



President and CEO Position Description

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**SALLY M. STERLING
EXECUTIVE SEARCH**

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THE OPPORTUNITY

South Central Pennsylvania's leading public media organization and source for news, education, arts and culture, Pennon is launching the search for its next President and CEO. This transition marks a significant inflection point for the organization as it enters 2026 with a more agile structure and streamlined focus on mission-driven services.



The incoming CEO will inherit an organization that has recently transitioned its newspaper assets to focus exclusively on its core mission of public media, regional journalism and education. Following the strategic transfer of LNP | LancasterOnline to an independent non-profit in early 2026, Pennon is now positioned to focus its resources on its 19-county service area with 3 million residents, ensuring that its media and educational offerings remain essential to the civic fabric of Pennsylvania.

This person will have the opportunity to lead the next transformative phase of Pennon's work, navigating the fast-changing media landscape and driving outcomes during a time of growth. The board seeks a "change agent" who can leverage the organization's recent restructuring to build a sustainable and impactful future, utilizing modern technologies while upholding core values of trust, transparency, diversity, and creativity.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the President and CEO leads and manages the organization and its brands and subsidiaries in accordance with policies, goals, and objectives established by the Board and articulated through Pennon's mission, vision, values, and strategic plan. This person is responsible for organizational health and achievements, will oversee an operating budget of \$10.7 million, a staff of 88 employees, and an endowment of more than \$26 million.

Key Relationships

Reports to

Board of Directors

Direct Reports

SVP & Chief Impact Officer

SVP & Chief Financial Officer

SVP & Chief Education Officer

Chief Development Officer

VP of Media & Production

Chief Marketing Officer

Other Key Relationships

PA State Broadcasters

Partner Organizations

Community Members and Leaders

Donors, Sponsors, and Foundations

PA State Government

PA Department of Education

PBS, NPR

Major Responsibilities

- Act as chief spokesperson and non-partisan ambassador, communicating organizational strategy effectively to internal and external stakeholders while serving as a prominent voice for public media across the 19-county service area.
- Serve as the most senior operating manager, ensuring Pennon has the team, structure, and culture to deliver mission-driven content in innovative ways.
- Directly supervise the executive management team.
- Partner with the Board and staff to develop strategic and business plans to advance the mission with measurable goals and clear timelines to position Pennon to thrive.
- Develop and steward relationships with staff, Board members, donors, community leaders, and government officials, as well as the larger public media ecosystem.
- Work with the executive team to develop an annual balanced budget, allocate resources responsibly and oversee endowment investment strategy.
- Oversee and direct all fundraising and development efforts, growing membership and building new revenue streams.
- Hold staff accountable for achieving goals and measures of success.
- Assess staff capacity, organizational structure and culture, and implement actions to increase effectiveness, teamwork and collaboration, and strive to be an employer of choice in Central PA.
- Maintain a productive working partnership with the Board of Directors, providing timely analysis of business and strategic options and clear recommendations to ensure effective decision-making.
- Become an active community member and resident of the Pennon service area.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE

While the next CEO may come from a variety of backgrounds, successful candidates will bring several of the following experiences:

Leadership experience. Track record as an effective leader and manager of diverse teams, in either a for-profit or nonprofit environment. The successful candidate will be an innovator and change agent who has evolved a business model and scaled an organization. They will have a reputation built from substance, experience, integrity and character sufficient to earn the trust of internal and external constituents.

Financial and operating acumen. They will have an understanding of how to manage budgets and allocate resources, and have P&L operating experience.

Fundraising experience. Demonstrated skill in generating financial and other support for a mission-driven organization or cause, as an executive, board member or in a related role.

Communication skills. Superior oral and written communication skills and the ability to sell ideas and concepts to various constituencies, both internal and external. The ideal candidate will be comfortable speaking on local, state and national platforms and across ideologically diverse environments. Having successfully operated in environments that value transparency and integrity, the candidate will consistently demonstrate views and behaviors that ensure Pennon remains a trusted pillar of the community.

Commitment to community. The ideal candidate will have a rich understanding and be an advocate of the entire population in Central Pennsylvania, embracing and encouraging content creation that authentically represents and elevates all voices in the communities Pennon serves.

Digital fluency. Demonstrated understanding of the rapidly changing media landscape and how technology continues to change the way content is produced, consumed, and shared. Ideally, the candidate will bring experience in partnering with industry colleagues to leverage new technologies and platforms.

Media awareness. Possessing a knowledge of and passion for the media industry and the unique role that public media serves. Familiarity with news coverage, cultural and educational programming and the evolving platforms of distribution/access. An appreciation of the value of data analytics, digital marketing and ways to financially leverage media platforms is preferred.

