



EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT

City Manager

Whitehall, Michigan

SALARY: \$110,000 to \$130,000 DOQ

Great leadership is in our nature.

www.doublehaulsolutions.com



OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY

The City of Whitehall, Michigan, located where the White River meets White Lake, is seeking its next City Manager to help lead the community into a new era of strategic progress and accessible leadership. Known for its welcoming neighborhoods, lakefront parks, and walkable downtown, Whitehall offers a close-knit environment where civic pride and community connection shape daily life. This is a place where relationships matter and where residents are actively engaged in shaping the city's future.

Part of the broader White Lake Area, Whitehall shares deep ties with its neighboring city of Montague and surrounding townships. The two cities have enjoyed a long history of friendly rivalry, regional cooperation, and shared services. The White Lake Area has a distinct and relaxed character that continues to attract multi-generational families and seasonal visitors, especially from the Chicago area.

Rooted in a long history that spans from its Indigenous heritage to its rise as a lumber and shipping hub in the 19th century, Whitehall has evolved into a center of advanced manufacturing and local innovation. Today, employers like Howmet Aerospace support the economy, with thousands of workers contributing to the region's global aerospace presence. Residents enjoy cultural landmarks such as The Playhouse at White Lake and public spaces like Goodrich Park, offering a blend of recreation, arts, and community gathering.

The next City Manager will serve as a steady and collaborative leader, responsible for managing daily operations, aligning departmental work with City Council policy, and supporting initiatives in infrastructure, development, and city services. Success in this role will require strong interpersonal skills, clear communication, and a commitment to open and accountable governance that fosters trust among staff, elected officials, and community members.

Whitehall is ready for a City Manager who brings curiosity, discipline, and care to their leadership. The ideal candidate will be comfortable navigating complexity, skilled at uniting diverse perspectives, and dedicated to helping Whitehall grow with purpose while honoring what makes it unique.

WHITEHALL FAST FACTS



POPULATION
2,974



HOUSEHOLDS
1,378



MEDIAN HOME VALUE
\$205,800



MEDIAN INCOME
\$58,750



BIKEScore
64/100



WALKScore
51/100



3.8
SQUARE MILES



15.3%
COVERED BY
LAKES & WATERWAYS





REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS

Whitehall's lakeshore setting offers access to outdoor recreation, local culture, forests and freshwater, arts events, and more. With many destinations just a short drive away, it's easy to discover what makes this part of Michigan truly unforgettable.

What attracts people to Whitehall, and what factors lead residents to stay and explore the region?

Agricultural & Rural Connections: Just ten minutes from Oceana County's farmland, Whitehall benefits from access to local produce, seasonal farm markets, and Montague's weekly farmers market.

Beloved Local Small Businesses (Whitehall): From boutique gift shops and cafés to breweries and cooking classes, the White Lake Area is full of locally owned businesses that reflect the community's charm and creativity.

Duck Lake State Park (South of Whitehall): This scenic park features an inland lake with beach access, hiking trails, and picnic areas, ideal for a quiet escape into nature.

Lakeshore Parks & Trails: The White Lake Area is a hub for trail lovers and outdoor enthusiasts, offering access to the Hart-Montague Trail, the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail, and more than ten state parks within an hour's drive. Trail networks connect to Muskegon and Grand Rapids and support hiking, biking, and nature exploration.

Michigan's Adventure Amusement & Water Park (Muskegon): The state's largest amusement park is just 20 minutes away and includes thrill rides, water slides, and attractions for all ages.

Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park: Located 20 minutes from Whitehall, this year-round recreation park features one of only three luge tracks in the country, along with hiking, sledding, skating, and more.

Nuveen Center (Whitehall): A vibrant hub for arts, exhibits, and creative community programming in the heart of downtown.

Outdoor Recreation: White Lake, the White River, and nearby Lake Michigan offer year-round water recreation including kayaking, boating, ice fishing, and water skiing. Residents also enjoy hunting, golf, and direct river access at Covell Park.

Regional Highlights & Events: Explore nearby communities like Montague, Rothbury, Grand Haven, Holland, Pentwater, and Ludington—each offering trails, beaches, art festivals, and nationally known events like the Electric Forest, Coast Guard Festival, and Tulip Festival.

