

# Position Specification

Historic Columbia  
Executive Director

Columbia, SC

March 2024



**HISTORIC**  
COLUMBIA



## Executive Director

<b>Reporting To</b>	Board of Trustees, through the Board President
<b>Direct Reports</b>	Director of Development, Director of Operations, Director of Outreach & Engagement, Director of Preservation, Director of Marketing & Communications, and Office Manager & Executive Assistant
<b>Location</b>	Columbia, SC

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## Company Description

### Historic Columbia

<https://www.historiccolumbia.org/>

**Purpose:** Preserve places and share complex stories from the past that connect us in the present and inspire our future.

**Vision:** We will harness the power of history to inspire curiosity and catalyze community engagement.

**Mission:** We share the complex history of Columbia and Richland County through historic preservation advocacy, innovative educational programs, and strategic partnerships.



#### Historic Columbia's Values:

- *Welcoming:* We behave in a way that makes people feel safe to open themselves up to a variety of concepts and experiences.
- *Inclusive:* We are intentional about ongoing efforts to include a diversity of individuals in decision-making.
- *Informed:* We work consistently and collaboratively with partners to amplify learning.
- *Responsible:* We are proactive in encouraging thoughtfulness, weighing possible outcomes, and considering what is best for the organization and Columbia/Richland County.
- *Evolving:* We continuously make improvements to Historic Columbia's policies, facilities, programs, and interpretations. Open to new ideas and suggestions from the public, we invite collaboration.

Historic Columbia is a nonprofit 501c3 organization dedicated to preserving Columbia and Richland County's historic and cultural heritage through historic preservation advocacy, public engagement in its historic house museums, gardens and related experiences, innovative educational programs, and strategic partnerships in the community. As the primary preservation advocacy organization in Columbia and Richland County, Historic Columbia works with City and County Council members, neighborhoods, property owners, and other interested parties to ensure the preservation of essential historic resources in the Midlands.

Established in 1961 with the goal of saving the Ainsley Hall House (today's Robert Mills House) from demolition and introducing it as a site for education on local history, today Historic Columbia manages, preserves, and operates a range of educational programs at [five historic house museums in the heart of the Robert Mills Historic District](#). At these historic properties and gardens, and throughout the community, Historic Columbia offers a full calendar of tours, special events, and other experiences that facilitate understanding of the diverse history of the region. Moreover, its programs aim to recognize the impact of all groups in that history and inspire connections within the current community.



Robin Waites, who has served as Executive Director of Historic Columbia for nearly 20 years, has announced her intention to retire in June 2024. During her tenure, the organization has grown to a budget of \$2.5 million with 21 full- and 20 part-time staff. In addition, the organization's successes include:

- Award-winning, cutting edge, and inclusive interpretation at its museums, [off-site tours](#), and throughout the [website](#);
- Rehabilitated, period-appropriate gardens at each of the properties that allow Historic Columbia to expand educational opportunities, generate increased revenue, and serve as accessible greenspace in the city center;
- Well-managed [collections](#) that are accessible online;
- Dynamic, inclusive [partnerships](#) that prioritize voices and stories of those previously not given a platform;
- An impactful, multipronged [preservation advocacy program](#) that has led to retention of some of the Midlands' most important and diverse historic assets;
- Strong relationships with and financial support from the City of Columbia and Richland County; and
- A talented and dedicated [professional staff](#).



## Scope and Responsibilities

The Executive Director will be an inspiring, entrepreneurial, and experienced leader with a demonstrated commitment to broad community engagement in history and historic preservation. The Executive Director will build upon the organization's past successes and strong community partnerships to ensure Historic Columbia continues to catalyze community interest in and support for historic preservation.

*Specific responsibilities include the following:*

### Strategic Leadership

- Advance Historic Columbia's mission to "share the complex history of Columbia and Richland County through historic preservation advocacy, innovative educational programs, and strategic partnerships."
- Continue to build strong relationships with the city and county officials.
- Provide thoughtful and strategic leadership to Historic Columbia by partnering effectively with the Board, leading and developing a talented staff team, stewarding and expanding relationships with community partners and civic leaders, and increasing the organization's reach and impact in a sustainable way.
- In collaboration with the Board, lead on-going implementation of the current strategic plan (2022-2025) and the development of successive strategic plans that leverage Historic Columbia's strengths and reinforce the organization's essential role in the community.
- Champion Historic Columbia's efforts to build and sustain a diverse and inclusive community among its staff, Board, volunteers, and partners. Support efforts to ensure underrepresented groups are actively engaged at all levels of the organization.

### Programmatic Leadership

- Working with the Director of Preservation, the Director of Outreach & Engagement, and across the organization, ensure that house museum interpretation, educational programs and materials, historic preservation efforts, and related program and resources adhere to the highest standards of rigor and credibility.
- Ensure that all programs and activities are engaging audiences in a meaningful way and are providing exceptional visitor/partner experiences.
- Develop and maintain alliances with individuals and organizations locally and regionally to plan for, develop, fund, and deliver impactful content in a way that equitably engages a diversity of audiences.
- Collaborate with staff, constituents, and partners to monitor contemporary issues and community needs to deliver robust, meaningful, and timely programs.
- Ensure that Historic Columbia's initiatives promote understanding within communities and highlight respectful conversations, empathy, and shared values.



