

Chief Executive Officer

ConTextos

Chicago, IL

Salary: \$135,000 - \$170,000

The Organization

Founded in 2011, ConTextos originated in El Salvador and expanded to Chicago in 2016 and has served over 100,000 teachers, students, youth, incarcerated persons, and community members. ConTextos uses the power of literary arts and education to promote healing and reflection, and to foster critical thinking and dialogue through personal storytelling. We seek to lift up the voices and insights of people affected by trauma, to challenge assumptions, and to provoke change.

ConTextos' founding work, which continues to be a key part of its El Salvador operations, focused on literacy education and teacher training. ConTextos has trained thousands of teachers across El Salvador, built libraries, and distributed tens of thousands of books. Through this work we seek to elevate the importance of stories, and storytelling, in learning, healing, and thriving as communities.

As ConTextos continued to work in El Salvador, and expanded to Chicago, our focus sharpened on working with communities impacted by community violence. We recognize that violence is not just an isolated moment between victimizer and victim. Hurt people hurt people, and violence spreads through networks: witnesses may become victims may become perpetrators. Through work in prisons, schools, anti-violence organizations, and community settings, ConTextos aims to intervene at each point in this network of trauma by using the power of story and critical thinking to build empathy and understanding. We want to decrease violence and help individuals and communities heal, and also to create a space for all of us to imagine what a thriving community means.

A central part of this work is achieved through small-group storytelling spaces, starting with our signature "Soy Autor" program in El Salvador. Now, in both El Salvador and Chicago we operate in various settings—incarceration, schools, and communities—supporting individuals who are navigating the criminal justice system, reentry programs, or are at elevated risk of violence involvement. Our work helps participants move from hurt to healing by developing self-reflection, social-emotional skills, and accountability. Through storytelling, we challenge assumptions, elevate voices, and foster empathy to provoke conversation and change in diverse audiences.

Our goal is to create spaces for reflection, healing, dialogue, and lasting change.

The Position

ConTextos is at a pivotal moment in its trajectory, and is seeking a visionary, dynamic, and creative CEO to bring the organization into its next phase. Since its inception, ConTextos has been founder-led; effective January 1, 2024 and pursuant to a planned transition process, the founder has left that position. ConTextos has two country directors, one in El Salvador and one in Chicago, who oversee day-to-day programming and operations in those locations; these two country directors will report directly to the new Chief Executive Officer.

The Position (cont.)

The new Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for upholding ConTextos' mission, vision, and values, and for overseeing the programs and strategic direction of the organization. There is significant interest in, and demand for, the programming and approach that ConTextos offers—both in and beyond our existing sites. The next CEO will be instrumental in setting the course for deepening our work and leveraging our expertise to amplify the impact of our proven programs. Other key duties include fundraising, partnership development, and reputation management for ConTextos globally. The position reports directly to the Board of Directors.

ROLE OVERVIEW

Organization Mission, Strategy, and Programs

- Conceptualizes and directs the implementation of ConTextos's programs, ensuring they align with the mission of using storytelling and education to promote healing, reduce violence, and foster critical thinking.
- Works closely with the board, management team, and staff to ensure the organization's mission is fulfilled through innovative programs, strategic planning, and impactful community outreach.
- Responsible for enhancing ConTextos's image and presence by being an active, visible leader in the community and fostering partnerships with professional, civic, and private organizations, as well as with funders, to expand the impact of ConTextos's mission.
- Builds and maintains strong relationships with justice-system organizations, schools, community leaders, and other stakeholders to further ConTextos's goals of preventing violence, addressing trauma, and supporting marginalized communities.

Board Governance

- Leads ConTextos in a manner that supports and strengthens the organization's mission, as defined by the Board of Directors.
- Communicates effectively with the Board, providing timely and accurate information to support informed decision-making and the successful governance of the organization.
- Fosters a shared commitment within the Board to advancing ConTextos as an equitable, mission-driven organization focused on social justice.
- Oversees organization Board and committee meetings.

Financial Performance and Sustainability

- Ensures Financial Health through Strategic Resource Development: Implements innovative strategies to secure sufficient resources for the organization's financial stability, growth, and the advancement of ConTextos' mission.
- Leads Fundraising and Revenue Generation: Drives comprehensive fundraising initiatives and cultivates diverse revenue streams, with a focus on supporting key program areas such as trauma intervention, criminalization prevention, and educational outreach.

Financial Performance and Sustainability (cont.)

- Oversees fiscal integrity by submitting proposed annual budgets and quarterly financial statements to the Board, ensuring they accurately reflect the organization's financial condition.
- Ensures responsible fiscal management, operating within the approved budget to maximize resource utilization and maintain a positive financial position for the organization.

