

Organization

Martha's Vineyard Museum (MVM) is a century-old historical and cultural museum that has collected art, artifacts, oral histories, documents, and photographs that help tell the stories of Martha's Vineyard from its prehistoric stage to the present. Committed to inspiring all people to discover, explore, and strengthen their connections to the island and its diverse heritage, MVM is the leading cultural and historic institution on the island. A venue for ongoing surprise and discovery, the museum offers thought-provoking programming, exhibits, and educational opportunities for children and adults. As historians and storytellers, MVM strives to provide a framework for understanding the past in order to create a better future. Every visit to the museum, like every visit to the island, surprises, challenges, delights, and leaves lasting memories.

Founded in 1922 as the Dukes County Historical Society and incorporated in 1923, the Historical Society met in libraries, churches, and private homes until 1932 when it acquired the early eighteenth-century Cooke House in Edgartown. Over time, the organization grew and in 2006, the Historical Society officially changed its name to the Martha's Vineyard Museum to better reflect its focus on both collecting the history of the island and presenting, educating, and sharing it with the public. By that time, it was also clear that MVM had outgrown its historic home and needed to move in order to achieve its mission.

In 2011, MVM purchased the four-acre 1895 Marine Hospital site in Vineyard Haven and set out on a \$31 million capital campaign to transform it into a new museum with more than 10,000 square feet of exhibit, library, collections storage, and office space. MVM was also gifted three properties adjacent to the Marine Hospital site, including one that serves as vital office space for its curatorial department and additional collections storage. Additionally, MVM made a commitment to transform the historic Edgartown site into a learning experience that would continue to interpret the Cooke House property and create a public garden for the community. The museum also operates two lighthouses, owned by the towns of Oak Bluffs and Edgartown.

In March 2019, the Vineyard Haven site opened to the public with great fanfare and a blockbuster exhibit celebrating the island's profound influence on the work of Thomas Hart Benton. With nearly 30,000 visitors in its first year—a fivefold increase over its best year at the Edgartown campus—it was ready for another robust summer. Exactly one year after opening in Vineyard Haven, the museum was forced to close due to COVID-19. The staff quickly pivoted to respond to the needs of its local school children, senior citizens, and anyone who had a connection to Martha's Vineyard. The museum mounted a strong online presence with daily oral history and object posts and offered downloadable lesson plans more than 1,500 times to parents for at-home teaching.

Today, MVM's collections include more than 43,000 different items and more than 350 individual subject collections consisting of manuscripts, maps and charts, and genealogical materials. Its Hackney Research Library provides anyone interested in the history and culture of Martha's Vineyard with access to more than 3,500 books, 900 maps and charts, and 50,000 photographic images. The library fields 500 to 600 inquiries each year from scholars, local governments, media, and the public, as well as offering genealogical services. The museum's scholarly journal, *MVM Quarterly*, has been published continuously since 1959. Established in 1993, the Oral History Collection contains more than 1,700 interviews. Through partnerships with Martha's Vineyard Public Schools and other organizations, MVM offers curriculum-based, in-classroom instruction and on-site opportunities to explore and discover the collection. The museum also houses a permanent exhibit, Hands On History, as well as summer camp experiences and educational programs for young children.

Over the past 15 years, the museum has broadened its outreach to the island community with the goal of being more inclusive and representative of the entire island population. As MVM approaches its centennial year, a strategic priority is to fill in the untold stories. Of particular importance, the museum is dedicated to elevating the voices of the voiceless, bearing witness to the overlooked, and challenging the myths that have given aid and comfort to injustice. In its recent Statement on Racial Injustice, MVM stated that it is deeply troubled by the events unfolding across the nation. MVM is committed to partnering with its community to collect and tell all the histories on the island. It knows that history is too often written only by the powerful and that museums have too often amplified their voices while ignoring or silencing others.

MVM is governed by a 30-member board of directors, led by Chair Cathy Weiss. Heather Seger, the Director of Advancement, was appointed as Interim Executive Director overseeing a mission-oriented staff of 15 curatorial, exhibition, program, research, visitor services, education, development, facility, and finance employees. The total non-COVID operating revenue in 2019 was approximately \$2.6 million, with \$1.4 million from contributions, grants, and special events and \$1.2 million from admissions, membership fees, and sales, as well as appropriations from the capital campaign. Total reported expenses were approximately \$2.9 million in 2019 and \$1.9 million in 2020, excluding depreciation and interest expense. At the end of 2020, its permanently restricted endowment stood at \$2.8 million.

Community

Located five miles off the coast of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard is the largest of Massachusetts' coastal islands. Approximately 87 square miles, the island is home to six towns: Aquinnah, Chilmark, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, Tisbury, and West Tisbury. The island has a population of approximately 17,000 people that swells to 90,000 during the summer and may exceed 100,000 during busy holiday weekends. Accessible to vehicles and passengers via ferry, the island also has an airport with four carriers, allowing easy access to major east coast cities and a range of connecting airports. Public transportation carries residents and visitors to all the major points on the island, though a car is essential for navigation away from the main arteries.

