



**Search for the Executive Director
Passim
Cambridge, Massachusetts**

THE SEARCH

[Passim](#), Cambridge's celebrated home for the folk music community, seeks an Executive Director (ED) to provide visionary leadership and skillful management to this historical and influential hub for performance and artistry. Reporting to an engaged and talented Board of Directors, and partnering with a passionate and committed staff, Passim is uniquely situated to meet today's important cultural moment, embracing folk music's rich roots, while also looking to a more inclusive, broad future.

Founded in 1958, Passim, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is best known for Club Passim, a 110-person live music venue in operation since the organization's founding. While Passim can proudly claim to have given world-renowned music legends such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez their epic career starts, today Passim continues to be a hub for established and emerging musicians with a focus on folk, roots, Americana and Celtic traditions. More than just a Club, Passim's dynamic and multifaceted programming also includes the Passim School of Music, multiple year-round festivals and concert series, and a range of grantmaking programs to support developing artists.

Following the successful decade-long leadership of Passim's outgoing Executive Director, the incoming ED will be responsible for the strategic, operational, programmatic, and administrative management of Passim. The ED supervises the year-round work of seven full and part-time administrative staff and 20+ hourly club and kitchen staff as well as several consultants and independent contractors. Passim is governed by a 15-member Board of Directors and its 2024 operating budget is \$1.9 million. Financially, Passim relies on a balance of ticket fees and tuition revenue generation, food and beverage revenue, and philanthropic contributions from individuals, grants, and corporate sponsors. The organization is based in the heart of Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA.

Looking forward, the ED will provide steady organizational leadership while refining the vision for Passim's future. This leader will continue to diversify and grow sources of funding; optimize facilities and operations; nurture a high-performing staff and board; deepen and manage relationships with audiences, external partners, funders, and the city; and ensure consistent delivery of programming—all while strengthening the diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work as an organization.

ABOUT PASSIM

Passim's mission is to provide truly exceptional and interactive live musical experiences for both performers and audiences, nurture artists at all stages of their careers, and build a vibrant, inclusive music community. It does this through its legendary listening venue, music school, artist grants, and community programs. As a nonprofit since 1994, Passim carries on the heritage of its predecessors—the historic Club 47 (1958-1968) and for-profit Passim (1969-1994). The Passim of today cultivates a diverse mix of musical traditions, where the emphasis is on the relationship between performers and audience and between teachers and students. Located in Harvard Square, Passim serves Cambridge and the broader region by featuring local, national, and international artists.

Since its start, Passim has been a cornerstone of the performing arts community in New England, fostering both performers and audiences alike. Joan Baez and Bob Dylan received their start at Passim, along with a host of others, including Tracy Chapman, Tom Rush, Taj Mahal, Al Koper, Peter Wolf, Patty Larkin, Bill Staines, Ellis Paul, and Suzanne Vega. Club Passim has received numerous awards and recognitions, including a spot on the list of Top 40 Live Music Venues in the United States (Paste Magazine, 2007), Best Small Folk Venue in the United States (International Folk Alliance, 2007), Best Live Music Bar in Boston (Boston Globe, 2011), and Best Venues for Live Music in Boston (Time Out, 2024). Passim maintains an active presence in the Cambridge community throughout the year, hosting outdoor festivals across the seasons and collaborating with the Harvard Square Business Association, Cambridge Arts Council, Berklee College of Music, and other local partners.

Programs

Passim provides year-round programming through in-person, online, and hybrid formats, reaching nearly 30,000 audience members and students annually.

- [Club Passim](#) is an all-ages 110-seat concert venue with live music 7 nights per week; nearly all shows are also live-streamed.
- [Passim School of Music](#) offers classes and workshops to adults in a variety of genres and instruments, including guitar, fiddle, mandolin, harmonica, and voice.
- [Artist Grants](#) provide financial support to aspiring musicians to enhance their careers and/or aid their community outreach efforts.
- [Festivals and Concert series](#), including a free summer concert series, Mayfair, Oktoberfest, and [BCMfest](#), which showcases Greater Boston performers of music, song and dance from the Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton and other Celtic traditions.
- [The Folk Collective](#), one of Passim's newest initiatives, is a cohort of twelve artists, musicians, and cultural thought leaders involved in an active exchange of ideas and conversation with the Passim community. Passim collaborates with The Folk Collective to present inclusive and equitable events that welcome and invite diverse audiences and artists to the Passim stage.

