



Position Specification

Executive Director

February 2020

Position	Executive Director
Location	Vancouver, British Columbia
Reporting Relationship	Board of Directors
Peer Relationship	Artistic Director
Direct Reports	4 – Development Director, Operations Manager, Production Manager, Volunteer Manager and seasonal staff

VANCOUVER WRITERS FEST

The Vancouver Writers Fest (VWF or the Organization) is a not-for-profit registered charitable organization based in Vancouver. Our mission is to connect people to exceptional books, ideas and dialogue through year-round programming that ignites a passion for words and the world around us. Operating from our home on Granville Island, the Vancouver Writers Fest programs year-round events and our flagship, annual week-long literary festival – one of the largest, and most prestigious in North America that attracts audience members to see events with local and international authors.

The Vancouver Writers Fest was founded in 1988 by founding Artistic Director Alma Lee. For over 30 years, the Writers Fest has connected Vancouver audiences with local, national, and international authors including Martin Amis, Margaret Atwood, Maeve Binchy, Roddy Doyle, Roxane Gay, Malcolm Gladwell, John Irving, Marlon James, P. D. James, Thomas King, Naomi Klein, Andrea Levy, Frank McCourt, Rohinton Mistry, David Mitchell, Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje, J. K. Rowling, Salman Rushdie, David Sedaris, Zadie Smith, and Carol Shields. In 2010, the Festival was named the Best Large Literary Festival in Canada by the Canadian Tourism Commission. The Vancouver Writers Fest adopted its current name in 2012.

Governance Model

The Festival is governed by a Board of Directors who share a commitment to our vision for a world in which the transformative power of books and ideas is the foundation of an empathetic, inspired and just society. The Board works collaboratively with an experienced and engaged senior leadership team comprised of Artistic Director, Leslie Hurtig, and an Executive Director. The Artistic Director and Executive Director have a peer relationship and both report to the Board of Directors. The Board focuses on strong governance in the areas of strategy, financial excellence, and audience development.

The Board of Directors has paved the way for a fiscally stable and responsible organization. Progress towards and achievement of outcomes outlined in the strategic plan is monitored quarterly. Specific Board committees are in place and have clearly defined Terms of Reference and meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. The Committees include the Finance Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Human Resources Committee, the Fundraising Committee, the Equity and Justice Committee, and the Governance Committee.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

The Vancouver Writers Fest has an operating budget of \$1.4 million. In 2019, our revenue was generated through earned revenue (33 percent); grants from our federal, provincial, and municipal government partners (35 percent); and through fundraising from our corporate partners and individual donors (32 percent).

Driving our artistic and financial success is a dedicated and passionate team of artistic and administrative professionals led by our senior executives. Supporting our team of full-time, part-time, and contract staff are 350 volunteers who collectively contribute over 5,300 hours of time to enhance our year-round programs and the October festival.

Artistic Programming

In 2019, over 27,000 audience members attended our programs, special events, and the Festival. In addition to the annual Festival in October, each year, our artistic team programs the following programs and events that engage our diverse regional audience:

Incite

From January to May each year, our Incite series offers highly accessible opportunities for our audiences to engage in intimate conversations with authors. All events in the Incite series are free of charge to our audience and are presented in partnership with Vancouver Public Library. All are held in the Alice MacKay room at the downtown Vancouver branch.

Special Events

Our special events are curated to offer our audiences the opportunity to see world-class writers in a variety of local venues ranging from cozy theatres to sold-out marquee auditoriums. These events are an important fundraising source that enable us to subsidize our education and youth programs. Recent authors presented include Margaret Atwood, Malcom Gladwell, Zadie Smith, Marlon James, Ian McEwan, and Lindy West.

The Festival

Our annual flagship October Festival attracts in excess of 16,000 people over seven days to 80+ events for all ages, held in various venues on Granville Island and across Vancouver. During this week, multiple events run simultaneously from morning until late. In 2018, we introduced Pay What You Can/Free Saturday to increase accessibility to our Festival events. In 2019, thanks to generous financial support from our partners the Y.P. Heung Foundation and Raincoast Books, over 3,500 people attended 13 events at no charge.

Education Outreach Programs

Each year our Youth Education Program offers students the opportunity to interact with celebrated authors. We program over 60 events designed specifically for young people and their teachers as well as schools and student groups. Over 9,000 students participate in events in the classroom and at our venues during the Festival and throughout the year. Our Writers in the Classroom series sees 30 authors visit classrooms across the Lower Mainland throughout the school year. We also host an annual writing competition that encourages youth to submit works of fiction and poetry for a jury to assess and award cash prizes.

