



# Position Specification

**American Alliance of Museums**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

## Our Client

Each year, more people visit art museums, science centers, historic houses or sites, zoos, and aquariums than attend professional sporting events. The American public regards museums as highly trustworthy—ranking second only to friends and family, and significantly more trustworthy than researchers and scientists, NGOs generally, various news organizations, the government, corporations and business, and social media. Additionally, museums contribute \$50 billion to the U.S. economy each year. The [American Alliance of Museums](#) (AAM) is the only organization representing the entire museum field, from art and history museums to science centers and zoos. Since 1906, it has championed museums through advocacy and provided museum professionals with the resources, knowledge, inspiration, and connections they need to move the field forward.

AAM is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with 35,000 members, including museums and museum professionals, all of whom are working to better their communities and world. Its mission is to champion equitable and impactful museums by connecting people, fostering learning and community, and nurturing museum excellence. Its vision is a just and sustainable world informed and enriched by thriving museums that contribute to the resiliency and equity of their communities. AAM has a highly dedicated team of 38 staff, a 18 member Board of Directors, and an annual budget of ~\$10 million.

AAM provides value to its members and the field at large through a variety of different services, including:

### Convenings

The AAM Annual Meeting first started in 1906 in New York with under 200 attendees. It has since grown to over 5,000 attendees, becoming the largest museum conference in the United States. It brings together individuals from museums of all types and sizes—from art and history museums to zoos and botanic gardens—to share ideas and make connections that are transformational. It's a place where all museum professionals learn from one another, create partnerships, and leave inspired to make an impact on their museums, communities, and the world. The [2024 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo](#) will connect museum professionals from around the world by exploring inspiring content on the theme of “thriving museums, healthy communities” across four tracks: personal, organizational, community, and society.

The [Future of Museums Summit](#) is a virtual convening where museum professionals go beyond the theoretical and gain tactical strategies and takeaways to plan for a brighter future for themselves, their museums, and their communities. The summit focuses on emerging phenomena impacting the museum field. Key themes of the 2023 Future of Museums Summit will be the Future Workplace, The Partisan Divide, A Digital (R)evolution, and Repatriation, Restitution, and Reparations.

### Advocacy

AAM helps museums tell the stories of their important activities and contributions to their communities (economic, educational, and beyond) and promotes a deeper understanding of museums with policymakers, the press, and the public. The Alliance closely tracks several legislative and policy issues affecting museums—including funding for grant-making federal agencies, tax incentives for charitable giving, education policy and more. In addition to its own advocacy work, AAM empowers its members to engage in advocacy by providing information, resources, and pathways for engaging with Congress. Since March 2020, more than 65,000 messages have been sent to Congress over the Alliance's online advocacy tools.

For more than ten years, AAM's [Museums Advocacy Day](#) has been providing the essential training and support advocates need to meet effectively with members of Congress and their staff. Museums Advocacy Day is a unique opportunity to unite with museum colleagues and supporters from across the country as one voice to reaffirm the field's essential value, collective contributions, and aspirations while making the critical case for museums directly to Congress.

## **Center for the Future of Museums**

AAM's [Center for the Future of Museums](#) (CFM) engages in research and forecasting to help museums explore the cultural, political, and economic challenges facing society and devise strategies to shape a better tomorrow. Each year, CFM releases *TrendsWatch*, an annual forecasting report on the biggest issues likely to impact the field. Themes of this year's report included the Future Workplace; The Partisan Divide; A Digital (R)evolution; Repatriation, Restitution, and Reparations; Changing Climate Risk; and The Metaverse and Web 3.0.

## **Facing Change**

In 2019, backed by \$4 million in grants from three foundations (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Alice L. Walton Foundation, and Ford Foundation), AAM launched [Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion](#). This three-year initiative set out to advance museum board diversity and inclusion from the top by providing the framework, training, and resources for museum leaders to build inclusive cultures within their institutions and more accurately reflect the communities they serve. While the program ended in 2022, its work has continued through AAM's ongoing strategic framework.

