



## Executive Director Opportunity Guide

[WSSDA.org](http://WSSDA.org)



# About Washington State School Directors' Association

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) is a nonpartisan state agency formed in 1922 that builds leaders by empowering its members with tools, knowledge, and skills to govern with excellence and advocate for public education. Funded by public education money, and with a goal of serving as a unifying voice of the public education agenda, WSSDA is the premier resource hub and advocate for public education governance. WSSDA resources, materials, and opportunities are available to all WSSDA members.

Offering comprehensive leadership development programs, strategic advocacy initiatives, and expert policy and legal support tailored to meet the diverse needs of Washington's elected school board members, WSSDA aims to equip these dedicated leaders with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to effectively serve and represent their districts, fostering educational excellence and equitable opportunities for over 1M students across the state. WSSDA strives to drive impactful leadership, foster student-centered governance, and bridge connections for student success in Washington's public education landscape. With a focus on transparency, collaboration, and empowerment, WSSDA fosters a community of dedicated leaders united in their commitment to educational excellence.

WSSDA has three branches that provide valuable services, resources, and supports to school boards across the state:

- **Leadership Development** - WSSDA offers training programs, events, and tools throughout the year that were developed to maximize leadership and governance abilities for improved student learning. Because WSSDA is the only organization representing the school board/governance perspective in the state's public education system, it is uniquely qualified to provide training for school directors.
- **Policy & Legal** - To help school districts stay on track with the most current policies and legal developments, WSSDA provides a variety of services and publications to support effective school district governance. WSSDA also provides members with responses to frequently asked questions regarding conflicts of interest, open public meetings, parliamentary procedures, etc.
- **Strategic Advocacy** - WSSDA equips all school board members with the knowledge, tools, and resources to engage in effective year-round legislative advocacy at the state and federal levels, through its strategic advocacy branch led by education policy experts.



All 1,477 elected School Board members in Washington are automatically members of WSSDA.



# The Opportunity: Executive Director

WSSDA seeks an Executive Director who is a consensus builder and an effective communicator with a passion for equipping the leaders who make a substantive impact on the education of over 1M children across the state of Washington. The Board desires a diplomatic and innovative Executive Director to steer the organization to the next level of impact and efficacy. As an advocate of all school board members across Washington state from districts with varying sizes, needs, and resources, the WSSDA Executive Director will need to seek balanced perspectives, engage all members as effectively as possible, and find common ground among stakeholders with competing or opposing priorities.

After nearly 8 years of leadership that evolved WSSDA in numerous positive ways, current Executive Director Tim Garchow is departing at the end of the current fiscal year. Under Mr. Garchow's leadership, WSSDA has significantly elevated its role in the public education policy arena. Most notably, WSSDA has become one of the biggest levers in K-12 education; school boards are represented by a stronger voice through WSSDA's committees and board, expert staff, and strong collaborative connections statewide. During Mr. Garchow's tenure, WSSDA underwent internal restructuring, adopting a shared leadership model to foster a more collaborative and positive work culture that ultimately resulted in the delivery of improved services to members. Mr. Garchow worked with the board to establish the new WSSDA Headquarters, offering a modern, highly functional workspace for staff and collaborative areas for members, committees, the WSSDA board, and education partners.

Accountable to the Board for carrying out the organization's mission and achieving its goals, the Executive Director is responsible for overall planning, deployment, coordination, monitoring, improvement, and management of staff and operations.

Directly reporting to the WSSDA Board of Directors, the Executive Director will lead a staff of approximately 15 full-time employees with 6 direct reports, which provide school board members research-based professional development opportunities, policy and legal services, and legislative advocacy supports based on the democratically determined member priorities of school board members statewide.

Critical to effective leadership in this role is the ability to cultivate and steward relationships with policymakers, community stakeholders, state legislators, elected officials, and advocacy groups that advance the interests of WSSDA. The Executive Director must thrive in legislative relations of a nonpartisan organization. The Executive Director will serve as a subject matter expert with a seat at the table in public education, so remaining abreast of emerging sector trends, best practices, and policies is essential. As the leader of a nonpartisan organization, the Executive Director will need the ability to transcend politics and remain focused on the impact on students while also supporting the autonomy of local school boards.



