompanied by team building skills. The ability to leverage the talent of others
- A high energy level with a can-do and winning attitude
- Impeccable integrity and humility, with a sense of humor
- Flexibility and willingness to attend events and competitions across Illinois, nationally (for Special Olympics North America engagements) and occasionally globally. There will be overnight travel
- Bachelor's degree required, and a graduate degree preferred



Special Olympics Illinois is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, age, disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, familial status, pregnancy, predisposing genetic characteristics, military status, domestic violence victim status, criminal conviction, and all other protected classes under federal or state laws.

SOILL's board has retained the services of Lincoln Leadership ([www.lincolnleadership.co](http://www.lincolnleadership.co)) to conduct this search. For those interested in the search or who want to recommend someone for the role in confidence, please contact Andrew C. Wheeler, Founder & President, at 267 257-1910 or [awheeler@lincolnleadership.co](mailto:awheeler@lincolnleadership.co).

Additional information about Special Olympics Illinois can be found at [soill.org](http://soill.org) or these social media channels:     

## Organization Overview

Special Olympics is a global organization that unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, every day around the world. Special Olympics Illinois is a not-for-profit organization offering year-round training and competition in 18 sports to a community of more than 50,000 traditional athletes, Young Athletes, Unified partners, coaches, volunteers, and more.

Special Olympics transforms the lives of people with intellectual disabilities, allowing them to realize their full potential in sports and in life. Special Olympics programs enhance physical fitness, motor skills, self-confidence, social skills and encourage family and community support. This global organization unleashes the human spirit through the transformative power and joy of sport, every day around the world.

Special Olympics began in Illinois with the first games at Soldier Field in July 1968 thanks to the efforts of Eunice Kennedy Shriver and her peers. There are now more than 6 million athletes and Unified partners in 170 countries. Special Olympics is financially sound with diverse revenue streams, a thorough annual budget process and increasing organizational revenue streams. Special Olympics, Inc. (SOI) is the official global governing body of Special Olympics and is headquartered in Washington, DC. The work of SOI is executed through an operating model that includes seven international regions. Each U.S. state program is administered by the Special Olympics North America (SONA) region, based in Raleigh, NC.

### OUR MISSION

Provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Illinois athletes, and the community.

### OUR VISION

Special Olympics Illinois will be a global leader in shaping a culture where people with and without intellectual disabilities are fully integrated into the community by providing year-round opportunities in competitive sports, health education, leadership and personal development.

### OUR REACH

- 18,912 athletes (children and adults) with intellectual disabilities
- 2,689 Young Athletes ages 2-7 with and without intellectual disabilities
- 31,984 volunteers and coaches
- 190 competitions each year
- 18 Olympic-type sports
- Programs in 11 regions across the state of Illinois, each coordinated by a Region Director and additional staff
- Dynamic sports and corporate partnerships
- Learn more [here](#)

To read more about SOILL's impact and reach, please go to:

[https://www.soill.org/wp-content/uploads/SOILL-Annual-Report-2021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.soill.org/wp-content/uploads/SOILL-Annual-Report-2021_Final.pdf)



## Organization Overview (continued)

### OUR PROGRAMMING

- **Competitive Sports:** Deliver high-quality training and competition in an inclusive culture that stresses athletic excellence, rewards determination, emphasizes health and celebrates achievement.
- **Health Programming:** Promote the overall well-being of people with intellectual disabilities via programs that ensure ongoing access to quality, community-based health care services, highlighted by free health screenings at Special Olympics Illinois competitions, games and other venues.
- **Leadership:** Equip young people and adult influencers with effective tools and training to create sports, classrooms and community actions that produce friendships and acceptance, driving positive attitude and behavioral change toward people with intellectual disabilities in communities statewide, strengthening the fabric of society.

The SOILL Athlete Leadership Council (ALC) represents the voice and influence of athlete leaders throughout the state by advising leadership on policies, and programming that are important to athletes. The ALC is run by athlete leaders and provides opportunities for athletes to provide input, make recommendations, introduce new ideas and utilize and develop their leadership skills. All athlete leaders are welcome to participate.

