

# MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION PROFILE WISCONSIN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ARTS & LETTERS MADISON, WI

### BACKGROUND & HISTORY

The story of the Wisconsin Academy began with the explosion of scientific discovery happening in the 19th century. At the time, knowledge—not only in the sciences, but in the arts and letters as well—was viewed as increasingly important to the social and economic security of America.

In the infancy of its statehood, Wisconsin had a group of leaders who embraced the ideal of knowledge as essential to growing a healthy civil society. Inspired by state Academies of Science that were springing up across the country, especially in the frontier states, these scholars and civic leaders met to organize a formal association “to encourage investigation and disseminate views of the various departments of science, literature and the arts.” The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters was born.

For over 150 years, this steadfast organization has been a steward of the Wisconsin Idea (that knowledge should benefit people’s lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom), and the Academy’s mission has been carried out in different ways through the grounding of that idea. *Transactions*, a journal highlighting Wisconsin-based research across disciplines, was published by the Academy for over a century. During the time the Academy was located in the Wisconsin State Capitol building (from charter in 1870 until the fire in 1904), it housed a library of scientific papers and research material available to the public and curated a collection of rare fossils and minerals available for study. Much of this historical material was, unfortunately, lost in two fires. Beginning in 1954, the Academy began publishing a general interest magazine which in 2003 became the Academy's magazine of contemporary Wisconsin thought and culture, *Wisconsin People & Ideas*.

In the 1970s, the Academy was able to hire its first executive director and then purchase an office building at 1922 University Avenue in 1973, due to a large gift from the Harry Steenbock estate. The Academy received a significant grant from the National Science Foundation to support an initiative to strengthen science education in public schools, leading to increased growth for the organization from the mid-1980s through the mid-1990s. In 1982, a Fellows Award was established to celebrate excellence and achievement across the sciences, arts, and letters. Academy membership shifted from invitation only to open enrollment in 1994 as a way of expanding Academy program participants and readers of its magazine, the latter of which announced that same year two Writing Awards to support Wisconsin poets and writers. In this period, the Academy also began to undertake collaborative multi-sector

investigations of challenges and opportunities in the state. A few of these projects include its landmark Waters of Wisconsin Initiative between 2000 and 2003, and the Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin Initiative that concluded with an influential report in 2007. In 2004 the Academy opened its James Watrous Gallery to showcase contemporary Wisconsin art in Madison's Overture Center for the Arts and that same year began an ambitious series of statewide Academy Talks (hosted primarily at Overture Center) exploring ideas at the intersection of the sciences, arts, and letters, many of which were recorded for later broadcast on PBS Wisconsin's *University Place*.

In the 21st century, the Academy has evolved to become an organization that showcases Wisconsin art, opens doors for Wisconsin writers and poets, and explores complex issues through civil exchange and science-based inquiry. Its current work includes the Climate and Energy Initiative, connecting leaders around the state to explore diverse, sustainable energy choices, and digital projects like the online Academy Courses in art and creative writing. Open to anyone who values curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, and civil discourse, the Academy today is a place for people to come together to learn from Wisconsin leadership and from each other. For more information on the Wisconsin Academy's current programs go to: <https://wisconsinacademy.org>

### **MISSION, VISION, GUIDING VALUES, DEI**

Founded in 1870 to gather, share, and act upon knowledge for the betterment of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Academy today showcases contemporary Wisconsin art at the James Watrous Gallery, examines science and culture in *Wisconsin People & Ideas* magazine, and explores pathways to a sustainable future through the Wisconsin Strategy Initiatives. Academy Courses and public talks provide opportunities for lifelong learning and personal enrichment, and the organization recognizes excellence through its annual Fiction & Poetry Awards for emerging writers and Fellows Awards for leadership in and across disciplines. The Academy also supports the Wisconsin Poet Laureate and other endeavors that helps to fulfill its mission: to create a better world by connecting Wisconsin people and ideas.

#### **Mission**

*To create a better world by connecting Wisconsin people and ideas.*

#### **Vision**

*A brighter future inspired by Wisconsin ideas.*

#### **Guiding Values**

*Curiosity  
Critical thinking  
Creativity  
Civil discourse*

The Academy Board recently approved this Strategic Vision for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): “*DEI embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people are represented in the sciences, arts, and letters—including, but not limited to, those who have been historically underrepresented based on race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, and religion. DEI engenders support of creatives and innovators and the nurturing of accessible, thriving avenues for expression and problem solving; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.*”

### **WISCONSIN ACADEMY FOUNDATION**

Since the Academy's founding, it was recognized that the work of the Academy would be enhanced by creation of a permanent endowment fund, with the annual earnings to be applied to Academy operations. By 1875, a fund of \$5,000 had been established for this purpose through annual membership dues. Several large bequests added substantially to the corpus of this fund in the early 1970s and subsequent years.

Incorporated in 1989, the Wisconsin Academy Foundation is a separate nonprofit organization dedicated to managing the Wisconsin Academy's endowment which is currently valued at approximately \$6 million. Managed by the Foundation Board, the Foundation provides the Academy with a steady source of income, which in recent years represents approximately one-fourth of total funds for Academy operations.

