



**JUST-A-START CORPORATION, INC.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CAMBRIDGE, MA**

THE SEARCH

Just-A-Start Corporation, Inc. (JAS), a 50-year old nonprofit community development corporation with a legacy of excellence in affordable housing, youth and adult education, workforce development and tenant/landlord services, announces its search for a new Executive Director (ED). Since its inception, Just-A-Start has been a valuable bridge to opportunity for youth and adults in Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Somerville and other nearby communities. The new leader will work collaboratively with the board, staff and stakeholders to expand the organization's reach and increase its impact by crafting and executing a new strategic plan, securing additional resources and strengthening partnerships within the community.

JAS's vision is a better future for every community member: a secure home, a sustaining career, and engagement in the community. The organization is committed to building the housing security and economic stability of low-to-moderate-income people in Cambridge and nearby communities. Through comprehensive and integrated programs, JAS creates and maintains affordable housing, provides housing resources and services, offers education and workforce training for youth and adults, and builds community engagement.

The new ED will report to a 17-member board of directors comprised of civic and corporate leaders from JAS's service areas. S/he will be expected to refine the organization's strategic direction and lead the way in implementing it as well as managing the day-to-day functions of the organization. Over the past five years, the current ED has strengthened the internal operations of JAS, broadened and increased access to capital, increased the strength and effectiveness of the programs and staff and, with the board, improved and diversified the governance structure. The next ED will build upon these achievements by both leading and empowering the staff and cementing bonds with partners and the community.

The Executive Director will be responsible for a yearly operating budget of more than \$6 million and the management of a \$23 million real estate portfolio. The organization's 45-member staff of talented and committed professionals includes a five-person leadership team that reports directly to the Executive Director. The leadership team consists of the Housing Director, the Education and Training Director, the Development Director, the Acting Real Estate Director and the Finance and Administration Director, a post which is currently vacant.

This year, JAS is marking its 50th anniversary with a year-long series of events in the community, many of which have been underwritten by the significant sponsorship of local businesses. In addition to fundraisers and celebrations, there are panel discussions, lectures and events within the community to discuss issues related to jobs, youth and affordable housing and their importance in fostering a safe, vibrant and culturally diverse community.

This position is an exciting opportunity for a new leader to create solutions for low-to-moderate income residents of the community by enhancing their access to the innovative, entrepreneurial and client-focused spirit that has characterized the emergence of Cambridge as a high tech and biotech hub. S/he will address both long-standing challenges for these residents that are made more acute by prosperity and income disparity. It requires a person who combines a passionate commitment to social and economic justice, sensitivity to community needs and strong management skills to lead an organization that occupies a uniquely important position in the City of Cambridge and surrounding communities.

JAS has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this search. All inquiries, nominations, referrals and applications should be directed in strict confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY AND FOCUS

Just-A-Start (JAS) was founded in 1968 as a community revitalization and youth training program focused on improving Cambridge's then-struggling Wellington-Harrington neighborhood. JAS was officially incorporated as a multi-service organization for community development programs in 1971. JAS believes that each individual should have a safe, affordable, secure home. Everything starts at home – home is the organization's first priority because it is the foundation upon which everything else is built: education, careers, family. By helping residents rent a home, buy a home, stay in a home, and improve a home, JAS supports community residents in many ways.

In addition to housing, JAS has planted community roots firmly in the education and training field, thus ensuring that individuals of all ages and circumstances – teens, young adults, and adults alike – are on career pathways with the skills, knowledge, and training to find and sustain fulfilling jobs. JAS has programs and resources to enhance career options and earning power for those in high school, out of high school, going to college, developing new skills, or exploring career possibilities.

The agency has grown into a multi-service organization offering a coherent array of programs that support low-to-moderate-income people from across Cambridge and surrounding communities. JAS's primary service area is Cambridge, a city where the substantial wealth created by economic growth has exacerbated problems with access to affordable housing, thus contributing to the economic insecurity of many residents.

From its beginning, JAS has provided invaluable education, workforce development, and supportive services – beginning with the Summer Youth Enrichment Program, which still provides high school students with education and employment training each summer. JAS's education and training programs serve high school students who need additional academic and career development support, at-risk youth who have dropped out of high school and low-income adults who want to improve their career trajectory. These programs now serve more than 200 people each year with the goal of increasing their overall economic stability. Youth in JAS's

training programs also do community service – from beautification projects to full-scale rehabilitation of housing units – that benefits public housing residents in Cambridge and Chelsea.

Since the early 1970s, JAS has developed and preserved 600 units of affordable rental housing, which provide quality, secure homes for low- to moderate-income residents, thus playing a vital role in maintaining Cambridge’s economic diversity. JAS has also developed 130 affordable first-time homebuyer units for purchase and manages the preservation, rehab, and resale of affordable homeownership units on behalf of the City of Cambridge. This work allows low-income residents who want to remain in Cambridge buy a home in the city, despite the high cost of market-rate real estate. JAS’s more recent real estate development projects all incorporate environmentally friendly and energy efficient features, with two developments receiving LEED Platinum ratings.

