



# Chief Finance & Operations Officer

## Leadership Profile

Winter 2025

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## The Opportunity

Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) seeks a strategic, collaborative, and mission-driven leader to serve as its next Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFO/COO). This pivotal role presents an extraordinary opportunity to advance one of Florida's most influential coastal conservation organizations, protecting and restoring the natural systems of Sanibel, Captiva, and the surrounding region for generations to come.

Founded in 1967, SCCF has evolved from a local land trust into a regional conservation leader, integrating science, policy, land stewardship, and community engagement. Today, SCCF manages more than 2,100 acres of protected land, operates a leading Marine Laboratory, and delivers programs that safeguard wildlife, restore coastal waters, and inspire environmental stewardship. With total assets exceeding \$55 million, SCCF is well positioned for long-term sustainability and impact.

Reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer, the CFO/COO will guide SCCF through a pivotal stage of modernization and growth. This dual role blends financial leadership with operational oversight, ensuring that systems, processes, and resources align with SCCF's mission and strategic goals. The successful candidate will oversee finance, accounting, risk management, and compliance, while also leading operations across HR, IT, facilities, and administration. They will partner closely with the CEO, Board Finance and Endowment Committees, and senior leadership to strengthen financial infrastructure, enhance transparency, and build capacity for sustainable growth.

The ideal candidate will bring a proven track record in accrual-based financial systems. Experience in cash-to-accrual transitions would be desired. Strong communication skills, strategic vision, and the ability to balance long-term planning with day-to-day execution are essential. This leader will champion SCCF's values of integrity, inclusivity, and innovation and demonstrate a collaborative leadership style that fosters trust and accountability.

As SCCF approaches its 60th Anniversary in 2027, the CFO/COO will play a critical role in positioning the organization for its next chapter—modernizing systems, strengthening resilience, and ensuring that SCCF continues to protect Southwest Florida's coastal ecosystems for decades to come.

Candidates should have a proven record of increasing responsibility and successful results in leading financial strategy, budgeting, and/or business operations teams. Experience in the nonprofit sector is desired but not required. A bachelor's degree in business, public administration, accounting, finance, or a related field is required, while an MBA or CPA is highly desirable.

This is an on-site position located on Sanibel Island. While the position requires in-office work, many SCCF employees live off island, and SCCF offers reasonable flexibility in office hours to accommodate commuter schedules.

Further details regarding nominations and applications for this esteemed role are available in the "Procedure for Candidacy" section.

## Organization Overview

Founded in 1967, the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF) is dedicated to safeguarding and restoring the coastal ecosystems of Southwest Florida. Its mission is driven through a comprehensive portfolio of programs focused on conservation land stewardship, ecosystem restoration, water-quality research, environmental policy and advocacy, sea turtle and shorebird protection, native landscaping, wildlife management, and community education.

As the largest private landowner on Sanibel Island, SCCF manages more than 1,800 acres on Sanibel and an additional 300 acres across surrounding islands, South Fort Myers, and Cape Coral—lands preserved thanks to decades of commitment from the community and supporters.

Over the past 57 years, SCCF has evolved into a leading regional conservation organization, expanding its impact through the Marine Laboratory, the Sanibel Sea School, Coastal Watch, and a growing suite of science-based and community-driven initiatives that protect the natural character and resilience of our coastal environment.



### MISSION

To protect and care for Southwest Florida's coastal ecosystems.

### VISION

A Southwest Florida where wildlife and natural habitats flourish in harmony with people and are protected by science-based policies.

### VALUES

- Tireless stewardship of wildlife and habitat
- Education that connects people to nature and inspires them to action
- Ethical and transparent science, communication, and advocacy
- Vigilant guardianship of water quality
- Dedication to leadership in conservation
- Commitment to diversity, inclusion, and community engagement
- Science-driven decision-making

## Finances

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, SCCF maintains a strong and diversified financial foundation grounded in responsible stewardship and community trust. With total assets exceeding \$55 million, including approximately \$25 million in conserved land—the organization is well-positioned to ensure long-term protection and resilience of Southwest Florida's coastal ecosystems.