## **Ethics, Standards, and Professional Practices**

Thousands of museums exist across the globe—including about 33,000 in the United States alone. These range dramatically in size, budget, audiences, and mission. Defining the ethics, standards, and best practices for such a diverse field requires equally diverse participation and a network of complementary practices and standards. This network is presented by AAM as the "[Framework for Museum Excellence](#)". "[The Continuum of Excellence](#)" is a pathway of standards-based programs which aims to build upon the Framework for Museum Excellence. The programs support, motivate, and recognize museums in their efforts to professionalize and operate according to standards and professional practices. For many museums, the ultimate goal of these programs is AAM accreditation.

For more than 50 years, the [Accreditation Program](#) has been recognized as the gold standard of museum excellence. With its mix of self-assessment, peer review, and public recognition, AAM Accreditation helps to ensure the integrity and accessibility of museum collections, reinforce the education and public service roles of museums, and promote good governance practices and ethical behavior. As the museum field's mark of distinction, accreditation offers high profile, peer-based validation of a museum's operations and impact. Accreditation often increases a museum's credibility and value to funders, policy makers, community, and peers, and can be a powerful tool to leverage change and facilitate loans between institutions.

## **Resources for the Field**

AAM provides a wealth of information and resources for the museum community, on a variety of topics including collections stewardship, education and interpretation, facilities and risk management, financial stability, governance and support organizations, human resources, marketing and public relations, DEAI, and mission and institutional planning. It maintains an online collection of more than 1,000 sample policies, plans, and forms from museums of all types and sizes. It also offers customized assistance to members as they face unique challenges.

## Strategic Priorities

AAM's [2022-2025 Strategic Framework](#) is the result of an intense effort by its staff and Board of Directors, during which AAM gathered thousands of pieces of input from across the field in survey responses, thought leadership, and focus groups.

The strategic framework is focused around four priorities:

Social & Community Impact: AAM will advocate for the value of museums, their power to change the world, and their essential roles in sustaining strong, inclusive, and resilient communities by enriching education systems, bolstering economies, strengthening the social fabric of communities, improving peoples' wellbeing, and beyond.

DEAI & Anti-Racism: Building on its momentum as a driving force for diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI), AAM will engage partners, allies, and experts to champion an anti-racism movement across the museum field, catalyzing and supporting changemakers in museums and efforts to create more equitable outcomes in all aspects of their structures and programming.

The Museum Community: AAM will bolster its role in supporting, celebrating, and convening the broad scope of the museum community. Following a period of radical disruption for the museum field, it will comprehensively review and adapt key fieldwide programs and initiatives to enable the museum community to connect and thrive.

The Way We Work: Equally important as what it does, AAM will critically review how it works to ensure equity is at the core of its culture, its structure is agile and scaled to national service as a changemaker and leader, and its business model facilitates a financially sustainable future.

## The Role

The President & CEO of the American Alliance of Museums is the leader of the organization dedicated to supporting all types of museums and strengthening the entire museum community. After a successful re-branding and development of a new strategic framework, the organization is at an exciting point in its evolution. The President & CEO must have the leadership skills and vision to ensure AAM's continued vitality, future growth and value to the museum community.

The President & CEO will work with the Board of Directors to develop and build consensus around the evolving strategy for the organization and lead AAM's team to execute upon that vision. They will serve as the chief advocate and spokesperson for the organization and the museum community, promoting and protecting members' interests, fostering collaboration and learning among the members, and reinforcing the tenets of DEAI throughout the Alliance's work.

Additional responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the programmatic, financial and business operations of AAM;
- Strengthening, coordinating, and leveraging relationships with members, other constituents, and partner organizations;
- Working with the Board of Directors to further develop the short and long-term vision for the organization;
- Developing business plans and implementation strategies to align with that vision; and,
- Securing financial support for the organization.

## Candidate Profile

AAM seeks a strategic, inspiring, and inclusive leader who is deeply passionate about the museum field and its impact on society.

The successful candidate will have a demonstrated track record of significant leadership, management and decision-making experience with direct accountability for results in an organization of comparable size and/or complexity to the AAM. They will have had success contributing to a compelling strategy for an organization, building financial support for its implementation, and skillfully balancing and aligning the needs of multiple interests. They will have a track record of ensuring sound financial management while taking appropriate risks to advance their organization.

