The MAYDAY Fund

Executive Director
The Mayday Fund
New York, New York

THE SEARCH

The Mayday Fund ("Mayday" or "the Fund") seeks a relationship-oriented, mission-driven leader to serve as its next Executive Director. Working closely with the Board, the Executive Director will steward the Fund's mission and resources, guide its strategic direction, and strengthen the organization's capacity to maximize its impact amid evolving needs across the pain field.

For more than three decades, Mayday has maintained a steadfast commitment to alleviating human pain. Established in 1992 to honor the philanthropic legacy of Shirley Steinman Katzenbach, the Fund has invested more than $31 million through nearly 400 grants to support research initiatives that advance understanding of pain and improve treatment and care.

Today, Mayday occupies a distinctive place within the pain field. Through its disciplined approach to grantmaking, deep engagement with researchers and clinicians, and support for pain education through curriculum development and implementation, the Fund has contributed meaningfully to scientific discovery, clinical practice, and public understanding. Momentum in these areas continues to grow as the medical, scientific, and societal challenges associated with pain gain greater prominence across healthcare, research, and public health, creating new opportunities to improve patient outcomes.

One of Mayday's longstanding contributions to the field is the Mayday Pain & Society Fellowship. Originally launched in 2004, the Fellowship now includes a network of 144 researchers, clinicians, advocates, and policy leaders across the United States and Canada. Together with the Fund's broader grantmaking efforts, the Fellowship reflects Mayday's commitment to strengthening leadership, communication, and collaboration across the broader pain ecosystem.

Mayday enters this leadership transition from a position of strength, with a clear mission, an engaged Board, trusted advisors, and long-standing relationships across the field. As the organization looks ahead, increasing scientific complexity and a changing research and funding landscape create an important opportunity for the new Executive Director to build upon Mayday's strong foundation and thoughtfully shape its next chapter.

The successful candidate will be an intellectually curious and collaborative leader with strong strategic, operational, and relationship-building capabilities. They will bring sound judgment, a commitment to partnership, and an appreciation for the unique culture, governance, and relationship dynamics of a family

foundation. Most importantly, they will be motivated by the opportunity to steward a respected institution and contribute to a field of growing importance and impact.

The Mayday Fund has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE MAYDAY FUND

History and Mission

The Mayday Fund was established in 1992 to advance the social and medical philanthropic interests of Shirley Steinman Katzenbach. The Board adopted the alleviation of human pain as the Fund's central mission, a focus that has remained unchanged for more than three decades. The organization's name commemorates both Mrs. Katzenbach's birthday and the international distress signal "Mayday," derived from the French phrase *m'aidez* or "help me."

From its inception, Mayday adopted a highly focused approach to philanthropy by concentrating its resources on the complex challenge of improving how pain is understood, treated, and addressed. This disciplined approach continues to shape the Fund's grantmaking and field-building efforts today.

Grantmaking and Programmatic Focus

Mayday supports efforts that contribute to the alleviation of pain through research, education, and communication. Its grantmaking spans a broad range of activities, from scientific and translational research to education, professional practice, and initiatives designed to improve public understanding and pain care across the lifespan.

The Fund is particularly known for providing catalytic support at pivotal moments, helping researchers, clinicians, and institutions pursue new directions, strengthen promising initiatives, and advance work that may later attract larger-scale funding and support.

Mayday has funded single-year projects as well as multi-year grants. Current areas of grantmaking interest include:

- Research Bench to Bedside: Support translational research with the potential to expand and improve clinical approaches to pain treatment.
- Pain Thermometer: Advance efforts to identify reliable, objective measures of pain that can inform more effective and personalized treatment.
- Knowledge & Networks: Support collaborative and scalable efforts to improve professional practice and public knowledge, including curriculum development, advocacy training, and convenings.

- Alternative Strategies & Therapies: Support research and models of clinical care focused on non-opioid approaches to treating and managing pain.

The Fund maintains an open grant application process and considers proposals throughout the year, with funding decisions reviewed by the Board quarterly. This approach allows Mayday to remain flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities while supporting approximately $1 million in annual grantmaking.