SCCF generates approximately \$7 million in annual revenue, supported by a balanced mix of contributed and earned income. In recent years, this income level has exceeded \$14 million due to storm-related donor gifts. Charitable contributions and in-kind support comprise approximately 40–45% of annual revenue. Grant revenue accounts for roughly 10–15%, fueling science, restoration, and education initiatives that directly advance the organization's mission. Program-driven income, including Native Landscapes & Garden Center sales, tuition from the Sanibel Sea School, and revenue from mission-aligned events, provides the remaining support.

Guided by a highly engaged Finance Committee, SCCF is strengthening its financial systems as the organization transitions from a cash to an accrual-based accounting structure. This shift enhances financial reporting accuracy, improves transparency, and better aligns revenue and expenses with operational activity—enabling leadership to plan with greater strategic clarity. Through disciplined management and evolving financial practices, SCCF is equipped to responsibly steward resources, maximize impact, and ensure long-term organizational sustainability.

### Operating Financials July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Operating Income	06/30/25	Operating Expense	06/30/25
Operating Contributions		Salary & Benefits	\$3,738,109
Annual Fund Drive (AFD)	\$1,157,054	General Operations	\$618,177
Major Gifts	\$824,971	Physical Plant/Equip Maint	\$232,442
Program Contributions	\$880,658	Insurance	\$337,091
Other Program Income	\$18,263	PR/Fundraising	\$257,717
Administrative Program Income	\$372,761	Grant Expense	\$212,598
Grant Income	\$602,694	Education Expenses	\$74,995
Education Income			
Education Programs	\$13,330		
Sea School Tuition	\$406,236	Retail Expense	\$182,660
Retail Income	\$290,266	Services Expense	\$30,693
Services Income	\$392,526	Special Events Expense	\$209,402
Special Events Income	\$834,143	Miscellaneous Expense	\$10,200
Endowment Support *	\$322,054	Capital Expenses	\$-
Unbudgeted Bequests/Memorials	\$77,083	Carry Forward to FY25/26***	\$374,999
Unbudgeted, Misc. Income**	\$87,045		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,279,084</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,279,084</b>

NOTE: \*4% of the average value for the last 12 quarters. \*\*Final insurance reimbursement due to Hurricane Ian claims.

\*\*\*Program area contributions and grant income are carried forward to the next fiscal year as project expense continues.

## Programs

SCCF accomplishes its mission through five core program areas.

### Protect Wildlife

***Safeguarding sea turtles, shorebirds, and coastal wildlife through research and monitoring.***



SCCF protects the islands' most vulnerable species through research, monitoring, and on-the-ground habitat management. In the last year alone, staff and volunteers documented **868 sea turtle nests that produced more than 27,000 hatchlings**, monitored **270 shorebird nests**, and contributed **over 7,600 hours to species protection — ensuring that coastal wildlife continues to recover, adapt, and thrive.**

### Preserve Coastal Lands

***Restoring and stewarding conserved lands, native habitats, and public trail access.***

SCCF manages and restores **over 2,100 acres of conservation land**, safeguarding wetlands, uplands, and mangroves that filter water, buffer storms, and support biodiversity. Native habitat is strengthened through mangrove planting, oyster reef restoration, invasive species removal, and prescribed fire, while **6–8 miles of public trails** provide access for education, recreation, and stewardship.



### Restore Coastal Waters

***Monitoring water quality in real time to protect and restore coastal waters.***



Through its Marine Lab and RECON network, SCCF delivers real-time information on water conditions across **1,500 square miles of estuary and coastal systems**. Over **78,000 water-quality observations** recorded this year informed HAB forecasting, seagrass and estuary monitoring, and science-based management decisions — improving the path toward cleaner waters and more resilient ecosystems.

### Educate and Inspire the Community

***Delivering hands-on marine science and native landscaping education for all ages.***

SCCF builds environmental literacy through immersive, field-based learning for youth, adults, families, and educators. In the past year, **9,213 students explored coastal ecology hands-on**, supported by **over \$100,000 in scholarships** that expanded access to camp programs, field lessons, native landscaping workshops, and lifelong stewardship experiences.



### Advance Environmental Policy

***Driving policy solutions that protect water, wildlife, and enhance coastal resilience.***



SCCF strengthens environmental protections by transforming science into policy guidance at the local, regional, state and federal levels. This work supported major progress on the 55-billion-gallon C-43 Reservoir, influenced water-quality legislation, and continues to shape resilience planning, Everglades restoration, growth management, and long-term coastal protection.

