

Chief Executive Officer

Own The Podium

Confidential Position Specification

August 2025





The Opportunity

Own the Podium (OTP) is an independent, not for profit organization formally established in 2012 as a legacy of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. OTP has been uniquely successful in delivering against its purpose, vision and mission and, as importantly acting as a key catalyst in nation-building for Canada using the power of sport to engage and inspire. Indeed, OTP is widely credited with delivering on its Impact statement:

Ultimately our aim is to impact how Canadians see and value sport, including sport's role in inspiring Canadians of all ages.

The Chief Executive Officer of Own the Podium is emphatically one of the highest profile, most influential leadership roles in the Canadian sport community. The next CEO will be an individual with a passion for the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of the organization.

OTP's current CEO, Anne Merklinger, will step down in March 2026. She has been in this role since 2012 and with OTP since 2009. Anne has a deep knowledge of the operations and staff and has led the organization through many challenges all while producing exceptional results. She will be available to the successful candidate for a defined period to support on-boarding and transition.

The Organization

Vision

For Canada to be leaders in Olympic and Paralympic sport.

Purpose

The purpose statement of supporting Olympic and Paralympic athletes centres on fostering success through a holistic approach that values not only winning at the highest level but also emphasizes integrity and athlete well-being. It encompasses achieving international success while prioritizing ethical conduct, fairness, and the overall health of athletes, ensuring an optimal pursuit of excellence.

Mission

Enhance the high-performance sport system by providing advice, delivering strategic priorities and providing funding recommendations that align with our funding partner's priorities.

Strategic Priorities

#1 - Lead the pursuit of podium performances

Enhance podium performances in targeted Olympic and Paralympic sports by providing technical guidance. This involves enhancing coaching, improving training and competition environments, delivering quality sport medicine and sport science services and backing NSO-led research programs to provide performance solutions. Ultimately, the goal aims to optimize support systems and environments for athletes and NSOs to achieve personal benchmarks and podium success in an environment that protects the physical and psychological health and safety of athletes.



#2 - Strengthen high-performance sport system

Lead the development of a positive high-performance sport system that achieves podium performances. This involves enhancing coaching expertise, empowering technical leaders and fostering a healthy culture of excellence across Olympic and Paralympic sports and providing technical support to non-targeted sports. As a prominent organization within the sports system, OTP leads by example and sets the standard in all organizational aspects.

#3 - Provide recommendations for optimal resource allocation aligned with funding partner priorities

Optimize resource allocation by providing funding recommendations based on NSO podium probabilities, athlete progress tracking, and identification of NextGen athletes on the podium pathway based on funding partner objectives.

#4 - Advocate for an increase in financial resources for high-performance sport

Advocate for an increase in financial resources for high-performance sports by identifying efficiencies and gaps that hinder our ability to achieve more podium performances.

Results

Short-Term Outcomes

1. More podium potential athletes

An increase in the number of athletes with the potential to win medals at the upcoming and subsequent Olympic and Paralympic Games.

2. Elevated the standard of sport excellence within the high-performance sport system

Overall improvement in the quality of training, coaching, support services and culture existing within the high-performance sport system.

3. Enhanced high-performance sport system capacity

Increase in the overall capabilities and resources of the high-performance sport system, including improvements in infrastructure, technology, personnel, and governance, resulting in a more robust and adaptable system capable of effectively supporting athletes, coaches, and stakeholders at every level of their development and beyond.

Long-Term Outcomes

1. Increase Canada's medal count in alignment with the goals of the sport system.

2. Inspire Canadians of all ages to play and stay in sport.

For a full summary of Own the Podium initiatives and programs, please visit www.ownthepodium.org



VALUES

Excellence: Excellence is a habit. We strive for performance solutions every day within our team and with our partners to drive continuous improvement.

Bold Leadership: Forging new paths takes courage. We challenge the status quo by encouraging innovation, supporting calculated risks and empowering the pursuit of excellence.

Collaboration: Working together is powerful. We work with our partners to achieve greater success by leveraging personal and collective strengths.

