



An invitation to apply for the position of  
**Executive Director**  
**Portland Public Library**  
Portland, Maine

## THE SEARCH

The Portland Public Library (PPL), serving the greater Portland community for over 150 years, seeks a collaborative, strategic, and innovative cultural leader and library professional to serve as its next Executive Director. As the state's largest public library system and most visited cultural institution, PPL is a cornerstone in the community providing access to information, advancing literacy, and enriching the lives of the growing and increasingly diverse population in Portland.

PPL seeks an outstanding leader with a demonstrated commitment to leading an organization through change in a diverse community, embracing new measures to support community-wide justice and equity. The next Executive Director will have the opportunity to engage in a strategic planning process that articulates a vision for the future of the Library and its relevance among the changing population of Portland. Overseeing multiple physical locations, as well as a bookmobile and a growing virtual presence, the Executive Director will lead an organization with over 60 full-time staff that is ready for thoughtful change. This individual will be an experienced library executive who will lead in providing a direction for the vital role of Portland Public Library in an exceptional location. Portland, Maine is ranked in the top 10 best places to live in America by [U.S. News and World Report](#) for 2022-2023, offering a variety of arts and cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities in a growing city.

The ideal candidate will have a thorough knowledge of public library current trends and best practices. The next Executive Director will bring a pragmatic and fiscally responsible approach to public library leadership with a focus on building community engagement and investment. PPL seeks a candidate who will bring experience and success in donor cultivation and stewardship to further the mission of the organization. They will have the political savviness to foster and navigate collaborative relationships among a variety of internal and external constituents and key stakeholders.

Portland Public Library has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this important search. All applications, inquiries, and nominations will remain confidential and should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## THE PORTLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Portland Public Library, chartered in 1867, is one of the oldest cultural institutions in Maine's largest city. With a Downtown location on Monument Square, three branch locations (Burbank Branch, Peaks Island Branch, and Riverton Branch), a Bookmobile, and a unique Shared Collections Management Center developed in partnership with the Maine Historical Society, PPL is a robust and community-centered cultural hub focused on expanding the resources and programming offered to all residents of Portland and the surrounding region. The Downtown branch underwent a significant renovation in 2010 that added new spaces for adult popular reading, technology services, and cultural center activities including the Lewis Gallery; Rines Auditorium and community meeting rooms; the new Sam L. Cohen Children's Library; and S. Donald Sussman Teen Library. PPL houses an extensive collection including electronic media, access to shared media, and important city historical archives, totaling over 300,000 print and digital works. In addition to providing computing and internet access services to the public, PPL offers educational, social, environmental, political, and cultural events and hosts thousands of visitors each year.

Community engagement is at the heart of the mission of PPL. By fostering learning, discovery, joy, and conversation, the Portland Public Library strives to enrich its diverse community and advance literacy. For more information on PPL's mission and vision, please explore the [website](#). Through community partnerships, PPL offers a wide range of educational, informative, and engaging programs and events for all audiences: children, families, teens, new Mainers, adults, seniors, and those new to their library.

### Organizational Structure and Finances

PPL is a 501(c)3 cultural organization with a staff of 63 full time equivalent employees, most of which have union representation, and is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is comprised of up to 21 members representing a wide range of professional experiences and areas of expertise who are all committed to supporting and advocating for the power of the public library. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Trustees, and collaborates with an experienced senior leadership team, including an Associate Director; Director of Advancement & External Relations; and Director of Finance & Human Resources.

Portland Public Library has a \$5 million operating budget and \$7 million in endowment funds. Approximately 82% of the annual operating budget comes from city, county, and state government sources which funds the cost of facilities, personnel, and the infrastructure. Although substantial financial resources come from the City of Portland, PPL is not a city department. The remaining 18% of the budget comes from individual gifts, foundation and government grants, and income from the Library's endowment, which provides an opportunity for the next Executive Director to play a key role in cultivating existing and developing new investment resources.

## THE CITY OF PORTLAND

A growing city of over 65,000 with a metropolitan area of over 500,000, Portland, Maine sits on the beautiful and scenic Casco Bay on a peninsula in southern Maine. Home to bold coasts, high peaks, rural farmlands, and thousands of lakes and rivers, Maine contains a diverse set of cultures and traditions including indigenous peoples and lifelong residents, as well as new immigrants who have just arrived and are excited to call Maine home. Portland has long been a city of immigrants and recently has welcomed new residents from across the globe who have added to the City's diversity.

Once a fishing port established in 1632, Portland offers historic 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture juxtaposed with a blossoming entertainment and dining industry. With fairs and music festivals, endless opportunities for the outdoor enthusiast, locally sourced farm-to-table dining options, and all of the arts, cultural, and recreational offerings of a big city with a small-town feel, Portland is truly an up-and-coming destination on the East Coast. The city is also home to the University of Southern Maine, Maine College of Art & Design, The Roux Institute of Northeastern University, and the University of New England, Portland campus (colleges of Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Professions and soon-to-be Osteopathic Medicine).