Strategic Priorities

The Board of Directors adopted the following five priorities in January 2023 to guide the organization's planning and decisions for the following 3-5 years:

- **Artist development and engagement:** Nurture an inclusive, vibrant, and equitable musical community, amplify diverse voices and talents, and support artists in all stages of their careers.
- **Customer experience (audience and students of Passim School of Music):** Cultivate a connected community across all audiences, students and artists and expand our engagement through music, exploration and collaboration.
- **Employee engagement and satisfaction:** Build a supportive, diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace consistent with attracting and retaining talented and dedicated staff and board.
- **Alignment of programming, facility, and resources:** Create an accessible and inclusive space for programming that builds on the pillars of Passim: artistry, community, and collaboration.
- **Financial organizational sustainability:** Establish a long-term financial plan that supports existing operations, enables future growth, and creates financial stability through ongoing operations, fundraising, and endowment.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

Passim nurtures a welcoming and inclusive community by providing structures and funding to support emerging musicians, and to create learning and relationship-building opportunities for a diverse group of artists to build their careers. In 2024, following the roll-out of the 2023 strategic priorities, Passim worked with a consultant to conduct a Climate & Engagement survey to assess the organization's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Participants included full-time staff, part-time staff, full-time administrators, School of Music teachers, and board members. Additionally, the inaugural cohort of artists in The Folk Collective was invited to participate, because this specific group of artists has experienced a more in-depth engagement in advancing the strategic work of the Passim organization, specifically its dedication to equity and inclusion efforts throughout the organization.

The resulting report provided insights on how Passim can advance the collective work of "fostering a culture where every voice matters, where passion thrives, and where collective success is inevitable." Overall, the organization's key drivers of engagement and involvement are its rich mission and strong sense of community. At the same time, the survey captured a shared hope for the organization's future as a more inclusive, equitable, and genre-diverse venue, specifying that "Passim has a unique opportunity not only to improve itself but to create a working model for progress for the entire national folk scene." Inclusive engagement must be increasingly embodied in Passim's day-to-day as well as its overarching policies and structures, addressing DEIB in both internal and external-facing practices of the organization.

Location, Facilities, & Accessibility

Club Passim is a 110-seat live music venue and kitchen at 47 Palmer Street in Harvard Square. The offices and School of Music are located around the corner from the Club at 26 Church St on the third floor of the building. The existing space is leased from Harvard University and is not fully accessible. Given the existing conditions of the building and the lease, Passim has very limited options to upgrade the physical space. The new ED, in partnership with the board and staff, has an opportunity to engage in dialogue with Harvard and run a feasibility study to determine the best range of options for a more accessible space.

Board of Directors

The 15-member [board of directors](#) is a dedicated group that represents an array of skills and tenure. The Board has the fiduciary responsibility to govern the financial health and overall well-being of Passim, and the Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has six meetings per year that include lively open discussions and deliberation. Each Director serves a two-year term, and service is limited to three terms, although several current board members' have been extended beyond their three terms. In recent years the Board has welcomed several new members, increasing the representation of artists and performers on the board. Most board members reside in the greater Boston area, and all are passionate musicians or audience members.

Finances & Fundraising

With a 2024 operating budget of \$1.9 million, Passim relies on a balance of earned revenue from ticket sales, food and beverage, and tuition plus contributions from individuals, grants, and sponsors. Club Passim produces 430 shows annually for nearly 30,000 patrons a year, which generates nearly 60% of the organization's total income (approximately 33% from ticket sales and 25% from kitchen revenues). Memberships and donations make up an additional 25%, and grants and sponsorships contribute approximately 10%. In 2023, the School served 684 students and offered 131 classes and workshops, generating about 5% of the organization's total income.

