Executive Director

The Opportunity
Walkway Over the Hudson seeks an inclusive, motivating leader with a proven ability to make strategic decisions, establish priorities, and communicate in ways that resonate and engage a diverse audience. This visionary leader will activate the organization around a clear vision, purpose, and priorities during the next years of Walkway Over the Hudson's growth.

Reporting to the Walkway Board of Directors, the Executive Director is a synergistic partner with New York State Parks, operating within the terms of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Cooperative Programming Agreement. Working with a dedicated staff, Board of Directors, and volunteer base, the new Executive Director will build upon the organization's successful programs, events, reputation, and history to advance the organization into the future.

Organization Summary
Walkway Over the Hudson (WOTH) www.walkwayoverthehudson.org is a 501-C3 nonprofit Friends organization formed in 1993 to transform an 1889 decaying commercial railroad bridge into a pedestrian Walkway. Known as the "Great Connector," the WOTH was launched with a 38-million-dollar funding effort spearheaded by the Dyson Foundation and supported by a passionate group of community leaders and the New York State government. The bridge opened as a New York State Park with great fanfare in October 2009.

This 1.28-mile linear park spans the Hudson River between the Town of Lloyd in Ulster County and the City of Poughkeepsie in Dutchess County. The Walkway connects the communities of the Hudson Valley, welcoming more than 600,000 local and global visitors annually who enjoy the unique view from 212 feet above the river as they walk, cycle, and run amidst its scenic beauty. Through unique partnerships and services, WOTH visitors can connect with the Empire State Trail, other rail trails, other NYS Parks, and many of the Hudson Valley's towns and communities.

The impacts of the Walkway Over the Hudson are far-reaching. They range from restoring a sense of pride in the community, providing health and fitness benefits, serving as a place to celebrate a milestone or show solidarity for a cause to generally being an accessible place to enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the Hudson River.

Today, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and the NYS Bridge Authority operate and own the Walkway. It is open year-round, offering programs, events, and
tours made possible through membership and donations. As a Friends organization, WOTH Board, Staff, and Volunteers (WOTH Ambassadors) collaborate with the State Parks team as they dedicate themselves to supporting and improving the visitor experience.

After a decade of significant growth, successful progress, and collaboration, WOTH has proudly accomplished important capital projects, including the planning, designing, and construction of the Ulster and Dutchess Visitor centers. WOTH visitors now experience new wayfinding and interpretive signage, as well as the comfort of services of the West Gate Plaza and the newly-completed East Gate Plaza and Friends Pavilion. The WOTH now offers visitors with limited mobility an option to tour the bridge with an ADA electric tram and other amenities. Eco-friendly solar lighting has also been installed across the span of the bridge, providing opportunities for evening events and adding a unique illumination across the expanse of the Hudson River.

As the Walkway transitions into a more mature and established nonprofit organization, it seeks to sustain its financial stability while expanding its funding from various sources: individuals, corporate and business support, members, special events, and private grants, along with increasing its endowment. As WOTH enters this next phase of growth and development, the focus remains on expanding and enhancing Walkway access to the diverse communities it serves.

**Position Overview**
The Executive Director (ED) will be responsible for driving the strategic growth of Walkway Over the Hudson while overseeing the daily operations. Working with the Board of Directors, the ED will contribute to the next strategic planning and goal prioritization necessary to support and improve the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park. Leading the organization into its next phase, the Executive Director will understand the complexities of change management and assist others to manage and embrace changing priorities.

The Executive Director will strengthen relationships with key stakeholders and influential collaborators, ensuring the successful delivery of goals and experiences. These relationships include NYS Parks department leaders and their teams; local and regional political leaders; business leaders and representatives; community partners; not-for-profit organizations; and Board, staff, WOTH members, and volunteers.

This individual will be a fundraiser, advocate, and skillful communicator, building on the Walkway's history, mission, values, culture, programs, constituencies, and infrastructure. As the "face of the organization," the ED must be a passionate spokesperson representing WOTH at community activities to promote and sustain the organization's community presence as the "Great Connector."

The Executive Director will identify strategies to build upon the current WOTH Ambassador program to attract, recruit and retain WOTH volunteers who significantly contribute to visitor experiences.
Building and leading a dynamic and cohesive team and developing staff members to their highest potential are essential to this position. A skilled team leader and a team player, the Executive Director, understands the power of delegation and accountability by setting clear goals and expectations for all employees. The ED will manage a culture that results in staff retention and alignment of duties with strategic priorities.

To promote sustainability, the Executive Director works with the Board of Directors to ensure that WOTH is fiscally, ethically, and administratively sound. In addition, the Executive Director advises and educates board members, leveraging their expertise to support the Walkway Over the Hudson mission.

**Knowledge, Skills, Abilities Required**
The Executive Director is expected to bring senior-level managerial experience capable of consensus and relationship building, with a proven ability to lead and manage human and fiscal resources strategically. Personal characteristics include high emotional intelligence, outstanding interpersonal skills, and the passion and energy for building a healthy organizational culture.

Ideally, this leader will be well-networked and, through creativity, collaboration, follow-through, and results, will enhance current relationships, develop new opportunities, and attain the next level of financial support needed for sustaining and strengthening Walkway's operations. The successful candidate should have the following experience and attributes:

**Strategic Thinker, Visionary**
The ability to set strategic direction inspires Board and staff while identifying and responding to growth opportunities. A visionary with the maturity, confidence, wisdom, and collaborative skills necessary to garner the trust and confidence of the Board, funders, donors, partners, and other stakeholders.

**Fundraiser**
The ability to strategically design and execute fundraising initiatives by maximizing the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of existing donors and donor prospects. The ability to sense donor priorities, deepen current relationships, and lead the Walkway to new sources of support.

**Collaborator and Networker**
The ability to develop, maintain, and strengthen partnerships with others inside and outside the organization who can provide information, assistance, and support. A proven track record of building and maintaining strong relationships with community partners. Serve as a spokesperson for the Walkway to initiate dialogues with prospective funders, and maintain high visibility at public events.
Change Agent
The ability to demonstrate support for innovation and organizational changes needed to improve Walkway's effectiveness, initiating, sponsoring, and implementing organizational change, helping others to manage organizational change.

Communicator
The ability to passionately articulate the mission of the Walkway and deliver compelling presentations highlighting the Walkway's uniqueness and capacities to diverse audiences. An authentic communicator who can deal effectively with multiple stakeholders and navigate complex relationships across differing constituencies resulting in enduring relationships.

Leader
The ability to lead by example demonstrating an unwavering work ethic and commitment to excellence. The ability to inspire, develop and empower staff resulting in a productive team-based culture that is equitable and inclusive, demonstrating trust and respect.

Fiscal Manager
The ability to oversee all financial (or fiscal) operations, including ensuring implementation of internal controls, timely and accurate financial reporting, budgeting, and managing cash flow.

Experience
In addition to the skills enumerated above, the Executive Director candidate must have the following qualifications:
✓ Minimum eight years’ senior leadership experience. Previous experience in a nonprofit leadership role preferred.
✓ Awareness of the unique opportunities and challenges of a nonprofit is essential.
✓ Proven track record in securing community support both fiscally and collaboratively.
✓ Bachelor's degree required, advanced degree in a related field a plus.

Walkway Over the Hudson seeks a diverse pool of candidates and is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants should reply with a resume and cover letter to Carol Gordon, executive search consultant, at: ApplyWalkwayED@gmail.com