



Executive Director Position Description

Reports to: Board of Trustees
Location: Boston, Massachusetts

About the Eliot School

Founded in 1676, the Eliot School of Fine & Applied Arts is the fourth oldest school in the United States and a beloved institution in Greater Boston. With a mission to inspire lifelong learning in craft and creativity for all, the school has evolved to meet the needs of its community, from colonial grammar school to manual arts training ground to the vibrant nonprofit it is today. Programs spanning youth and adult hands-on arts education are delivered at two locations in Jamaica Plain, including a charming historic schoolhouse at 24 Eliot Street, also known as the traditional lands of the Wôpanâak, the Pawtucket, the Ponkapoag, and the people known today as the Massachusett. Eliot School teachers also deliver visual arts and woodworking instruction in numerous Boston Public Schools.

Access and inclusion are core principles at the Eliot School, where everyone is welcome, and people of all ages and backgrounds come to make things by hand, learn from skilled artists and craftspeople, and find belonging in the act of creating.

Primary programs include:

Adult and youth tuition-based classes: More than 400 small-group classes are hosted each year at the historic schoolhouse.

Teen Bridge and Artist in Residence: Grade 8-12 Boston Public School students come daily to the Eliot School for after-school visual arts engagement and to explore productive pathways and careers in the arts and adjacent fields. Each summer we host an Artist in Residence who works with teen artists to create an original work centered on community engagement.

School and Community Partnerships: The Eliot School reaches more than 1,000 Boston Public School (BPS) children each year through visual arts and woodworking instructors we place in BPS classrooms. The program is also active in charter and private schools throughout Greater Boston.

Summer Program for Children and School Vacation Programs: More than 200 children aged 6-12 participate in art-making classes each summer. Additional programming is offered during winter and spring school vacations.

The Eliot School operates with an annual budget of approximately \$1.5 million and a dedicated staff of approximately 9 full-time and more than 80 part-time teaching artists. A diverse and engaged board of ten Trustees provides oversight.

The Opportunity

The Eliot School enters this search during its 350th year, a milestone that invites celebration, reflection, and the rare opportunity to help shape the Eliot School for generations to come. The next Executive Director will work in partnership with the Board of Trustees to craft strategy and programs that both fulfill the school's mission and ensure that the institution continues to thrive.

For more than three centuries, the school has evolved alongside the communities it serves. From its beginnings as a colonial grammar school to its emergence as one of Boston's leading community arts

schools, the Eliot School has continually adapted while remaining rooted in a simple and enduring belief: that people learn, connect, and discover their own creative capacity through making.

Today, the Eliot School is building on its history while asking important questions about its future. It has emerged from the disruptions of the pandemic with a talented team, dedicated teaching artists, strong partnerships, and a clear sense of purpose. At the same time, there is an opportunity to strengthen the school's financial foundation, expand access, deepen community impact, and further integrate its tuition-based and community-supported programs so they reinforce one another in advancing the school's mission and long-term sustainability.

One of the Executive Director's early priorities will be leading a strategic planning process that engages staff, teaching artists, Board members, Advisory Council members, students, community partners, and supporters in shaping the school's next chapter. This is a substantial opportunity to engage the Eliot School community in shaping its next chapter and establishing clear priorities that guide programmatic and organizational decisions.

The next Executive Director will also oversee the thoughtful evolution of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) strategy at the Eliot School. As one component of this work, the school is engaged in an important examination of its own history. As it reflects on its colonial origins, the Indigenous lands on which it was established, and the legacy of its namesake, the school recognizes that understanding its past is only part of the path forward. The Executive Director will help the Board, staff, and community consider what it means to acknowledge that history with integrity, and how those insights should shape the school's relationships, programs, and role in the community going forward.

The Executive Director will work in close partnership with an engaged Board of Trustees (10 members) and Advisory Council (20 members). Governance members bring deep expertise across finance, administration, and fundraising, and work through an active committee structure including Governance, Finance, Development, and other standing committees.

Leadership Responsibilities

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director is responsible for managing all staff and critical functions of the organization, including programs, development, communications, finance, human resources, and facilities.

