

Executive Director

Virginia Discovery Museum

Charlottesville, Virginia

About the Virginia Discovery Museum

The [Virginia Discovery Museum](#) (VDM) is a vibrant, hands-on children's museum located on Charlottesville's historic Downtown Mall. For more than 45 years, VDM has sparked curiosity, creativity, and discovery in young children and the adults who care for them. Through interactive exhibits and programs grounded in early childhood development, the museum creates joyful learning experiences that help build confident learners and connected families.

VDM serves approximately 60,000 visitors annually and operates with a commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community impact, ensuring that all children can explore, imagine, and discover together.

Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) is the strategic and visionary leader of VDM, responsible for advancing its mission, ensuring financial sustainability, and strengthening its role as a cornerstone of early childhood experiences in the region.

Leading a dedicated team of six staff members and 200 plus volunteers, and working in close partnership with an engaged Board of Directors, the ED balances big-picture vision with hands-on execution. This leader will drive fundraising and community engagement while maintaining excellence in daily operations and the visitor experience.

The ED will play a critical role in shaping the museum's next chapter—expanding its reach, deepening its impact, and exploring opportunities for growth in programs, partnerships, and potentially physical space.

The Virginia Discovery Museum seeks to welcome its next Executive Director in **Summer 2026**, with some flexibility based on candidate availability.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership & Vision

- Partner with the Board to develop and implement a multi-year strategic plan to expand the reach and mission of VDM.
- Identify opportunities for growth in audience, programming, and facilities.
- Measure educational impact and organizational success and integrate into strategic planning.

Fundraising & Financial Leadership

- Lead and execute a comprehensive fundraising strategy through individual giving, corporate partnerships, foundation grants, and events.
- Maintain and foster new relationships with major donors and community supporters.
- Oversee grant strategy, including research, writing, and reporting.
- Develop and manage an annual operating budget of approximately \$900,000.
- Ensure strong financial controls, reporting, and compliance, including audit and tax filings.
- Partner with the Board to manage long-term financial planning, including endowment oversight.

Community Engagement & External Relations

- Serve as the museum's primary ambassador and public voice.
- Build strategic partnerships with schools, universities, nonprofits, and businesses.
- Represent VDM with local, regional, and state government entities.
- Elevate the museum's visibility and reputation through museum associations and non-profit leadership and community organizations.

Operations & Visitor Experience

- Support Director of Operations in day-to-day museum operations, ensuring a high-quality, safe, and engaging visitor experience.
- Oversee exhibit maintenance and evolution of exhibits, including the historic carousel.
- Spearhead collaborations with local government officials, public leaders, university partners, and others to highlight and expand VDM facilities and programming.
- Uphold compliance with safety, ADA, and nonprofit regulations, and ensure equal access to programs and facilities.

Team Leadership & Culture

- Retain and develop a high-performing team of staff including development and professional opportunities.
- Recruit high-performing volunteers and staff as needed.
- Foster a collaborative, inclusive, and mission-driven workplace culture.
- Support staff in delivering innovative, high-quality programs and exhibits.

Qualifications

Required:

- 8–10+ years of senior leadership experience, ideally in a nonprofit, museum, education, or mission-driven organization.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, including major gifts and institutional support.
- Strong financial acumen, including budgeting, forecasting, and financial reporting
- Experience managing and developing teams.
- Exceptional communication and relationship-building skills.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree or relevant professional certifications preferred.

Preferred:

- Experience in non-profit management, education, or cultural institutions.
 - Familiarity with government relations and public funding environments.
 - Advanced degree (e.g., MBA, M.Ed., MNM, Museum Studies, or related field).
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Compensation & Benefits

- \$115,000-\$135,000 salary range, commensurate with experience.
 - Benefits package including health insurance and paid time off.
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How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter outlining their interest in the role and alignment with the Virginia Discovery Museum's mission to:

edsearch@vadm.org

Applications will be reviewed by a search committee of the Board of Directors. All inquiries and applications will be handled confidentially.