The successful candidate will be a compelling spokesperson for the organization and will be able to inspire the confidence of a wide variety of individuals, both internal and external to AAM. They will have demonstrated experience building consensus among diverse constituents with varying interests, and a strong track record of building partnerships and relationships. Ideally, they will bring experience working with a Board of Directors to successfully achieve organizational goals.

This individual will have a proven ability to create and foster an atmosphere of inclusion, equity, teamwork, and mutual respect among staff. They will bring a strong personal commitment to DEI both internally and in the field at large. They will demonstrate the highest degree of personal integrity and will be confident, but self-reflective and aware of their own limitations. They will lead by example and drive the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement and curiosity. Collaborative by nature, they will encourage others to share the spotlight and will work to empower each member of their team.

*In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:*

**Strategic Leadership:** All membership organizations must regularly and clearly demonstrate their unique value proposition. The President & CEO will ensure AAM is effective and relevant for the future and will work in collaboration with the Board of Directors to articulate a clear strategic vision for AAM by:

- Establishing and pursuing clear, measurable goals for the organization with the understanding that AAM's objectives will not align perfectly with the needs and wants of all members.
- Assessing both current and potential programs against AAM's mission and value-proposition for the organization and its members.
- Reinforcing and continuing to ensure a positive and effective culture of creativity, member service, and accountability.
- Attracting, retaining, mentoring and empowering a high performing team to advance AAM goals and objectives.
- Serving as a trusted advisor to the Board on matters related to strategic development and implementation.
- Aligning the organization with cultural and societal trends; practicing effective strategic foresight to allow AAM to continue to lead the field.

**Executing for Results:** While AAM is highly focused on its value to members and the field, it is critical that the organization continues to run smoothly internally. The next leader will ensure operational stability, financial sustainability, and that internal team culture remains strong by:

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- Working with the team to implement AAM's strategic framework while introducing creative ideas to expand upon that framework; ensuring sound financial management while achieving organizational goals.
- Considering potential changes to AAM's business model, particularly in an ever-changing external environment.
- Maintaining a strong culture and ensuring that all constituents are aligned behind organizational priorities; celebrating diversity of identity, thought, and background among the team.
- Ensuring that AAM's north star remains the value it provides to its members and the museum field, and that the organization's ways of working align with its mission and vision.

**Resource Development:** AAM is an organization devoted to supporting all museums across the country, regardless of size and subject matter, as well as museum professionals of all types. The new President & CEO will play a significant role in attracting the capital necessary to realize its mission by:

- Cultivating and stewarding major donors, both in North America and globally, capable of funding AAM's initiatives going forward.
- Forging new partnerships – both US and international – exploring new opportunities for enhanced, innovative collaborations while maintaining/building upon those with current institutional partners.
- Seeking continuous improvement around the convenings and other offerings to members, ensuring success both from a content and earned revenue perspective.
- Explore and implement approaches to diversifying AAM's funding base through earned and contributed revenue.
- Investigate and develop potential partnerships with AAM members, including finding opportunities to share or leverage resources that both benefit AAM members and also advance the field.

**Influencer and Champion:** The President of AAM will serve as the primary spokesperson and advocate for the organization and the field. They will communicate with diverse audiences, representing the museum field with a high level of energy, enthusiasm and passion by:

- Elevating the understanding of the importance of museums and the museum profession on a national and international level by highlighting the positive impact museums have on communities.
- Possessing strong communication skills, including the ability to communicate in a compelling manner with a variety of audiences, including peer organizations, the media, legislators, members and the public.
- Clearly articulating the organization's value proposition for its diverse membership.
- Exhibiting political savvy, leading the development of a legislative strategy and serving as the primary advocate for museums with lawmakers on the Hill and in the Administration.

## The Staff, Compensation and Benefits

AAM staff is committed to continuous learning and fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace as outlined in the staff's [core values](#). AAM offices are located in Northern Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC. The office currently works under a hybrid work schedule that includes remote work and in-person work. AAM provides a competitive compensation package as well as comprehensive [benefits](#). The salary for the position is commensurate with experience.

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## Contact

If you are interested in applying to this position, please email a resume and cover letter to the Russell Reynolds Associates team at [aamceo@russellreynolds.com](mailto:aamceo@russellreynolds.com).