# Performance Objectives

## Strategic & Industry Leadership

- Establish and maintain a strong relationship with the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, allowing for a transparent partnership and effective governance. Collaborate with Board members to determine appropriate strategies to achieve WSSDA's mission and vision.
- Coordinate and implement the [Action & Accountability Plan](#), measurable outcomes, and directed strategies in partnership with the Board and Leadership Team while maintaining a solid, sustainable operational infrastructure. As necessary for a new era of leadership, lead a process to define strategic futures to serve the interests of members.
- Demonstrate industry leadership in local and state forums to both share best practices and ensure WSSDA remains a leader in high-quality services. Keep the Board and members informed of changing trends and regulations and how WSSDA can remain at the forefront of the industry.
- Communicate transparently, effectively, and regularly with the Board and membership, serving as the strongest link of communication between Board members, school board directors, staff, legislators, and the community at-large.
- Provide collaborative leadership in maintaining a positive and productive working relationship among the Board of Directors, membership, and partnering agencies in the state and field of public education.

## External Relations & Policy Advocacy

- Raise the profile of WSSDA (regionally and statewide) while supporting the initiatives and needs of the members it serves.
- Maintain active membership and a strong presence in professional organizations, community groups, state councils and commissions, and other spaces relevant to the work of WSSDA and its mission.
- Build coalitions that move policy work ahead, and effectively work on bipartisan legislative advocacy.
- Monitor the legislative program and maintain relationships with state agencies, such as the State Board of Directors, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Governor's office.
- Respond to member concerns. Facilitate the connection between school directors and the resources sought and ensure that services support the needs and purpose of membership and the field.
- Attend regional meetings of local boards, listen to learn each district's struggles and strengths, and help make the connection to emergent resources.
- Bring districts into active engagement with WSSDA's democratic process that allows all positions to be proposed and considered. Increase involvement in the [General Assembly](#), annual conference, and in legislative advocacy.
- Cultivate a community of informed and inspired leaders who champion student success. Provide education and training for school board members, particularly those who are newly elected.





# Performance Objectives

## Team Leadership & Administration

- Ensure a solid operating infrastructure of all aspects of the agency under the guidance and policy set by the Board (staffing, contracts, finances, program, etc.).
- Create and maintain a climate and culture that attracts, motivates, and retains a productive and cohesive staff with both professional/technical expertise and operational talent. This includes role modeling the key behaviors of active learning and listening, empowerment, respect, collaboration, recognition, empathy, and fun.
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and efficient use of all organizational resources.
- Provide oversight to ensure that the organization operates within budget guidelines. Regularly monitor budgets and cash flow statements.
- Monitor monthly reporting on the organization's financial position and outlook and ensure fiscal responsibility. Grant approvals for investments and expenditures.
- Develop strategies for seeking additional revenue to support budget growth as appropriate.
- Lead and manage staff through a lens of collaboration and flexibility; support staff growth, professional development, and work/life balance.
- Maintain departmental operating policies and procedures. Ensure that leadership staff are informed of association-wide practices, issues, and processes.



# The Qualified Candidate

WSSDA is in search of a transparent and collaborative leader as its next Executive Director. The ideal candidate will challenge the status quo, bridge divisions and unify efforts of school boards across the state (i.e., rural vs. urban, big vs. small, east vs. west, influential vs. invisible, etc.), and drive change all while promoting civility and open discourse in and through all interactions. With prior experience in Board leadership and development, along with a background in collaborating with a member-services, policy entity, a leader with a creative and inviting approach to implementing “best practices” is sought.

The ability to understand and navigate the state of Washington’s educational and political landscape, WSSDA’s relationships with all legislators, and community support services will be key. The Executive Director serves as the primary spokesperson for WSSDA’s interactions with partners, policymakers, and the broader base of community leaders. The next Executive Director will have knowledge of parties concerned with education in Washington state to improve educational opportunities for all students, working conditions, salaries for teachers and administrators, and bipartisan support for education in the legislature. WSSDA is seeking a candidate who can foster depoliticized decision-making, collaboration, and consensus-building to advance organizational goals through cooperative efforts.