The Mayday Pain & Society Fellowship

One of Mayday's most distinctive initiatives is the Mayday Pain & Society Fellowship, a strategic communications training program managed by the public interest communications firm Burness in partnership with Mayday. Launched in 2004, the Fellowship was created to strengthen the ability of pain experts to communicate evidence-based information about pain research, treatment, and policy to broader audiences.

The Fellowship brings together researchers, clinicians, advocates, and policy leaders from across the United States and Canada for communications training, leadership development, and peer learning designed to enhance their effectiveness as public voices in the field. Today, the Fellowship includes a network of 144 alumni, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, scientists, legal scholars, and other leaders across the pain management community.

Governance

Mayday is governed by a highly engaged Board of four Directors, which has historically included both family and independent members. The Board works closely with the Executive Director and advisors to advance the Fund’s mission and steward its long-term success. Directors are active participants in grantmaking, strategic discussions, and organizational decision-making, reflecting a deep commitment to Mayday and its work.

The Board views the Executive Director as a trusted partner and thought collaborator, creating a governance environment characterized by engagement, accessibility, and shared commitment to the Fund's mission. As Mayday looks to the future, fostering the involvement of emerging generations of family leadership remains an important priority.

Additional information about the Fund can be found at https://maydayfund.org/

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director serves as the chief executive of the Mayday Fund and is responsible for the Fund’s overall management and effectiveness. Working closely with the Board, advisors, family office, and directly supervising the Grants Manager, the Executive Director oversees operations, develops the annual operating budget, and ensures that Mayday's systems, practices, and organizational infrastructure support its mission and long-term success. The Executive Director also leads preparation for Board

meetings, translating complex scientific and programmatic information into clear materials that support informed discussion and decision-making.

The Executive Director oversees the Fund's approximately $1 million annual grantmaking portfolio, including the review, selection, administration, and evaluation of grants. This work includes maintaining relationships with grantees, identifying new funding opportunities, and staying current on developments across the pain field through conferences, literature review, site visits, and engagement with researchers, clinicians, and institutional leaders. The Executive Director also oversees scientific and expert review to support rigorous and informed grantmaking.

As Mayday's primary ambassador, the Executive Director represents the Fund with government agencies, peer funders, professional societies, research and clinical institutions, and other partners. The Executive Director oversees the Mayday Pain & Society Fellowship in partnership with Burness and manages external consultants and professional service providers, including communications, legal, financial, and accounting partners. Throughout all aspects of the role, the Executive Director serves as a thoughtful steward of Mayday's reputation, values, and longstanding commitment to privacy and discretion.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shape Mayday Fund's future impact and strategic direction

As Mayday prepares for its next chapter, the Executive Director will have the opportunity to help the Board define how the Fund can deepen its impact and influence in an evolving research, policy, and funding landscape. With additional philanthropic resources expected in the coming years, this leader will work with the Board to identify emerging opportunities and assess where Mayday is best positioned to make a difference in the years ahead. Success will require balancing thoughtful stewardship of the Fund's history with a forward-looking perspective on where Mayday can have the greatest influence in the pain field.

Strengthen Mayday's grantmaking and scientific review capacity

As the pain field becomes increasingly sophisticated and grant demand continues to grow, the Executive Director will play a central role in developing more structured approaches to peer review and expert assessment. This leader will help refine how Mayday solicits, evaluates, reviews, and monitors grant applications while preserving the organization's ability to remain nimble and responsive to emerging opportunities.

Mayday has already made important investments in its future capacity, including implementing a new grant management system and consolidating historical grant records and data. Working closely with the Grants Manager, the Executive Director will build on this progress to improve efficiency, make thoughtful use of technology, and strengthen the Fund's ability to track grantees, analyze its portfolio, and learn from its investments over time.

The Executive Director will also help advance more sustainable approaches to scientific review to bolster reviewer networks and field-wide capacity. Success will require introducing greater structure and rigor while preserving the flexibility, responsiveness, and relationship-driven approach that have long distinguished Mayday from larger foundations.

Amplify Mayday's role as a field builder

While Mayday is best known for its grantmaking, its influence extends far beyond the grants it awards. Through decades of relationship-building, strategic investments, and support for emerging leaders, the Fund has contributed to progress in research, clinical practice, policy, and public understanding.