The Playhouse at White Lake (Whitehall): This historic venue hosts live performances, concerts, and film screenings year-round, contributing to the area's cultural vitality.

White River Light Station Museum (Whitehall): A preserved lighthouse featuring lake views, maritime exhibits, and walking trails.

World's Largest Weathervane (Montague): A whimsical photo stop and local icon that celebrates the region's maritime heritage.



CITY OF WHITEHALL HISTORY

Whitehall's story begins with the Ottawa people, who first inhabited the region and gave White Lake its name—Wababigun-nee-gish-gi-boo-goo Nebish—meaning “white-clay-that-is-being-washed-away Lake,” a reflection of the marl deposits once found along its shores. Drawn to the area's waterways for transportation, trade, and food, the Ottawa laid the foundation for a place long defined by its relationship to nature. In the 1830s, settlers arrived and established farms along the lake, quickly building a strong community anchored in agriculture. By 1837, Whitehall entered a new chapter when Charles Mears built the first lumber mill, transforming the area into a logging hub that would ship more than 3 billion board feet of lumber before the industry's decline in the early 20th century. Over time, Whitehall's early reliance on natural resources evolved into a strong manufacturing base that continues to shape the local economy.

The City of Whitehall, formally incorporated in 1867, has preserved its historic downtown and walkable streetscape while embracing change across generations. Once known as a destination for steamboats arriving from Chicago, Whitehall still carries that legacy of seasonal tourism and long-time second homeowners. The community's rich arts culture, including The Playhouse at White Lake and Nuveen Center for the Arts, along with stewardship efforts that restored White Lake's natural health, showcase a deep civic pride and enduring commitment to preserving what makes Whitehall special.

INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

Whitehall's Economic Landscape:

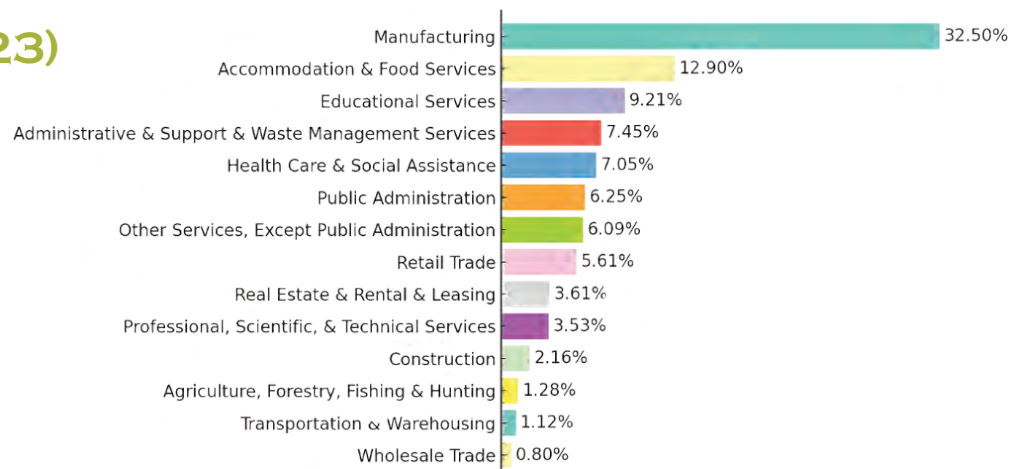
Whitehall's economy has grown from its historic roots in lumber and shipping to a diverse mix of industries that reflect its regional strengths. Manufacturing remains a cornerstone, supported by long-standing employers with global reach, such as Hilite International and Howmet Aerospace.

The broader job market includes strong representation in education, healthcare, food service, and technical services, highlighting Whitehall's role as a regional hub for employment and opportunity. The community also benefits from small business vitality, outdoor recreation, and proximity to agricultural producers. As Whitehall grows, its dynamic and varied economy continues to support innovation, local investment, and long-term prosperity.