The Executive Director will:

- Continue to expand high-impact programs at both the schoolhouse and throughout the community that drive measurable achievement against strategic goals.
- Build new and sustainable earned revenue streams to diversify from a current reliance on contributed revenue.
- Expand the base of financial supporters and attract new individuals and institutions.
- Ensure continued financial stability by creatively stewarding resources within constraints.
- Cultivate a high-performing team and effectively manage resources to ensure that all team members are equipped to succeed in their roles.
- Support board development and recruiting efforts to expand both financial support and contributions of expertise and time.
- Be an enthusiastic ambassador of the Eliot School and seek to know and understand the community in which we operate.
- Be situationally aware and lead with integrity at all times.



This role requires significant on-site presence across two Jamaica Plain locations. Although there is the possibility of some remote work, candidates should expect to be on-site the majority of the time.

Primary Responsibilities

Management, Organizational Leadership, and Institutional Stewardship

- Recruit, support, develop, and retain a talented, collaborative, and high-performing staff.
- Create a workplace grounded in trust, clarity, feedback, and mutual accountability to foster a culture of inclusion where everyone can do their best work.
- Translate strategic priorities into clear goals and aligned resources that shape daily operations and how work is organized across teams — advancing the Eliot School's mission while staying true to its values.
- Ensure strong finance, human resources, legal, and administrative practices.
- Provide the leadership and administrative oversight needed to ensure the Eliot School remains a healthy, well-managed, and financially sustainable organization.
- Partner closely with the Board to develop a shared vision of the Eliot School's future and support strong governance, strategic planning, and informed decision-making.
- Make and support decisions that balance access, quality, financial sustainability, and mission alignment over time, including the tradeoffs that shape how the school grows and what it prioritizes.
- Oversee the annual operating budget and ensure sound financial management and long-term financial and operational sustainability.

Program Leadership

- Lead the continued evolution of the Eliot School's programs as a connected portfolio of tuition-based classes, school programs, community partnerships, and creative initiatives.
- Guide staff and teachers to design, evaluate, and refine programs that respond to community needs and advance the school's mission, long-term direction, and financial sustainability.
- Identify opportunities to grow the school's reach through new partnerships, program models, and creative use of resources, and make strategic choices about where and how the school expands its impact.
- Foster thoughtful innovation and a culture of experimentation while keeping the Eliot School grounded in its values and identity.
- Assess programs for mission alignment, community impact, educational quality, financial sustainability, and long-term viability, and use these assessments to guide program priorities and evolution over time.

Fundraising & External Relationships

- Serve as the school's chief ambassador and principal fundraiser, responsible for advancing the Eliot School's external relationships and development strategy.
- Lead efforts to grow and diversify the Eliot School's base of major philanthropic support.
- Work closely with the Development Manager and Board to advance fundraising strategy and execution, including designing and launching a major giving program.
- Communicate the impact of the Eliot School's work in ways that inspire investment and engagement, to ensure that support translates into sustained, mission-aligned funding over time.

Qualifications and Skills

- A minimum of seven years of senior leadership, with a demonstrated track record of building teams with clarity and purpose.
- Adept at moving fluidly and effectively between strategy, people, and day-to-day leadership to set priorities and guide decisions.



- Deep fundraising expertise and the ability to be an engaging and compelling spokesperson for the organization.
- Strong financial acumen with successful experience developing and managing budgets of similarly sized organizations.
- Believe deeply in the value of art, craft, and creativity to community life and resilience.
- Committed to racial and educational equity in all facets of programming and organizational development.
- Proven ability to build authentic and enduring relationships with donors, partners, artists, and community members.
- Equipped with the intellectual and emotional integrity to make difficult decisions in complex environments, and take responsibility for tradeoffs between mission, resources, and community needs.

Compensation, benefits, and application process

This is a full-time, salaried, exempt position with a starting salary range of \$170,000 to \$190,000 commensurate with experience and qualifications. The Eliot School offers a comprehensive benefits package which includes health and dental coverage, retirement plan participation, and generous paid time off.

This role requires a regular, visible presence in the community and at our two locations in Jamaica Plain. There is limited opportunity for remote work.

Candidates must include a resume and cover letter, both in PDF format, which describe how their qualifications and experience are especially suited to leading the Eliot School. A CORI and SORI check will be required for all finalists. For consideration, please email materials to edsearch@eliotschool.org.

Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

The Eliot School is an Equal Opportunity Employer and seeks applicants who bring a variety of experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds. The Eliot School provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, political affiliation, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, or any other characteristic protected by law. We value the diversity of our community, and we strive to create an inclusive, thriving workplace that values each member of the team.

