



**Search for the Executive Director  
Bridges Homeward  
Cambridge, MA**

*Bridges Homeward provides high-quality support and advocacy for children, adults, and families to develop and nurture safe, permanent relationships and maximize individual growth.*

**THE SEARCH**

Bridges Homeward, formerly Cambridge Family & Children’s Service, one of the premier providers of permanency-focused programming in Greater Boston, seeks a dynamic and experienced leader to serve as its next Executive Director. Bridges Homeward’s next Executive Director will bring a deep passion for positively reshaping the lives of children, youth, adults, and their families – drawn to the agency’s ethos of “family and connection for all.”

Since its founding in 1874, Bridges Homeward has evolved into a leading-edge, multi-service agency providing services across five program areas: Adoption, Developmental Disabilities Services, Family Services, Family Support and Stabilization, and Intensive Foster Care. The agency’s continuum of care and holistic approach to the delivery of services yield significant benefits for the families, children, and adults it serves. Each of Bridges Homeward’s programs is defined by permanency; the agency does not seek quick fixes but instead takes an in-depth and personalized approach to ensure the people they serve develop healthy, permanent relationships and are living in safe, stable, and loving homes.

In FY2022, Bridges Homeward supported 1,000 children, families, and adults, helping them thrive and build resiliency and power for themselves and their loved ones. The agency’s FY2023 budget is \$6.9 million, and it employs about 100 part-time and full-time employees, including a leadership team of six. A 19-member board of directors governs the agency.

Bridges Homeward’s Executive Director, working closely with the board and staff, will provide strategic vision and leadership to the agency, leveraging its unique strengths to continue to meet the ever-evolving needs of children, adults, and families in Greater Boston. The Executive Director will reinforce the strength and quality of Bridges Homeward’s portfolio of services, innovating and expanding where necessary, and will anticipate and prepare for shifts in the policy landscape in which the agency operates. They will effectively build high-impact partnerships and steward relationships with various stakeholders, including government agencies, sister agencies, community organizations, and funders. They will secure Bridges Homeward’s financial health through the cultivation of diverse funding sources. They will also ensure that

Bridges Homeward's administrative infrastructure is effective in its scope and scale and invest in the agency's ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

The next Executive Director will believe strongly in the power of strengthening family connections and increasing individual growth for all people the agency serves. They will bring leadership experience in an organization similar to Bridges Homeward in its complexity, programs, and funding model and will be familiar with what it takes to be successful at the helm of a human services organization today. They will be a thoughtful, facilitative, and collaborative leader of people; an effective partner with external constituencies; and a knowledgeable fundraiser. They will also bring measurable evidence of having consistently centered the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work and will understand the necessity of culturally competent and responsive care.

## **ABOUT BRIDGES HOMEWARD**

### **History**

Bridges Homeward is one of the oldest continuously operating human services organizations in Greater Boston. The agency was founded in 1874 as the Avon Home, the first orphanage established for local children in the area. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Avon Home expanded to house many more children and grew its programs to include foster care, a therapy clinic, a community center, and education and medical care services. In 1978, the agency adopted the name Cambridge Family & Children's Service to reflect its expanded suite of programs. Since then, the agency has continued to evolve to meet the changing needs of kids and families, and in 2022, Cambridge Family & Children's Service became Bridges Homeward. The new name reflects the agency's reach beyond Cambridge and its mission to be the bridge that connects children, youth, adults, and families to safe, secure, and supportive parenting relationships.

### **Bridges Homeward Today**

Today, Bridges Homeward works with more than 1,000 children, teens, families, and adults in Massachusetts every year and is widely respected for its high-quality programs and services that reach beyond and even help define industry standards. Despite its relatively small size, the agency has a diverse portfolio of five programs that span the child welfare and developmental disability services arenas. Its substantial, well-rounded practice and long-standing role as a key player in the public policy landscape have placed it at the leading edge of child and family services in the Commonwealth. Bridges Homeward operates most of its programs and services in collaboration with Massachusetts' Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Like many organizations, Bridges Homeward has grappled with challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff have persevered and excelled in carrying out the agency's mission despite difficult circumstances, including increased trauma and crises experienced by clients and the swift transition to remote work. The agency continues to operate under a hybrid work environment, and the next Executive Director will evaluate and implement structures and systems to continue supporting staff working in this context.