Education champion. Understanding the importance that education plays in Pennon's mission and nurturing the impact education has at all levels of learning. Inspired by creative programming and innovative approaches to education as differentiated business for the organization.

Education. A B.A. or Master's degree or higher is preferred.

CRITICAL COMPETENCIES

Strategic Leadership and Vision

- **Mission Alignment:** Demonstrate a commitment to Pennon's mission and values and ensure organizational priorities and operations align with the mission. They will maintain a strong relationship with the Board of Directors and advance strategies, acting as a liaison from the Board to senior leadership and staff.
- **Visionary Thinking:** Adept problem-solver, decision-maker and communicator capable of guiding the organization through transition with clarity and purpose.
- **Change Management:** Experienced in leading organizations through periods of uncertainty or transformation ensuring that activities support and fulfill the mission-based priorities of Pennon.
- **Management Experience:** Proven track record in managing complex organizations and drawing fully on the talents of organizational personnel. This includes leading effective internal communication efforts that guide the work of Pennon staff across multiple divisions and encouraging collaboration.

Operational Expertise

- **Financial Acumen:** Skilled in budgeting, philanthropy and legal contracts that achieve ongoing financial sustainability.
- **Program Oversight:** Ability to evaluate, improve, and scale programs while maintaining impact and efficiency in alignment with Pennon's strategic priorities in public media, education, and journalism. Align senior leadership areas of direct collaboration and identify areas of operational overlap to ensure teams work and communicate effectively. Actively pursue opportunities to grow audience, services, and partnerships to advance Pennon's mission.

Stakeholder Engagement

- **Board Relations:** Skilled in working collaboratively with the board of directors and navigating governance structures. This will include the Pennon Board of Directors, Enterprise Board and various subcommittees.
- **Staff Leadership:** Demonstrate empathy, transparency, confidence and effectiveness to manage and motivate the senior leadership team that oversees various divisions of Pennon with both individual and shared priorities.
- **Community and Donor Relations:** Experienced in maintaining and creating strong relationships with donors, partners, political figures and the broader community. Demonstrates views and behaviors to engage effectively with stakeholders across the political spectrum. Proficient and knowledgeable on a variety of topics that demonstrate the community value Pennon brings to Central PA.

Cultural Fit and Values

- **Integrity and Ethics:** As an organization representative to both internal and external stakeholders, this role must uphold high ethical standards and foster a culture of accountability. This role will reset organizational expectations and realign the culture to one of respect, personal accountability and commitment to the mission of Pennon.
- **Empathy and Communication:** A proven track record of clearly and compassionately communicating with internal and external stakeholders including board members, senior leadership, staff and donors. This will also include communication efforts with program partners in education, public media, and journalism.

Performance and Impact

- **Results-Oriented:** Capable of refocusing teams on measurable outcomes and continuous improvement while showing consistent accountability to staff at all levels of the organization.
- **Crisis Management:** Pennon's three main service areas directly impact the public. As such, candidates should demonstrate the ability to respond effectively to organizational challenges and public scrutiny while leading senior leadership to deliver a clear and consistent message both internally and externally.
- **Excellence in Execution:** Capable of making quick, decisive, mission-driven choices and decisions that stabilize and strengthen Pennon to be thriving and financially sustainable for the future.

ABOUT THE PENNON ORGANIZATION

Pennon builds common ground, showcases local stories and inspires lifelong learning so all Central Pennsylvanians are informed on local issues, connected with their neighbors and equipped with the skills needed to analyze and collaboratively solve problems faced by the community.



Pennon is a nonprofit public media organization serving Central Pennsylvania by providing high-quality public media, regional news and journalism, and education services. This work is carried out through WITF-TV, WITF-FM, a digital and online presence, and Pennon Education, all united by a shared commitment to public service.

Mission

Inspire lifelong learning by connecting people and communities of Pennsylvania through trusted journalism, thoughtful discussion and educational experiences.

Vision

Be an essential part of the civic, educational and cultural fabric of Pennsylvania.

Values

- Trusted: a trusted source for information
- Transparent: transparent in everything we do
- Diverse: committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in our content, organization and communities
- Creative: inspires creativity internally and externally

For more than 60 years, WITF Public Media has inspired lifelong learning by connecting people and communities of Pennsylvania through thoughtful discussion, educational experiences and trusted journalism, covering the state legislature and state issues. Its programming reaches audiences from early childhood to elder maturity, reflecting an entrepreneurial approach to fulfilling its

mission. In 2018, WITF's news team was honored with 11 regional Edward R. Murrow awards, second only to WBUR in Boston.