## Staff

SCCF's team of nearly 50 professionals is deeply committed to conserving Southwest Florida's coastal ecosystems. With strengths across science, policy, education, wildlife and habitat management, staff work collaboratively to advance SCCF's mission.

### James Evans, Chief Executive Officer



James Evans has served as SCCF's CEO since 2022, following his transition from Environmental Policy Director in 2020. With more than 25 years of experience in South Florida ecosystems, he brings expertise in water quality, marine biology, estuarine ecology, environmental policy, and ecological restoration.

Previously, James spent over two decades with the City of Sanibel, including seven years as Director of Natural Resources. He holds a B.A. in Environmental Studies and an M.S. in Environmental Science from Florida Gulf Coast University. His leadership in conservation and water quality has earned regional recognition, including Citizen of the Year (2022) and Gulfshore Life's Man of the Year (2024).

## Board of Directors

SCCF's Board of Directors is composed of professionals with deep ties to Sanibel and Captiva. Their expertise spans finance, philanthropy, stewardship, policy, and community leadership — with members also serving on the Finance and Endowment Committee. Together, they guide strategy and help safeguard the long-term health of Southwest Florida's coastal ecosystems.

### Nik Khakee, Board President



Nik Khakee is Managing Director – Principal at Apollo Global Management and Head of Ratings for the High Grade Capital Solutions team. He holds an M.P.P.M. from Yale (1996) and a B.A. with honors from NYU (1992), beginning his finance career at S&P Global the same year.

A lifelong visitor to Sanibel since 1977, Nik later engaged more deeply through the Sanibel Sea School Board and transitioned to SCCF when the organizations united in 2020. He served on the Board through 2023 and was reappointed as Board President in 2025.

