



WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY DIRECTOR

Recruitment Announcement

The Washington State Historical Society (WSHS) offers an exceptional opportunity for a visionary leader to guide one of the state's most beloved cultural institutions into its next era. We seek a dynamic and forward-thinking Director to preserve, interpret, and promote Washington's rich history, inspiring a talented team and galvanizing partners to ensure the stories of our past shape the places we call home today and tomorrow.

With the five-year strategic plan nearing completion, the next Director will lead new strategic planning efforts that may include a capital campaign for a new collections facility, initiatives to increase access to Washington's history, and a major redevelopment of permanent exhibitions.

WSHS is an accredited museum, well-positioned to build on its strengths through ambitious fundraising and strategic partnerships. The next Director will bring vision, fundraising expertise, and the ability to build powerful coalitions, continuing a legacy of leadership that has made WSHS a trusted and influential voice in Washington's cultural landscape.



About the Society

The Society is also recognized in law as a trustee agency of the state of Washington and is a non-profit 501(c)3 membership organization, open to all.

The primary functions of the Society are to:

- Collect, catalog, preserve, and interpret objects, manuscripts, sites, photographs, and other materials illustrative of the cultural, artistic, and natural history of Washington State
- Operate state museum and assist and encourage cultural and historical studies and museum interpretive efforts throughout the state, including those sponsored by local historical organizations, and city, county, and state agencies
- Engage in cultural, artistic, and educational activities, including classes, exhibits, seminars, workshops, and conferences related to the basic purpose of the Society

The Washington State Historical Society is headquartered in Tacoma on the traditional lands of the Puyallup People who have stewarded this land throughout the generations. We pay respect to their elders past and present. The Society is committed to Tribal relations and equity, which includes supporting Tribal cultural programs and recognizing the importance of tribal arts and culture. [*This is Native Land*](#), a new exhibit opening in October of 2025 invites visitors to understand Washington State through the lived experiences and voices of its Native people.

Founded in 1891 and now in its second century of service, the Washington State Historical Society is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and vividly presenting Washington's rich and storied history. The Historical Society offers a variety of services to researchers, historians, scholars, and lifelong learners and operates the [State History Research Center](#) and the [Washington State History Museum](#).

The Historical Society is governed by a [Board of Trustees](#), which includes seven public officials (the Governor, Secretary of State, Superintendent of Public Instruction and four State Legislators) who serve ex officio. The director is appointed by, and serves at the pleasure of, the board and functions as the corporate secretary.

A brief video about the WSHS facilities can be found here: <https://youtu.be/Us-PekCnnDg>

MISSION

The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all.

VISION

Our vision is to be the recognized destination for Washington State history. We will achieve this by serving as our state's primary history educator, making history relevant to our modern lives, and supporting civic dialogue where all are welcome.

VALUES

- Innovation
- Stewardship
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Partnership
- Inclusivity
- Scholarship
- Relevance



About the Position

The Director is responsible for leading the daily and strategic implementation of WSHS's mission. The Director is a visible public figure, expected to proactively engage with elected officials, other agency heads, and a broad array of community and philanthropic stakeholders. This position requires comfort navigating the connections between big picture policy and internal organizational decision-making.

The Director creates constructive partnerships with individuals, communities, foundations, corporations, tribes, state and federal agencies to build a wide base of support for the Society, including non-state sources for financing operations. The Director provides fiscal leadership to ensure the organization's long-term sustainability—leveraging public funding, private contributions, and earned income. This position reports directly to the Board of Trustees and maintains communications with the Office of the Governor.



Responsibilities of the Director include:

- Manage \$15 million biennial budget, of which 30%+ will be secured from earned and contributed income (non-state) activities.
- Provide fiscal oversight, ensuring transparent and responsible stewardship of public and private resources, and alignment of budgets with strategic priorities.
- Direct outreach activities, including up to \$10 million biennial capital projects for the Heritage Grant Program, Diversity in Local History Grant Program, and support services for heritage organizations statewide.
- Conduct fundraising meetings with individuals, corporations, and foundations in support of earned and contributed income goals and actively lead fundraising campaigns to support programmatic and capital priorities.
- Direct a staff of approximately 70 employees working in two major facilities with a cumulative size of 160,000 square feet. Most employees are represented by the Washington Federation of State Employees labor organization.
- Represent the agency in professional and community affairs before the legislature and in public speaking events across the state throughout the year.
- Oversee development of interpretive themes for the Society's major permanent and temporary exhibits.
- Oversee development and implementation of public programs and K-12 educational programs offered onsite, online, and around the state.
- Oversee care and maintenance of the Society's buildings and other assets, including the Society's extensive artifact and special collections.

