



SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE

Researching the Environment and Women's Health

Search for the Executive Director

Silent Spring Institute

Newton, MA

THE SEARCH

Silent Spring Institute, the leading scientific research organization dedicated to uncovering the links between chemicals in the everyday environment and women's health, especially the development of breast cancer, seeks a visionary, energetic, and passionate leader to serve as its next Executive Director (ED). Since its founding in 1994, Silent Spring has been an advocate for the development of safer chemicals, market shifts away from toxic chemicals in products, and more health-protective regulatory policies. With the recently announced retirement of Silent Spring's distinguished leader, Dr. Julia Brody, Silent Spring seeks as its next Executive Director, an accomplished and strategic scientific leader to collaboratively develop and implement a vision for the organization's next chapter.

The new ED will champion the pioneering work of Silent Spring, be an active listener, relationship-builder, and creative problem-solver, and will have demonstrated organizational leadership and management skills. They will be expected to maintain and expand research areas, garner support internally and externally to enhance resources, promote research and community partnerships, continue to attract and mentor outstanding junior and senior scientists, and engage policymakers at both the state and national levels to further enhance the organization's impact.

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For nearly thirty years, Silent Spring has published high-quality environmental health research. It operates at the nexus of science, advocacy, and public policy, and its success depends on cooperation, coordination, and communication among its many and varied constituents. Alongside Silent Spring's board of directors, a broad range of external stakeholders, including federal grant-making agencies and individual donors, as well as the scientific community and advocacy groups, contribute to the organization's success and the realization of its mission.

History and Mission

In 1993, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health published for the first-time cancer rates by town. Alarmed by reports of elevated breast cancer rates in **eleven of fifteen towns** on Cape Cod, members of the [Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition](#) called for a scientific investigation. Fueled by the realization that decades of clinical research had failed to stem the tide of rising incidence rates, these activists wanted a new kind of study—one that focused on environmental links to the disease. They founded “a laboratory of their own” and named it Silent Spring Institute in tribute to Rachel Carson, whose landmark book, *Silent Spring*, launched the modern environmental movement. Carson died of breast cancer just two years after her book was published in 1962. With funding from a special appropriation by the Massachusetts legislature, Silent Spring assembled a scientific team to lead the [Cape Cod Breast Cancer and Environment Study](#). The study became a national model, providing public health researchers with new tools for studying environmental risk factors and disease, while laying the groundwork for future investigations. Silent Spring has since grown into a national environmental health research organization with unique and unparalleled expertise on everyday exposures to environmental chemicals and community-engaged research.

Work

Rooted in a community-based approach, Silent Spring developed a “Pathway to Prevention” model that asks three key questions: (1) How do we identify chemicals that cause breast cancer? (2) How are we exposed to cancer-causing chemicals? and (3) What are the health risks associated with these exposures? Silent Spring’s scientists begin at a micro level, identifying carcinogens and other toxic chemicals that affect cancer pathways, continue on to find their major sources, and then use their findings to strengthen policies and educate communities. Central to the model is the translation of science into action, whether that is empowering consumers to make healthier choices or informing new policies to keep harmful chemicals out of consumer products. Though not an exhaustive summary, its work includes:

- [Exposure Science](#): Silent Spring has conducted numerous studies documenting people’s exposure to harmful chemicals in indoor air and dust, in drinking water, and in consumer products. The Institute’s Household Exposure Study was the first study to measure endocrine disrupting chemicals in U.S. house dust and indoor air, and it revealed consumer products as a major source of everyday chemical exposures. This work has motivated EPA to prioritize indoor air quality and provided valuable insights into potential health risks associated with indoor exposures.
- [Safer Chemicals Program](#): Going further upstream, the Safer Chemicals Program is developing new cost-effective screening methods to predict which among the thousands of chemicals in use today are likely to increase breast cancer risk. This work will help regulators and manufacturers quickly identify potential breast carcinogens that increase breast cancer risk to

prevent their use in products. The program is also advancing science on the biological pathways by which endocrine disrupting chemicals can lead to the development of breast cancer.

- **Community-Based Research and Environmental Justice:** Through community-engaged research, Silent Spring works to address the environmental health concerns of specific communities and engage them in the research process. For instance, in the [Massachusetts PFAS and Your Health Study](#), a collaboration with Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Eastern Research Group, Silent Spring scientists are working alongside communities that have been impacted by drinking water contaminated with PFAS chemicals in order to understand their exposures. In the [Taking Stock Study](#), the Institute is partnering with Black Women for Wellness and Occidental College to document inequities in exposures to harmful chemicals in personal care products used by Black and Latina women.
- **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** Through its science and expert testimony, Silent Spring has informed numerous public health policies, influenced decision-makers, and promoted the adoption of safer alternatives and practices. In 2016, Silent Spring worked with community groups to persuade the City of Boston to change its fire code to allow furniture free of flame retardants in public places, and in 2021, Massachusetts passed the [Children and Firefighters Protection Act](#) into law, which bans 11 toxic flame retardants in children's products and household furnishings. Silent Spring scientists provided the scientific foundation for the bill, testifying at multiple hearings and meetings with committee chairs.
- **Communications and Outreach:** Silent Spring is committed to sharing its research with the public. The organization supports a strong communications program for developing educational materials, conducting workshops and trainings, and working with the media to promote its latest studies. The Institute's many digital tools include the popular healthy living app, [Detox Me](#), which is also used in research intervention studies. Silent Spring recently partnered with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in 2022 and with Columbia University in 2023 to create the [Cancer & Environment Forums](#). The workshops provided an opportunity to engage physicians and nurses in the latest science on environmental chemicals and cancer and strategies for prevention.

