

Houston
Audubon

Development Director

Sorrell is proud to partner with Houston Audubon in its search for a seasoned fundraising leader to serve as its next Development Director. Established in 1969, Houston Audubon is a leading regional nonprofit and accredited land trust focused on protecting the natural environment for birds and people in the Houston Gulf Coast area. Its commitment to excellence in land conservation, environmental education, community engagement, and science is foundational to advancing the conservation of birds and their habitats and improving our community for people and other wildlife.

Houston Audubon owns and manages more than 4,200 acres of habitat, including 18 nature sanctuaries that serve as community assets, venues for quality education and recreation experiences, and collaborative research opportunities. While currently focusing its work across 11 counties in the Upper Texas Gulf Coast Region, Houston Audubon sees opportunities for future expansion. The organization's annual budget is approximately \$2.3 million and is growing to fulfill the strategy.

Houston Audubon recently announced the successful completion of its "Save Bolivar" campaign, officially closing on the acquisition of the land required to fully protect the Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary. The acquisition marks the culmination of a dedicated, multi-year effort to protect the entire footprint of Bolivar Flats. This globally recognized sanctuary serves as a critical lifeline for hundreds of thousands of birds annually, providing essential habitat for nesting, wintering, and refueling during grueling migratory journeys along the Upper Texas Coast. On the near-term horizon is the Bolivar Peninsula Nature Trail, a RESTORE ACT-funded project that includes plans for construction of an observation deck at Bolivar, in addition to the trail system.

You may find more information on Houston Audubon at <https://houstonaudubon.org/>.

Position Overview

Houston Audubon seeks an experienced, senior-level Development Director to serve as the organization's chief philanthropic strategist and revenue leader. This role is responsible for planning, leading, and executing a comprehensive fundraising program that advances Houston Audubon's mission and directly supports the goals of the 2024–2034 Strategic Framework.

The Development Director is accountable for growing and diversifying philanthropic revenue across all sources while strengthening donor, foundation, corporate, and community partnerships. As a member of the senior management team, this position plays a central role in aligning

fundraising strategy with program priorities, capital and endowment goals, and long-term organizational sustainability. Houston Audubon's annual operating budget ranges from approximately \$2–\$2.5 million, with roughly 80% derived from philanthropic support.

Strategic Context

Houston Audubon's Strategic Framework calls for:

- Increasing operational fundraising targets by a minimum of 5% annually to address inflation and support strategic plan implementation;
- Growing the Stewardship Endowment by 50% by 2033;
- Launching and executing a capital campaign by 2026 to support sanctuary and facility acquisition and improvements; and
- Expanding community-centered conservation, education, and engagement initiatives that require reliable, multi-year funding.

The Development Director will lead the fundraising strategies required to achieve these outcomes and ensure philanthropy is fully integrated into organizational planning, budgeting, and execution.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

Revenue Strategy & Execution

- Develop and implement a multi-year fundraising strategy aligned with Houston Audubon's strategic plan, annual operating budgets, capital priorities, and endowment growth goals.
- Own performance across all philanthropic revenue streams, including major gifts, individual giving, membership, corporate partnerships, foundations, government grants (as applicable), special events, appeals, and planned giving.
- Collaborate with the President & CEO to develop and execute an annual development plan that outlines revenue targets, expenses, and key initiatives; monitor progress and provide regular reporting to senior leadership and the Board.
- Establish annual and long-range revenue targets; monitor performance against goals; adjust strategies based on data, trends, and organizational priorities.
- Lead the development and execution of a comprehensive capital campaign, in close partnership with the President & CEO and Board leadership.

Donor, Foundation & Partner Engagement

- Cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of major donors and prospects, including individuals, corporations, and foundations capable of five- and six-figure commitments.
- Partner with the President & CEO and senior leadership to understand program goals and priorities and translate them into compelling funding proposals and donor requests.
- Oversee grant strategy and execution, including prospect research, proposal development, compliance, reporting, and relationship management.
- Maintain strong relationships with funders and partners to ensure alignment between funded projects and organizational goals.
- Ensure best-in-class stewardship practices that reflect Houston Audubon's values and reinforce long-term donor loyalty.

Board & Volunteer Leadership

- Serve as a primary staff partner to the Board of Directors and relevant committees, including the Development committee.
- Support and activate board members in fundraising, donor cultivation, and ambassador roles through training, tools, and clear expectations.
- Participate as needed in board meetings and provide clear, actionable fundraising reports and insights.

Events & Campaigns

- Provide strategic oversight of Houston Audubon's signature fundraising events, including Avian Affair, Birdathon, and Evening on the Canopy, with a focus on net revenue, donor pipeline development, and mission integration.
- Ensure fundraising events, appeals, and campaigns support long-term donor engagement strategies rather than operating as stand-alone activities.

Systems, Planning & Accountability

- Ensure accurate revenue forecasting, pipeline management, and monthly and annual reporting to senior leadership and the Board.
- Oversee donor database management, data integrity, and reporting systems to support transparency, accountability, and decision-making.
- Collaborate with Finance and Operations to align fundraising projections with cash flow, restricted funds management, and compliance requirements.

Team Leadership & Organizational Collaboration

- Provide leadership, management, mentorship, and performance oversight to a team of skilled development staff.
- Recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing development team with clear goals and professional growth pathways.
- Foster a culture of philanthropy across the organization by collaborating closely with Communications, Land Conservation, and Education teams.
- Represent Houston Audubon in the community and confidently articulate the organization's mission, strategic priorities, and impact to a variety of audiences.

Qualifications and Experience:

Required

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent professional experience
- Minimum of seven years of progressive nonprofit fundraising experience, including leadership of comprehensive development programs
- Demonstrated success securing major gifts in the \$50,000–\$250,000+ range
- Proven experience developing and executing multi-year fundraising strategies aligned with organizational growth
- Experience working closely with Boards of Directors and senior executives
- Strong financial acumen, including budgeting, forecasting, and revenue analysis
- Demonstrated ability to motivate and support team members and to build strong, trusting relationships with peers and potential partners

- Highly relational, high touch, politically savvy and intuitive with high emotional intelligence
- Exceptional written and verbal communication skills

Preferred

- Experience leading or playing a senior role in a capital campaign or endowment initiative
- Familiarity with conservation, environmental, education, or land trust organizations
- Knowledge of the Greater Houston philanthropic landscape
- Experience managing CRM systems and using data to drive fundraising strategy
- CFRE designation a plus

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation is competitive and commensurate with experience. An attractive benefits package includes medical insurance (75% of premiums for medical and dental plans), life insurance, 401(k) up to 3.5% match, and a competitive provision for vacation and sick leave. This role is based in HAS's Headquarters office at 440 Wilchester Boulevard in Houston, Texas.

Application and Referral Process

Applicant review is currently underway and will continue until the candidate has been selected. To nominate a prospective candidate or be considered for this position, please contact Priscilla Plumb, priscilla@sorrellco.com / 281.224.0881 or Stacie Gaff, stacie@sorrellco.com / 832.594.1925. All inquiries will be held in confidence.

Houston Audubon is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. HAS is committed to fostering and nurturing an organizational culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion within its workplace and sanctuaries, and in its work in the community. HAS believes that the rich blend of ideas, perspectives, and viewpoints that come with diversity are essential to its long-term success.

About Sorrell

Sorrell is a highly relational provider of executive recruiting. Our mission is to serve as partners with our clients to accelerate their efforts to attract, hire and retain talent that impacts the future of the organization. For more information, call 713.840.1870.