



Executive Director
Mural Arts Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

Through participatory public art, Mural Arts Philadelphia inspires change in people, places, and practices, creating opportunity for a more just and equitable Philadelphia.

THE SEARCH

[Mural Arts Philadelphia](#) (Mural Arts) seeks a civic-minded, visionary, and seasoned Executive Director to lead the next chapter of the nation’s largest public art program. Building on more than four decades of innovation and community impact, the Executive Director sits at the intersection of creativity, community, and civic impact. The role offers a unique and important opportunity to champion Philadelphia artists and neighborhoods by transforming public spaces into powerful storytelling canvases—projects that can build pride, spark dialogue, and make culture visible in everyday life.

The incoming Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia will build on a powerful legacy to shape the next chapter of the nation’s largest public art program. For over 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative process rooted in the traditions of mural-making to create art that transforms public spaces and positively impacts communities. Mural Arts Philadelphia exists to provide transformative experiences, progressive discourse, and economic stimulus to the City of Philadelphia. Since its founding in 1984, Mural Arts Philadelphia has advanced its mission through four core program areas: Public Art and Civil Engagement, Art Education, Porch Light (behavioral health), and Restorative Justice, while producing more than 4,000 works of public art in collaboration with communities across the city. The organization continues to serve as a global model for socially engaged public art, demonstrating the profound civic impact that creativity can have on community cohesion, public health, economic vitality, and collective imagination. The new leader of Mural Arts will steward this legacy while guiding the organization into its next era.

In close collaboration with the Board of Directors of Mural Arts Advocates (the non-profit arm of Mural Arts Philadelphia), the City of Philadelphia, artists, community leaders, and a multidisciplinary team, this leader will promote a compelling vision for public art, determine strategic direction, enhance the organization's infrastructure, and guarantee excellence in program implementation. With a primary focus on strengthening and modernizing a unique city-nonprofit hybrid organization during a pivotal time, this leader will be a confident and effective fundraiser, skilled at navigating Philadelphia's civic and philanthropic landscapes, diversifying revenue streams, and managing major relationships. They will also provide disciplined financial, operational, and personnel leadership that develops sustainable systems and supports staff growth, artistic excellence, and long-term resilience.

The successful candidate will act as a visible and trusted civic leader—bringing creativity, integrity, and a collaborative spirit to maintain Mural Arts' high profile both locally and nationally.

The Mural Arts Advocates Board of Directors has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, for this recruitment effort. All applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed in confidence to the search team as indicated at the end of this document.

MURAL ARTS HISTORY AND FOUNDER

[Jane Golden](#) founded Mural Arts Philadelphia in 1984 and continues to lead the organization, guiding its evolution from a city initiative into the nation's largest public art program and a widely recognized model for civic transformation through art. Beginning with efforts to redirect the creative energy of graffiti writers toward collaborative, community-driven mural making, Golden helped establish an approach rooted in neighborhood partnership and artistic excellence. Under Mayor Ed Rendell, the program was restructured, and in 1998, Mural Arts Advocates was founded to expand capacity and support the organization's growing scope and impact.

Early milestones, such as [Kent Twitchell's Dr. J mural](#)— the first in Philadelphia to use the “parachute cloth technique”— signaled the program's growing artistic ambition and its commitment to elevating public art through ingenuity and collaboration. These formative years laid the groundwork for a model that valued neighborhood partnership, artistic excellence, and the power of public art to spark conversation and catalyze change. Landmark projects, including the [Peace Wall in Grays Ferry](#), which helped bridge neighborhood divides, and [Meg Saligman's iconic Common Threads](#), reflected the program's deepening engagement with issues of identity, unity, and shared experience.

Her impact and leadership have been recognized with numerous honors, including most recently the Governor's Keystone Award for her profound impact on Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Edward G. Rendell Lifetime Achievement Award (upcoming in April) from the *Philadelphia Citizen* to honor her long-term, profound impact on Philadelphia's culture, business and civic life.

HAPPENING TODAY

The organization now completes 50–100 new projects annually and maintains its growing collection through a dedicated restoration initiative. Year-round programming and tours attract more than 15,000 residents and visitors each year, strengthening Philadelphia’s reputation as the “Mural Capital of the World.” The remarkable, storied impact of Mural Arts has resulted in 2026 being the second year in a row, and the third time in the last four years, that [USA Today](#) named Philadelphia the best city in the United States for street art.

In 2024, Mural Arts engaged 25,000 people, employed over 200 artists, and completed 75–100 public art projects—amounting to a \$2.7 million investment in Philadelphia’s creative economy. Notable highlights included 120 classes at the Tacony LAB Community Arts Center; new murals and exhibitions; and ongoing artist pipeline initiatives like the Philadelphia Fellowship for Black Artists (supporting 85 artists so far, with a new 15-artist cohort showcased at Ubuntu Gallery). For more details, review the [annual reports](#).