WHITEHALL JOB MARKET (2023)

Employment Distribution
by Industry (1,248 workers)

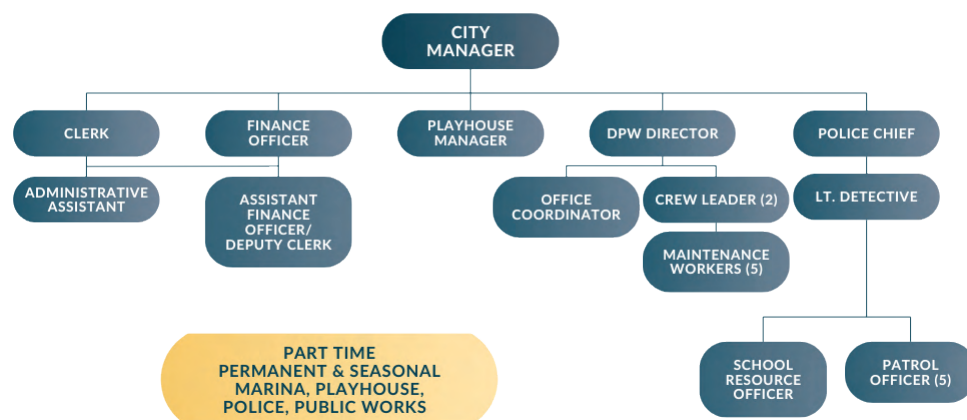


WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR...

The City of Whitehall operates under the Council-Manager form of government. The City Manager oversees day-to-day operations, implements policies formulated by the City Council, and ensures efficient and cost-effective management. The role includes appointing and removing employees, enforcing laws and ordinances, reporting to the Council, and representing the city in various forums.

The City Manager oversees a staff of 23 including five (5) department heads. DPW is the only department operating under a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Fire and Emergency Medical Response is provided by the White Lake Area Fire Authority, which is made up of the City of Whitehall, Whitehall Township, and Fruitland Township. The Authority is funded by a millage levied on the three communities.

CITY OF WHITEHALL STAFFING



IDEAL SKILLS

COMMUNICATION

- Approachable, able to work well with others.
- Proactive, honest, and concise communication.
- Equitable in messaging, particularly with elected officials.
- Communicates the direction of the community through clear strategic goals informed by the public and elected body.

OPERATIONAL TACTICIAN

- Well organized and deliberate.
- Contemplates the long-term impacts of internal and external actions.
- Balances strategic fiscal management with practical investment.
- Open to change when it supports progress and aligns with community needs.

MANAGES AND LEADS

- Systematic and organized, yet curious and creative.
- Driven to innovate and seek continual improvement.
- Critical thinker, decisive when necessary.
- Able to lead "bridge building" initiatives with tact and resolute integrity.

TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

- Builds teams through trust, delegation, and shared responsibility.
- Provides an environment that fosters professional growth and interpersonal development.
- Fosters a culture of accountability and pride in "the work."
- Encourages strong collaboration between elected and appointed leaders.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Locally committed and focused on what's best for Whitehall.
- A passion for community building and people.
- Proactively engages the community and listens to the input offered.
- Visible, participates in community activities and events.

STEADY AND AUTHENTIC

- Approaches challenges with a calm, composed, and reassuring presence.
- Builds trust through genuine, professional relationships rooted in respect.
- Demonstrates curiosity by asking thoughtful questions and seeks to understand before acting.

ABOUT THE POSITION

Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

- Serve as Chief Administrative Officer under the authority of the City Charter, carrying out the City Council's policies and ensuring legal compliance.
- Oversee the recruitment, onboarding, and supervision of all non-elected city personnel, including department heads, ensuring effective service delivery and alignment with strategic priorities.
- Ensure compliance with all labor laws and regulations, developing and implementing HR policies and procedures, managing employee compensation, benefits, and payroll, overseeing workplace health and safety programs, and maintaining accurate employee records and documentation.
- Administer, enforce, and ensure compliance with all laws, city ordinances, resolutions, and policies adopted by the City Council, including ADA regulations.
- Develop, implement, and manage the annual operating and capital improvement budgets; provide regular financial forecasts and updates to the Council.
- Serves as the City's Economic Development Coordinator, proactively fostering business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts; collaborates with local, regional, and state partners to stimulate sustainable economic growth, support workforce development initiatives, and enhance the City's overall economic vitality.
- Provides support to the Tax Increment Finance Authority, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Local Development Finance Authority aligning their activities with city-wide goals.
- Advise the City Council on policy decisions, strategic planning, and operational issues, and serve as a non-voting participant in all Council meetings.
- Foster relationships with regional, county, state, and federal partners, advocating for resources and legislative support.
- Identify, apply for, and manage grants and alternative funding opportunities.
- Lead emergency response coordination and serve as the City's communications officer during crises, in collaboration with appropriate agencies.
- Promote community engagement and facilitate communication between the city, residents, and businesses to enhance trust, responsiveness, and service excellence.
- Deliver presentations to community groups and governing bodies to share plans, gather input, and report on progress.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the City Council.



OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Downtown Development

Downtown Whitehall offers a walkable, historic setting along the White River and White Lake, with potential for expanded retail, dining, and cultural activity. While seasonal vibrancy brings energy to the district, fluctuations in year-round foot traffic pose challenges for traditional storefront investment. The City is working to strengthen partnerships with property owners and invest in infrastructure that supports a more diverse and resilient downtown economy.

Financial Outlook

Whitehall has long taken a fiscally conservative approach, operating with no municipal debt and maintaining a healthy fund balance. Major capital investments follow a “pay-as-you-go” philosophy, appreciated by some for its prudence, though it has resulted in delayed infrastructure improvements. Despite this, the City continues to pay down its pension liabilities at an accelerated rate, positioning itself favorably compared to many peer communities.

Looking ahead, the expiration of several tax abatements and brownfield tax captures over the next five years will provide a meaningful boost to the general fund. The next City Manager will be tasked with guiding thoughtful discussions with the elected body and community about how to strategically invest this incoming revenue, ensuring long-term value and sustainable investments in infrastructure, service delivery, and community amenities.

Governance and Organizational Collaboration

Like many municipalities, Whitehall is seeking to enhance internal cohesion and strengthen the connection between elected officials, staff, and the broader community. There is a collective desire for greater communication and inclusion in decision-making, without overreach into day-to-day operations. This creates a powerful opportunity for the incoming City Manager to build a strong, collaborative foundation. Through shared goal-setting, strategic planning, and open dialogue, the new leader can unify perspectives and foster a culture of mutual respect, ensuring the City operates with clarity, alignment, and shared purpose.

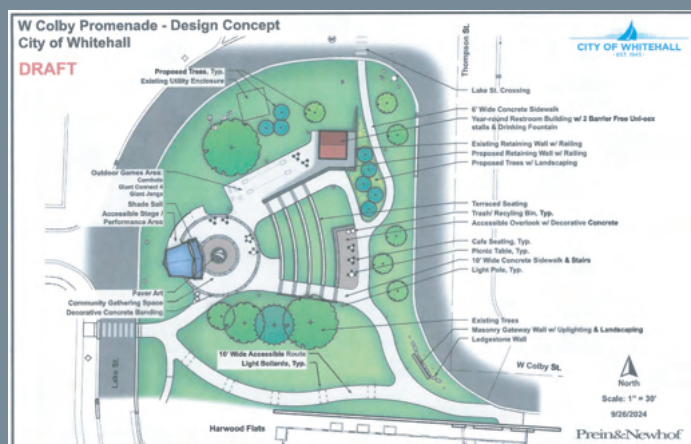
PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

West Colby Promenade:

One of the City’s most visible downtown investments is the planned West Colby Promenade. This nearly \$1.5 million project will transform a dead-end section of Colby Street between Goodrich Park and the former Big John’s Pizza site into a vibrant green space that links downtown to the marina and waterfront.

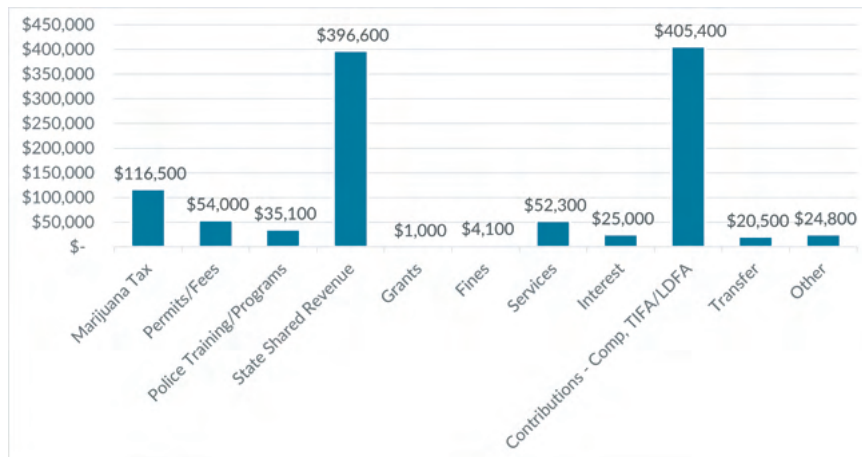
Planned amenities include seating areas, game tables, terraced performance space, and landscaping designed to encourage both community gathering and visitor exploration.

