WILSON BRUCE EVANS HOME HISTORICAL SOCIETY | OBERLIN, OHIO

Executive Director

Job Description

Reports to	Board of Trustees
Status	Full-time, exempt (salaried and not eligible for overtime pay)
Location	Oberlin, Ohio, with regular onsite presence
Salary	$65,000 to $70,000, based on experience, plus benefits
Transition	Works alongside the founding Executive Director through September 2027

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society honors the legacy of Wilson Bruce Evans, Sarah Jane Leary Evans, and their descendants, and places that legacy within Oberlin's larger story as a historic site in the continuing struggle for Black freedom, racial equality, and social justice. The Evans House, a National Historic Landmark across the street from Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, is in the second phase of its rehabilitation and is expected to open to the public in early 2027 as an educational center and historic site.

For six years, volunteers have built the Society almost entirely, led by a founding Executive Director who served without pay and a Board of Trustees that includes Evans family descendants from two branches of the family. The Society has a growing membership, a working relationship with the National Park Service, and an exhibit design team that is installing the permanent exhibits under an interpretive plan the Board and the Evans family helped shape.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Board of Trustees wants Oberlin to become a destination for Black heritage tourism in this region of the country, with the Evans House as the starting point, and it intends to build that in partnership with the Oberlin Heritage Center and the City of Oberlin. The next Executive Director will have the chance to shape the public identity of a nationally significant place from its first days as an educational center and historic site, so that people planning a visit to Cleveland also plan a day in Oberlin to see the Evans House.

POSITION SUMMARY

The Executive Director is the Society's first paid executive and, at the start, its only employee. This person leads the organization as it moves from a rehabilitation project to an operating historic site, managing its finances, bringing in the revenue that sustains it each year, and building the relationships across Oberlin and beyond that the Society depends on. The Executive Director partners with a Board of Trustees that is shifting from running the work itself to governing an operating organization, and leads the Society's next strategic plan with the Board, setting direction for the years after the house opens.

WHAT MAKES THIS ROLE DIFFERENT

- **Two communities share this work.** Evans family descendants take an active part in the Society's governance and decisions, which is unusual among heritage organizations and one of the Society's real strengths. The Executive Director helps carry that partnership forward and keeps the descendants and the wider Oberlin community working together as programs and daily operations grow.
- **Trust in Oberlin is earned over time.** Oberlin has a long, layered history, including relationships among longtime residents, Oberlin College, and its students, as well as a racial history that remains present today. The Executive Director earns trust by showing up, listening, and learning from the community before leading change, with particular attention to Oberlin's African American community.
- **The founder is staying close.** The founding Executive Director will overlap with the new Executive Director to transfer relationships, files, and history before becoming Executive Director Emerita in September 2027. The Board of Trustees stays actively involved through the opening, so the new Executive Director will not carry it alone.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Financial Management

- Develops and manages the annual operating budget for an organization opening its doors to the public
- Works with the volunteer Treasurer and the Society's accountant on financial reporting to the Board
- Prepares the Society for its first full financial audit, including any audit required for federal awards, and keeps compliance filings current
- Carries out the Society's responsibilities as an employer, including payroll, employment law, and personnel policies

Revenue and Fundraising

In the first two years, the Board of Trustees wants the Executive Director to focus on establishing the Society in the community, bringing in visitors, and building the brand of the Evans House. Fundraising is a shared responsibility, and the Board will carry part of it through its fundraising committee, so the Executive Director is not expected to spend most of their time raising money at the start. As the house becomes established, the Executive Director takes on a growing share of fundraising, and by the third year leads the work of raising the operating budget with the Board's support.

- Works with the Board of Trustees and its fundraising committee on an annual revenue plan that shares the work of raising operating support between the Board and the Executive Director
- Builds revenue first through visitors, programs, membership, and partnerships across Oberlin and the region, as the Society establishes its place in the community
- Keeps and grows the Society's existing donors and membership, and builds new support from individuals, foundations, and businesses over time
- Asks for and closes gifts personally, alongside Board members
- Brings pricing and new revenue ideas to the Board as complete proposals with the research behind them

Board Partnership and Governance

- Provides a written report at each Board meeting and keeps the Board informed between meetings
- Carries out the policies and direction the Board sets, and brings new ideas forward for Board decision
- Calls and organizes committee meetings, tracks action items, and follows up so that work gets done
- Supports the Board as it moves from overseeing a capital project to governing an operating organization, including planning the annual meeting each September