Bridges Homeward has also spent the past few years strengthening its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) focus. Assisted by the YW Boston's Inclusion Boston program, the agency has developed goals, objectives, and action steps to ensure that its DEI values are defined and inform every facet of its internal operations and work with clients. Bridges Homeward is particularly focused on working closely with foster and adoptive families to ensure that the youth in their care remain connected with their cultures and fully live into and embrace their identities as they relate to race, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, sexual orientation, and gender.

### **Permanency**

Bridges Homeward is five years into a sustained transformation of all service areas to focus on permanency, which is defined as someone having a safe, emotionally secure parenting relationship. Permanency can show up in many ways throughout the agency's work, including ensuring a child remains with their biological family; ensuring someone with a developmental disability can live with family instead of moving to an institutional setting; finding a child in foster care a forever family; and youth aging out of foster care maintaining legal and physical stability and strong relationships with family or other supportive adults. Bridges Homeward has cultivated for all staff a foundational understanding of the importance of permanency, provided ongoing coaching and support for staff to learn techniques to achieve stronger permanency outcomes, implemented new data collection methods, and partnered with like-minded agencies to support one another with the work and advocate for change on a statewide level. Bridges Homeward is an active member of the [Massachusetts Permanency Practice Alliance](#).

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

### **Adoption**

Bridges Homeward provides adoption planning and case management services for children and teens in the custody of the Department of Children and Families. The agency typically works with youth who face the most significant challenges to adoption, including older children; sibling groups; and children with particular medical, developmental, emotional, or behavioral needs. The program ensures that these children and teens can grow up in healthy, committed families that provide unconditional love, a sense of security, and a community to call their own. In FY22, Bridges Homeward placed 12 youth in pre-adoptive homes, supported 49 children (including ten groups of siblings), and legalized 11 adoptions. Bridges Homeward also provides consultation services to DCF, completing adoption home studies and child permanency assessments, supporting adoptive family recruitment efforts, and providing interstate adoption support.

### **Developmental Disabilities Services**

Bridges Homeward supports and advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as their families. Program goals include helping people with disabilities remain in their homes and maximize their potential to live independently in the community; helping with navigation of the educational and medical systems; preventing inappropriate or premature out-of-home placement; providing social opportunities; supporting the integrity of the family as a unit; and empowering individuals and family members to make

decisions about their own care and wellbeing. In FY22, Bridges Homeward provided education and support to 114 children, 316 adults, and 397 families.

### **Family Services**

Bridges Homeward recruits, trains, and supports adoptive and foster parents, ensuring their journey goes as smoothly as possible. Social workers in the program provide ongoing support and guidance during the matching process and after the placement of a child or sibling group, providing parents with all the tools and resources necessary to create a safe, loving, and therapeutic home. Staff help families navigate children's often-complex relationships with their birth family and other significant adults in their children's lives and provide specialized training around trauma, grief, and attachment. In FY22, the agency approved 12 new adoptive families, graduated ten families from the [Massachusetts Approach to Partnerships in Parenting training](#), and supported 16 active foster homes.

### **Family Support and Stabilization (FSS)**

The Family Support and Stabilization program consists of multiple services designed to stabilize youth and families and ensure they have the skills, resources, and family connections they need to be successful and maintain long-term permanency. The program includes highly focused, in-home services to aid in resolving conflicts and promote a safe, stable home life; parenting workshops; family time visitation between biological parents and their children placed in foster care; and services to assist families and young adults transitioning out of foster care. Within FSS, Bridges Homeward operates its Independent Living program to support transition-age youth; Parenting Journey, which helps parents build resilience and identify their strengths; and the Young Parents Support (YPS) program, which supports parents under 23 who live in Boston. In FY22, the agency served 164 families and 252 children, enrolled 40 parents in the YPS program, and supported 13 young adults in the Independent Living program. FSS has been one of Bridges Homeward's fastest-growing programs in recent years and is poised to continue expanding to meet community needs.

### **Intensive Foster Care (IFC)**

Bridges Homeward provides transitional, therapeutic foster care for children whom DCF has determined require out-of-home placement. Intensive Foster Care supports children who require more support from their foster families because of trauma they have experienced or because of other medical or developmental needs. Social workers and foster parents provide specialized, round-the-clock care and guidance, supporting the youth's successful cultivation of permanent relationships and helping them thrive in a safe, nurturing family and community. In FY22, 44 percent of youth in IFC met their permanency goals, and Bridges Homeward placed 24 youth in foster homes, discharged six youth to pre-adoptive homes or kinship placements, and reunified three youth with their parents.