Leadership and Governance

[Dr. Julia Brody](#), executive director, is a nationally recognized expert on environmental chemicals and breast cancer, as well as a leader in community-based research and public engagement in science. Dr. Brody's research focuses on studying the links between environmental exposures, such as endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and the risk of breast cancer development. Dr. Brody's work is particularly focused on developing new methods for sharing personal results with participants in environmental health studies to inform them of their own chemical exposures. Her interest in returning results grew out of Silent Spring's [Household Exposure Study](#), the first comprehensive assessment of exposure to

endocrine disrupting compounds in homes. As a pioneer of “report-back,” Silent Spring remains on the cutting edge of research on the ethical reporting of personal exposure results and the development of guidelines for best practices.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized Dr. Brody’s research with an Environmental Merit Award in 2000. In 2002, she presented one of the Distinguished Lectures at the National Cancer Institute and spoke at the 2009 President’s Cancer Panel. She has served on the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council and is currently an advisor to the California Breast Cancer Research Program and breast cancer activist organizations. In addition to her role as Executive Director, Dr. Brody is a Research Associate in Epidemiology at the Brown University School of Public Health. She earned her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin and her AB at Harvard University.

Silent Spring is governed by a [Board of Directors](#) that is responsible for guiding the strategic direction of the Institute and ensuring that its mission and objectives are fulfilled. The Executive Director of Silent Spring reports to the Board and is responsible for the overall direction and general management of Silent Spring. The Board consists of scientists, public health professionals, environmental advocates, and community leaders, and their expertise is critical to the impressive and ongoing positive trajectory of Silent Spring.

Operations

Dedicated to science of the highest quality, Silent Spring blends strong internal talent with external expertise. The Institute’s 32-person staff includes accomplished doctoral-level scientists and experienced professionals in project management, administration, finance, communications, and fundraising. Its leadership team includes a Deputy Director and Directors of Research, Finance and Administration, Communications, and Development.

Funding

Silent Spring’s innovative research is supported by both government and philanthropic partners. Its total revenue for 2022 was \$4.7 million, about half of which came from government grants (around \$2.4 million) and the other half from foundations or individual donations.

To learn more about Silent Spring Institute, please visit <https://silentspring.org>.

THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

With the support of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director provides direction for all aspects of the organization, setting a forward-looking agenda for advancing the Institute’s mission. This leader must routinely exercise discretion and judgment regarding the administration of all internal Silent Spring operations as well as the management of key external relationships. The Executive Director should be able to articulate the Institute’s mission and vision to all stakeholders, communicate Silent Spring’s

research results effectively to the science community and decision makers, secure funding for Silent Spring's operations and growth, and ensure the overall programmatic and fiscal integrity of the organization.

The Executive Director will be expected to engage the Silent Spring Board, staff, and financial sponsors in the regular assessment of organizational goals and priorities. They will oversee budgeting decisions to support the objectives of the strategic plan, monitoring progress towards successful implementation. The Executive Director also consults with the Board on the creation and adaptation of policies related to fulfilling Silent Spring's overall mission.

Internally, the Executive Director guides and motivates Silent Spring's leadership team, consisting of five directors, as well as Silent Spring's professional scientists and other staff. Through regular evaluation and appropriate training, this leader encourages staff growth and cultivates a staff ethos that mirrors the organization's commitment to quality, credibility, and impact. The Executive Director ensures that Silent Spring adheres to all professional and quality standards and legal requirements, including those related to sponsored research funding and the research and review process.

The Executive Director maintains clear communication channels with the Board, Silent Spring staff, financial sponsors, and scientific constituencies, among other stakeholders, and participates in the communication of Silent Spring's findings to a wide range of public and private scientific and non-scientific audiences.

As the fiscal manager for Silent Spring, the Executive Director develops and administers the organization's operating budget and ensures proper management of all institutional funds. To this end, the Executive Director establishes and fosters productive external relationships with private and government sponsors that support Silent Spring's research initiatives. To ensure continued success of Silent Spring's funding model, this leader should sustain productive relationships with current sponsors while exploring other areas for revenue generation. The Executive Director, along with senior science and development staff, solicits funding through strategic grant-writing and by cultivating relationships with individuals, corporations, government agencies, philanthropies, and other potential sponsors aligned with Silent Spring's mission.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director will conceive and implement creative strategies to promote Silent Spring's mission and enhance its visibility in the scientific and advocacy communities. In addition, Silent Spring's next leader will be prepared to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Define and guide Silent Spring's next chapter through the creation of a strategic plan that addresses the Institute's most pressing internal needs and external focus areas, considering both an evolving political landscape and new opportunities for increased and widespread impact

