

Forman Arts Initiative

Forman Arts Initiative Search for the Executive Director Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

THE SEARCH

Forman Arts Initiative (FAI) seeks a leader with vision and entrepreneurial drive to serve as their inaugural Executive Director (ED). In collaboration with the FAI founders, advisory group, and community partners, the Executive Director will fulfill FAI's mission to mobilize community and uplift arts and culture in Philadelphia. The ED will articulate and execute FAI's operational goals, and build powerful partnerships and connections among artists, civic leaders, and organizations both non-profit and corporate to leverage the power of the arts.

Forman Arts Initiative was launched in 2020 as a vehicle for experimentation, exploration, and support for Philadelphia artists and other culture makers. FAI's early work was developed in immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic and took the shape of a rapid-response granting initiative that offered timely support for local artists and arts organizations to help sustain their critical work in a time of uncertain resources. FAI's early work has been designed to draw attention and resources to Philadelphia's creative communities through new partnerships and opportunities for public engagement. The approach to these programs has been intentional – to deliberately test and grow programs, forge new partnerships, and build trust with the community. FAI was founded by Jennifer Rice and Michael Forman, passionate art collectors and civic leaders, whose intention is to employ the making and enjoyment of all kinds of art – visual, performing, and genre-defying – to build connections and vitality across Philadelphia. In the near term, FAI will create a hub for art and civic engagement on North American Street in the West Kensington neighborhood north of the center city.

FAI's founders and advisory committee are ready to take FAI into the next stage of its evolution, and the recruitment of its first Executive Director is a central task. With a new Mayor coming into office in a few months' time, transformation of the City Council, and the approach of the 250th anniversary, FAI seeks to tap the city's appetite for change as they expand their programmatic reach and look to open a 21st century cultural hub in 2026. To pave the way for this place-based element of FAI's vision, the founders recently acquired several parcels making up nearly a full city block on North American Street in West Kensington. The programming for the space is in the early stages of strategic planning and will be developed in close collaboration with the ED and will be informed by feedback from local community groups. The property

will be used for exhibitions and cultural programs that showcase the diverse Philadelphia artistic community. In addition, the site will provide common space for convening arts organizations, as well as artist in residency studios, and areas for makers and for active arts education. It may also house the FAI art collection. The development and opening of the North American Street campus – in time to be celebrated in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the founding of the nation – will be a central component of the Executive Director’s portfolio.

This is a rare opportunity to shape an emerging arts organization. The inaugural Executive Director will be a purposeful and forward-looking leader with a passion for art as a creative force for community building. The successful candidate will understand the strategic issues facing arts and culture organizations and will have the energy and the temperament to engage, with grace and respect, a diverse spectrum of community stakeholders. The ED will lead and publicly represent a dynamic and growing organization in achieving its ambition to establish and nurture a creative hub in Philadelphia. The role requires nimble navigation across cultural boundaries, a person who will be equally authentic and at home in corporate and private foundation board rooms, neighborhood streets, artists’ studios, and the offices of city officials.

Forman Arts Initiative has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

FORMAN ARTS INITIATIVE

[Forman Arts Initiative](#) (FAI) supports community-based arts and artists in Philadelphia through programming, convening, and advocacy. The organization brings together individual artists, non-profit arts organizations, and public and private supporters of the arts in a variety of modes and venues to engage, join forces, and generate creative ideas to advance shared goals. FAI has worked with the design and strategy firm [DVDL](#) since its inception, and in close collaboration, continues to develop and implement operational strategies to connect and support artists and cultural organizations in Philadelphia. Through public programming, exhibitions, commissions, financial support, and professional assistance, FAI ensures that artists and arts organizations can focus their energies on creating positive impact through their work and their collaborations.

FAI’s first initiative, [Art Works](#), was developed in close collaboration with the Philadelphia Foundation and in partnership with BIPOC and underserved communities to support community-based organizations and emerging artists. In 2021 and 2022, Art Works has completed two annual rounds of grant-making, providing general operating support to non-profits and individual artists. Art Works will distribute \$3 million to artists and community organizations over its first five years.

In 2021, in an effort to create more awareness about the individuals who are helping to shape culture in Philadelphia, FAI launched a collaboration with The Philadelphia Citizen to develop [FAI Stories](#), an interview series featuring artists and creatives in every neighborhood in Philadelphia.

Earlier in 2023, FAI launched their first artist-in-residence program, [Public Works](#), in partnership with Mural Arts, the nation's largest public art program. Driven by the conviction that public art has the power to inspire real positive public change by fostering public spaces that benefit all, [Public Works](#) places artists in Philadelphia government agencies to develop artwork that forges new connections between the agency's work and the community they serve. The program's inaugural artist-in-residence will join the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) to develop a project designed to inspire positive human connection through shared transit experiences. Additional programs and community engagement initiatives are currently in development for 2023 and beyond. These projects will build on FAI's ongoing programs with the Philadelphia cultural community, including a series of listening sessions with artists, cultural, and community leaders, and convenings organized in partnership with the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and the Independence Historical Trust, assessing the civic impact of the Philadelphia arts community.