### **Residential Services**

Until March of 2023, Bridges Homeward operated two group homes, in Dorchester and Malden, for transition-age youth ages 16 to 21 in the custody of DCF. For many years the agency had been grappling with maintaining these homes as the system has shifted away from a focus on congregate care and as the

needs of youth referred to the homes increased. In 2022, Bridges Homeward made the difficult decision to close the program and deepen its engagement and investment in its remaining programs. The next Executive Director will work closely with the board and staff to think strategically about the agency's suite of services and consider how it can utilize the two former group homes, which it owns, in service of organization-wide sustainability and success.

## **ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE, AND GOVERNANCE**

Bridges Homeward is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The agency owns the building that houses its headquarters and two additional pieces of real estate in Greater Boston. The agency has an FY2023 budget of \$6.9 million, 88 percent of which is derived from government contracts, ten percent from philanthropic contributions, and two percent from tenant revenue and investments. Approximately 86 percent of the budget is allocated towards program services and 14 percent towards administration and fundraising. The agency also has a \$4 million board-designated fund which the agency draws from to support programs and attend to other emerging or pressing items. In FY2024, Bridges Homeward's budget will decrease, reflecting the closure of its residential programs.

Bridges Homeward employs about 100 full-time and part-time staff and is led by a leadership team of six, including the Executive Director, Deputy Director, Director of Operations, Chief Financial Officer, Director of Advancement, and Director of Human Resources. The agency is governed by a 19-member board of directors, which meets 11 times a year. Each board member serves on at least one committee, those being: Executive, Finance, Advancement, Program, Audit, and Nominating/Governance

## **LEADERSHIP TRANSITION**

Bob Gittens has served as the Executive Director of Bridges Homeward since 2016. Bob came to the agency after a significant career in human services, having served as Massachusetts' Secretary of Health and Human Services and Commissioner of the Department of Youth Services. During his tenure as Executive Director of Bridges Homeward, Bob has engaged in thoughtful culture-building within the agency, has been a tireless advocate and representative, and has played an important role in statewide efforts to support children and families. As a result of Bob's leadership, the next Executive Director will inherit an organization well-positioned for its next era of growth.

Bridges Homeward recently underwent a strategic planning process that projected the agency's external and internal realities through 2024. The planning process underscored Bridges Homeward's focus on permanency and its alignment with the federal '[family first](#)' model, which nicely positions the agency to receive future state contracts. Other key priorities for the agency include: continuing to respond directly to needs expressed by those they serve; navigation of an ever-evolving policy landscape; alleviation of workforce challenges; growth and diversification of revenue; improvement of technology and data collection and analysis capabilities; and the creation of an economy of scale within Bridges Homeward that supports the agency's infrastructure.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Working in conjunction with board members and staff, the Executive Director will:

### **Enhance and expand Bridges Homeward's programs and services.**

Bridges Homeward will continue to strengthen its reputation as a leading provider of permanency-focused programming in service of improved outcomes for all individuals served. In partnership with the board and staff, the Executive Director will determine the agency's future growth strategy and mix of programs that best respond to what clients, communities, best practices, and government agencies identify as important. The agency will also continue to expand on its data-driven, evidence-based model to guide continuous learning and program development and will ensure alignment across programs and in direction, decision-making, and internal communications.

### **Continue to grow financial resources to support Bridges Homeward's mission.**

As Bridges Homeward seeks to continue to execute high-quality services and achieve long-term financial strength, it will be critical for the next Executive Director to preserve the agency's existing revenue streams while attracting new ones. The agency should remain competitive with state agencies and community funders while engaging in intentional and proactive donor cultivation and stewardship. The Executive Director will also champion a fundraising culture at the board level.

### **Cultivate mutually beneficial external partnerships.**

The Executive Director will build upon Bridges Homeward's relationships with critical constituencies, including state agencies, elected officials, community partners, funders, and other human services nonprofits. The Executive Director will be able to clearly articulate the mission and vision of Bridges Homeward to this broad set of stakeholders and will play an influential role in advocating for children, families, and adults and the agencies that serve them. They will also proactively seek connections and opportunities to collaborate with and support other permanency-focused organizations to advance the work.