Silent Spring believes that knowledge is not just power, but a prescription for prevention. While Silent Spring has made significant contributions to the body of research on breast cancer prevention, there is more work to be done. Silent Spring celebrates a well-earned and regarded status as one of the leading breast cancer prevention research engines in the nation, leaving room now for more work connecting its discoveries to the medical community and increasing prevention research funding from both cancer and other environmentally-focused organizations. Silent Spring sees a future in which emphasis on environmental exposures and impacts on health is prioritized, not only at the level of individual care (through doctor-patient relationships), but also in the larger collective philanthropic movement to address breast cancer. Silent Spring is already making progress on both fronts, but it will be the responsibility of the next Executive Director to keep up the momentum and ensure the Institute's priorities are reflected in the next strategic plan.

As new research opportunities, community partnerships, and policy questions emerge, the Executive Director will work with the Board, staff, scientific and community partners, and sponsors to identify the highest priorities. They will be responsible for the development of the new 5-year strategic plan and will approach this work with an open mind, flexibility, and the creativity to envision, plan, and realize new possibilities for Silent Spring.

Lead a diverse and experienced staff, maintaining cohesion and encouraging mentorship

Silent Spring's talented and dedicated staff look to the Executive Director as a thought partner who inspires and empowers the team to support the Institute's important mission. The Executive Director must be actively engaged in listening to and guiding the staff's collective passion and commitment and foster formal and informal mentorship structures to empower each generation of Silent Spring scientists and staff. The Executive Director will foster a collegial and supportive working environment that invests in the professional development of each staff member and provides opportunities for training, mentorship, growth, and recognition. In the current working environment that is both in-person and virtual, the Executive Director will need to lead by example by being a strong in-person presence, paying extra attention to ensuring that staff feel included and connected.

Advance Silent Spring's broad commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion

The Executive Director will be the champion for Silent Spring's action plan to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging both within the organization and in the Institute's scientific research and outreach. The Executive Director will assess progress regularly and ensure that measures are in place to support a safe and welcoming environment for all staff members and to continue to engage a more diverse scientific community. Silent Spring is also committed to ensuring that its science program expands and prioritizes public outreach to increase broader understanding of health inequities, specifically chemical exposures that disproportionately affect historically marginalized groups. The Executive Director will support continued attention to these important topics.

Sustain Silent Spring's vital public and private sponsorships while securing additional revenue streams

Silent Spring's steady support from sponsors enables its ability to provide credible and timely scientific research to advocates and policymakers. The Executive Director will maintain and build upon these important relationships by taking the time to understand fully the goals, needs, and expectations of its sponsors, donors, and the broader stakeholder community. Silent Spring's next leader must be capable of adroitly and creatively managing within a complex financial structure in which monies may be constrained by government fiscal policies. In addition, the Executive Director will anticipate funding shifts related to fiscal cycles, government regulatory and policy processes, industry dynamics, and evolving public interest and funding priorities. The Executive Director will navigate a diverse set of funding environments and will be entrepreneurial in building bridges with potential new funders. Guided by Silent Spring's mission and values, this leader will recognize and assess risks in seeking additional funding, anchoring Silent Spring to its core objectives while advancing the organization's priorities.

Communicate effectively and nurture relationships with external constituencies

Fundamental to Silent Spring's success is the management of its relationships with critical external parties. The Executive Director will nurture relationships with scientists, policymakers, advocates, and community groups and include staff in these external facing opportunities where appropriate. With an understanding of how science and technical information inform policy actions, this leader will spend a great deal of time navigating relationships with a variety of public and private sector constituents, communicating regularly with Silent Spring sponsors, investigators, community leaders, and other stakeholders. The Executive Director must articulate Silent Spring's mission and goals compellingly to donors and policymakers to ensure Silent Spring's continued funding and potential for impact.

EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

While no one person will embody all desired characteristics, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- A doctoral degree (PhD, MD, ScD) or equivalent combination of training and experience in environmental health science and an understanding of how science and technical information inform advocacy and public policy.
- A tested leader, communicator, and fundraiser.
- A creative thinker able to set the strategic vision for an organization that straddles many fields.
- The ability to grasp the meaning of and communicate research findings to diverse audiences.
- A demonstrated record of results related to Silent Spring's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Management skills to inspire and motivate staff, instill trust, and lead change.

- Financial acumen and evidence of fiscal leadership in setting budgets and priorities as well as assessing organizational risk.
- Experience and an understanding of the responsibility of institutional fundraising and grantsmanship, along with a creative understanding of how to access and use various funding sources.
- Capacity to advocate for Silent Spring and promote its mission and objectives to various constituencies.
- Ability to provide decisive leadership while receiving insight and advice from diverse stakeholders.

Applications, Inquiries, and Nominations

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent to:

Stephanie Fidel, Partner
Ellen Egitton, Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/silent-spring-institute/executive-director>

Silent Spring Institute is an equal opportunity employer, and we encourage applicants from groups who are traditionally under-represented in STEM. We value diversity and an inclusive work culture, and we do not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, religion, color, national origin, gender identification, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability status.