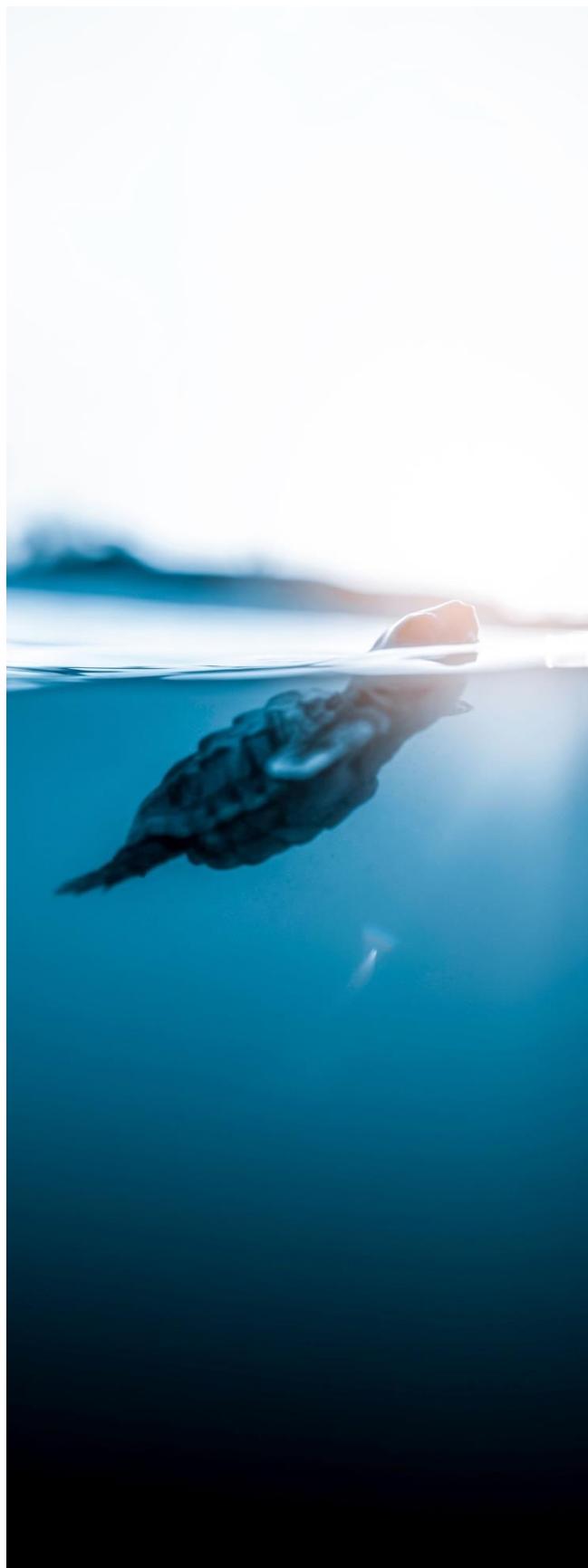
### Doug Ryckman, Board Treasurer



Doug Ryckman, SCCF's 2026 Treasurer, has been connected to Sanibel and Captiva since the 1970s and has owned property on the islands for 30 years. A CPA, he holds degrees in finance and hospital administration from the University of Michigan. His career includes serving as CEO of Mott Children's and Women's Hospitals, followed by 26 years with Accenture, where he held senior global leadership roles and served two terms on the Board of Partners.

In retirement, Doug has remained active across community organizations and has previously served SCCF as treasurer, vice president, and president. He and his wife, Kris, have three children and two grandchildren, and spend summers hiking in North Carolina.

To learn more about the staff and board of directors, including complete bios, visit: <https://sccf.org/about/board-and-staff/>.



## Position Summary

### Reporting Relationships

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Chief Finance & Operations Officer (CFO/COO) will serve as a key member of the executive leadership team and a critical thought partner to the CEO.

### Overview

The CFO/COO will guide the organization's financial strategy and oversee all finance and accounting functions, including budgeting, financial reporting, audits, compliance, cash flow management, and long-term financial planning. They will ensure strong financial stewardship that advances the organization's mission, strengthens sustainability, and supports smart growth.

In addition to leading the financial enterprise, the CFO/COO will oversee internal operations and organizational infrastructure, managing a cross-functional portfolio that includes operations, technology systems, facilities, and events management. The CFO/COO will build and maintain systems that enable efficiency, build capacity, support programmatic excellence, and position the organization for long-term operational success.

This individual will work closely with the Finance and Endowment Committees of the Board of Directors, preparing and presenting financial updates, investment insights, and strategic recommendations. The CFO/COO will help guide the Board's decision-making, ensuring transparency, clarity, and stewardship of organizational assets.

As needed, the CFO/COO will also represent the organization externally, serving as an ambassador and partner with donors, funders, financial institutions, vendors, and community stakeholders. The successful candidate will uphold the highest ethical standards, cultivate trust with internal and external partners, and bring a collaborative, mission-centered approach to leadership.

# Responsibilities

The successful CFO/COO candidate will:

## Financial Oversight & Reporting

- Oversee all financial functions, including accounting, budgeting, forecasting, and reporting.
- Create monthly financial reports for the Finance Committee and Board of Trustees.
- Attend monthly Finance Committee and Board meetings.
- Work with the CEO to create and track the annual budget.
- Provide regular financial analysis to the CEO and Board, highlighting risks and opportunities.
- Monitor and assess the financial health of the organization to ensure alignment with SCCF's mission and goals.

## Compliance & External Relations

- Manage annual audit and 990 tax return with an external accounting firm.
- Ensure compliance with GAAP, nonprofit accounting standards, and regulatory requirements.
- Maintain relationships with auditors, banks, and financial partners.

## Systems, Processes & Risk Management

- Lead conversion from cash to accrual accounting.
- Implement metrics, dashboards, and reporting tools for transparency.
- Strengthen internal controls and governance best practices.
- Advance risk management and scenario planning.

## Operational Leadership

- Oversee individuals who lead HR processes, IT systems, facilities, and administrative functions.
- Implement process improvements for efficiency and compliance.
- Support capital planning and event operations.

## Leadership & Organizational Support

- Serve as a thought partner to the CEO, helping balance strategic priorities with operational execution.
- Maintain an open-door policy to ensure staff and organizational needs are met.
- Mentor finance and operations staff; build organizational capacity and reduce burnout.
- Foster SCCF's collaborative, mission-driven culture while driving accountability and clarity.

## Administrative

- Implement and optimize administrative and financial processes across the organization to enhance efficiency and overall operations.
- Ensure alignment of administrative systems with SCCF's strategic goals and compliance requirements.

## Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives have been identified as priorities for this position:

### **Modernize Financial Systems & Improve Reporting Clarity**

The CFO/COO will oversee the transition from cash to accrual accounting and guide staff and leadership through the change with comprehensive training, coaching, and thoughtful implementation support. They will help the organization establish appropriate financial metrics and leverage technology to create clear, accessible financial reports and narrative insights that inform planning and decision-making. Building on a solid foundation, this evolution will strengthen forecasting, visibility, performance management, and share confidence in how financial resources are understood, communicated, and managed.