Community Partnerships and Public Voice

- Builds and holds relationships with the Evans family descendants, the Oberlin Heritage Center, the City of Oberlin, Oberlin College, schools, churches, and civic organizations
- Takes on the state and national relationships the founding Executive Director has built, including regional and national heritage and Underground Railroad networks
- Serves as the public voice of the Society to media, visitors, funders, and partner institutions, including an active presence on social media
- Attends community events regularly to meet people, listen, and earn trust over time

Grants and Federal Funding

- Researches, writes, and manages grants from foundations and government sources
- Maintains the Society's relationship with the National Park Service, including reporting and compliance on federal awards
- Keeps grant records, reports, and deadlines organized so the Society stays in good standing with every funder

Site Operations

- Opens the house to the public and sets and keeps regular visiting hours
- Establishes and manages contracts with vendors for building maintenance, grounds care, cleaning, and security
- Oversees safety, insurance, accessibility, and building access, along with the daily problems of an open building, from equipment failures to weather
- Handles walk-in visitors and the interruptions that come with being the only staff member on site

Programs and Visitor Experience

- Develops public programs that put the house to good use, such as speakers, reading groups, film series, and regular meetings of genealogy and history groups
- Works within the interpretive plan for the permanent exhibits and plans rotating exhibits with the Evans family, scholars, and partners
- Brings visitors in from Oberlin, Cleveland, and beyond through marketing, tourism partnerships, and school groups
- Presents the painful parts of this history, including slavery, lynching, and segregation, honestly and with care

Volunteers and Future Staff

- Recruits, trains, schedules, and supervises the volunteers who give tours and help run the house

- Works alongside the volunteer leaders in membership, bookkeeping, graphic design, media, and operations
- Hires and supervises paid staff as the strategic plan and funding allow

THE FIRST YEAR

By the end of the first year, the Board hopes to see the house open on a regular schedule with trained volunteers in place and a calendar of public programs underway. The Executive Director will have built a revenue plan with the Board, prepared the Society for its first audit, and taken over the National Park Service relationship. Just as important, the Executive Director will become a familiar and trusted presence in Oberlin, known to the Evans family, partner organizations, and neighbors, and the Board will receive a clear report at every meeting.

QUALIFICATIONS

Required

- Three to five years of nonprofit management or comparable leadership experience, including responsibility for a budget
- A record of raising operating revenue from individuals, members, and foundations, including gifts asked for and closed personally
- Experience reporting to or working closely with a volunteer board
- A record of building community partnerships, including earning trust in a community where you are new to the community or the position
- Experience researching, writing, and managing grants, including government grants and their reporting requirements
- Experience running the daily operations of a site, facility, or program open to the public
- Strong writing and public speaking skills

Preferred

- Knowledge of African American history, Underground Railroad and abolition history, or Oberlin history
- Museum, historic site, or public history experience
- Experience bringing in visitors through marketing, social media, or heritage tourism, and building earned revenue
- Experience developing public programs and educational initiatives
- Experience recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers
- Experience opening a new site or launching a new organization
- Working knowledge of nonprofit employment and compliance requirements

A museum background is not required. Genuine interest in the Evans family's story is.

THE PERSON THE BOARD IS LOOKING FOR

Beyond experience, the Board of Trustees described the qualities that will make someone successful in this role and in this community.

- **Sees this as the work, not the title.** The right person is a hands-on builder who wants to do the start-up work of opening a historic site and finds meaning in it.

- **Listens as well as leads.** This person takes time to understand Oberlin, the Evans family, and the Board before making changes.
- **Leads honest conversations.** This person can talk openly about race and about the hard parts of this history, and stays steady when facing public criticism.
- **Enjoys people.** This person is warm and engaging with visitors, volunteers, and neighbors, and treats everyone they meet with respect.
- **Gets things done.** This person is organized and confident enough to call meetings, keep people on track, and follow through.
- **Works within the Board's direction.** This person makes daily decisions with confidence while respecting the vision and guardrails the Board has set.
- **Adapts well.** This person handles interruptions, surprises, and the variety of being the only staff member with patience and good humor.

COMPENSATION AND WORKING CONDITIONS

The salary range is $65,000 to $70,000, based on experience, plus benefits. The Board of Trustees has approved a 3% salary increase at the end of each of the first two years of employment, with later increases set by the Board through the annual performance review.

Some evening and weekend work is expected for public hours, programs, and events, along with occasional travel for regional and national heritage networks.

The Wilson Bruce Evans Home Historical Society is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome applicants of every background and are committed to a fair and consistent process for every candidate.