### **Nurture a welcoming and diverse community and strengthen organizational culture around diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

The Executive Director will foster a culture of respect that celebrates diversity, equity, and inclusion as a fundamental part of the Bridges Homeward mission and will further the agency's ability to provide care that respects the identities, beliefs, languages, dis/abilities, and behaviors of individuals and families served. The Executive Director will understand the mechanisms of systemic racism and other structural inequities and how they impact the communities the agency serves. They will ensure that programming is culturally responsive and that the agency's capacity to provide services in multiple languages continues to be strengthened. Staff composition at all levels will better reflect the community the agency serves and a strong, inclusive culture will be fostered, with regular opportunities for building authentic community among staff.

**Attract, retain, and develop skilled and committed staff.**

The Executive Director will build the agency's capacity for recruitment and onboarding efforts and will devise creative recruitment and retention strategies. These strategies should include making compensation and benefits as competitive as possible and providing increased professional development opportunities and wellness support for staff. The Executive Director will pay particular attention to recruiting and retaining direct service staff.

**Engage and work closely with Bridges Homeward's committed and talented board.**

The Executive Director will engage board members as active contributors and thought partners, leveraging their diverse expertise in short- and long-term strategy. They will ensure the board represents a diversity of identities, backgrounds, and experiences, including representing the lived experience of those Bridges Homeward serves. The Executive Director will encourage continued transparency and opportunities for collaboration between the board and staff.

**Assess and evaluate necessary changes to organizational structures, systems, and footprint.**

The Executive Director will ensure that Bridges Homeward's structures, systems, and staff roles and responsibilities are set up for success, allowing for the most effective and efficient organizational capacity. They will work with the board and staff to leverage the agency's real estate assets for the purposes of programmatic quality and financial health and will invest additional resources in the agency's human resources function. The Executive Director will be oriented toward continuous improvement of work processes, communication channels, and technological capabilities.

**QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

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

- Passion for and demonstrated commitment to Bridges Homeward's mission to empower and deliver quality care to children, families, and to adults with developmental disabilities.
- Demonstrated success leading a complex human services organization or program, in the nonprofit or public sector, with service lines similar to Bridges Homeward's.
- Experience with successful strategic planning and positioning an organization for the future in a continuously developing sector. Expertise in translating a vision and strategy into a practical plan with concrete implementation methods and measures of anticipated outcomes.
- Demonstrated experience building and sustaining collaborative networks and working effectively in partnership with various groups, including individuals served, community partners, government, industry partners, and others.
- Exceptional organizational skills and experience with financial oversight, including budgeting, planning, and reporting. A thorough understanding of managing diverse funding streams, especially from government sources.



- Knowledge of and experience with fundraising strategies and an appetite for stewarding donors.
- Demonstrated ability to guide, support, and leverage staff expertise and capacity. Success in building safe and courageous spaces to reflect on progress, check in across programs, and engage in equity-centered dialogue.
- Demonstrated personal and professional commitment to and experience in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion and an understanding of how systems of inequity intersect with Bridges Homeward's work.
- Experience working with a governing board or equivalent experience.
- Experience with facilities oversight and capital planning is a plus.
- Knowledge of Massachusetts's human services system preferred.
- An open and honest communication style, emotional intelligence, and an approach to leadership that is inspiring, collaborative, conscientious, creative, and adaptable. Experience as a role model for respectful interpersonal engagement across diverse perspectives.

## APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Bridges Homeward has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm based in Boston, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, and applications (including resumes and one- to three-page letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be directed in strict confidence to the search team below. Applications will be reviewed as they are submitted. To be assured full consideration, please submit materials by Monday, May 8, 2023.

Bridges Homeward anticipates a salary range of \$180,000 to \$200,000 for this position, commensurate with experience.

Tatiana Oberkoetter, Annah Wells, and Phillip Petree  
Isaacson, Miller

[Bridges Homeward Executive Director Search](#)

*Bridges Homeward is an equal-opportunity employer. We are committed to maintaining an environment in which employees and clients are treated equally without regard to their race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, genetic information, or military status. Any discrimination based on an individual's protected status will not be accepted or tolerated. It is our goal to provide equal employment opportunities for all employees and applicants for employment and to prevent any unlawful discrimination or harassment of any individual working at or with Bridges Homeward. Bridges Homeward is committed to hiring minorities, women, veterans, and people with disabilities in all areas of its workforce with a goal of equal employment opportunities for all qualified people.*