### **Strengthen Controls, Audit Readiness & Fiscal Policies**

The CFO/COO will support forward-looking planning by helping the organization identify key risks early, develop response strategies, and prepare funding plans for unexpected changes such as donor shifts, storms, cash-flow fluctuations, or program growth. These practices enhance SCCF's ability to plan with confidence and respond promptly when conditions change. This represents a positive next step in the organization's evolution, building stability, resilience, and readiness for the years ahead.

### **Build Enterprise Risk Management & Resilience Tools**

The CFO/COO will build upon newly established approaches to scenario planning, enterprise risk management, and contingency funding to help anticipate donor and other funding trends, environmental impacts, cash-flow variability, and program shifts. This proactive framework adds forward visibility to budgeting and planning discussions. Rather than signaling deficiency, it represents the next step in organizational maturity—one that enhances agility, safeguards mission continuity, and prepares the institution to adapt with confidence.

### **Align Finance & Development to Grow the Endowment**

The CFO/COO will partner closely with development, providing regular reporting, analysis, and forecasting to both the Finance Committee and the Endowment Committee. Their work will help each group understand current performance, future scenarios, and opportunities to strengthen financial sustainability. By modeling gifts and pledges, supporting donor engagement, and enhancing transparency around fund performance and restrictions, the organization advances endowment growth and long-term resource planning—building capacity for mission-focused expansion.

### **Create Scalable Operating Systems for the Next Chapter**

The CFO/COO, in partnership with leadership, will collaborate across HR, IT, facilities, and administration to enhance coordination, clarify decision-making processes, and support scalable operations as the organization expands. Building on 59 years of progress, this next step strengthens systems for consistent, confident execution—positioning the institution for sustainable growth and its next chapter.



# Candidate Qualifications

## Education/Certification

### Required:

- Bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, business administration, or related field.

### Desired:

- CPA strongly preferred.
- MBA or advanced degree in Finance, Accounting, or Nonprofit Management.

## Knowledge and Work Experience

### Required:

- Minimum 7 years of progressive leadership experience in finance, ideally in a nonprofit or mission-driven organization.
- Proven experience in senior financial management, including budgeting, forecasting, audits, and compliance; experience with accrual accounting.
- Strong technical knowledge of GAAP, nonprofit accounting, and financial reporting.
- Ability to lead risk management, scenario planning, and governance best practices.

### Desired:

- Demonstrated success with financial system transitions, particularly cash-to-accrual conversions.
- Experience with endowment management, restricted/unrestricted funds, and donor stewardship.
- Familiarity with 401(k) compliance and HR processes.
- Experience implementing financial dashboards and reporting tools (e.g., Power BI).
- Background in operations leadership (HR, IT, facilities, multi-site logistics) and process improvement.
- Prior experience partnering with development teams on fundraising strategy and donor engagement.
- Exposure to capital planning and infrastructure projects.

## Leadership Skills and Competencies

- **Inclusive Leadership:** Fosters respect, collaboration, and belonging across teams.
- **Strategic & Operational Balance:** Plans long-term while managing daily priorities.
- **Clear Communication:** Explains complex financial and operational concepts simply.
- **Integrity & Accountability:** Acts transparently and ethically; owns outcomes.
- **Team Development:** Mentors staff and builds systems that support growth and reduce burnout.
- **Adaptability:** Thrives in a dynamic, mission-driven environment; hands-on when needed.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** Engages stakeholders and values diverse input.
- **Tech-Savvy:** Leverages modern tools and systems for efficiency and data-driven decisions.



## The Community



### Sanibel–Captiva & Surrounding Communities

Sanibel and Captiva Islands are barrier islands off the coast of Southwest Florida, connected to the mainland by the Sanibel Causeway. Known for pristine beaches, abundant wildlife, and a distinctive small-town character, the islands foster a community deeply rooted in conservation and outdoor living. With a modest, seasonal population, year-round residents enjoy a neighbor-focused culture where relationships are personal, nature is part of daily life, and the Gulf of Mexico is always within reach.

