

Executive Director

About Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens is appropriately described by many that have visited as an oasis in Washington DC. The estate, which includes a museum and award-winning gardens, sits on twenty-five acres in a lush urban setting and once served as the home of Marjorie Merriweather Post, philanthropist, arts patron, and one of the wealthiest women in American history. Today, Hillwood preserves and interprets her life and legacy through a world-class collection of Russian Imperial and French 18th Century art and decorative arts, a stunning mansion with original period interiors, award-winning gardens, the Collections and Research Center, and a rich calendar of public programs and exhibitions.

Hillwood's mission is to welcome, delight, and engage all visitors with an experience inspired by the life of its founder. That mission guides everything from gallery interpretation and horticultural stewardship to community partnerships and institutional sustainability. The organization is governed by the Board of Trustees of Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens Foundation and benefits from a dedicated philanthropic community, a growing membership base, and strong earned revenue from admissions and events.

For more information on Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, please visit <https://hillwoodmuseum.org/>.

The Opportunity

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens stands at an exciting inflection point. Having grown from fewer than 50,000 to more than 110,000 annual visitors over the past decade, the institution has demonstrated both its broad appeal and its capacity for intentional, sustained growth. With a newly refreshed strategic plan, a passionate and dedicated staff and volunteer community, and a campus poised for continued investment, Hillwood now seeks an Executive Director (ED) who can build on its successful trajectory and positive momentum, embracing and guiding the institution confidently into its next chapter.

Hillwood is one of the nation's most distinctive cultural institutions — a mansion museum, working greenhouse, and curated gardens that together tell the story of Marjorie Merriweather Post, one of America's most remarkable women. The next Executive Director will steward this singular legacy while simultaneously driving the institution's contemporary relevance: broadening audiences, deepening community connections, and ensuring that Hillwood remains a place where diverse visitors find personal meaning, beauty, and inspiration.

This is a rare opportunity for a mission-driven leader to serve as both steward of an irreplaceable collection and champion of a living, breathing cultural destination. The next ED will arrive at an institution that is financially stable, strategically focused, and

deeply committed to environmental sustainability, inclusion, and the highest standards of museum practice. They will lead a talented and cohesive management team, partner with an engaged Board of Trustees, and serve as Hillwood's primary face to donors, community stakeholders, and the broader art, cultural, and heritage sector.

The next ED will possess the judgment to navigate complexities inherent in stewarding a historic house museum and estate: honoring the spirit and intentions of Marjorie Merriweather Post while ensuring that Hillwood remains dynamic, welcoming, and meaningful to contemporary audiences. They will recognize that Hillwood's future success depends not simply on increasing attendance, but on growing intentionally and sustainably while preserving the intimacy, beauty, and quality of the visitor experience.

The position offers the full scope of executive leadership: organizational strategy, people management, financial oversight, major gift fundraising, board governance, collections stewardship, and programmatic vision. For a leader energized by complex, multi-faceted institutions and motivated by the opportunity to make a lasting cultural contribution, this role is exceptional.

Essential Functions and Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of Hillwood's current strategic plan, focused on managing success, advancing relevance, and promoting environmental sustainability across all operations.
- Champion Hillwood's culture of welcome by ensuring that all guests, staff, and volunteers feel a sense of belonging and inclusion throughout the campus experience.
- Translate the Board's vision into actionable plans, ensuring alignment between institutional priorities and day-to-day operations across all departments.
- Drive visitation and audience diversification through integrated strategies encompassing programming, communications, exhibitions, and community engagement, building on Hillwood's record of intentional growth from under 50,000 to over 110,000 annual visitors.
- Guide ongoing infrastructure and campus improvements, including gallery expansions, accessibility enhancements, outdoor pathways, and environmental upgrades to support a growing and diverse audience.

Organizational Leadership & People Management

- Directly supervise all Management Team directors and executive staff; provide oversight, direction, coaching, and professional development in accordance with Hillwood's policies and procedures.

- Partner with People & Culture to recruit and hire employees who are passionate about Hillwood's mission and values.
- Foster a spirit of teamwork, unity, and open communication that allows for expeditious conflict resolution, appreciation of diversity, and cross-functional collaboration.
- Support workforce planning, talent pipelines, wellness initiatives, and cross-functional knowledge sharing to build staff capacity and resilience.
- Communicate consistently in a manner that embodies Hillwood's standards and spirit of generosity, maintaining transparent communication through department meetings and regular interpersonal engagement.

Board Relations & Governance

- Serve as the primary staff liaison to the Board of Trustees; assist the Board in effectively discharging its fiduciary and governance responsibilities in compliance with the Marjorie Merriweather Post Trust Agreement and accepted professional museum practices.
- Develop agendas and prepare materials for meetings of the Executive Committee, Finance Committee, Nominating Committee, and other Board committees.
- Proactively identify, assess, and communicate institutional risks to the Board, including financial, operational, reputational, and legal exposures; partner with the Board to develop and maintain appropriate risk management strategies, in consultation with subject matter experts in the respective areas.
- Provide the Board with an annual review of staff organization and performance and regularly recommend policies and actions for Board consideration.