The Ideal Candidate

The next Director will be a strategic and unifying leader who inspires trust and engages effectively with staff, partners, and the broader community. They will bring proven experience in fundraising and fiscal stewardship, including building diversified revenue streams, leading major fundraising efforts, and aligning resources with strategic goals to ensure long-term sustainability.

Performance Dimensions

LEADERSHIP

- *Lead courageously:* Continuously build and defend the strength, reputation, and image of WSHS. Engage, motivate, and inspire staff around a shared vision and mission. Demonstrate principled leadership, personal courage, and decisiveness.
- *Build talent pools:* Hire, mentor, develop, and manage staff. Continue to build and reinforce a cohesive, dedicated, highly effective team
- *Fundraising and Fiscal stewardship:* Demonstrate strong financial leadership and accountability. Oversee budgets strategically, align financial decisions with mission and long-term goals, and actively engage in fundraising and revenue development.
- *DEIA:* Demonstrated ability to honor diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility and the commitment to supporting a respectful, safe, and supportive work

environment. Ability to collaborate with diverse audiences and navigate culturally sensitive situations and facilitate discussions with skill and tact.

COMMUNICATION

- *Inspire trust:* Communicate honestly, be trustworthy and consistent, follow through on commitments, and create an atmosphere of integrity marked by fair, respectful behavior.
- *Promote open communication:* Maintain an environment where communication is open and direct, encouraged, rewarded, and relevant.
- *Marshal support:* Coordinate and cooperate with members and groups having divergent viewpoints and needs. Help them find common ground.

CONSTITUENT RELATIONS AND COLLABORATION

- *Drive effective external communications:* Develop and nurture mission-critical relationships with community partners; donors, business and

civic leaders; political leaders; and the media.

- *Build consensus:* Collaborate, facilitate, and develop relationships with community partners, and key partners to advance shared goals.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- *Provide visionary insight:* Translate big-picture vision and goals into both long- and short-range plans that are comprehensive, realistic, and effective. Identify key opportunities resulting from the intersection of external events (political, social, economic, demographic, environmental) to develop and strengthen WSHS.
- *Manage change:* Oversee the change management process, including successful communication strategies, involving others in the implementation of change, and monitoring and reinforcing process and success. Create a work environment that encourages original and innovative solutions.





Desirable Qualifications

A Bachelor's degree and at least seven years of progressively responsible leadership experience working to engage staff and volunteers in a museum or historical organization setting. An advanced degree is a plus.

In addition, candidates should bring the following:

- Proven ability to develop and manage board, staff, and volunteers as a team, including demonstrated success working collaboratively with labor unions.
- Proven ability to build relationships with constituencies including donors, business and civic leaders, tribal nations and their members, foundations, and governmental institutions.
- Proven record of maintaining a financially sustainable organization, including oversight of complex budgets and diversified revenue streams.
- Demonstrated success in leading fundraising initiatives, cultivating major donors, securing foundation and corporate support, and engaging in capital campaigns.
- Knowledge of nonprofit best practices, including understanding of nonprofit financial management reports and tools.
- Knowledge of museum and collections-based institution best practices, including facility requirements, artifact preservation standards, and audience engagement standards.
- Knowledge of software, hardware, and other IT systems that support museum operations and digital delivery of interpretive content.



APPLICATION PROCESS

Persons interested in this position should submit the following information:

- A cover letter
- A current resume

If you have questions regarding this announcement, please call Marissa Karras at 360-956-1336. This position will remain open until filled but the screening process will move quickly. In order to be considered for the first round of interviews please submit your application materials at www.karrasconsulting.net no later than December 9, 2025.

Washington State Historical Society is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, marital status, race, creed, color, national origin, religion or beliefs, political affiliation, military status, honorably discharged veteran, Vietnam Era, recently separated or other protected veteran status, the presence of any sensory, mental, physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability, equal pay or genetic information.

Compensation

The annual salary range for this position is \$150K - \$182K dependent on candidate experience. A salary review is currently underway. Washington State offers one of the most generous benefit packages in the nation. More information about benefits can be found [here](#).

Washington State offers a total work/life package of pay, benefits, flexibility and workplace opportunities to help you get the most out of your career and out of life. Washington State is a great place to work, play, and be a part of a community. Washington offers a quality of life that is unsurpassed. From the high-energy urban center of Seattle, one of the nation's top-ranked cities, to the more relaxed pace of our rural communities, Washington's distinctive Northwest lifestyle blends a progressive, creative culture with a casual nature.