Pennon's media services include:

- Public television: WITF-TV
- Public radio: WITF 89.5 and WYPM 93.3 (Chambersburg)
- Podcasts and Digital Audio: Original productions including popular programs, such as *The Spark* and *The Morning Agenda*
- Websites: WITF.org and Education.Pennon.org
- Statewide radio networks: Pennsylvania Public Radio
- Production services: Media Solutions

Today, Pennon is a trusted institution that's both regionally valued and nationally recognized, with a \$10.7 million annual budget and a board-designated endowment of more than \$26 million.

Pennon Education is a Pennsylvania-based innovative Educational Improvement Organization (EIO) and approved Act 48 provider dedicated to forging meaningful partnerships with students, families and educators. Its team of talented educators delivers research-driven professional development, curates standards-aligned resources, and hosts dynamic community events and after-school programs that spark curiosity and elevate learning.

As Pennon looks to the future, it is committed to being an essential part of the civic, educational and cultural fabric of Pennsylvania.



ABOUT CENTRAL PA

The Harrisburg-Lancaster-York region in Central Pennsylvania offers both big-city urban appeal and small-town comforts. From downtowns, to town squares, to countryside, the region provides a balanced mix of economic opportunity, recreational and cultural offerings, and quality lifestyle for anyone. Located in the heart of South Central Pennsylvania, the region is centered in Cumberland, Dauphin, York and Lancaster counties. Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania, is well-known for its central location in the Mid-Atlantic, stable economy, exceptional quality of life and affordability.

The Harrisburg-Lancaster-York region is among the fastest-growing areas in Pennsylvania and is consistently recognized as one of the top-ranked places on the East Coast to live, work, and play. This distinction is particularly strong among millennials and young professionals drawn to the diverse experiences and robust career opportunities found in the area.

For additional and more specific information, please refer to: www.whyorkpa.com, www.harrisburgregionalchamber.org, www.landinlanasterpa.com.



A Great Place to Work

- **Thriving economy:** A growing hub for government, healthcare, manufacturing, logistics and hospitality, with major employers like State Government, Hershey Entertainment & Resorts, The Hershey Company, Rock Litz, Harley Davidson and several award-winning health systems.
- **Work-life balance:** Affordable cost of living, easy commutes, and a rich cultural scene.

A Great Place to Live

- **Natural beauty:** Scenic parks, hiking / biking trails and boating along the Susquehanna River, and proximity to the countryside, Appalachian Trail and the surrounding foothills.
- **Diverse neighborhoods:** A mix of historic districts, modern developments and charming small towns such as Lititz and others across Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, York and Lancaster counties.
- **High quality of life:** Excellent schools, extensive higher education institutions and opportunities, affordable housing, access to fresh foods and a welcoming community atmosphere.



A Great Place to Visit

- **Cultural attractions:** Home to the PA Farm Show, Harrisburg Artsfest, Kipona Festival, the National Civil War Museum, historic farmers markets in Lancaster and York, Amish attractions and Hershey's Chocolate World Attraction.
- **Rich history:** Landmark sites like Gettysburg National Battlefield, the PA State Capitol, the State Museum of PA, and historic Harrisburg and Lancaster.
- **Travel and connectivity:** Convenient access via Amtrak train service and Harrisburg International Airport (HIA).
- **Nearby destinations:** Easy travel to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, DC, New York City, and Hershey.

COMPENSATION AND CONTACT

Compensation and Benefits

The salary range for this role is between \$260,000-\$310,000. Total compensation includes an excellent benefits package and is commensurate with experience.

Contact

Pennon has retained Sally M. Sterling Executive Search to support the search for President and CEO. We welcome comments, nominations or expressions of interest. All applicants are asked to include a letter of interest with their resume.

Please send an email with supporting materials to:

Pennon@sallysterlingexecutivesearch.com.

The Pennon Organization is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages individuals of all backgrounds and cultures to consider this leadership position. Pennon's commitment to inclusivity encompasses but is not limited to diversity in race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, and disability.

ABOUT SALLY M. STERLING EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Based in the greater Washington, DC area, Sally M. Sterling Executive Search is a female-owned executive search services firm specializing in nonprofit and board leadership.

Sally Sterling, firm founder and principal, is a seasoned executive search consultant with more than 25 years of experience across a variety of nonprofit sectors, including foundations, media, global development, and cultural organizations. Sally's firm focuses on recruiting CEO and C-suite leaders for some of the most influential and prominent organizations, whether they are local, national, or international in scope and/or reach. She has worked for some of the most recognized search firms in the world including as a partner at Spencer Stuart until late 2017 when she decided to open her own firm.