Rich in history and tradition, Martha's Vineyard is called Noepe (dry land amid the waters) by the Wampanoag, whose ancestors settled it 10,000 years ago. It was first colonized by the English in 1642 and was part of New York until the 1690s. Fishing and farming, the backbone of the island economy, were supplemented in the nineteenth century by the offshore whaling industry. The slow decline of whaling and coastal shipping between the Civil War and World War I was matched by the island's emergence as a summer destination. Initially a destination for Methodists and Baptists seeking solitude for their summer camp meetings, by the end of World War II the tourist economy had taken hold across the island, joining fishing and farming as an economic mainstay.

Over time, the maritime trades and the tourist trade combined to make Martha's Vineyard steadily more diverse. The first Azorean immigrants, sailors who arrived in the late eighteenth century, established a Portuguese-speaking community that blossomed in the decades around 1900 and was further expanded by the arrival of Brazilian immigrants a century later. Middle-class African Americans from cities in the Northeastern United States began to vacation in Oak Bluffs early in the twentieth century. Staying at Black-owned inns and buying summer houses of their own, they established a thriving summer colony that now welcomes the fourth and fifth generations of its founding families. The Wampanoag, though dispossessed of nearly all their ancestral lands, remained central to the island's cultural and economic life, particularly in the town of Gay Head (now Aquinnah) and in the Chappaquiddick region of Edgartown. The Aquinnah Wampanoag became a federally recognized tribe in 1987 and has remained a part of the island's culture, with an active reservation in Aquinnah including the largest number of registered tribal members.

Martha's Vineyard has always welcomed artists of all fields who found inspiration in its natural beauty. There is a vibrant arts and culture scene with year-round performances and events. Dining and shopping are plentiful on the island and land conservation and farming help to maintain its beauty. Seasonal farmers markets and numerous local farms are part of the year-round community of sustainable agriculture. Each town has its own unique character and sites that have been featured in films such as *Annabel Lee* (1921), *Jumping the Broom* (2011), and most famously *Jaws* (1975), where Edgartown portrayed the fictional Amity Island.

Martha's Vineyard is a casual community that takes pride in being a place where the famous can come to be anonymous and where everyone can be who they are. Several presidents have vacationed on the Vineyard, including President and Mrs. Obama who recently purchased a home in Edgartown. While industries related to tourism are a key part of the island's economy, education, healthcare, and professional services are critical. There are five public elementary schools and a regional high school serving the island's children, as well as a public charter school and a Montessori school.

Sources: mvcommission.org, mvol.com, mvy.com

Position Summary

Reporting to the board of directors, the Executive Director will serve as a forward-thinking chief executive officer of the newly revitalized MVM, with overall responsibility for the execution of its mission and achievement of its vision. An outgoing leader, the Executive Director will be committed to museum excellence and possess a deep appreciation for the changing museum field, community engagement, and high-quality visitor experiences. This individual will represent MVM regionally and nationally to external stakeholders, constituents, and community partners. They will build excitement, provide leadership, and invigorate a strategic direction in support of MVM. Maintaining a high professional profile, the Executive Director will support growth in both contributed and earned revenue, closely collaborating with the board to complete the capital campaign while identifying opportunities for legacy and endowment gifts. The Executive Director will also partner with the board to cultivate relationships and financial resources that will ensure the success of an institution that serves as a symbol of community engagement and pride to the residents and visitors of Martha's Vineyard.

Roles and Responsibilities

Strategic Direction and Revenue Enhancement

- Communicate the museum's strategic direction, vision, and impacts to build membership, attendance, commitment, and support for the organization and its mission and programs.
- Pursue an expanding dialogue about Vineyard histories through collection enhancement, creative and relevant exhibits, meaningful educational opportunities, and programming that deepens the exhibit narrative.
- Cultivate major donors and expand fundraising activities to support the completion of the comprehensive capital campaign and to build financial resilience for ongoing programs and operations.
- Guide development activities in partnership with the Director of Advancement and board of directors, maintain strong relationships with donors and the funding community, and establish strong stewardship and cultivation methods with the board and staff.
- Ensure the implementation of the strategic plan and completion of the business planning process, working with the board, staff, and community stakeholders to attain a clear vision for programming, financial growth, and community partnership opportunities.
- Define short-term and intermediate goals towards the growth of the endowment and legacy giving programs.
- Embrace other strategic direction and revenue enhancement responsibilities as needed.

