



Creating pathways to new beginnings.

**Executive Director**  
Boston, Massachusetts

## THE SEARCH

Rian Immigrant Center (“Rian” or “the Center”) seeks a strategic and compassionate leader to be the next Executive Director (ED). For more than 30 years, Rian has been dedicated to serving immigrant and refugee families in Massachusetts by responding to their most urgent needs so that they are able to lead fulfilling lives. The next ED will join an organization that is deeply committed to anti-racism and advancing its historical values of hospitality and social justice.

Founded to serve Irish immigrants, today Rian, recognized as Boston’s Welcome Center, offers a comprehensive, multi-service approach to supporting families from more than 126 countries on their path to success. Its services include: free legal consultations to over 2,000 immigrants, refugees, and asylees as well as full case representation before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for over 600 families; education services that provide timely and responsive learning opportunities for immigrants to develop and strengthen the skills that lead to sustainable living; and counseling and case management which includes ensuring overall wellbeing and support for those who seek its services. Additionally, the Center maintains a strong connection to Ireland through an international learning exchange program, which provides students and graduates of Irish universities the opportunity to gain professional skills and experience as interns with companies throughout the United States. Throughout the years, Rian has deftly managed the political landscape, strengthening its role as an advocate for the human rights of immigrants and refugees, and playing an important role as a convener across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Reporting to a 16-member Board of Directors, the Executive Director will oversee an operating budget of \$3.3M and guide a dedicated team of 40 to develop and implement a strategic and unifying vision that aligns with Rian’s organizational mission and its goal of being an intentional anti-racist organization. While passionate about improving the experiences of newly arrived immigrant and refugee families, this forward-looking leader will build shared accountability for this work internally and externally, empowering the staff and Rian partners to implement meaningful change while fostering a culture of trust and transparency. This key role requires someone with strong interpersonal, management, communication, and fundraising skills as well as a commitment to growing and diversifying partnerships across the Commonwealth.

The Rian Immigrant Center has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations, and/or applications should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## FOUNDING AND HISTORY

Established in 1989 by a group of volunteer Irish immigrant women who shared a growing concern about the well-being of an estimated 150,000 undocumented Irish immigrants in the United States, the then Boston Emerald Isle Immigration Center began with the purpose of addressing the basic and critical needs of an underground community. In a basement office in Dorchester, this core group of women spearheaded the nascent organization, setting up a confidential hotline to provide advice to visa recipients and undocumented immigrants. Not long thereafter, the volunteer-led initiatives and programs grew to include job readiness trainings, financial literacy, and housing assistance. In time, with growing grant support and a generous government and community of donors, the Center became a staff-led international organization, equipped to acclimate Irish beneficiaries of U.S. work and travel visa programs.

Since its founding, the Center has undergone three name changes. From Boston Emerald Isle Immigration Center to Irish Immigrant Center in the early 1990s to Irish International Immigrant Center in 2011. In a continued effort to be inclusive of all the communities it serves yet still remain respectful of its Irish roots, the organization changed its name to Rian Immigrant Center in 2020. The word “Rian” in Irish refers to a path.

## CORE WORK

What began as a modest group of volunteers has grown to be a multi-service organization of approximately 40 staff members – a quarter of whom identify as BIPOC – and over 90 volunteers. Collectively they speak nearly 10 different languages and serve immigrants and refugees from more than 126 countries, providing legal, educational, and wellness services, learning exchange programs, and advocacy. In the last decade, the Center has incrementally tripled its budget and staffing.

Rian Immigrant Center’s [robust programmatic and service portfolio](#) includes:

### *Immigration Legal Services*

Rian’s team of ten attorneys and three paralegals offer comprehensive, professional, and confidential services for non-citizens, regardless of their legal status or ability to pay. Much of the Center’s casework includes assisting immigrants and refugees in becoming legal residents and U.S. citizens, supporting children of immigrants to gain legal status through the DACA program, reuniting refugee families that have been separated by war or political unrest, supporting those with Temporary Protected Status, and representing individuals in removal proceedings. In addition, the Rian Immigrant Center helps families extend visas or obtain deferred action so they

can remain in the U.S. while a family member receives life-saving medical care. In 2021, the immigration legal services team supported 2,454 immigrants and refugees.

### *Education and Career Services*

Rian serves a broad newcomer community in key areas of skill development with online courses and tutoring. The four core education programs at the Center are English for Speakers of Other Languages – to improve proficiency in English; a partnership with Tech Goes Home – to build computer proficiency for the workplace; the Individual Achievement Program – one-on-one coaching tailored to support individual economic and educational goals; and Citizenship Education – one-on-one tutoring to gain the knowledge and confidence to pass the USCIS naturalization exam. The education programs served 288 adults in 2021, a significant increase over past years, likely due to the online format.