Financial Management

- Assume primary responsibility, in conjunction with appropriate staff and Board members, for the preparation of the annual financial budget and operating plans.
- Oversee financial operations including comprehensive financial planning, budgeting, forecasting, and cash flow management, while ensuring compliance with accounting standards and requirements.
- Evaluate and report financial status and progress to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis.
- Oversee the annual third-party financial audit process, ensuring timely completion, transparency, and presentation of audit findings to the Finance Committee and Board.

Development & External Affairs

- Build and strengthen Hillwood's sustainable donor base through cultivation of existing donors and identification of new donor partners, with the goal of increasing contributed revenue annually in support of general operations and capital projects.
- Steward major donor relationships and serve as a visible ambassador for Hillwood's membership programs, Circles Program, special events, and planned giving initiatives.
- Represent Hillwood to the greater Washington community, neighboring residents, local stakeholders, the philanthropic community, and broader national and international arts and museum colleagues, fostering relationships that advance the institution's goals and visibility.
- Maintain an active association with museum professionals and professional organizations, cultivating new relationships; regularly review professional publications to sustain current awareness of the arts, heritage, and cultural landscape.

Collections, Exhibitions & Programmatic Oversight

- Uphold best practices in the care of Hillwood's mansion, exhibition spaces, collections, archives, and special collections to preserve Marjorie Merriweather Post's legacy for future generations.
- Ensure ongoing development of Hillwood's exhibition, mansion display, and publications programs, including contemporary, outdoor, and scholarly projects that appeal to diverse audiences.
- Ensure development of public, interpretive, and educational programs that draw upon the collections, exhibitions, and founder's stories, deepened through community and other partnerships, so diverse audiences can make inspiring and relevant connections.
- Make recommendations to the Board regarding loans, acquisitions, and de-accessions of works of art.

Sustainability

- Advance Hillwood's commitment to environmental sustainability across all campus operations, in alignment with the strategic plan's goal to implement practices that inspire, educate, and contribute to the reversal of nature decline.
- Support the work of the Hillwood Environmental Action Team (HEAT) and institutionalize sustainability goals related to overall operations, procurement, waste reduction, energy efficiency, and staff behavioral change.

- Champion major sustainability initiatives including responsible materials sourcing, end-of-life material management, food service sustainability, and capital projects such as window and HVAC improvements.

Candidate Profile

We recognize that there is a spectrum of lived and professional experience that will set candidates up for success in this role. While no one candidate will have every experience outlined in the position description, ideal candidates will display the following professional skills and qualities, and personal attributes:

Strategic and Visionary Institutional Leadership

The successful candidate will be a thoughtful and strategic leader capable of guiding the organization through its next phase of sustainable growth and evolution. Our client seeks a leader who can build upon an already strong foundation with care, discernment, and long-term perspective — balancing mission, preservation, audience growth, and operational realities within a unique campus environment. Demonstrated experience in strategic planning, organizational leadership, and institutional management, preferably in a museum, historic site, or closely related cultural nonprofit setting is highly desired. This leader should display judgment in navigating nuanced dynamics inherent in stewarding a historic house museum and estate. Experience with deepening engagement, strengthening visibility and relevance, and thoughtfully addressing emerging questions around interpretation and collections stewardship for a historic organization's future while preserving the intimacy, beauty, and quality of the visitor experience is preferred.

Collaborative and People-Centered Leadership

Hillwood's culture is one of its greatest strengths, and the next ED will embrace and nurture its highly collaborative, transparent, and people-centered environment. The ideal candidate will be an accessible and emotionally intelligent leader who listens well, communicates clearly, and fosters trust, transparency, accountability, and professional growth across the institution. This leader will possess experience leading, managing, and mentoring senior teams within complex cultural organizations. They will value cross-functional collaboration and support a strong culture of shared stewardship, low turnover, and high morale by ensuring that employees continue to feel valued, heard, and connected to the mission.

Stewardship of Collections, Gardens, and Historic Legacy

The next ED will appreciate the extraordinary and multifaceted nature of Hillwood's campus, collections, gardens, and mission. Experience working within museums, historic sites, gardens, estates, or similarly visitor-centered cultural institutions is strongly preferred. Advanced knowledge of museum operations, collections stewardship, and the cultural institution landscape, with a demonstrated ability to keep

such knowledge current. Familiarity with exhibitions, archives, horticulture, historic preservation, and/or cultural programming is highly valued. This leader will foster rigorous scholarship and museum best practices while also understanding the importance of making an institution welcoming and accessible to broad audiences, balancing scholarship, accessibility, relevance, and innovation. Top candidates will possess the intellectual curiosity and institutional sensitivity necessary to steward all aspects of the organization thoughtfully and holistically.