Respect: People and their perspectives matter. We show our teammates and partners that we care about the consequences of our actions and treat them with dignity by considering their ideas and opinions.

Integrity: Integrity is the foundation of trust. We are committed to building mutual confidence and trust in all of our relationships by being honest, transparent and fair.

Accountability: Owning our actions is fundamental. We consistently meet our commitments and take responsibility for our behaviours and decisions.

Diversity: Difference is valued. We believe in an inclusive culture that empowers all of us to connect, belong and grow.



The Position



Position

Chief Executive Officer



Reporting Relationship:

Board of Directors, Own the Podium



Location:

Headquarters in Ottawa, ON

Preference Ottawa, ON

The role requires significant presence at headquarters and frequent travel across the country.



Website:

<https://www.ownthepodium.org/>

The CEO of OTP is the visionary leader, champion of its short- and long-term strategic objectives and representative of OTP both at home and abroad. Demonstrating humility, passion for the importance of sport, collaboration and agility, they will build a strong relationship with the Board, inspire their team and influence a diverse array of stakeholders.

The incoming CEO will inherit a team where there is a high level of loyalty, capability and tenure across all levels of the organization. The staff have worked well together in uplifting performance across Canada's sport system.

Nevertheless, the incoming CEO's infusion of new skills, perspective, and energy provides opportunities for new ideas and modernization. An important quality for the new leader will be the ability to guide the current team with trust and confidence and attract new staff who fit with the culture and performance expectations.

The CEO is the key steward of OTP's national funding partners, including Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Canadian Paralympic Committee. OTP enjoys exceptional relationships with all three parties. Building and maintaining relationships with these national funding partners as well as other key stakeholders in Canada's sport system is critically important for the incoming CEO.

As well, the Future of Sport in Canada Commission will release its final report in and around OTP's CEO transition. The incoming CEO will be charged with implementing the recommendations from the Commission as they pertain to any change in OTP's role or operations.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership & Vision: Provide inspiring, forward-thinking leadership that aligns with OTP's goals and values. Refine and strengthen a clear vision with a strong implementation plan while remaining adaptable to new opportunities in a dynamic sport environment.

Ecosystem Engagement: Act as a central figure within the sport ecosystem, engaging athletes, NSO's, other sports leaders, government, and other partners. Communicate a compelling vision that galvanizes Canadians in the pursuit of excellence in global sport and the importance of sport in inspiring Canadians of all ages.



Culture & Talent Development: Foster a high-performance culture rooted in authenticity, inclusivity, and integrity. Attract, inspire, and retain top talent, ensuring an engaged and diverse workplace where employees continue to thrive.

Operational Oversight: Oversee day-to-day operations in collaboration with senior leaders, ensuring alignment across units for optimal performance.

Reputation Building: Maintain and further reinforce OTP's reputation as a collaborative leader by fostering strong relationships with the board, government, NSO's, and key partners.

Fiscal Responsibility: Prioritize financial stability by securing and nurturing funding sources and by driving fiscally responsible growth initiatives.

Board Relationship: Quickly build trust and a collaborative working relationship.

Key Experience Requirements

The ideal candidate will bring a strong understanding of the sport ecosystem, with experience engaging athletes and supporting excellence and innovation. While direct experience as an athlete, coach or sport administrator is not required, it would be an asset. This individual will serve as a thoughtful and dynamic advocate for athletes and the broader sport ecosystem, representing OTP's mission with a diverse group of stakeholders.

Specifically, the candidate will bring:

Leadership and Organizational Expertise:

- Experience in senior leadership roles, such as CEO, Executive Director, or a comparable position.
- Track record of driving organizational growth, strategic planning, and effective team leadership.
- Experience managing multi-million-dollar budgets, ensuring financial sustainability and alignment with OTP's mission.

Ecosystem and Community Engagement:

- Familiarity with the Canadian sport landscape, with the ability to build and maintain credible relationships across diverse groups, including other sports organizations, government and corporate partners.
- Experience fostering collaboration and trust within an athlete-centred environment is an asset.