In addition, the Unified Champion School strategy is a youth-driven, service-learning initiative that uses sports, education, and social events to raise awareness and activate young people as agents of change. This movement works to further develop inclusive learning and social environments for all students, with and without disabilities.

### GEOGRAPHIC FOOTPRINT

SOILL is in all 102 counties, serving athletes in every corner of Illinois. It is organized into 11 geographic Regions, each with its own team to implement SOILL programming at the local level. Athletes compete at their Region Qualifier and those earning a gold medal may advance to the next level of competition which in most cases is the State Championships.

The Region Team is made up of several individuals depending on the size of the region. Each Region has a Region Director that oversees all aspects of region programming. Additional team members are charged with sports programming or fundraising campaigns along with outreach, communication and education initiatives. Offices are located in Carbondale, Chicago, Decatur, Highland, Homewood, Lombard, Monmouth, Normal, Rockford, and Springfield.

Special Olympics Illinois is accredited by Special Olympics, Inc. for the Benefit of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities. Special Olympics Illinois does not charge athletes or their families to participate in the program.

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging is important to Special Olympics Illinois. It is at the very core of what we do. Fostering inclusion and awareness to expand our capacity for empathy and compassion towards members of our whole community helps everyone to be part of the Special Olympics movement. Everyone can participate and find a sense of belonging and connectedness to others: as an athlete, as a volunteer, as a coach, as a parent, as a relative, as a donor, as a peer -partner, as a board member or as a fellow employee. Our dedication is to grow the welcoming culture to ensure our mission encompasses everyone.



## Organization Overview (continued)

### STRATEGIC PLAN, 2020-2025

In October 2018, Special Olympics Illinois embarked on a journey to design a new five-year strategic plan to drive the organization into its future. Having celebrated its 50th Anniversary, Special Olympics Illinois was poised to springboard into a future where sports, health and leadership would shape its programming for the next generation of athletes. The 2020-2025 strategic plan focuses:

- Improving the athlete experience
- Reaching more athletes
- Raising more resources

### FINANCES AND FUNDING

By all measures, Special Olympics Illinois is well-managed financially as demonstrated by many variables.

- The budget for FY21 was \$15.2 million (earned revenues and in-kind support), up from \$12.6 million in FY20, and the net surplus was \$2.2 million, up from \$1.2 million.
- Net assets also increased from \$8.7 to \$10.9 million.
- Special Olympics Illinois has a four-star rating from Charity Navigator and earned the Platinum Seal of Transparency in 2021 from GuideStar. SOILL is an accredited nonprofit from Better Business Bureau.
- About 80% of every dollar raised goes directly to programming in Sports, Health and Leadership.
- SOILL's funding comes from numerous events (that include hosting plunges and partnering with law enforcement to put on Law Enforcement Torch Runs) grants and contracts, individuals, corporations, and foundations. Some of the corporate partners include Amazon, Dunkin', Gallagher, Hyatt, Jewel-Osco, and United Airlines.

As part of its fundraising activities, the ILSO Foundation provides resources and an appropriate level of support for the organization for non-recurring budget items such as USA Games and World Games, capital expenses, and technology advancement.

For more information on the organization's finances, funding, annual reports, reach reports, audited financials, and 990 reports, please visit [www.soill.org/finances-and-accountability](http://www.soill.org/finances-and-accountability)

### BOARD GOVERNANCE

Special Olympics Illinois' fiduciary board consists of 39 members, with a current max of 40 members, representing corporations, civil service organizations, school districts, Special Olympics Illinois families and includes three members that are actively participating Special Olympics Illinois athletes. The role of the Board and its Directors is to lead, nurture, and oversee the organization as well as being the body the President/CEO answers to and works with. The Board is a consistent body that continues to change over time in the makeup of its directors. The consistency comes from the Board's role and acceptance of providing the stewardship to the organization to ensure long term and continued success.

Members participate in any number of board committees; Executive, Governance and Membership, Program Services, Development, Finance/Business Services, Audit, Marketing & Communications, and Investment.

In addition to the fiduciary board, the ILSO Foundation supports Special Olympics Illinois providing an alternative revenue stream in perpetuity. There are some individuals who serve on the fiduciary board and the ILSO Foundation.