Audience Development, Relevance, and Community Engagement

Our client seeks a leader to thoughtfully expand and diversify audiences while maintaining the high level of integrity and quality of the visitor experience. The ideal candidate will understand how to position an organization as both a destination and a welcoming civic and cultural resource that sparks curiosity, beauty, learning, and connection. They will bring a sophisticated understanding of audience development, visitor engagement, and cultural relevance. Top candidates should possess strong external relationship-building skills to serve as a visible ambassador for their organization within a cultural landscape and beyond. They will have experience cultivating meaningful partnerships with peer institutions, schools and other educational institutions, scholars, community organizations, and a range of stakeholders, foundations and other philanthropic organizations, to raise their institution's profile regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Financial, Operational, and Environmental Stewardship

The next ED will bring strong organizational and operational leadership capabilities, including experience overseeing budgets, infrastructure, capital planning, and institutional sustainability. The ideal candidate will demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of operating and preserving a historic estate and museum campus while maintaining a strong culture of planning and organizational alignment. They will possess the strategic and financial acumen necessary to oversee infrastructure planning, maintenance reserves, environmental sustainability initiatives, accessibility improvements, and long-range capital priorities. This leader will also understand the importance of operational transparency and cross-departmental coordination.

Fundraising, Board Partnership, and External Presence

The ED will serve as Hillwood's primary external ambassador and will partner closely with the Board of Trustees, donors, members, and supporters to advance the institution's mission and long-term sustainability. The ideal candidate will possess executive presence and the ability to build trust in order to partner closely with the Board of Trustees. They will bring demonstrated experience cultivating major donors and other philanthropic relationships, stewarding and supporting philanthropic growth within a cultural, educational, or nonprofit setting. Familiarity with development and fundraising principles, including major gifts, membership, grants, and planned giving. Top candidates will have experience strengthening organizational visibility, representing

institutions with diplomacy, warmth, and credibility, with the ability to connect authentically and effectively across a wide range of constituencies — from trustees, scholars, and collectors to visitors, neighbors, civic leaders, and community and other partners.

Commitment to Inclusion, Accessibility, and Institutional Values

Our client seeks a leader who genuinely embraces its commitment to inclusion, accessibility, environmental responsibility, and community care. The successful candidate will demonstrate cultural humility, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to broadening participation and fostering belonging across the institution. Valuing excellence through inclusive leadership, collaboration over hierarchy, and thoughtful evolution over unnecessary disruption, top candidates should demonstrate how to lead with integrity, curiosity, warmth, and respect for their organization's history and its future. Above all, this leader will embody Hillwood's values of generosity, collaboration, excellence, and thoughtful stewardship.

In addition, strong candidates will offer:

- Significant experience — typically 10 or more years — in senior leadership roles with direct responsibility for staff management, budget oversight, and board relations.
- Strong analytical, financial, and report-writing skills; effective communications and presentation skills. Ability to translate complex data into clear recommendations for Board and staff audiences.
- Understanding of environmental sustainability practices and DEI principles as applied to cultural institutions.
- Polished writing and speaking ability with exceptional interpersonal skills; high EQ.
- Demonstrated ability to inspire, mentor, and develop high-performing teams; skilled in coaching, conflict resolution, and collaborative decision-making.
- Values diversity of thought, background, and perspective; fosters a culture of equity, inclusion, and genuine welcome throughout the institution.
- Goal-driven strategic thinker who can manage competing priorities while maintaining a long-term institutional vision.
- Works independently with sound judgment; able to navigate ambiguity with confidence, composure, and ethical grounding.
- Embraces new ideas and innovation; open to collaboration and continuous learning.

- Customer-service orientation and mindset; maintains a focus on the visitor experience and community impact in all decisions.
- Well organized with strong detail orientation and a penchant for action.

Compensation & Benefits

Salary is competitive and commensurate with experience. The salary range for this role is \$300,000 - \$350,000 with a generous benefits package.

Contact

DSG | Koya has been exclusively retained for this engagement, which is being led by Naree Viner, Stephen Milbauer, and Tenley Bank. Submit a compelling cover letter and resume by <https://talent-profile.dsgco.com/search/v2/23105>. All inquiries are strictly confidential.

DSG | Koya is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to individuals living with disabilities. If you are a qualified individual living with a disability and need assistance expressing interest online, please email npsipractice@dsgco.com. If you are selected for an interview, you will receive additional information regarding how to request an accommodation for the interview process.

Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens is an equal opportunity employer and strongly encourages applications from people of color, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBTQ+ applicants.

About DSG | Koya

DSG | Koya, a DSG Global company, is the nation's premier search firm dedicated to mission-driven leadership. Since its founding in 2004, DSG | Koya has had an exclusive focus on mission-driven clients and was founded on the belief that the right leader can transform an organization and have a deep and measurable impact on our world. DSG | Koya works with nonprofits & NGOs, responsible businesses, and social enterprises in local communities and around the world.

DSG Global is consistently recognized by Forbes on its top 10 list of "America's Best Executive Recruiting Firms" and is an industry leader in recruiting transformational leaders for a changing world. The firm is deliberately different in its approach, with best-in-class teams who have decades of experience in cultivating inclusive leaders, understanding the dimensions of diversity, and building equitable teams.

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