As the next chapter of Passim takes shape, a more robust and strategic fundraising plan will need to be developed to sustain, diversify, and strengthen revenue. Passim has successfully sustained an annual fundraising cycle and is actively working to broaden the local folk community and attract new audiences. Looking ahead, the organization is positioned to increase donors, grants and partnerships and to cultivate more long-term sources of funding.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall strategic, operational, programmatic, and administrative management of Passim. The ED plays a vital role in working with staff, board, and artists to implement an exciting and strategic vision for Passim. Reporting to a 15-member board of directors, the ED oversees a budget of approximately \$1.9M and supervises the work of seven administrative and program [staff](#). In the past decade, the organization has grown from an under \$1M budget to nearly \$2M and has enjoyed the return to in-person live music over the past year. The ED will work closely with the board and staff to identify and raise appropriate resources and a sustainable budget model that supports the continued success of the programs as well as the aspirations for growth.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Club Passim's next Executive Director will lead the organization in its next chapter, addressing the following opportunities and challenges:

Lead Passim into its next era with an expansive, inclusive, and sustainable vision of folk music and the organization's future

Building on Passim's reputation as a vibrant hub for folk music, the ED will provide visionary leadership to explore who the next generation of folk music artists and audiences should be, and how to develop and grow the organization's strengths and shore up financial resources to effectively meet the moment. The next leader has an opportunity to engage in thoughtful conversations across the organization with the board and staff, helping Passim to boldly and viably move forward, building on its strong foundation. This leader will first lead an assessment of the organization's strengths and resources, helping Passim consider what to preserve and what must change to secure a sound financial future, overcome its current deficit, and embrace a changing era in folk music artists and audiences. Expanding on the strategic plan, it will be critical that Passim continues to prioritize an artist-centered experience, intentionally cultivate a diverse and inclusive organization and community, and nurture the passion and creativity that has attracted Passim artists and audiences for decades, all while ensuring that the financial viability of the organization is secure as it embarks on its next chapter.

Champion and expand Passim's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

Passim is a committed learning organization, consistently working to discern and promote an inclusive definition of folk music itself, while simultaneously aspiring to cultivate a diverse community of employees, artists, and audiences. The ED will play an important role in advancing the organization's ongoing DEIB work, identifying areas of potential growth, and ensuring that the organization authentically ascribes to a future vision of an increasingly diverse folk music community. New programs such as The Folk Collective demonstrate the possibilities that are already taking shape and have been identified as a potential model for peer organizations. The ED will take a proactive, equity-centered approach to how staff and board members are recruited, mentored and trained; how programs and services are structured and delivered; how programming engages with the broader community; and how to build and sustain both longstanding and new relationships with artists and audiences. Accessibility of the venue is also top of mind for Passim, hence the incoming ED will assess the current space and venue and partner with the board and staff to determine next steps and improve this situation.

Identify, grow, and mentor a talented internal team

A pillar of Passim's mission is developing artists at all stages of their careers. This includes Passim's employees, many of whom view Passim as a place of employment wherein they can dually make a living in a field they love and explore their artistry at the same time. The incoming ED will be capable of identifying, growing, and mentoring the talent they inherit, while also looking to the future and imagining what an evolved optimal organizational structure might allow the organization to accomplish. The incoming leader will invest in continuous improvement of work processes, policies, best practices, and communication channels and will engage all staff as active contributors within the organization. Success in this regard will require a dedication to transparency; a clear articulation of goals, roles, and expectations; and an enthusiasm for supporting individuals with a range of tenures and experience.