### Fundraising & Revenue

- Ensure income goals are achieved through contributed support (public funding, grants, corporate, and individual gifts), as well as earned income (ticket sales, events, museum shop, facilities rentals, and other sources).
- With the Board and Director of Development, develop and sustain a comprehensive fundraising strategy and the organizational infrastructure required to increase long-term membership, donations, grants, and other forms of contributed support.
- Advocate for Historic Columbia with the City and County to ensure annual governmental support is secure and collective goals are met.
- Explore other funding possibilities with the state of South Carolina and regional and national foundations interested in historic preservation and social justice.
- Responsibly maximize earned income and proactively develop ancillary revenue sources in alignment with the institution's vision and goals (e.g. increase revenue from events that regularly sell out, increase the use of the facilities for events, maximize program service revenue from preservation activities, etc.)



### Operational and Financial Management

- Working with the Director of Operations, manage Historic Columbia's finances and operations to ensure the organization follows best practices in nonprofit management, lives its values, and maximizes capacity to achieve its mission in a sustainable way.
- Develop metrics for the current strategic plan.
- Working with the Board and staff, develop and manage the annual budget.
- Cultivate a strong, transparent, and collaborative working relationship with the Board, particularly Board leadership.
- Sustain Historic Columbia's inclusive team-oriented culture that respects differences and values the efforts of all.
- Recruit, develop and mentor a talented staff team; ensure best practices in employee engagement and retention.
- Oversee stewardship of the collection.
- Provide responsible stewardship of the organization's finances and endowment.

### Community Awareness & Engagement

- Articulate and advocate for the importance of historic preservation and the deep and diverse history of the region.
- Provide visibility for the organization throughout the community and reinforce Historic Columbia's brand as an honest storyteller, reliable partner, and a credible resource.
- Proactively identify strategies and opportunities to enhance public awareness of Historic Columbia's array of programs and services and to engage broad and diverse audiences in historic preservation and local history initiatives.





## Qualifications

- Significant leadership experience in museums, cultural organizations, historic preservation, and/or educational institutions.
- Demonstrated expertise in history, education, and/or historic preservation. Experience interpreting and dealing with sensitive or difficult topics in history and/or contemporary society.
- Track record of working with a Board and staff to develop, articulate and implement a shared vision and strategic plan. Successful experience leading a staff team of similar size and complexity. Demonstrated ability to recruit, guide and empower a talented staff team and serve as an effective internal collaborator.
- Experience building an effective working partnership with a Board.
- Experience working in collaboration with municipal governments, outside agencies, universities and organizations.
- Demonstrated experience in all aspects of fundraising, specially building and stewarding strong relationships with donors and funders. Experience with grant writing, management, and reporting.
- Proven experience in management, administration, systems development, budgeting and staff management.
- Ability to cultivate relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders (donors, staff, constituents, civic leaders, public audiences, the media).
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace and in the community.
- Experience overseeing and providing guidance around the prioritization of resources for a multi-layered and complex calendar of programs, special initiatives, and on-going projects.
- Knowledge of and/or ability to learn and adopt relevant technology and software systems.
- Bachelor's degree (advanced degree preferred) in history, public history, business administration, non-profit management, or related degree.



## Personal / Professional Attributes

- Leadership skills and behaviors demonstrating self-awareness, empathy, the ability to analyze complex management situations, and the ability to lead, influence, and build consensus on a range of topics among multiple constituents.
- Unwavering integrity and unimpeachable personal ethics.
- Diplomatic acuity and exceptional communication and relationship-building.
- Aspirational vision combined with strategic execution and ability to prioritize and focus on core objectives.
- Healthy combination of confidence and humility.
- Forward thinking and proactive approach to problem-solving.
- Self-motivation with relentless enthusiasm and energy.
- Inspiring yet approachable leadership style.
- Understanding of how learning and teaching history informs how communities function today.
- Passion for history and historic preservation and personal alignment with Historic Columbia's mission, purpose, and values.



## Contact Information

DHR Global's Nonprofit Practice has been exclusively retained by Historic Columbia to assist with this executive search. Please direct all inquiries, nominations, and recommendations to any of the contacts below.

**James Abruzzo**  
Managing Partner, Global Nonprofit Practice  
New York, NY  
T: +1 212 883 6800  
E: [jabruzzo@dhrglobal.com](mailto:jabruzzo@dhrglobal.com)

**Michele Counter**  
Partner, Nonprofit Practice  
Raleigh, NC  
T: +1 919 244 1201  
E: [mcounter@dhrglobal.com](mailto:mcounter@dhrglobal.com)

**Brian Shallcross**  
Associate  
Chicago, IL  
T: +1 312 782 1581  
E: [bshallcross@dhrglobal.com](mailto:bshallcross@dhrglobal.com)

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