

## *Position Profile: Executive Director*

Reports to: Pilot Dogs Board of Directors

Location: Columbus, Ohio

### *The Opportunity*

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Since 1950, the mission of Pilot Dogs has remained unchanged: to provide the finest of guide dogs to the qualified blind and visually impaired. From its first graduating class of four, the organization has grown in scope and stature, serving about 150 individuals every year. Pilot Dogs' incoming Executive Director (ED) has the opportunity to build on this proud history of service, elevating the organization's profile through awareness, advocacy, and innovation.

Inspired by the organization's mission, the new Executive Director will evaluate and improve operations in all areas. In addition, the Executive Director fosters enthusiasm across Pilot Dogs' staff members and volunteer corps. The ED has a vision for the organization that will allow it to touch even more lives and will help it thrive for decades to come.

The Executive Director is Pilot Dogs' key representative, articulating the value of their work to a wide range of audiences—from media to donors to community leaders. An ambassador for the organization, the ED will give voice to the mission, communicating to others how their gifts can personally improve the lives of program participants in a lasting way. The ED is comfortable speaking to a range of potential donors and funders and will diversify Pilot Dogs' sources of financial and volunteer support.



At Pilot Dogs, every day is about advancing the independence of persons living with impaired eyesight. The new Executive Director relishes the opportunity to enrich lives through companionship and will use their skills to guide the organization into the future.

### *More About Pilot Dogs*

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Pilot Dogs has provided high-quality canine guides to persons in need for over 70 years. Dedicated staff and volunteers provide socialization, veterinary care, and training to ensure that the Pilot Dogs are prepared to be capable companions to the blind and visually impaired. The dogs provide independence and freedom, reflecting the tireless work of an enthusiastic team in their exemplary training.



The organization provides extensive education for qualified applicants at no cost to program participants. Housing, food, and equipment are all included, allowing students to focus on building relationships with their dogs and learning how to live and work in harmony.

Pilot Dogs is accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation. The organization receives no federal or state funding, relying on generous gifts from individuals, companies, groups, and other organizations all over the country.

## About the Position

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The Executive Director is responsible for the maintenance, culture, and growth of the organization that enables Pilot Dogs, Inc., using proven best practices, to fulfill its mission of providing the finest guide dogs to qualified blind and visually impaired persons.

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration and management of Pilot Dogs, Inc., including:

- maintaining programs and delivering services based on best practices;
- guiding long-term strategic planning for growth and financial stability;
- leading and developing a team to effectively provide services for blind and visually impaired individuals;
- ensuring accreditation compliance with the International Guide Dog Federation; and
- increasing funds to ensure growth.

### Key Responsibilities

**Operations and Planning** - Provides executive leadership for teams responsible for all operations including student services, training, physical plant and facilities, puppy breeding and training, kennel operations, veterinary care, and kitchen operations. Leads continuous improvement for the organization. Leads strategy development and operational planning to achieve the organization's objectives. Ensures that the work of the organization is supported by clear and effective processes and measurable objectives.

**Staff Relations and Culture** - Develops a culture of strong communication and employee engagement. Ensures safety is the priority for students, volunteers, and staff. Supports and ensures ongoing staff education and professional development. Ensures that the team collaborates in a way that provides the best services to the students.

**Finance and Administration** - Oversees financial operations and business planning to ensure that the program is viable and growing. Ensures overall financial integrity including accurate budgeting, financial administration, and financial reporting. Serves as the primary connection for the Pilot Dogs Foundation. Directs all administrative activity including IT, Human Resources, and vendors and outsourcing.

**Board Relations** - Develops and maintains strong board relations and supports the board with governance activity and board engagement. Provides accurate, timely, and meaningful reporting to the board on financial and organizational operations.

**Community Involvement and Advocacy** - Represents and promotes Pilot Dogs to the community, funders, and sponsors. Develops strong relationships with key constituents. Serves as chief spokesperson with media and as lead advocate for Pilot Dogs with active engagement at community events and with civic organizations. Oversees volunteer recruitment and engagement activity.



**Fundraising** - Establishes and maintains relationships with current and prospective donors to increase philanthropic engagement and broaden financial support. Oversees, supports, and engages in fundraising activities to ensure growth in financial support. Cultivates and solicits lead gifts. Initiates and oversees planned giving program. Oversees fundraising planning and fundraising effectiveness.

## Qualifications and Experience

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**Successful candidates will have the following qualifications.**

- Minimum qualifications include:
  - Nonprofit leadership experience, including direct management of a staff
  - Track record of successful organizational growth and staff development
  - Experience working with nonprofit board
  - Bachelor's degree in an appropriate field or equivalent experience
- Highly desirable qualifications include:
  - Experience in a leadership role with a guide dog school, dog companion programs, or dog training organization
  - Experience as an executive director or equivalent role with a nonprofit
  - Experience with blind or visually impaired persons

Pilot Dogs offers a competitive compensation and benefits package, including subsidized health insurance, paid vacation/holidays, and a retirement plan match. Salary commensurate with experience.