To learn more about FAI's programs, visit: <https://formanartsinitiative.org/>

THE FOUNDERS

Jennifer Rice, co-founder of FAI, is devoted to many charitable organizations with a focus on the arts, education, women's rights and animal welfare. She serves on the boards of The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Fund for the School District of Philadelphia, Big Picture Philadelphia (Vaux and El Centro high schools), Elevate 215, ACCT Philly (animal care and control team of Philadelphia) and The Cat Collaborative. She is a member of the Gender Wealth Institute Advisory Committee for Women's Way, the Philadelphia Equity Alliance, the Sam Fox School National Council, and the Kemper Museum Collection Committee. She is the former board chair and current honorary trustee for The Philadelphia School, an independent, progressive school in center city Philadelphia. In 2023, Jennifer and her husband, Michael Forman, were recognized by University of the Arts as Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts recipients in acknowledgment of their contribution to the arts and cultural spaces.

Michael Forman, co-founder of FAI, is Chairman and CEO of FS Investments, a Philadelphia based alternative investments asset manager. Michael founded FS in 2007 after a successful career as both a corporate and securities lawyer and a serial entrepreneur. The firm is an outgrowth of Michael's simple vision: help investors access alternative sources of income, growth, and diversification formerly available to only large institutions and the wealthiest individuals. Since its founding, FS Investments has grown from a small, innovative start-up to an organization that manages nearly \$80 billion in assets and a growing suite of solutions designed to help financial advisors, individuals and institutions achieve a variety of financial goals. With ten offices and over 500 employees, the firm has been recognized as an industry

leader. FS Investments was named one of “Philly’s Coolest Companies” by Philadelphia Magazine in 2015 and one of Greater Philadelphia’s Healthiest Employers by the Philadelphia Business Journal in 2019.

A native of northern New Jersey, Michael attended the University of Rhode Island. He graduated summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa with a BA in Political Science, and he went on to earn a JD from Rutgers Law School. In 2013, Michael was named the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year for Greater Philadelphia.

Michael lives in the Society Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia with his wife and three daughters who, as a family, created a foundation that devotes resources to civic and charitable organizations supporting education, the arts, childhood nutrition, women’s rights, and animal welfare. In 2020, Michael co-founded the Forman Arts Initiative (FAI) with his wife, Jennifer Rice. FAI is a platform to connect and support artists and cultural organizations in Philadelphia through programming, exhibition commissions, financial support, and advocacy. In 2023, Michael and Jennifer were recognized by University of the Arts as Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts recipients in acknowledgment of their contribution to the arts and cultural spaces.

Michael’s commitment to the Philadelphia region extends to board service at several institutions, including Drexel University and The Center City District Foundation. He also serves as the Founding Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Equity Alliance. His civic leadership has garnered recognition by the community and his peers, including the 2022 Corporate Leadership Award from the Community College of Philadelphia, the 2019 Americanism Award from the Anti-Defamation League of Philadelphia as well as a special honor from Mural Arts Philadelphia in 2017 for his dedication to the city’s public art initiatives. In 2019, Mr. Forman co-founded Fitler Club, a diverse and civically engaged private lifestyle club located in Center City, Philadelphia.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE

The Initiative’s board of directors and the founders have assembled a panel of [Expert Advisors](#), including leaders from across the civic and artistic landscape of Philadelphia and beyond. In addition, FAI [NextGen Advisors](#) include early career civic and cultural activists from various backgrounds and disciplines who inform FAI’s exploration of the role of art in building a more inclusive and equitable Philadelphia.

The founders have endowed FAI for the near term, with the expectation that the organization will become self-sustaining in the coming years and that the Executive Director will help to secure ongoing financial support. The annual operating budget will support recruitment of additional professionals, and will enable programmatic development, grant-making, and general operations.

THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

With forty-five million people living within 200 miles of the city, Philadelphia is at the core of the country's most densely populated and culturally rich area. The collection of universities and medical centers have helped to spawn a growing, entrepreneurial economy that has become steadily more prosperous. The city attracts people nationally and globally and is served by a fine and accessible airport, offering 500 daily departures to 130 non-stop destinations in the country and around the world.

Philadelphia boasts a vibrant culture rich with history, entertainment, and sports; new, varied, and outstanding dining; outdoor activities; and arts. Its cultural landmarks include the Philadelphia Museum of Art and other fine museums, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Opera and the Ballet, and a mix of well attended theater companies. Philadelphia has more public art than any other city in the nation. Nearly 4,000 murals grace the walls and display the essence of neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The recent recognition of *USA Today* for Philadelphia being voted the [most walkable city in America](#) validates that though it is a large metropolis, it comes with an intimate, small town feel.