### *Resource and Support Services (RSS)*

Resource and Support Services provide confidential counseling, case management, and wraparound assistance to address the basic and critical needs of their immigrant clients. In addition to this direct service, offered free of charge, the skilled RSS team helps families navigate the various systems and agencies that may deem them eligible for healthcare services, housing assistance, continued education, childcare, and employment. Following an unprecedented year with the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, RSS facilitated stability for nearly 350 immigrants and refugees in 2021. Their critical efforts continue to be timely and urgent as the United States continues to help with the resettlement of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees.

### *Learning Exchange Program (LEP)*

Rian serves as a J-1 visa sponsor for Irish citizens who are current university students and recent graduates of Irish universities to complete an internship in the U.S. for up to 12 months. Since 2008 the Center has supported more than 2,500 graduates and students who gained an unparalleled experience in their field of study. For most of 2021, LEP remained on hold for new students. As travel restrictions ease, LEP aims to graduate 280 students in 2022.

### *Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative (MIC)*

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rian (alongside Agencia ALPHA and the Brazilian Workers Center) spearheaded a collaborative effort across Boston and neighboring communities to deploy vital financial support and resources to immigrant and refugee families, particularly those left outside of the direct cash assistance from the federal government. The [Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative](#) has now expanded to include 15 organizations throughout Massachusetts and Rian serves as the fiscal sponsor.

To date, MIC has provided emergency relief and support to 100,000 individuals and families. Having raised more than \$10 million to provide emergency cash and culturally relevant food assistance since April 2020, the collaborative disburses more than \$300,000 a month in assistance and has engaged in COVID-19 prevention and vaccination outreach in the immigrant community.

### *Advocacy*

For over 30 years, Rian has worked to ensure that the United States and Massachusetts are welcoming to people who were not born in this country by promoting comprehensive immigration reform, protecting human rights, and advocating for immigrant protections and opportunities. Working alongside the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, Irish Pastoral Center, members of the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative, and others, Rian influences a range of federal, state, and municipal policies. In 2021, Rian staff, board members, partners, and clients met with legislators and submitted testimony on several issues including the Work and Family Mobility Act (Bill Number H.3012/S.2061) and Safe Communities Act (Bill Number S. 1579/H.2418).

## **LEADERSHIP**

In 1991 with the first grant from the Irish government of \$16,000, the Center was able to hire part-time staff, including a founding executive director, Sister Lena Deevy. Years earlier, Sister Lena's fervent commitment to the well-being of Irish immigrants had led her to join the original volunteer group that established the Center in Boston. Over the course of her 24-year leadership, the Center expanded to serve diverse immigrant communities throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In 2013, Sister Lena was succeeded by Irish immigrant Ronnie Millar, who previously served as Rian's deputy director. During his nearly ten years of leadership at Rian, he has cultivated strategic partnerships across the city of Boston, the Commonwealth, and internationally. With his steady approach to growth, Rian has gone from a \$1.1 million annual operating budget and 17 staff to a \$3.3 million annual operating budget and 40 staff. Because of his leadership, the Center is well-positioned to continue serving as a staunch advocate for the human rights of all immigrants and refugees.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Rian is governed by a [16-member Board of Directors](#) of which the executive director serves as an *ex officio* member. The Center's bylaws state that the Board will have between 10-22 members who may serve two successive three-year terms. Meeting six times per year, the board has a strong committee structure with active finance, governance, program, development, and HR committees. The board is comprised of a highly engaged and accomplished set of individuals working across legal services, philanthropy, government, and financial services. Rian is also generously supported by a more-than-40-member [advisory board](#).

## THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rian's next ED will be a visionary leader with outstanding communication and interpersonal skills and will bring a proven commitment to anti-racism and social justice. Their work will involve setting a strategic direction as well as overseeing its implementation.

### Key Opportunities and Challenges

*Leading the development of a unifying vision for the future that honors Rian's history and sets a progressive outlook for immigrant and refugee communities in Massachusetts*

The Executive Director will provide inspirational leadership for Rian, harnessing the momentum of the transition to define an ambitious vision alongside a dedicated community of staff, board members, and partners. They will bring an inclusive approach to strategic planning, both honoring the organization's distinctive history and aspects that set the organization apart and identifying opportunities for thoughtful and strategic growth that advance the organization's mission and impact.

