

National Committee on North Korea (NCNK)

President — Position Description

About NCNK

The mission of NCNK, Inc. is to promote principled engagement between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK/North Korea) toward the reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula and to improve the humanitarian well-being of the North Korean people. Facilitating cooperation between the U.S. and the DPRK, as U.S. law permits, and building mutual trust between the peoples of the two nations are integral to the work of NCNK.

NCNK's principal asset is its expert membership—a network of practitioners, policy experts, humanitarian leaders, academics, and other professionals working on issues related to North Korea. This network is what enables NCNK to serve as a trusted, non-partisan platform for dialogue, a respected convening organization, and a thought leader on engagement, diplomacy, humanitarian cooperation, and peacebuilding on the Korean Peninsula.

NCNK is at an inflection point. The organization's recent transition from Mercy Corps to independent 501(c)(3) status is the most visible change underway, but the more consequential transition is geopolitical and strategic: U.S.-DPRK relations are entering a period of deep uncertainty, and the broader international order in which NCNK was founded (2004) is shifting. Meeting this moment will likely require not only a more diversified financial model, but a willingness to rethink what NCNK does, whom it engages, and how it sustains itself.

This will require leadership that combines the traditional strengths of a Washington-based policy leader—credibility with government and policy communities, deep networks across the engagement field, and sound judgment on DPRK issues—with qualities that are, in important respects, nontraditional: comfort with building rather than maintaining, the capacity to broaden NCNK's membership and donor base, openness to experience and perspectives outside the standard policy track, strong interpersonal skills and the ability to build trust and lead inclusively, and the imagination to envision what NCNK could become.

Position Summary

The President leads NCNK in partnership with the Board of Directors, the members, and a small staff. The role combines strategy, fundraising, programming, and external representation. The next leader will guide NCNK through significant transition—building a diversified financial base, evolving programming for a changing geopolitical landscape and diversified membership, and solidifying the organization's independent footing.

This is a hands-on role. The President's name is on many of NCNK's governing and financial documents, and the role requires staying close to the daily mechanics of the organization, not just setting strategic direction. Candidates should enter the process with a clear-eyed understanding of this reality.

Responsibilities

Strategic leadership and external representation. Set NCNK's direction in partnership with the Board. Serve as the organization's leading public voice across government, foundations, media, and the academic, humanitarian, and policy communities engaged with the Korean Peninsula. Position NCNK as a trusted platform for dialogue and a thought leader on future diplomatic and people-to-people engagement and peacebuilding.

Fundraising and financial sustainability. Lead the development of a new financial model less reliant on traditional grants. Cultivate individual and institutional donors, as well as foundations and other possible sources of funding or revenue. Partner with the Board to launch a Development Committee and to build a culture of member-giving. (NCNK does not accept funds from any government or foreign-based entities.)

Programming and membership. Convene NCNK's signature gatherings—the East and West Coast annual member meetings, DC policy salons, in-person and remote seminars, and ongoing consultations across the engagement communities inside and outside the United States. Evolve programming in response to changes in U.S.-DPRK relations. Grow and engage NCNK's membership as the organization's principal asset and help cultivate the next generation of experts and practitioners working on North Korea and East Asia.

Operations and team. Supervise and manage a small staff as well as bearing responsibility for NCNK's overall financial and compliance operations. Allocation of time is currently split between NCNK programming and external representation (50%) and fundraising and administration (50%).

Qualifications

- Leadership experience in a sector relevant to NCNK's mission—nonprofit, policy, government, business, academic, humanitarian, philanthropy, journalism.
- Credibility on East Asia-related issues. Familiarity with the Korean Peninsula and U.S.-DPRK relations is an advantage, not a prerequisite.
- A record of building—organizations, programs, funding bases, or new directions—often under resource constraints.
- Substantive fundraising experience, including approaches beyond traditional foundation grants.
- Strong communication skills with diverse audiences: members, policymakers, funders, scholars, practitioners, civil society organizations, and media.
- Sound judgment in politically sensitive environments.
- Comfort in a small, entrepreneurial organization.
- Willingness to be hands-on with financial, administrative, and compliance matters, not simply oversee them.
- Realistic expectations about the day-to-day, at times unglamorous, demands of leading a small, independent nonprofit.

Reports To, Location, and Compensation

Reports to: NCNK Board of Directors.

Location: Washington, DC area preferred. Periodic domestic and international travel.

Start date: November 30, 2026

Compensation: \$125,000–\$150,000 annually, commensurate with experience. Health benefits.

To Apply

To express interest, or to suggest a candidate, please send a cover letter and résumé to Trevor Higgins at thiggins@worldaffairs.org, subject line — NCNK Search Committee. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until the position is filled. Inquiries from current jobholders will be treated in confidence.