The city remains accessible and affordable when compared to its cousins in the North and South. *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Philadelphia in the top 15 Best Affordable U.S. Destinations. The combination of a robust culture, an expanding economy, rich transportation nodes, and affordable living has attracted young people. Philadelphia's population of millennials is growing at a faster rate than in any of the nation's 30 largest cities.

All that said, Philadelphia wrestles, like other American cities, with a range of social concerns, as growth and economic vitality do not benefit different people and neighborhoods equitably. For all its economic energy and prosperity on the one hand, poverty rates are high. What is affordable for one demographic invokes the specter of disruption and displacement for others. Philadelphia is a complex combination of much to celebrate and much that must be made better. It is in this intricate and challenging urban context that FAI aims to make its mark.

[The Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy \(OACCE\)](#) in [The City of Philadelphia](#) closes the gap in access to the arts for all Philadelphians and is committed to equitable support of culture and creativity throughout the city's neighborhoods. OACCE supports free cultural programming; creates opportunities for local artists and creative organizations; connects Philadelphians to quality arts experiences; and preserves the city's public art assets.

THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With the support of influential and deeply committed founders, FAI's inaugural Executive Director will be a visible leader and champion of Philadelphia communities who invites people into the FAI network, convenes them together, listens, and amplifies the voices of Philadelphians through the arts. There is a

real place for FAI in the social landscape of the city; the ED will find where that is—a place that is unique, clearly defined and well understood, accessible, and robust with enormous benefits to the city. The Executive Director will work closely with the founders, the board, principal consultants including DVDL and art advisor Jaime Frankfurt, as well as a dedicated panel of advisors representing experts in the arts, education, and non-profits to implement a distinctive vision. In collaboration with community leaders, the ED will drive forward the creation of an artistic and cultural hub in Philadelphia that will in time earn national recognition as a model for urban communities nationwide. FAI will serve as an on-the-ground partner mobilizing non-profit and private organizations of all sizes and missions and generating opportunities for artists across Philadelphia.

The ED will have an enterprising approach and attention to detail to negotiate mutually beneficial partnerships. The ED will be a prominent external face of the organization and will collaborate with the founders in nurturing existing partnerships and cultivating new ones. An ability to think strategically and creatively, the imagination to conceive audacious initiatives, tempered by an astute understanding of risk, will be essential. They will be expected to engage with a wide variety of entities across sectors including the corporate community, non-profits, philanthropy, education, and the arts. In addition, their efforts will enrich current and future relationships with government agencies shepherded by the founders and their current partners. Persistent and skillful stewardship of cross-sector partnerships will increase FAI's visibility and influence across multiple fields and audiences.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is expected that the inaugural Executive Director will address a set of consequential opportunities and challenges that include, but are not limited to:

- ***Crystalize and amplify FAI's identity and mission and operationalize its strategic vision.***
- ***Cultivate and sustain authentic trust with Philadelphia communities.***
- ***Champion diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) as core values of FAI.***
- ***Articulate and advance a cutting-edge and community-driven curatorial practice.***
- ***Demonstrate strong business acumen and the ability to steward financial resources effectively and build a long-term foundation of financial support.***
- ***Create the organizational infrastructure necessary for FAI to excel into the future.***

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Executive Director role calls for a proven innovator and creative risk-taker with a lived commitment to bringing greater equity and access to the arts. They will be a persuasive communicator with a record of successful partnerships across diverse constituencies and a zeal for building meaningful community partnerships.

While no single candidate will likely have all the ideal qualifications, the successful candidate will possess many of the following qualifications and qualities:

- A deep, lived passion for advancing the arts and working with artists, and a belief in the power of art as an engine for positive social change;
- A track record of advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access throughout an organization;
- Experience in a leadership role in an early stage or rapidly growing enterprise, with limited resources and infrastructure, and unlimited ambition and opportunity;
- The flexible and fast-paced disposition to work successfully alongside intensively engaged and influential founders;
- A habit of thinking big and implementing bold ideas;
- A nimble style, and the agility to build, rethink, and restructure as circumstances shift;
- Success in establishing mutually beneficial collaborations; a skilled negotiator and trustworthy partner;
- The aptitude and appetite for effectively advancing fundraising efforts;
- Outstanding presentation and communication skills and the experience and inclination to be an effective, outgoing spokesperson;
- Experience in large-scale project management including real estate development projects is a plus;
- A calming demeanor, personal resilience, entrepreneurial drive, and personal humility are required.

TO APPLY

Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications should be sent electronically to the following:

Lisa Savereid (she/her), Partner | Search Co-Lead
Tiffany Weber (she/her), Managing Associate | Search Co-Lead
Quizayra Gonzalez (she/her), Senior Associate
Christina Errico (she/her), Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Apply online: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/forman-arts-initiative/executive-director>

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