*Reinforcing and expanding Rian's commitment to being an anti-racist organization*

More brightly illuminated today than ever before are the racial and structural inequities that operate as barriers for underrepresented communities in the United States. The next Executive Director must prioritize and act with measured urgency to advance Rian's commitment as an anti-racist organization, particularly as it operates in environments that counter and challenge this important value. They will codify the important work that has already begun at Rian of strengthening an inclusive community of staff, board members, and clients – prioritizing opportunities for anti-racist learning, healing, and community building, eliminating processes and practices that do not serve this goal, and adopting and sustaining those that do, pivoting and taking action in a decisive manner while promoting shared accountability.

*Building upon Rian's reputation as a thought-leader, leverage resources to advocate alongside immigrant and refugee communities*

The Executive Director will be a visible leader across the organization and out in the community, leading conversations that give shape to transformational immigration policies and services at the local, state, and federal levels. While maintaining a deep respect for the organization's history, the ED will be progressive and proactive in solidifying Rian's brand identity in authentic ways that appropriately support and reflect the goals and objectives of the Center today. They will leverage Rian's role as a convener and leader of the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative to deepen relationships and institutionalize partnerships to enrich programming, increase effectiveness, and support an ecosystem of mutual support.

### ***Growing and diversifying Rian's funding base and partnerships***

Since its founding, Rian has received generous support from the Irish government, local foundations, and many Irish Americans. The future sustainability of the organization requires an Executive Director who will be an engaged leader, communicating effectively across cultural bounds, nurturing existing relationships as well as securing a broader base of financial support to advance its mission. While the ED will serve as primary spokesperson and fundraiser for the organization, they will recruit a dedicated Director of Development to lead the fundraising team.

### ***Strengthening and integrating programs and services across the organization to ensure quality in delivery***

Rian's steady growth and expanded capacity to serve larger communities of immigrant and refugee families requires consistent updates to systems, policies, and processes. To enable staff to deliver the excellence they are committed to providing, the Executive Director will need to invest in comprehensive upgrades that improve workflows and facilitate a seamless integration of its programs and services. They will be expected to define clear goals, metrics, and mechanisms for feedback that drive a culture of continuous improvement and ultimately improve the client and partner experience.

### ***Working collaboratively with the board and designing systems for board development and engagement***

Rian's Board of Directors consists of 16 community and business leaders who guide the Center's strategic course. It is imperative that the incoming Executive Director engage the Board around the organizational vision and keep them well informed about ongoing activities so they can be effective ambassadors for the organization. Their work will include developing strategies for diversifying the board to reflect clients served, fostering transparent relationships between staff and board members, establishing clear expectations for the board to meaningfully contribute to Rian as an anti-racist organization, and continuing to involve them in donor engagement.

### **Desired Experiences and Qualifications**

The next Executive Director will reflect Rian's core values of antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion, adaptability, equality, empowerment, hope, interdependence, learning, and welcoming. They will also bring many of the following qualifications, professional experiences, and personal attributes:

- Resonance with the mission, values, and legacy of the organization;
- Authentic personal interest in the well-being of immigrant and refugee communities; an affinity to or shared lived experience as an immigrant or refugee;
- A record of inspirational leadership and effective management within a similarly complex community-based organization or entity, preferably with a variety of programs and service lines;

- Expertise in translating a vision and strategy into a practical plan for implementation and measures of anticipated outcomes;
- A track record of establishing and amplifying community-centered partnerships;
- Demonstrated experience growing and diversifying revenue streams, including a creative approach towards fundraising as well as resource allocation;
- Outstanding presentation and communication skills; the inclination to be an effective, outgoing spokesperson for the Center;
- Deep understanding and knowledge of institutional policies and practices that perpetuate or bring about racial and social disparities and inequity;
- Policy and advocacy experience and an ability to undertake a strong representational role and close working relationship with key government entities, the media, philanthropic community, and private sector funders;
- Proven track record leading through transitions and change, including confidence making hard choices and experience establishing clear decision-making processes and channels;
- Experience recruiting, cultivating, and maintaining strong relationships with a governing board;
- The highest integrity, wisdom, emotional intelligence, and can-do attitude;
- A sense of humor.

#### TO APPLY

Nominations, inquiries, and/or applications (which should include a resume and letter of interest describing the individual's interest in and qualifications for the position) should be sent in confidence to:

Phillip Petree, Partner  
Berlinda Mojica, Senior Associate  
Isaacson, Miller  
<http://www.imsearch.com/8588>