Athlete's Journey Insight:

- While the next CEO does not themselves need to have been a high-performance athlete, they need to convey deep understanding and ability to support the athlete journey, including its unique challenges and milestones.

Sport Sector Knowledge:

- Comprehensive understanding of evolving trends in sport and implications for athletes and organizations including safe sport and analytics.
- Equal comfort with the issues associated with para-sport is assumed.

Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy:

- Demonstrated success in building and maintaining strong relationships with diverse



stakeholders, including athletes, NSO's, other sports organizations, government bodies and other partners.

- Adept at advocating for OTP's mission and priorities at local, national, and international levels.
- Preferably brings familiarity with government relations and external partnerships, with an ability to maintain productive public sector relationships.

Operational and Team Leadership:

- Skilled at building, leading, and retaining high-performing, cross-functional teams.
- Experience fostering an inclusive and collaborative organizational culture that aligns with core values and encourages excellence and innovation.

Community Commitment, Mission Alignment and Passion:

- Demonstrated commitment to see Canadian individuals and organizations compete successfully at the highest levels on the global stage.
- Passion for excellence and the transformative potential of sport in driving economic and social change.

This role is ideally Ottawa-based. If the incoming CEO is not in Ottawa, the successful candidate will have made a clear commitment to having a meaningful presence in the Ottawa hub. Current OTP policy is for employees to be in the office at least 3 days per week except when travelling for business, with the expectation that the successful candidate will actively engage with the national and international sport community and build strong, in-person connections.

This is not a 9-to-5 job; it requires someone who is eager to connect with athletes, sports leaders and other stakeholders, much of which happens outside of regular business hours and the majority of which is outside Ottawa.

Key Leadership Competencies

Strategic Visionary Experienced Building and Scaling

- Pragmatic visionary who demonstrates the intellectual bandwidth, creativity, and broad knowledge that aligns with OTP's mission.
- Inspiring leader who effectively develops and communicates a focused strategy and prioritizes objectives for staff in the context of ever-changing external opportunities and potential constraints.
- Balances short term organizational realities and objectives with longer term organizational health and impact.

Relationship and People Skills

- Quickly establishes trust and connection and cultivates long-term collaboration and partnerships with a wide variety of people and organizations.
- Invests in the team and cultivates a strong cultural glue and shared sense of direction, accountabilities, and common goals.
- Embeds an appreciation for diversity of experience and perspective in all that they do for the organization.



Communication Skills

- Articulate compelling communicator comfortable leading, speaking and influencing across a diverse array of stakeholders and settings.
- Exudes quiet confidence, calm and approachability.
- Effective with a variety of audiences and at all levels in and out of the organization.
- Functionally bilingual in both official languages is helpful, or at minimum, demonstrated commitment to learning the other language.

Drives Results

- Translates bold objectives into tangible outcomes.
- Develops enduring relationships while getting deals done, identifying mutual interests and securing partnerships, support, and tangible investments.
- Balances oversight of a high-performance culture and identifiable impact with thoughtful attention to people and culture and a commitment to teams, collaboration, and inclusiveness for the long term.

Other Personal and Leadership Attributes

- Effective listener; able to express alternative views with respect.
- Sophisticated social and interpersonal skills; low ego and mature confidence.
- Patient, thoughtful, decisive, tenacious.
- High emotional intelligence; navigates nuanced situations to positive outcomes.
- Creative, innovative, and strong problem-solving skills.

The Process

Estimated Search Timeline

While every search is dynamic and time frames are hard to predict, the following is the expected timeline for this search:

- **Development of the candidate pool:** August - November 2025
- **Client interviews:** Begin November 2025
- **Decision and announcement:** Early 2026
- **Start date for incoming CEO:** Q1 2026

Apply Online

Korn Ferry Job Portal - <https://jobs.candidate.kornferry.com/go/ext/AXLFDU/242>

The employer is committed to employment equity, diversity and inclusion, and encourages applications from all qualified individuals. Accommodations are available throughout the recruitment process upon request.



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