The next Executive Director will deepen Mayday's role as a connector and catalyst by building relationships with researchers, clinicians, professional societies, government agencies, policymakers, peer funders, and institutional leaders. This includes stewarding the Mayday Pain & Society Fellowship in partnership with Burness, elevating the achievements of fellows and grantees, and identifying opportunities to strengthen leadership, communication, and collaboration across the pain field.

The Executive Director will also consider how Mayday can best leverage its credibility, networks, and convening power to extend the impact of its investments. With respect to Mayday's longstanding preference for a relatively low public profile, this leader will exercise sound judgment about when increased visibility can advance Mayday's mission and broader influence.

Partner with the Board to strengthen governance and stewardship

One of Mayday's greatest assets is its deeply engaged Board, whose directors view themselves as partners in the Fund's work. As the organization continues to mature, the Executive Director will serve as a trusted advisor to the Board, helping Directors navigate questions of governance, organizational capacity, future priorities, and long-term stewardship.

The Executive Director will have the opportunity to further strengthen the Fund's governance, decision-making processes, and organizational practices while preserving the warmth, collegiality, and relationship-centered culture that Mayday is known for. An important dimension of this work will be helping the Board foster meaningful engagement among emerging family generations and cultivate future family leadership and participation in the Fund. Success will require a leader who can guide sensitive conversations, offer thoughtful recommendations, and translate strategic priorities into meaningful action while positioning Mayday for effective stewardship across generations.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no single candidate will possess every qualification listed below, the ideal candidate will bring many of the following experiences, skills, and attributes:

Leadership and Organizational Management

- Significant leadership experience within philanthropy, healthcare, research, higher education, nonprofit organizations, or other mission-driven environments.
- Experience managing people, operations, budgets, consultants, and organizational priorities.
- Ability to balance strategic thinking with effective execution in a small, collaborative organization where flexibility and initiative are highly valued.
- Experience strengthening organizational systems and processes, with an appreciation for how technology and data can improve efficiency, decision-making, and institutional learning.

Board Partnership and Relationship Building

- Experience working effectively with governing boards or other senior stakeholders, ideally within a family foundation or other closely held governance environment.
- Ability to serve as a trusted advisor, thought partner, and facilitator of productive decision-making.
- Exceptional relationship-building skills and the ability to establish credibility and trust across diverse constituencies.
- Strong interpersonal skills characterized by diplomacy, emotional intelligence, active listening, and the ability to navigate multigenerational relationships and differing perspectives.

Scientific Engagement and Intellectual Curiosity

- Scientific fluency and familiarity with healthcare, medicine, public health, or related fields; an advanced scientific or health-related background is welcome but not required.
- Ability to engage credibly with researchers, clinicians, institutional leaders, and subject matter experts.
- Appreciation for the interdisciplinary nature of pain, including its scientific, clinical, psychological, social, and policy dimensions.
- Ability to synthesize and communicate complex information to both technical and non-technical audiences.
- Intellectual curiosity and a demonstrated commitment to continuous learning, particularly beyond one's primary area of expertise.

Personal Characteristics

- A collaborative leadership style grounded in partnership, trust, and mutual respect.
- Commitment to Mayday's mission and appreciation for the role philanthropy can play in advancing meaningful change.
- Integrity, humility, sound judgment, and emotional maturity.
- Strong communication skills and the ability to represent the Fund effectively to a wide range of audiences.

- Appreciation for the unique culture and governance dynamics of a highly engaged family foundation, including the importance of family stewardship and engagement across generations.
- Willingness to maintain an active presence in the field through conferences, site visits, and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, with travel primarily within the U.S. and occasional international travel.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated salary range for this position is $185,000 to $225,000, commensurate with experience.

The position is based in New York City with the possibility of a hybrid work arrangement. The Board meets at least four times annually, including at least two in-person meetings in New York City. Extensive engagement with researchers, grantees, fellows, conferences, and institutional partners will require periodic travel.

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/mayday-fund/executive-director.

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Isaacson, Miller

The Mayday Fund is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes applications from people of all cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. Individuals from historically marginalized populations are encouraged to apply. Employment opportunities are based upon individual capabilities and qualifications without regard to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic as established under law.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by The Mayday Fund. 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 The Mayday Fund would supersede any conflicting information in this document.