Organizational Leadership

- Collaborates with the Board of Directors on policy decisions, fundraising efforts, and enhancing the visibility of ConTextos.
- Leads and mentors the staff management team, fostering a workplace culture rooted in empathy, reflection, accountability, and social justice.
- Oversees strategic planning and implementation of programs aimed at interrupting social networks of violence at key moments: prevention, trauma, and criminalization.
- Serves as the primary spokesperson for ConTextos to stakeholders, media, and the public, advocating for the organization's mission and programs.
- Establishes and maintains strategic relationships with partner organizations to enhance ConTextos' mission and increase the organization's reach and effectiveness.
- Engages in active fundraising and development to secure financial resources necessary for program growth and innovation.
- Honors and embraces the transnational, multi-cultural history, tradition, and values of ConTextos.
- Performs other duties as assigned by the Board of Directors.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate for the CEO position possesses the following competencies:

Strategic Visioning Demonstrates the ability to develop and implement long-term strategies that align with the organization's mission and goals.	Emotional Intelligence Effectively leads with empathy and self-awareness, fostering a positive and inclusive work environment.	Program Innovation Proactively creates and implements groundbreaking programs that drive mission-driven impact and social change.
Fundraising and Resource Development Skilled at generating and sustaining diverse funding sources to ensure organizational financial health and program growth.	Partnership Building Cultivates strong relationships with stakeholders, communities, and funders to expand the organization's reach and influence.	Operational Leadership Efficiently manages resources, staff, and budgets to optimize organizational performance and sustainability.

Additional Qualifications

- Strong background in organizational leadership and social justice programming, particularly with a focus on violence prevention, trauma intervention, and/or criminal justice reform.
- Demonstrated experience in using storytelling, narrative-building, or literary arts as tools for healing and social change preferred
- Proven ability to lead with confidence, integrity, and a deep commitment to equity and social justice, especially in addressing systemic issues within marginalized communities.
- Ability to envision and convey the organization's mission and future direction to staff, board members, volunteers, donors, and community partners.
- Experience and skill in working with a Board of Directors, fostering a collaborative and equitable governance structure.
- Skilled in high-level strategic thinking and planning, with a demonstrated ability to operationalize and execute strategic initiatives.
- Prior success in establishing and nurturing relationships with influential individuals and organizations, including funders, partner agencies, and community leaders.
- Active fundraising experience with excellent donor relations skills, a deep understanding of the funding landscape, and a track record of generating new revenue streams and improving financial outcomes.
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills, with the ability to serve as a compelling advocate for the organization's mission.
- Five or more years of senior management experience (10+ years preferred).
- Bachelor's degree required; Master's degree preferred. An equivalent combination of relevant education and experience will also be considered.
- Fluency in Spanish is essential.

Where We Work

- **Incarceration:** Collaborating with juveniles and adults involved in the criminal justice system, particularly those awaiting trial for violent offenses.
- **Schools:** Partnering with educators to promote reflective, dialogue-driven learning environments that foster emotional and social success in students.
- **Community:** Engaging in workforce development, reentry programming, alternative sentencing, and community-based efforts to support individuals at elevated risk of violence or recently released from incarceration.

Equipment and Work Setting

This role will be based in Chicago, Illinois. Chicago programming operates on a multi-site basis, with time in the office, out in the community at a partner site, or time spent remotely (at home or any other location). This specific position involves a meaningful amount of travel and time at partner locations. Regular access to a personal vehicle is ideal, but not required.

2-4 trips to El Salvador per year are expected as a part of the role.

Accessibility and Environment

ConTextos Chicago's office is an older building with a single step up to most entrances, and a full staircase leading to the second floor. One entrance has a ramp.

Physical demands generally include the ability to operate a computer, and health and mobility sufficient to allow for international travel to El Salvador.

Legal and Safety

- The role is subject to a background check and fingerprinting to ensure compliance with requirements set forth by the State of Illinois, funders, or other bodies.
- Eligible to work in the United States; ConTextos is not able to sponsor a visa for this position.
- Must be able to obtain clearance to represent ConTextos Chicago in public school settings and/or within correctional facilities when those settings are relevant to the program.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

At ConTextos, we are deeply committed to fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where all voices are heard and valued. We believe that diverse perspectives are essential to addressing the complex social challenges we seek to solve, and we strive to create a culture that promotes belonging, respect, and opportunity for all. Our mission is rooted in uplifting the stories of those who have been historically marginalized, and we actively work to ensure that our programs, partnerships, and workplace reflect these values. We welcome individuals from all backgrounds and encourage candidates who share our passion for social justice, equity, and inclusion to apply.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary

\$135,000 - \$170,000

Benefits

ConTextos offers full-time employees health, dental, vision, and employer-matched 401k plans.

TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in this position, please [click here](#). All applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their application.

We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply even if you do not meet all of the qualifications outlined above. If you are selected to move forward for an initial screening call, we expect you to hear from us by November.

Omar Lopez
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[Submit an application](#)