Core Program Areas

[Public Art and Civic Engagement:](#) Projects that respond to community histories, needs, and creative visions; includes special projects, mural restoration, community murals, and civic partnerships. For example, through the **Community Murals** program, Mural Arts collaborates with residents to create murals highlighting community identity and history. As another example, Mural Arts participates in the Kensington Wellness Initiative, a public art and wellness collaboration in Kensington.

[Art Education:](#) In-school and after-school arts education for youth across Philadelphia, plus programs like *Murals on the Move*, a mobile art-class program for youth run in partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation.

[Restorative Justice:](#) Programs that use artmaking to support returning citizens and justice-impacted individuals, focusing on healing, dialogue, and community connection.

[Porch Light:](#) A collaboration with the City of Philadelphia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services, focused on community wellness and behavioral health through public art. Includes **Color Me Back**, a same-day work-and-pay program, with more than 1,300 participants since 2019, 360 jobs offered each month, and over \$550,000 in wages paid.

THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia is a vibrant, historic, and deeply livable city that combines the cultural richness of a major metropolis with the accessibility and neighborhood feel of a much smaller place. As the nation’s first capital and the birthplace of American democracy, it offers unparalleled historical landmarks alongside a thriving contemporary arts and culture scene. Today, more than 1.5 million residents call Philadelphia home, contributing to the city’s dynamic blend of innovation, diversity, and community pride.

Often described as a city of neighborhoods, Philadelphia is made up of more than 150 distinct communities, each with its own character, rhythm, and identity. From the tree-lined streets of Chestnut Hill to the creative energy of Fishtown and the bustling core of Center City, these neighborhoods shape daily life and provide residents with a strong sense of belonging.

The city's cultural resources are exceptional. World-class museums, public art, theaters, music venues, and parks are woven into the fabric of everyday life. Philadelphia also boasts a food scene that rivals larger coastal cities, ranging from award-winning restaurants to beloved neighborhood institutions. Its extensive park system, anchored by Fairmount Park, offers abundant outdoor space and an active lifestyle.

Philadelphia's affordability relative to other major Northeast cities continues to draw talent from across the region. The cost of living is significantly lower than in cities like New York or Washington. At the same time, competitive salaries and robust employment sectors—including education, healthcare, technology, and the creative economy provide meaningful career opportunities. The city is also highly walkable, with reliable transit options that make it easy to move between neighborhoods without a car. Its compact urban grid, historic architecture, and strong civic identity make Philadelphia both accessible and distinctive.

FINANCES AND GOVERNANCE

Mural Arts Philadelphia operates through a public-private partnership as part of the City of Philadelphia's Creative Philadelphia office. It functions both as a City agency dedicated to public art and as a nonprofit organization supported by the Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates. The City of Philadelphia provides essential funding for Mural Arts' core operations. At the same time, additional support from individual donors, foundations, and corporate partners enables the organization to expand its transformative public art projects and community-based initiatives across the region.

In fiscal year 2024, Mural Arts managed an approximately \$18 million budget. Funding from the City of Philadelphia and federal grant sources accounted for 34% of the overall budget, with the remaining resources generated through foundation grants, corporate sponsorships, individual donations, and earned revenue.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting to both the Board and the City, the Executive Director oversees all Mural Arts Philadelphia operations, including a staff of 57 full-time employees, over 200 contract artists and teaching artists, and participants across all program areas. Direct reports to the Executive Director include:

- Executive Assistant
- Chief Advancement and Impact Officer
- Chief Operating Officer
- Director of Special Projects

The Executive Director will work closely with the Board of Directors to set strategic priorities, uphold strong governance practices, and ensure the Board receives timely, accurate information. The Executive Director will also serve as a strong partner to the City of Philadelphia, collaborating with civic and community leaders, public agencies, and neighborhood stakeholders. They will maintain productive relationships that advance shared goals, support public art initiatives, and ensure that community voices shape the work of Mural Arts Philadelphia.

The role provides leadership to the senior management team, serves as the key link to the Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates, and ensures alignment across core program portfolios, Art Education, Restorative Justice, Public Art & Civic Engagement, and Porch Light. The Executive Director manages an approximately \$18 million budget; leads fundraising across public, private, and earned revenue streams; serves as the organization's primary spokesperson; and directs artist selection, contracting, community engagement, partnership development, and project delivery to uphold Mural Arts' commitment to creative, community-driven public art.

The Executive Director will be expected to manage a set of ongoing balances inherent to this role—advancing Board priorities while supporting sustainable staff capacity; engaging City partners and other public leaders while remaining accountable to community needs; and strengthening support from funders and sponsors while upholding the organization's mission and values. The Executive Director will also bring sound judgment to when to pursue new opportunities and when to set clear, disciplined limits; how to honor artists' creative autonomy while ensuring operational clarity and integrity; and how to steward long-standing relationships while establishing their own credibility and leadership voice. Throughout, they will keep teams aligned across programs, operations, finance, and communications, and help grow national visibility while remaining grounded in Philadelphia trust and partnerships.