The Promenade reflects a broader commitment to place-making and year-round downtown vitality.



CITY OF WHITEHALL BUDGET

REVENUE



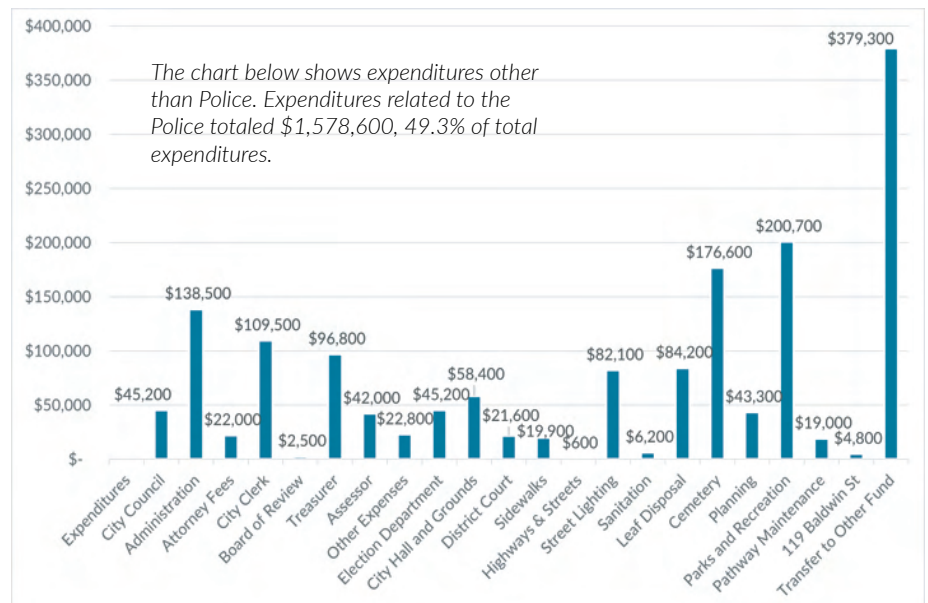
The chart above shows revenues other than property taxes. Revenue related to the property taxes totaled \$1,994,100, 49.3% of total revenue.

Whitehall Taxable Value

2024 State Equalized Value:
\$191,032,200

2024 Taxable Value:
\$150,831,185

EXPENDITURE



The chart below shows expenditures other than Police. Expenditures related to the Police totaled \$1,578,600, 49.3% of total expenditures.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Laying the Groundwork for Whitehall's Future:

The City of Whitehall is actively investing in its future through a wide range of capital improvements and strategic initiatives. More than \$16 million over several years will be allocated toward park upgrades, street resurfacing, utility enhancements, and energy-efficient city facility upgrades, including solar power. These projects are designed to modernize infrastructure and enhance daily life for residents.

In addition, Whitehall is advancing community-focused initiatives such as restoring the White River, extending water service into Whitehall Township, and developing a city-owned subdivision in partnership with Muskegon County and the MEDC. The completion of the West Colby Connector will link downtown to the waterfront, reinforcing the city's commitment to walkability, livability, and long-term resilience.





QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree in Public Administration, Business Administration, Urban Planning, or a related field. A Master's degree is strongly preferred.
- Minimum 5 years of progressively responsible leadership in municipal or public sector management.
- Demonstrated knowledge in public administration, municipal finance, HR management, infrastructure, and strategic planning.
- Strong communication, leadership, emotional intelligence, and political acumen.
- Familiarity with Michigan municipal law and city charter requirements.

This role necessitates familiarity with diverse software applications. Additionally, proficiency in utilizing email and other communication tools such as Teams, Zoom, and video conferencing is essential. Proficiency in social media platforms and other communication channels is desired.

