



OKEFENOKEE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

The Okefenokee Swamp Park, Inc. (OSP) includes Okefenokee Swamp Park (Ware County) and Okefenokee Adventures (Charlton County). The OSP opened at the northern entrance into the 407,000-acre Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in Waycross in 1946 and has evolved into a regional educational organization that is dedicated to fostering a deep connection with nature and conserving its ecological health through stewardship, education, and outdoor recreation around the Okefenokee.

Since 2023, the Okefenokee Swamp Park (OSP) has convened a collaborative group of over 50+ organizations and stakeholders, known as the Okefenokee Partnership. The Okefenokee Partnership is focused on facilitating regional engagement, aligning local objectives and strategies, and supporting sustainable economic development initiatives.

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

The Regional Development Manager is a full-time, temporary 18-month contract position (1099) with the potential for renewal pending future funding. The role primarily serves the Okefenokee Regional Partnership, while also supporting select initiatives of the Okefenokee Swamp Park (OSP). This is a hybrid position based in the Okefenokee region, with regular travel required across Charlton, Clinch, and Ware counties.

This position will play a key role in advancing regional collaboration, promoting sustainable economic development, and preparing the region to leverage opportunities associated with Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge's anticipated World Heritage Site designation. The manager will be responsible for building and strengthening relationships across public, private, and nonprofit sectors to align local priorities, foster economic opportunity, and inspire a shared regional vision rooted in ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and downtown revitalization.

Key responsibilities include coordinating stakeholder outreach, facilitating public meetings and regional convenings, supporting downtown revitalization in the gateway communities of Folkston, Homerville, and Waycross, and championing the economic potential of increased visitation to the Okefenokee.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Develop and maintain strong, trust-based relationships with regional stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, nonprofits, schools, and residents.
- Serve as the lead coordinator for the Okefenokee Partnership, facilitating regular meetings, stakeholder outreach, and collaborative initiatives.

- Represent the Partnership and OSP in public meetings and local government settings to align regional priorities and foster buy-in.
- Collaborate with OSP's marketing team, local tourism boards, chambers of commerce, and business leaders to implement cohesive regional branding and messaging.
- Support efforts to raise awareness about the economic opportunities related to the World Heritage Site designation, including increased tourism, ecotourism development, and small business growth.
- Assist local communities—particularly Folkston, Homerville, and Waycross—with downtown revitalization strategies that reflect the region's identity and capitalize on rising visitation.
- Lead outreach efforts to schools, civic organizations, and the broader public to build local pride and support for the Okefenokee as a world-renowned ecological and cultural destination.
- Partner with local and regional business resource providers to promote and facilitate new opportunities in hospitality, recreation, and visitor services.
- Track and report on key metrics related to engagement, tourism growth, and economic development.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Bachelor's degree in public administration, planning, community development, environmental studies, communications, or a related field. Equivalent professional experience will be considered.
- 2–5 years of professional experience in community engagement, planning, facilitation, or related work.
- Demonstrated ability to build and maintain relationships with diverse stakeholders, including public officials, business leaders, nonprofits, and community members.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills, including experience facilitating meetings, giving presentations, and preparing outreach materials.
- Self-motivated, organized, and capable of working independently in a hybrid, regionally mobile role.
- **(Preferred)** Knowledge of rural economic development, conservation, outdoor recreation, place-based initiatives, research, marketing, and communication.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS:

This is a full-time, 18-month contract position (1099) with a salary range of **\$58,000–\$65,000**, commensurate with experience and qualifications. The position is grant-funded, with potential for renewal based on performance and continued funding.

This is a hybrid role based in the Okefenokee region, and regular, reimbursable travel throughout Charlton, Clinch, and Ware counties is required.

HOW TO APPLY:

To apply, please submit a resume and cover letter to **Kim Bednarek** (kim.bednarek@okeswamp.org) with the subject line **“Regional Community Development Manager – [Your Name]”**.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, with a priority deadline of **June 30, 2025**.