Community Engagement and Governance

- Develop an active community presence and authentic relationships to foster opportunities for new initiatives and partnerships that build connections and the collection, support increased attendance and membership, and strengthen the fabric of social and cultural organizations on the island.
- Deepen and refine all aspects of communication to support and strengthen the museum's brand and visibility, particularly during the robust tourist season.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with arts, cultural, and educational organizations and other businesses to ensure that the museum campus is an accommodating and welcoming venue for programming, educational activities, and other events.
- Build strong, positive relationships with government officials, civic leaders, social innovators, and cultural champions who seek to advance the interests and reputation of the entire Martha's Vineyard community.
- Identify, cultivate, recruit, and orient new board members in partnership with the governance committee and provide ongoing education for existing board members.
- Mobilize and best utilize the board's insights, connections, talents, and resources as ambassadors and volunteers who wholeheartedly support the museum's overall goals and strategic initiatives.
- Develop and support an effective and engaged board of directors, serving as an ex-officio member of its committees in seeking to build board involvement.
- Provide concise, relevant, and timely information to the board so that it can fulfill its policy-setting and decision-making responsibilities.
- Embrace other community engagement and governance responsibilities as needed.

Leadership and Administration

- Lead a performance- and outcomes-based organization, overseeing all day-to-day operations, with a focus on providing quality exhibitions and programs within the framework of excellence in the visitor experience.
- Establish systems to track progress and measure organizational effectiveness, communicating key metrics and performance indicators to the staff, board, community, and key stakeholders.
- Oversee the preparation of the annual operating budget with the Director of Finance and the Finance Committee and provide regular, ongoing updates on financial operations to ensure the most effective use of financial, human, and technological resources.
- Ensure that the necessary organizational structure, policies, systems controls, and procedures are in place and regularly reviewed for effectiveness.
- Inspire, mentor, evaluate, and guide a high-performing team that supports a culture of inclusion, growth, and continuous improvement and values staff well-being.
- Actively engage with a comprehensive network of museum professionals, artists, and art collectors by participating in relevant fieldwide convenings to share industry trends and implement current best practices.
- Maintain an organization with the highest ethical standards.
- Embrace other leadership and administration responsibilities as needed.

Traits and Characteristics

The Executive Director will have a well-rounded set of competencies as a resourceful and creative museum professional who values frequent interaction and collaboration with others. A visionary leader with the ability to set, pursue, and achieve goals in a timely manner, the Executive Director will have excellent communication skills, imagination, entrepreneurial spirit, leadership abilities, and a passion for the unique mission and impact of MVM. A results-oriented relationship builder who maintains a high professional profile, the Executive Director will inspire a long-term vision with achievable goals and a strategy that embraces many constituencies. They will value MVM's social impact on its community and articulate its cultural, educational, and economic impact messages. A strong conceptual thinker and creative generator of curatorial ideas, the Executive Director will have the ability to move from dialogue to timely decision making and action. As a people-oriented servant leader receptive to new ideas and innovations, the Executive Director will be open to considering new approaches that achieve desired outcomes and exceed donor, visitor, and community expectations.

Other key competencies include:

- **Leadership and Goal Orientation** – The aptitude to organize and motivate others to set, pursue, and accomplish goals regardless of obstacles while creating a sense of order, direction, and active participation among a variety of stakeholders.
- **Personal and Professional Accountability** – The authenticity to self-evaluate and take responsibility for personal actions and decisions, accept setbacks, look for ways to progress, and understand how obstacles impact results.
- **Planning and Organizing** – The capacity to set and prioritize relevant, realistic, and attainable goals and objectives; to anticipate effects, outcomes, and risks; and to manage resources according to set priorities.
- **Time, Priority and Project Management.** – The ability to prioritize and complete tasks and to oversee all resources and people to obtain desired results with allotted time frames.
- **Diplomacy** – The dexterity to effectively and tactfully handle difficult situations and treat others fairly regardless of differences while maintaining positive relationships.

Experience and Qualifications

A master's degree or equivalent experience with at least seven years of progressive executive leadership or senior management experience in a museum or related nonprofit organization are required. A deep understanding of historical collections and archives, particularly in a multi-facility organization, is highly desired. A proven track record as an effective fundraiser with supervisory budget oversight is essential. The ideal candidate will possess skill, passion, creativity, and an appreciation for cultural history, educational programming, and community partnerships, as well as a demonstrable commitment to the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation is anticipated in the range of \$145,000 to \$165,000 plus a three-bedroom home adjacent to MVM. Employee benefits include group health and life insurance, vacation time, and matching 403(b) retirement plan. Public transportation discounts, relocation assistance, and optional dental insurance are also available.

Application and Inquires

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments, please click [here](#) or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

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Martha's Vineyard Museum stands on Wampanoag land, acknowledges these native peoples, and commits to cultural equity now and in the future. The museum is dedicated to diversity in all forms in its staffing, governance, volunteers, and interns, as well as in its programs and educational offerings, to create an accessible and inclusive organization and ensure a welcoming community.