The islands are nationally recognized for world-class shelling, approximately 70% of land protected for conservation, and rich marine and bird habitats. Sanibel–Captiva supports a balanced lifestyle with access to beaches, shared-use bike paths, kayak trails, and nature preserves. The community also offers strong educational options, **including** The Sanibel School — a Blue Ribbon School — and an established preschool, as well as local arts programming, theater, and galleries. Children and families benefit from meaningful outdoor experiences, with nature serving as an extension of learning, play, and community engagement.

#### Sanibel–Captiva offers residents and visitors:

- Miles of undeveloped, shell-rich beaches and Gulf access
- Over 25 miles of bike-friendly shared-use paths
- The J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge and extensive conservation lands
- Kayaking, boating, birding, fishing, and year-round outdoor recreation
- A friendly, relationship-oriented community
- A nature-driven lifestyle for those who value balance, beauty, and stewardship

#### Nearby Mainland Communities

Many employees live on Sanibel or Captiva, though nearby areas offer broader housing and pricing options — all within a manageable commute.

- **Fort Myers:** Closest urban hub with diverse housing, dining, healthcare, and schools.
- **Cape Coral:** Waterfront living with boating and coastal amenities at a more accessible price point.
- **Estero & Bonita Springs:** Fast-growing areas with newer homes, strong schools, and family-friendly infrastructure.

## Procedure for Candidacy



Please direct all nominations and applications to Ashley Buderus, Michelle Johnson, and Jess Cummings, through the WittKieffer Candidate Portal by [clicking here](#) or through the office of Jess Cummings at [jcummins@wittkieffer.com](mailto:jcummins@wittkieffer.com). Candidates can also find this portal via the WittKieffer website at [www.wittkieffer.com](http://www.wittkieffer.com) and selecting the "Become a Candidate" button.

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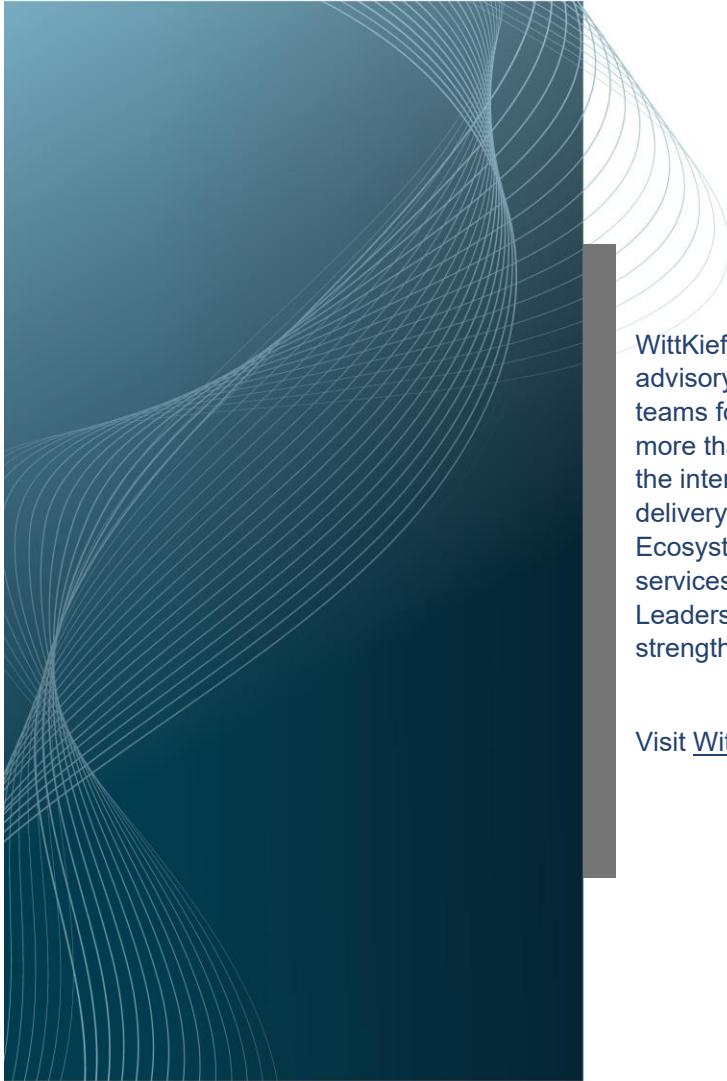
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