Increase Passim's visibility and continue to build community both locally and nationally

Passim's next ED will embrace being a visible and accessible leader; they will be present in the office and the club, and will also prioritize donor meetings, partnership building, and networking at music and cultural events locally and nationally. This person will be comfortable and experienced in navigating those communities and will build and nurture those relationships with authenticity, serving as a compelling narrator and Passim's chief spokesperson. Passim enjoys a national reputation, but is also directly tied to the economic, social, and cultural vitality of its home in Cambridge. The next ED will be an inspirational and respected ambassador for the folk music scene locally and nationally, developing strong partnerships with city and other local leaders and defining areas for partnership and mutual investment that can meaningfully impact the local community. The context of arts and cultural, academic, and community institutions in close proximity offers the ED an extraordinary chance to implement the organization's goals around expansion and inclusion.

Strengthen and expand revenue streams and fundraising

As Passim looks to sustain its renowned programming and grow in new ways, it is critical that the next leader ensure that the financial resources exist to support talented staff and artists, grants for emerging talent, high-quality education and artistic training, and diverse and accessible programming. With ticket sales and food and beverage service contributing approximately 60% of the organization's revenue, there is potential to explore ways to optimize those revenue streams as well as diversify sources through both earned and contributed revenue. When it comes to fundraising, the next ED will have the appetite and entrepreneurial drive to oversee the process of identifying, securing, and sustaining individual donors, grants, and sponsorships. Over the years, Passim has cultivated strong relationships with individuals and organizations who have made contributions over a long-time horizon, ensuring institutional stability. Moving forward, the organization has an opportunity to continue to build out its legacy giving and build out its long-term audience of potential donors and supporters.

Collaborate with and leverage the board of directors to advance Passim's goals

Passim is supported by a devoted Board of Directors that is enthusiastically supportive of the creativity and growth expected with new leadership. The ED will be the chief visionary, ambassador, and fundraiser guiding Passim in its next chapter. They will work with the board to implement the strategic plan, including growing fundraising, addressing ongoing facilities considerations, broadening the reach to audiences and artists, and investing in the organization's ongoing DEIB journey, all while ensuring that Passim continues to celebrate the artist-forward approach for which it is known.

QUALIFICATIONS & CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every trait and bring every experience, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional and personal qualifications:

- A commitment to Passim's mission and values, to providing exceptional, artist-forward programming, and engaging a network of esteemed and emerging artists, along with an appreciation for performing arts non-profit organizations and their distinct cultures.

- A track record of providing visionary and operational leadership in the non-profit sector while effectively guiding an institution through a period of organizational assessment, strategic planning, evolution, and growth.
- Strong business, financial management, and fundraising skills, with experience steering an institution, organization, or program to a position of fiscal sustainability. Demonstrated success in fundraising, including cultivating individual major donors, philanthropic grant funding, and corporate support.
- A commitment to the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and a record of turning those values into action in an organizational context. Track record of success in nurturing and sustaining an organizational culture of collaboration, mutual trust, and accountability.
- History as an effective manager of a dedicated, diverse, and intergenerational staff across a range of functions, with the ability to hire, retain, manage, mentor, and hold accountable a capable team; ideally with experience leading an organization with full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff and contractors. Experience partnering effectively with a board of directors or advisory board in a range of organizational management needs.
- Capacity to serve enthusiastically as the key organizational ambassador, convening and communicating with a multitude of constituencies, strategic partners, donors, and audiences.
- Excellent judgment and problem-solving skills. Experience strengthening processes, policies, and technology to increase organizational effectiveness.
- Deep, unbridled, soulful, boundless, and genuine passion for and love of music.

COMPENSATION & LOCATION

The salary range for this position is \$120,000-\$150,000 commensurate with experience. While Passim currently offers a fairly flexible work schedule, the Executive Director is expected to have a regular presence in the office and club, ensuring visibility and accessibility with both staff and the community. Periodic travel for music and cultural events and network building is expected.

TO APPLY

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumes with letters of interest should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search: Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Katie Rockman, Carrie Alexander, Nella Young, and Marlyn Desire

Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/club-passim/executive-director>

Passim is an equal opportunity employer. We celebrate diversity and are committed to creating an inclusive environment for all employees.