SALARY & BENEFITS

- Compensation: \$110,000 to \$130,000 DOQ
- Benefits: A comprehensive benefits package will be provided including, but not limited to, medical, dental, vision, Defined Contribution, including access to a 457, Retiree Health Savings Account, auto allowance, paid time off and tuition reimbursement.
- Relocation: A relocation package may be offered to the top candidate if they reside outside the immediate region and demonstrate an exceptional alignment with the community's values, leadership needs, and long-term vision.

TOP FIVE REASONS WHY YOU WANT TO BE OUR NEXT CITY MANAGER

1. **Small-Town Character with Big-Time Access:** Whitehall offers the charm and sense of community found in a classic lakeshore town, surrounded by natural beauty and walkable neighborhoods. All of this comes with the added benefit of easy access to the cultural and economic opportunities found in nearby Muskegon and West Michigan's larger metropolitan areas.
2. **Opportunity to Lead Through Organizational Transition:** With multiple retirements anticipated in the coming years, the next City Manager will play a central role in shaping the leadership team and reinforcing a strong internal culture. It's a rare chance to guide an experienced staff through a period of renewal and alignment.
3. **Strong and Stable Financial Foundation:** Whitehall operates with no municipal debt, a healthy fund balance, and a prudent fiscal philosophy. The upcoming expiration of several PA 198 abatements and development agreements presents a valuable opportunity to guide strategic reinvestment into infrastructure, services, and quality-of-life initiatives.
4. **Momentum for Economic Development:** The city's industrial park is nearly sold out and ready for new development, positioning Whitehall for continued business growth. Paired with the community's interest in revitalizing downtown and enhancing public spaces, the next City Manager will be well-positioned to support balanced and meaningful economic progress.
5. **Collaborative Regional Partnerships:** Whitehall benefits from a long-standing spirit of collaboration with regional partners, including neighboring communities and Muskegon County leaders. The City Manager will be supported by strong intergovernmental relationships that promote shared services, resource efficiency, and a unified approach to regional challenges.

LIVING IN WHITEHALL



Nestled between White River and White Lake, Whitehall offers the charm of a historic lakeside town with the livability of a close-knit community. Residents enjoy a relaxed lifestyle anchored by natural beauty, walkability, and year-round access to recreation, culture, and family-friendly amenities.

Idyllic Living

Whitehall's landscape is defined by its access to water and trails. Residents and visitors can enjoy boating, fishing, and hiking, with the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail providing 22 miles of scenic biking and walking from downtown Whitehall to Hart. This rail-trail corridor is a daily staple for outdoor enthusiasts and connects the community to neighboring towns and local attractions.

Community and Culture

From the historic Playhouse at White Lake to the Nuveen Center's rotating art exhibitions and programs, Whitehall embraces its creative side. Residents gather for free summer concerts, seasonal festivals like Pumpkinfest and the White Lake Christmas Parade, and a weekly Farmers Market. Public art, including sculptures along the Hart-Montague Trail, reflects the city's investment in culture and place-making.

Safety and Livability

Whitehall is known for its safe neighborhoods, low crime rate and an average commute time of just 16 minutes, welcoming atmosphere, and strong community spirit. Residents enjoy access to essential healthcare services, fresh air from the surrounding natural areas, and well-maintained parks and trails that promote an active and healthy lifestyle. These features contribute to a comfortable and fulfilling place to call home.

Cost of Living

Whitehall offers affordable lake living without the inflated housing costs common in many Lake Michigan communities. The median home value is \$205,800, and both renters and homeowners benefit from a stable, attainable housing market, making it a welcoming place for first-time homebuyers, retirees, and families alike.

Education and Youth Enrichment

Whitehall District Schools serve around 2,100 students with above-average performance ratings. The city's commitment to families is reflected in the accessibility of playgrounds, youth programs, and year-round community events, creating an environment that nurtures growth and lifelong learning.





HOW TO APPLY

**First round of candidate review will begin on May 15, 2025.
Accepting applications through May 30, 2025.**

Please complete the application form using the link below.
DO NOT APPLY via LinkedIn.

**NOTE: To request confidentiality during this executive search process,
please indicate your preference in your cover letter.**

Any questions or inquiries regarding the position can be made to the attention of:
Nate Geinzer,
Founder and CEO; Double Haul Solutions
nate@doublehaulsolutions.com | 248-207-5293

Applicant Management Provided by Vettraino Consulting.

CLICK HERE TO APPLY TODAY.

www.doublehaulsolutions.com