

**President and Chief Executive Officer
Cherokee Farm Development Corporation**

Position Announcement

The Opportunity

The Cherokee Farm Development Corporation (CFDC) is seeking its next President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The ideal candidate will be a visionary who will lead, help shape, and in some cases reimagine CFDC's role in supporting the place-based innovation strategy of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT) and the institution's growth as a top tier Research 1 institution. Competitive candidates will be leaders with proven track records of implementing place-based innovation projects that advance collaborative R&D and support workforce and economic development. Experience with university-anchored research parks or innovation districts is essential. The ideal candidate will have experience managing real property transactions and activating multidisciplinary, multi-sector collaborations.

CFDC is currently responsible for the development of the UT Research Park, which houses high-tech firms like Volkswagen and CEC, the R&D programs of UT's [Institute for Advanced Materials & Manufacturing](#), the CFDC-operated [Spark Innovation Center](#) incubating and accelerating high-tech start-ups, and [The Orthopaedic Institute](#), a state-of-the-art ambulatory care facility operated by the UT Medical Center and OrthoTennessee and housing UT's R&D Center for Precision Health. In the Fall of 2024, CFDC will open a new ~90,000 SF mixed-use facility on the UT Research Park supporting R&D and workforce development in advanced manufacturing, and is currently entertaining bids from organizations interested in developing an extended stay hotel and conference center on the site.

UT seeks to expand its place-based innovation strategy beyond the borders of the UT Research Park. CFDC's new leader will explore other place-based innovation initiatives in the greater Knoxville region, including, for example, in the City of Knoxville, Knox County's Hardin Valley, and in Oak Ridge, where the University enjoys a strategic partnership with [Oak Ridge National Laboratory](#) (ORNL).

CFDC is a board-managed 501c3 subsidiary of the [University of Tennessee Research Foundation](#) (UTRF). The CFDC President and CEO serves at the pleasure of the CFDC Board and works in close coordination with the President of UTRF.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities

The President and CEO will be a dynamic, innovative leader who will perform a broad range of duties including, but not limited to, the following:

- Shape the vision, create the strategic plan, and lead development and operations of CFDC
- Develop relationships with local and national technology communities as well as researchers at UT
- Connect with industry partners with R&D interests that align with UT's priorities

- Lead/oversee real estate development projects at the UT Research Park at Cherokee Farm and in other locations in the Knoxville MSA
- Serve as the Owner’s representative for the UT Research Park at Cherokee Farm, overseeing negotiations for ground leases and ensuring new developments meet UT’s place-based innovation goals and align with the Park’s Master Plan and Development Guidelines
- Identify opportunities for new development projects and strategic partnerships to enhance Knoxville’s innovation ecosystem and UT’s contributions to it
- Engage with local residents, businesses, and community leaders to ensure that real estate development projects align with community needs and priorities
- Nurture close working relationships with all major stakeholders and financial partners, helping to ensure that support for UT’s place-based initiatives remains strong
- Work closely with UT to support day-to-day operations at the UT Research Park and at other place-based innovation sites as they are created
- Support the CFDC Board of Directors, developing agendas, reporting financial performance, recording minutes, and ensuring full compliance with the organization’s charter, by-laws, and non-profit status
- Develop and continually refresh materials that advance CFDC’s place-based innovation initiatives, and implement an effective marketing and communications strategy to share these materials locally, regionally, and nationally
- Explore opportunities to expand the reach and impact of UT’s place-based innovation strategies by leading and/or contributing to economic development initiatives at regional, State and Federal levels
- Lead a team of staff, ensuring excellent communication and coordination between CFDC, UTRF and UT
- Support the Spark Innovation Center to incubate and accelerate deep-tech startups
- Promote and support UT’s other innovation and entrepreneurship programs and ambitions, engaging both the UT community and other stakeholders in the region

Qualifications

- A bachelors degree in real estate, urban planning, business administration or a related field is required; an advanced degree is preferred
- Minimum of 10 years of experience in real estate development with a track record of delivering complex projects in university-anchored research parks or innovation districts
- Strong leadership and management skills, with the ability to inspire and motivate cross-functional teams
- Excellent communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills, with the ability to effectively engage with diverse stakeholders
- Deep understanding of real estate finance, investment analysis and risk management
- Proven ability to think strategically, analyze market trends, and identify opportunities for growth and innovation
- Experience working with a university research park is strongly preferred
- Experience working in mixed-use or innovation districts is preferred
- Knowledge of local zoning regulations, land use policies and permitting processes helpful
- United States citizen or permanent resident

This position offers an exciting opportunity to make a significant impact on the innovation ecosystem in the Knoxville MSA, and to contribute to the economic, social and cultural vitality of the region. If you are a dynamic leader with a passion for place-based innovation, we encourage you to apply.

Procedure for Candidacy

Applications and nominations should be addressed to Catherine Lane, Search Committee Chair, and submitted via email to emily@tnresearchpark.org. Applications must include: **1).** a cover letter; **2).** a *curriculum vitae*; and **3).** the names and contact information of five professional references. Review of applications will begin on July 19th, 2024, and continue until the position is filled. Applications without a cover letter or references will not be considered.

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation will be competitive and commensurate with qualifications and experience. Additionally, Tennessee residents do not pay a state income tax.

Tennessee, East Tennessee and the Knoxville Community

Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains along the Tennessee River, Knoxville is a thriving Southern city known for its great outdoors, diverse music scene and wide variety of eateries. It is known nationally for its Urban Wilderness, which is located less than three miles from downtown and has more than 50 miles of natural trails. A vibrant downtown located within a mile of UT and the UT Research Park at Cherokee Farm offers live entertainment, shopping and outstanding local dining.

Knoxville supports a thriving innovation ecosystem. A 2021 [Techstars assessment](#) highlights a number of strengths, including a rich collaborative research environment supported by the Tennessee Valley Authority, ORNL and UT who together perform research worth billions of dollars annually and provide start-ups with access to specialized research infrastructure. Local entrepreneurs note that Knoxville's lower cost-of-living makes it easier to succeed here as a tech entrepreneur. The region's tech talent pool is deep, with tens of thousands of STEM and skilled technical workers already in the workforce. UT and the region's community and technical colleges constantly enrich the talent pool, producing thousands of new STEM graduates and skilled technical workers annually. Finally, organizations like the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center, ORNL's Innovation Crossroads, and UT's Spark Innovation Center have come together to create programs of support for early-stage tech-intensive companies, including firms spun out of the region's research-intensive institutions as well as those recruited to the region to participate in its innovation ecosystem.

With a city population of more than 200,000 and almost 800,000 in the MSA, the Knoxville region is growing. The city is a one-hour drive from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the US National Park Service's most visited site. Atlanta, Chicago, Washington DC and the Atlantic coast are within a day's drive. Among its many accolades, Knoxville was named one of the Top 10 Best

Places to Live by livability.com, and is included in the top 10 big cities in Travel and Leisure's "America's Favorite Cities".

Tennessee is home to 7 million people, four large metropolitan areas, two time zones and an economy ranked 13th-largest in the US. Tennessee's innovation economy has expanded considerably in the past decade, thanks to growing strengths in advanced manufacturing, health technology, information technology, and clean energy.