In taking on this role, the Executive Director will:

Lead a community-centered public art vision with operational clarity: The Executive Director will harness Mural Arts' expansive reach and civic role to advance a bold, community-centered public art vision grounded in operational excellence. They will build and refine the structures, systems, tools, and teams that enable a coordinated, high-functioning organization, fostering strong cross-departmental collaboration, shared purpose, and clear accountability. As a unifying leader, they will articulate a compelling vision and priorities that guide decision-making, strengthen alignment, and empower staff and artists to do their best work. A deep commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility will be embedded in their leadership, ensuring Mural Arts' culture, programs, and partnerships authentically reflect and serve Philadelphia's communities.

Fortify and crystallize the hybrid nonprofit/city partnership structure: The Executive Director will partner with Creative Philadelphia to establish clear shared priorities, roles, decision rights, and accountability across both systems—ensuring Mural Arts can operate with the rigor of a public partner and the agility of a mission-driven nonprofit. The Executive Director will proactively manage and strengthen relationships

with City and State leadership and agency partners, translate public-sector requirements into workable internal processes, and create dependable rhythms for communication, reporting, budgeting, and contracting.

Mobilize resources and grow sustainable funding: As the chief public representative of Mural Arts, the Executive Director will lead a comprehensive revenue strategy to secure and diversify philanthropic and public funding to sustain and expand Mural Arts' community-centered work. The Executive Director will work with the development team to inspire and steward donors, cultivate institutional and corporate partners, and translate impact into compelling cases for support—while building the internal systems, and accountability needed for reliable fundraising performance. In close partnership with the Board, City stakeholders, and community allies, the Executive Director will align fundraising priorities with program strategy, elevate the organization's visibility and value, and ensure resources flow equitably to artists and neighborhoods, strengthening long-term stability and mission impact.

Center quality, equity, and artists in programs, partnerships, and public impact: The Executive Director will champion innovative, socially engaged public art that advances Mural Arts Philadelphia's leadership across large-scale murals, civic collaborations, and mission-aligned initiatives—including art education, behavioral health, and restorative justice. The Executive Director will uphold clear standards for high-caliber artistry and equity by ensuring fair compensation, transparent selection, and strong production practices, while building partnerships that expand opportunity without compromising the organization's defined purpose.

Nurture a healthy workplace that develops, empowers, and retains talent: The Executive Director will manage and develop a skilled leadership team across multiple functional areas, providing leadership that promotes transparency, professional development, cross-departmental collaboration, and operational effectiveness. In addition, the Executive Director will conduct a thorough review of internal operations to identify opportunities to streamline workflows, strengthen organizational systems, and ensure that processes effectively support long-term growth. This includes assessing current practices, implementing clearer structures and communication channels, and building sustainable operational frameworks that allow staff to thrive.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Master's level degree in fine arts, arts administration, arts education, Museum Studies, public art, or related fields is preferred.
- Deep connection to the arts and community, with a dedication to the Philadelphia community and willingness to deepen local relationships, and fluency in the city's relationship-driven ecosystem.
- Authentic arts and cultural leader, bringing genuine appreciation for artistic practice and community-centered work.
- Exceptional communicator and storyteller, able to clearly and compellingly articulate the organization's identity, mission, vision, priorities, and strategic direction across diverse audiences.

- Proven fundraiser across public and private sectors, with experience securing government support, philanthropy, and corporate partnerships.
- Proactive relationship-builder, politically savvy and diplomatically skilled, with the ability to manage board, mayoral, City Council, and donor expectations with clarity, consistency, and confidence.
- Resilient, decisive, and values-driven, demonstrating high integrity, calm under pressure, and a willingness to advocate for the mission and staff amid resistance or scrutiny.
- Emotionally intelligent and culturally humble, bringing patience, curiosity, and fairness to complex decisions, particularly in challenging or high-stakes moments.
- Strong people manager and operational leader, capable of developing staff, overseeing budgets, delegating effectively, and strengthening systems and accountability.
- Collaborative leadership style, empowering staff, and nurturing artistic freedom.
- Persuasive and grounded public presence, able to represent the organization externally while fostering trust and alignment internally.
- Strategic and future-oriented, committed to thoughtful, consistent planning and systematic execution, strengthening organizational focus and sustainability while growing national visibility without losing local identity.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The salary for the position will range from \$200,000 to \$225,000 commensurate with experience. This position is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The successful candidate is expected to reside in the Philadelphia region and to work in person. This position is a very hands-on job, and remote work is not acceptable except in very limited circumstances.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website (<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/mural-arts-philadelphia/executive-director>) to the attention of **Tiffany Weber, Sarah James, Quizayra Gonzalz, and Siobhan Hanley**.

Mural Arts Philadelphia is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We are committed to building a diverse staff and strongly encourage individuals from underrepresented communities to apply. If you meet some of the requirements but not all, we encourage you to submit your application to be considered.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Mural Arts Philadelphia. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Mural Arts Philadelphia would supersede any conflicting information in this document.