



ISLAND READERS & WRITERS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The board of directors of Island Readers & Writers (IRW) seeks a proven and passionate leader to succeed Founding Executive Director Jan Coates and advance the mission of this unique nonprofit: to inspire a passion for reading and learning among children living on Maine's coastal islands and rural inland communities. This beloved nonprofit is premised on the belief that reading enriches lives and makes the world big, which is especially crucial for children in Maine's remote environments. IRW travels by car, boat and plane to deliver year-round programming, working closely with each constituent community to craft high-touch, book-centered and interactive experiences for children and their supporting educators, families, and neighbors. Through its unique approach, IRW makes a demonstrable impact on participating students, teachers, and the school communities served.

Organizational Overview

Incorporated in 2006, Island Readers & Writers partners today with 26 schools, bringing book-centered educational experiences to more than 2,600 children in grades Pre-K-8, from Cliff Island to the Passamaquoddy Reservation.

These experiences are designed to stretch imaginations, encourage curiosity, develop creative and reflective thinking skills, and expand perspectives through hands-on learning in natural history, science, literature, writing, and art. IRW collaborates with teachers and authors and illustrators to customize each experience to the school's needs and goals. Each program culminates with a visit from the author or illustrator, and every participating student receives a personalized copy of the featured book. Last year, IRW distributed 2,739 books.

Beyond its signature Island Book & Author Program, IRW has created robust professional development opportunities for Maine educators, including Dear Teacher, a two-day conference celebrating literacy and rural education. The organization has also expanded its offerings to include virtual, hybrid, and community-based programming at libraries and beyond, as well as programs for homeschoolers.

In 2020, the Library of Congress honored IRW for its implementation of best practices in literacy promotion, and IRW has twice been the recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read grant. Indeed, IRW has earned longstanding support from public and private grantors and individual philanthropists, testament to the high quality and significant impact of its work. The organization has grown on the strength of its relationships—with educators, children and families, authors and illustrators, and funders—its deep respect for the communities served, and its responsiveness to their needs and desires.

With assets totaling \$5 million and an annual operating budget of \$729,000, IRW's dedicated board of directors and exceptionally talented staff seek to build on the organization's firm foundation and evolve to serve more children, educators, and communities.

For more information about IRW's history, team, programs, approach, and outcomes, visit <https://islandreadersandwriters.org/>.

Role and Responsibilities

The executive director provides leadership internally and externally to advance the mission of Island Readers & Writers, ensuring a sustainable financial base for its operations, upholding the highest professional standards and best practices in building literacy, and maintaining IRW's child-centric approach. This individual directs all aspects of

the organization's day-to-day operations, serving as chief executive and principal fundraiser, working in collaboration with the organization's highly skilled and motivated staff and in partnership with the board.

Specific responsibilities include

- *Strategic leadership.* Provide visionary leadership and partner with the board in developing long-term strategic plans to advance the mission, deepen impact, and ensure sustainability
- *Fiscal management.* Develop an annual operating budget for board approval and oversee all financials, cash flow, investment accounts, and bookkeeping, ensuring accuracy and timeliness; prepare monthly financial reports for the board and annual financial summaries, comparing budget to actual revenue and expenses and explaining variances
- *Fundraising.* Develop and lead implementation of a multifaceted development plan to sustain current relationships and expand the organization's network of support; identify, cultivate, and engage major donors, including individuals, foundations, community organizations, and businesses; support the continued development of The Purple Crayon Society to honor legacy gifts; maintain accurate documentation of donor activities and funding initiatives, and ensure informative and timely reporting
- *Program oversight.* Oversee the development and implementation of all programming to ensure exceptional quality, mission-alignment, and the achievement of desired outcomes
- *Public relations.* Develop and execute effective outreach and visibility strategies, serving as the primary voice of IRW and overseeing implementation of a robust communication strategy including newsletters, year-end reports, annual appeals, website updates, press releases, public appearances, and social media; maintain positive and collaborative relationships with diverse stakeholders that inspire sustained support for the mission
- *Human resource management.* Provide organizational leadership and management of employees (currently two full-time and three part-time), including recruitment, hiring, compensation, professional development, and evaluation, maintaining a culture and environment that is stimulating, respectful, collaborative, and fun
- *Board relations.* Work in productive partnership with the board of directors, providing informative reports on a regular basis, participating in board committees as appropriate, and assisting in the recruitment and orientation of new board members and ongoing board education
- *General operations.* Maintain a comprehensive set of policies and procedures to guide organizational activities and decision-making; ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies

Position Requirements

Effectively navigating a founder's transition and leading Island Readers & Writers as it grows from a small to mid-sized organization requires a broad set of attributes and skills. The successful candidate will bring to IRW:

- A passion for IRW's mission and a sense of urgency around broadening high-quality learning opportunities for rural children
- Senior-level organizational leadership experience, preferably in the nonprofit sector, and successful experience growing an organization through the development and execution of strategic plans
- Demonstrated capacity to juggle multiple responsibilities, prioritize, and balance big-picture thinking and attention to detail
- Exceptional verbal and written communication skills, including active listening, and the ability to adapt and engage meaningfully with various constituencies and build enduring relationships

- Financial acumen and experience managing the finances of an organization with annual revenue of \$750,000-\$1 million
- Appreciation for the nuances of the educational landscape in rural areas and interest in educational policy and best practices
- Demonstrated strength developing and executing a multifaceted fundraising strategy and promoting a culture of philanthropy amongst a community of supporters
- A successful record of managing diverse teams, building healthy culture, effectively delegating, and developing talent
- Experience working in partnership with a nonprofit board of directors and supporting best governance practices
- Evidence of creative problem-solving, strategic planning, and efficient execution
- High energy, authenticity, and good humor
- Technological proficiency
- Integrity, curiosity, and humility

IRW's offices are currently located in Southwest Harbor. While future facility plans will likely take shape as part of a comprehensive strategic planning process, the executive director's proximity to IRW's partner schools and community of support will remain essential. The new hire would therefore be expected to live within reasonable driving distance of the organization's service region.

Compensation

IRW's executive director will earn a salary of \$85,000-100,000 commensurate with experience and benefits including health insurance, paid time off, and access to Maine MERIT workplace retirement savings program. The successful candidate can expect a formal review after the initial six months, and an annual review thereafter.

Nondiscrimination

Island Readers & Writers does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, national origin, ancestry, public assistance, ethnic background, religion, marital status, economic class, age, disability or handicap (mental or physical), sex, creed, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and any other legally protected characteristics in admission or participation in its programs, services and activities, or in employment. The organization complies with all applicable national, state and local laws pertaining to nondiscrimination and equal opportunity.

To apply

Interested candidates should send a cover letter and resume to Starboard Leadership Consulting at the following address: search3@starboardleadership.com. Paper copies may be sent to Jessica Weiner, Starboard Leadership Consulting, 84 Harlow St., Bangor, ME 04401, but electronic submissions of material are preferred. No phone inquiries, please.

The application deadline is March 6, 2025, and review of all submissions will begin immediately thereafter.