### **MADISON AND THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

As a statewide organization, the Academy has helped lead important conversations across Wisconsin at the intersection of the sciences, arts, and letters. As a state, Wisconsin is geographically, economically, and culturally diverse and is home to eleven federally recognized Native American tribes. Madison, where the Academy is based, is the state capital and home to the state's largest research university, the University of Wisconsin – Madison which is part of a 26-campus system. The fastest growing city in the state with a metropolitan population exceeding 650,000 residents, Madison has a large technology sector and is the headquarters of a variety of corporations including Epic Systems and American Family Insurance. Madison's civic influence throughout the state is significant with a flourishing arts and culture community, a solid base of philanthropic support, and a much-admired quality of life for its diverse group of citizens. More information on the city can be found at [www.visitmadison.com](http://www.visitmadison.com). Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city and another economic and cultural hub, has also become increasingly important to the Academy's programmatic mix. The Academy also has a statewide footprint through important partnerships and collaborations.

### **POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Executive Director will provide visionary leadership and comprehensive oversight for the Wisconsin Academy, including strategic planning, board governance, financial stability, programming, and staff management. The Wisconsin Academy's Board of Directors seeks a strongly collaborative leader who will embrace the values of the organization while working collectively to set a future vision for the Wisconsin Academy that will inspire and guide the Board and staff. The Executive Director reports directly to the Board of Directors through the Board President. Responsibilities include the following:

#### **Leadership**

- Direct the activities and growth of the Wisconsin Academy and work with staff and board members to build upon the vision, mission and strategic plan that guide programs and development.
- Lead strategic and program planning for the organization.
- Foster creativity and cooperation among staff members; supervise and evaluate staff and provide overall operational direction for programs.
- Engage the Board of Directors in governance and fundraising activities. Cultivate board leadership and recruit new members, while at the same time broadening the Academy's general membership and sponsorships and deepening their engagement.

**Management/Administration**

- Supervise program and senior development and financial management staff (currently 6 direct reports).
- Ensure compliance with labor laws, hiring practices.
- Contract authority for all Academy contracts with vendors, insurance providers, partnerships, and professional services/consultants.
- Facilities management oversight: (ensure code and safety compliance, authorize maintenance and capital improvements working with the Building Manager and Outreach Coordinator).
- Work with the Academy and Foundation Board Presidents to plan quarterly board meetings, committee strategies, meeting design.

**Finances**

- Set financial goals and budgets that anticipate near-term and future challenges and opportunities.
- Oversee and be accountable for Wisconsin Academy's operations, including sound financial controls and reporting.
- Develop the annual budget and financial strategies with the staff team and consultation with the Finance-Audit committee.
- Manage the annual budget with the leadership team to meet financial and programmatic goals and objectives.

**Fundraising**

- Oversee fundraising program strategies to ensure resources for and long-term sustainability and annual operations (\$800,000 to \$1 million).
- Work closely with the director of development to coordinate a comprehensive fundraising program to achieve development goals and objectives including developing and stewarding personal relationships with major donors and grantmaking organizations and other personal cultivation as appropriate to support Academy operations and growth of the Foundation endowment.
- Work with the Wisconsin Academy and Foundation boards to engage their leadership and participation in fundraising plans and their implementation.
- Cultivate relationships with potential supporters to identify and connect with new sources of funding to meet fundraising goals.
- Oversee compliance with grant obligations and restricted funds management with program directors and the business manager.
- Serve as a key spokesperson, strategist, and champion for the Academy's planned capital campaign. (Target goal is \$ 4.5 million).

**Represent the Academy**

- Be the steward and strongest advocate for the Academy's commitment to DEI and its evolution for all organizational planning and programming
- Identify opportunities to raise the public profile of the Wisconsin Academy and its core programs across Wisconsin.
- Maintain and enhance current relationships and build new relationships with individuals, organizations and media that can assist the Wisconsin Academy in achieving its mission.
- Represent the Academy on the Cultural Coalition and the Overture Center for the Arts Resident

Companies Advisory Council and other formal and informal collaborations closely tied to mission and programs as appropriate.

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

The chosen candidate will need to establish strong and productive working partnerships with the Academy Board of Directors and Foundation Board; prior experience with such partnerships would be deemed useful. A familiarity with and understanding of Wisconsin regions, populations, educational and business sectors would also be a plus. The successful candidate will have the following skill sets and experience:

- Strong passion for building a great institution that can grow significantly within the Madison community and across the state.
- Demonstrated success in personally securing philanthropic support in a not-for-profit environment.
- Detail oriented and methodical about organizational routines and processes.
- A clear knowledge of the ramifications of programmatic and budgetary decisions and the need to align them strategically.
- Demonstrated ability to motivate and lead a team focused on long-term objectives.
- A collaborative style to engage staff, Board, and key donors.
- A tenacity and drive to help the Wisconsin Academy continue to produce at a consistently high level.
- Strong communication, social, and interpersonal skills in multiple social and business contexts.

### **COMPENSATION, APPLICATION PROCEDURE, AND START DATE**

The search for the Executive Director is headed by a ten-member committee, chaired by Kevin Reilly. The committee's desire is to identify a candidate by November 2021 with the new Executive Director on site as soon as possible thereafter. The salary range starts at \$100,000 annually and is negotiable based on background and experience. The compensation package includes health and life insurance as well as paid vacation/holidays.

Jason Palmquist and Jonathan West are the MCA consultants who will facilitate this search. Interested candidates are invited to confidentially send a resumé, cover letter, and at least three professional references (name, work relationship, email, phone). All materials must be in.pdf (preferred) or Word format with the applicant's name included as part of the document file name and submitted through the MCA application portal for this search: <https://mcaonline.com/searches/executive-director-wi-academy>

#### **Management Consultants for the Arts, Inc.**

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Questions about this search may be submitted to: [info@mcaonline.com](mailto:info@mcaonline.com)

With Wisconsin Academy Executive Director Search in the subject line.