## Competencies

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**Competitive applicants possess the following competencies, knowledge, and skills.**

- Passion for serving blind and visually impaired persons with empathy
- Comfort working with dogs, guide-dog training
- Business acumen, financial management, and business development experience
- Strategic agility
- Managing vision and purpose - forward thinking
- Political savvy
- Organizational agility
- Ability to hire, develop, and lead a team
- Performance accountability and management
- Quality improvement and metrics management
- Knowledge of facility and administrative operations
- Fundraising/development methods, process, and systems
- Client, customer, and stakeholder focus
- Drive for results
- Timely decision-making
- Adaptability and learning agility
- Change management

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*The company provides equal employment opportunity to all qualified applicants regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or other legally protected classification in the state of Ohio.*

## About Columbus

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Columbus is a booming city—affordable; with a rapidly expanding urban population; peppered with art, music, theater, museums, food, and culture. And, thanks to a growing array of businesses and strong higher education institutions, including The Ohio State University, it's home to a bustling and energetic workforce.

### **Bustling City—with an Affordable Cost of Living**

Columbus is Ohio's capital and the state's largest city, with two million people in the metropolitan area. It is one of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S., with a population increase of nearly 11% in the past eight years and job growth of 14% in roughly the same period. Its prosperous economy draws millennials and mid-career professionals, creating a young and energetic atmosphere throughout the city—in fact, Columbus was recently awarded the top spot on the Forbes list of Best Cities for Mid-Career Professionals. It is the country's first-ever "Smart City," and is ranked at the top of the list for attracting technology talent. All this—without the high cost of living. According to PayScale.com, the cost of living in Columbus is 10% lower than the national average.

### **Arts, Culture, and Cuisine Hub**

Columbus, named one of the "30 Most Fun Places to Live in the U.S." by *U.S. News & World Report*, is flush with creative talent and cultural hotspots. On any given day...

- One might explore the Columbus Museum of Art (...or the Pizzuti Collections, called "one of the top art collections in the world"; or the Wexner Center for the Arts; or the annual Columbus Arts Festival, featuring 280+ artists; or the brand-new "Otherworld" exhibit, a 32,000-sq.-ft.-immersive art installation—the list goes on!).
- Theater aficionados can pay a visit to Columbus' multitude of performing arts spaces: from Shadowbox Live!, to the Columbus Symphony, to four other large theaters, and more.
- Families might spend a day at the 36,000-sq.-ft. LEGOLAND Discovery Center, top-rated science center COSI, Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, the nation's most highly rated public library system, American Museum of Natural History Dinosaur Gallery, or recently opened National Veterans Memorial and Museum.
- Those with an eye for design can celebrate fashion in Columbus; the city comes in right after New York and Los Angeles as the biggest fashion design city in the nation.

In addition, Columbus is rapidly gaining a reputation as a culinary destination, offering everything from classic diner fare to fine dining; to offbeat, ethnic, and funky cafes. The city is notably home to restaurateur Cameron Mitchell and Jeni Britton Bauer of Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams, as well as other local favorites. The booming coffee and craft beer scenes are worth mentioning as well—both explorable through the city's enjoyable "coffee trail" and "ale trail" programs.



### **Nature Oases**

While downtown is a bustling urban area, Central Ohio provides ample nature preserves, state parks, and metro parks as well. Notable green spaces include Schiller Park in German Village, the Park of Roses in Clintonville, the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Garden, and the Scioto Mile in downtown Columbus—253 acres of parkland, including miles of multi-use trails and the country’s largest free outdoor climbing wall.

### **Top Educational Opportunities**

The region has some of the top public schools in Ohio, as well as a number of independent and parochial schools. In addition to The Ohio State University, the area is home to private institutions of higher learning such as Capital University, Otterbein University, Ohio Dominican University, Ohio Wesleyan University, Denison University, Ashland University, Pontifical College Josephinum, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and the Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

### **Diverse Neighborhoods**

Columbus has active urban neighborhoods—such as German Village, the Short North Arts District, Olde Towne East, Victorian Village, and Clintonville—with unique housing, galleries and exhibition space, and shopping. The city includes many architectural landmarks, both historic and modern. And, the metropolitan region has established and growing suburbs with many options for primary and secondary education and a wide variety of housing stock.

## **To Apply**

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Benefactor Group is honored to facilitate the search process for Pilot Dogs, Inc. **To apply, please send cover letter and resume to: [HR@benefactorgroup.com](mailto:HR@benefactorgroup.com)**

For inquiries, please contact Ron Guisinger, [ron@benefactorgroup.com](mailto:ron@benefactorgroup.com) or Cathy Fynes [cathy@benefactorgroup.com](mailto:cathy@benefactorgroup.com).

Candidates are urged to visit the Pilot Dogs website at <https://www.pilotdogs.org/>