THE OPPORTUNITY

In response to a recent departure, the Vancouver Writers Fest has formed a Search Committee to identify the next Executive Director to lead a motivated and dedicated administration team and to partner with the Artistic Director to implement the strategic plan and the annual business plan. As co-leaders, the Artistic Director and Executive Director share responsibility for the overall success of the VWF and fulfilling its mission and vision.

VWF staff work from our Granville Island office, keeping regular business hours but also prioritizing attendance at special events, series and Festival week. Attendance at monthly Board meetings, committee meetings and workshops required. We are an open-concept office with a fun and industrious work environment.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director is responsible for the financial and administrative operations of the VWF and supports the delivery of high-quality programming developed by the Artistic Director. Additional responsibilities of the Executive Director include:

Finance and Budget

- Developing and managing the VWF operating budget and all capital project budgets. The Executive Director reports on the financial position of the Organization at each meeting of the Board of Directors and works closely with the Chair of the Finance Committee to review and report on the financial position of the VWF
- Identifying opportunities to securing public sector funding and identifying additional grant opportunities; and
- Overseeing and supporting the work of the Development Director.

Strategic Planning

- In early 2019, Vancouver Writers Fest completed its current Strategic Plan which will drive the direction of the Organization to achieve its stated goals. The execution of the strategic plan and the annual business plan is the responsibility of Artistic and Executive Directors of the VWF.

Administration and Operations

- Overseeing the VWF infrastructure and administrative and operational needs including planning capital acquisitions and negotiating rental agreements
- Working with the Operations Manager to identify a ticketing system/client relationship management system and leading its effective implementation
- Supervising operations, logistics, and staffing of the annual Festival and overseeing the production department jointly with the Artistic Director
- Working collaboratively with the Board, Artistic Director, and VWF staff to ensure that our foundational business processes, technology systems, commitments to equity and justice, governance, and staffing are effective, efficient and consistent with wise practices so that VWF can meet its goals

Governance and Human Resources

- Overseeing the human resources function in collaboration with the Artistic Director including recruiting, supervising, and evaluating all full, part-time, and seasonal staff
- Managing an engaged leadership team responsible for fund development, box office, volunteer management, production and operations.
- Hiring and oversight of seasonal staff for Festival
- Implementing the policies of the VWF Board of Directors and participating in, and supporting, the Board's ongoing development of policy and strategic direction
- Working collaboratively with the Board Chair to support the Board and the work of its sub-committees.

Fundraising and External Stakeholder Relations

- Working collaboratively with the Board, Artistic Director, and Development Director to support fundraising activities, including setting priorities, actively identifying, cultivating, and soliciting funds and stewarding major donors
- Together with the Artistic Director, liaising with stakeholders such as government partners, other arts organizations, the Granville Island Council, CMHC, and local business groups
- Oversees Development Director in externally representing VWF with outside organizations to develop strategic relationships and increase VWF profile.

Diversity and Inclusion

- Reviewing diversity, inclusivity, equity and justice issues and addressing issues accordingly
- Working together with Board and staff towards a goal of a more equitable and just environment for our authors, audiences, volunteers, staff, and communities.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE / QUALIFICATIONS

The Executive Director is expected to have a passion for the arts in general and specifically, a high regard for the public presentation of exceptional books, ideas and dialogue. Experience in leadership, governance, fundraising, and general management gained through their professional and/or volunteer careers. Proven ability in fiscal management is key.

Excellent written and verbal communication skills, and the ability to present to different audiences and stakeholders.

COMPENSATION

The Vancouver Writers Fest offers a competitive compensations and benefits package.

Annual salary range: \$75,000 - \$85,000 commensurate with experience

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

The Vancouver Writers Fest is committed to recruiting a diverse staff team that represents the community we so proudly celebrate. We encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous applicants, all genders, nationalities and persons with disabilities.

Our commitment to equity and justice is encapsulated in our values of creativity, accessibility, excellence, integrity, collaboration and inspiration.

Interested and qualified individuals are encouraged to submit their CV in confidence to the Search Committee via email to EDsearch@writersfest.bc.ca March 20, 2020. We thank all interested parties and advise that only those selected to advance in the process will be contacted.