## THE ROLE

The next Executive Director will join Portland Public Library at a time of exciting opportunity. With the recent retirement of the previous Executive Director after a dedicated progressive career with PPL, a strong foundation has been laid to continue to grow and develop PPL. Through its ties to the greater Portland community, PPL is actively funded by the city government with the commitment to serve and support the growing and increasingly diverse population of Portland. The Executive Director will bring a strong personal priority to and demonstrated experience in making diversity, equity, access, and inclusion a significant focus for patrons, staff, and board engagement. The Executive Director will be an active listener, a skilled communicator who values transparency, and a passionate champion for the role public libraries play as a pivotal civic resource to the communities they serve. They will be a bridge builder between key stakeholders, including the staff, Board of Trustees, City of Portland, county and state officials, and other cultural and civic organizations to ensure the Library's mission is fulfilled.

## OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

***Lead a passionate and energized team using best practices and current trends for nonprofit library management***

The new Executive Director must possess strong skills and experience as a leader. They will be expected to create an environment of collaboration, inclusion, and communication among all staff. The Executive Director will provide support and guidance to team leadership as well as ongoing opportunities for

professional development to a dedicated and talented staff. Thorough knowledge of library principles and best practices, fiscal responsibility, technologies, and communication are a must.

***Collaborate with internal and external key stakeholders to build and foster relationships that further the mission of the organization***

As the leader of a publicly funded institution, the Executive Director will collaborate with the Board of Trustees, local government and public schools, key community organizations, regional non-profit partners, and local corporations to enrich the lives of the people of Portland and beyond. Current partnerships include immigration and social service agencies, the Small Business Administration, United Way of Southern Maine, conservation and environmental organizations, regional colleges and universities, and the Portland Chamber of Commerce. The new Executive Director will lead efforts to cultivate partnerships alongside library staff in a way that expands resources and programming to meet the evolving needs of the community.

***Direct fundraising opportunities and cultivate donor relations to build a dynamic network of support***

As resource demands on PPL increase, the Executive Director will be expected to cultivate and steward relationships with local and state-wide nonprofits and individual donors who wish to support the work of the Library. In conjunction with the Board and the Director of Advancement, the next Executive Director will have the chance to tell the story of the library and its value to the people of Portland, building new relationships and finding sources of revenue through donor cultivation.

***Oversee a strategic planning process to establish achievable goals while assessing tangible impact***

As PPL enters into a new strategic planning process, the next Executive Director will be instrumental in helping to develop and lead planning alongside staff and the Board of Trustees. They will be responsible for setting short-term and long-term goals and assessing the impact of the library to inform decision-making to advance the mission of the organization.

***Prioritize community-focused public programming efforts through a lens of equity, access, and representation***

The next Executive Director must have a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access, and proven experience in helping staff build robust community programming to reach an increasingly diverse city population. Expanding on PPL's pre-Covid programs and community offerings, they will work with the PPL staff and community leaders to assess the changing population's needs across the many branches in the city. Currently, Portland is home to immigrants and asylum seekers speaking languages from countries across the world. Additionally, Portland is home to a growing and thriving LGBTQIA+ population with a strong community presence. The Executive Director will center equity in practice by prioritizing public programming ideas and efforts that welcome all community members.

## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS

PPL seeks a dynamic leader to provide vision and leadership in a time of transformation in the public library space, who is passionate about serving the community and inspired by PPL's mission and potential. Although no one person will embody all the qualities enumerated below, the ideal candidate will possess many of the following professional and personal characteristics:

- A Masters of Library Science degree from an ALA-accredited library school;
- A minimum of seven years of progressive responsibility and leadership experience in library management, preferably in a public library setting;
- A genuine passion for the mission of PPL, understanding the pivotal role PPL plays in the local and broad community;
- Leadership experience supporting and serving a diverse, passionate, and energized team; working knowledge of leading in a unionized environment preferred.
- Experience with physical planning and navigating an organization with multiple physical locations;
- A high level of financial acumen and budget oversight experience;
- Strategic thought and vision to assist in developing and implementing a strategic plan;
- Commitment to diverse community programming;
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion that prioritizes an understanding of the evolving demographics of the city of Portland;
- Experience cultivating and stewarding donor relations to further the mission of non-profit organizations;
- Leadership that embraces new roles for the library in the community and welcomes broadening the impact of the modern public library; and
- A strong commitment to intellectual freedom and public service.

## INQUIRIES, NOMINATIONS, AND APPLICATIONS

Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications (including resumes and brief letters of interest) should be sent electronically to the following:

Rebecca Kennedy, Partner (she/her)  
Hannah Moore, Senior Associate (she/her)  
Cortnee Bollard, Senior Search Coordinator (they/them)  
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/8695>

*Portland Public Library is an equal-opportunity employer dedicated to providing everyone with safe and free access to educational and cultural resources. PPL is Maine's most visited cultural institution and is a valued community asset, serving residents and visitors for over 150 years. PPL creates a culture that*

*fosters continuous staff development and engagement to reflect the learning role we play for our patrons. Individuals who share knowledge and experience, work collaboratively, and communicate openly can thrive at Portland Public Library. PPL promotes professional engagement with colleagues, with community efforts, and with others in the library field. Every employee of the Portland Public Library strives to offer the highest quality service – externally to library patrons and internally to colleagues. PPL is committed to hiring and maintaining a diverse workforce of highly qualified staff to ensure broad perspectives, promote equity and inclusion, and connect to our wide community. Applicants with racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse identities or backgrounds are encouraged to apply.*