## Specific Requirements Include:

- Passion for WSSDA’s mission and the children of Washington, augmented by demonstrated experience in similar programmatic and nonprofit service areas.
- Exceptional ability to work across lines of difference and divergent perspectives with diplomacy and discretion, bringing people together around shared vision, goals, and civil discourse.
- An open-minded approach that facilitates discussion and seeks to find common ground among all people and positions. Bring an unbiased perspective allowing all views to be considered.
- Ability to cultivate and leverage strong external relationships with a variety of business, civic, and elected leaders on the state and local levels, as well as with state agencies, partner organizations, and other stakeholders.
- Track record in fiscal management, stewardship, and strategy. A record of integrity and inclusiveness in nonpartisan organizations is essential.
- Proven success in building strong and productive work teams with a focus on mentoring and nurturing staff development.
- Strong analytic and strategic-thinking skills, with a demonstrated ability to create, implement, and monitor complex plans and then translate those plans into goals and concrete strategies.
- Success in advocating for or obtaining adequate financial resources for public institutions and entities.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills, including the ability to share information, influence/persuade others, and negotiate mutually beneficial outcomes. Strong public speaking skills are required, as well as the ability to convey compelling messages to a variety of audiences.
- Work within a Member Services Association/Association Management is desired, but not required.
- A minimum of 7 years of progressive experience in leadership and management in nonprofit organizations or public education. Direct work in legislative relations is a must, as well as demonstrated and effective leadership in public education.
- Record of integrity in decision making and information sharing.

Don’t check off every box in the requirements listed above? Please consider applying anyway! Studies have shown that underrepresented communities - such as women, people of color, LGBTQ, people with disabilities, and immigrants - are less likely to apply to jobs unless they meet every single qualification. WSSDA is dedicated to building an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible workplace that fosters a sense of belonging – so if you’re excited about this role but your past experience doesn’t align perfectly with every qualification in the job description, we encourage you to still consider submitting an application.

# Specifics and How to Apply

This position offers a market-rate salary based on recent benchmarking and board review. The hiring range is expected to be in the low \$200,000s. Strong benefits are offered through the Public Employee Benefit Board (PEBB), and WSSDA employees participate in the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS). The team currently operates in a Hybrid format, with M/F as remote days and Tuesday-Thursday as in office days. Given that WSSDA is a State agency, and the external responsibilities of the role, the Executive Director must be able to be present in the greater Olympia area as well as travel throughout the state regularly, and nationally to conferences and other events related to this leadership role. Relocation is negotiable based on a specific situation and within state guidelines. Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) is an equal opportunity employer.

WSSDA strives to create an inclusive working environment that respects diverse backgrounds. Individuals from diverse gender, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, religions and creeds, and national origins, individuals with any disabilities or the use of a trained service dog or service animal, individuals over 40 years of age, individuals in honorably discharged veteran or military status and individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities are encouraged to apply. Please include your name and preferred pronouns in your application, to ensure we address you appropriately throughout the application process.

To ensure confidential tracking of all applicants, no applications will be accepted via email. ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

All candidate-submitted materials and credentials will be reviewed for consistency and accuracy. Candidates can expect that KEES will verify employment/academic/ background information both in the screening process and for the finalist(s) in a formal background check. KEES utilizes a 4-step screening process, the first of which is the formal Candidate Application.

Applications are reviewed by the KEES team and advanced through various stages of inquiry and confirmation. Applications with specific cover letters will be given priority consideration. Early applications are encouraged and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications received by June 18, 2024 will get priority consideration. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the search. Based on the timing of your specific application, you are welcome to reach out for information on the timeline.

This search is being managed by Heather Eddy, President & CEO, and Megan Taylor, Project Manager, of KEES. Questions may be addressed to [mtaylor@kees2success.com](mailto:mtaylor@kees2success.com).

**APPLY HERE**



## About KEES

KEES (formerly Alford Executive Search) is a nonprofit executive search firm that builds diverse teams with dynamic leaders in the nonprofit and public sectors. A woman owned and operated firm, KEES offers a full array of nonprofit consulting services including executive search, leadership development, interim staffing, and HR support. For more information, please visit [KEES](https://www.kees2success.com).