JAS provides services to about 1,500 low-to-moderate-income people who live in JAS affordable rental properties, offering educational and community resources, and referrals to external community service providers. JAS also offers housing services to more than 1,000 community members every year, supporting renters by helping to resolve tenant-landlord disputes and prevent eviction and assisting low-income homeowners by providing financial and technical support for needed renovations.

Further details about JAS’s programs can be acquired by consulting their website at www.justastart.org.

EDUCATION & TRAINING SERVICES

Biomedical Careers Program

This free, nine-month training prepares low-to-moderate-income adults for entry-level jobs in the biotechnology, life sciences and medical research industries. Training includes chemistry, biology, medical terminology, and computer and laboratory skills. Students also receive job readiness training and job search support. Graduates may be eligible to receive college credits through a partnership with Bunker Hill Community College.

Information Technology (IT) Careers Program

This program provides low-to-moderate-income adults with the skills to access careers in the highly competitive and growing high-technology industry. Through this training module students are able to obtain stackable industry-recognized credentials and certificates (i.e., CompTIA, CompTIA A+ and Network+). The program is rooted in a “dual customer” model, where the focus of service is on both program participants and employers – adding value for both employers and program participants.

JAS YouthBuild

A comprehensive education, training and service program is designed for 17 to 24-year-old youths who have dropped out of high school, providing the opportunity for them to earn their high school diploma or HiSET and gain leadership and workforce skills. Youths spend half of their time in educational programs, including counseling and leadership development activities and half of their time learning construction skills working on professionally supervised housing renovation projects that benefit their community.

Youth Programs

This program brings career awareness and readiness to the forefront for high school students as they are beginning to think about their path in life and shows them how those concepts are tied to their educational success in high school and beyond. Youths are offered a continuum of employment opportunities, training, and support for different skill and experience levels. The programs enable them to build their resumes from a first early supported work experience, gain teamwork and leadership skills, learn how to find jobs and learn how to work with supervisors and coworkers. The programs also help them identify an education path that will work with their career goals.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS

Affordable Rental Housing

As part of its core mission, JAS develops and owns affordable apartments that enable low-to-moderate income residents to live in Cambridge at rents that are within their means. JAS's portfolio of rental properties includes 600 units across 41 properties ranging in size from studios to 5-bedrooms. JAS also currently has 134 units of affordable and workforce housing in various stages of development.

Homeownership Development

JAS develops homes sold at prices within reach for low-to-moderate income households. All of the homes are sold to first time homebuyers pursuant to an Affordable Housing Agreement with the City of Cambridge, allowing the City to repurchase the units when resold at a restricted sale price. Buyers are selected through a lottery process with preference given to Cambridge residents and families with children. Homeowners are required to take a First Time Homebuyers class prior to purchasing their home, and JAS provides condominium training and support in the first year of operation.

Condo Resale Program

There are more than 500 homeownership units in the City of Cambridge currently subject to Affordable Housing restrictions, including many developed by JAS. JAS manages the preservation, rehabilitation, and resale when owners decide to sell their units on behalf of the City. New buyers are selected from the Homeownership Resale Pool, which is administered by the City's Housing Division.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Financial Capability Program

Launched in 2017, this program provides participants with financial knowledge, skills, and resources with the goal of increasing the economic stability of JAS clients. Programming continues to be developed to meet the needs of JAS clients, including free, volunteer provided tax preparation, credit counseling and asset building workshops, one-on-one financial coaching, and a matched savings pilot program.

Home Improvement Program (HIP)

HIP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible Cambridge homeowners who want to renovate their 1-4 unit properties. The program covers houses, condominiums, and small rental properties. JAS's experienced rehab specialists guide clients through the entire process, from application to completion. Financial assistance is limited to those earning up to 120% of Area Median Income.

Housing Stabilization Services

JAS works with at-risk tenants, landlords, and low-income condo owners to support housing stability, prevent homelessness, and re-house homeless families through mediation, emergency financial assistance, case management, and legal services. It also provides workshops for tenants and landlords, and trainings for skills development to prevent homelessness.

Resident Services

JAS provides tenants of its affordable rental properties with services including community activities, education and supportive services (for example, ESOL and computer classes and support groups), and referral services. It also assists property management in addressing resident issues.

STAFF

JAS employs approximately forty-five staff members working in Cambridge. JAS's skilled staff includes teachers, case managers, licensed social workers, attorneys, trained mediators, construction managers, and project managers. Approximately thirty volunteers serve JAS each year, primarily in its YouthBuild program.

THE ROLE

The preferred candidate is a practical visionary, able to envision, communicate and execute a successful future for JAS, inspiring staff and stakeholders to support the mission. The Executive Director will lead the day-to-day functions of the organization, while also building the systems and capacities required to support anticipated growth in real estate development, property asset management, tenant/landlord services and education/workforce development activities. Through strong internal relations, careful planning and thoughtful implementation, the Executive Director will set a tone of professionalism and excellence throughout the organization. S/he will also be skilled at persuading the board to tackle the hard work necessary to achieve that vision. The Executive Director will be responsible for developing the staffing, systems, and policies required to develop additional new affordable housing, workforce development and community service initiatives and resources.

Through vision and entrepreneurial leadership, the Executive Director will continue to engage, educate, convene and coordinate with a broad array of stakeholders and institutions to support and create programs, services, public policies and financial resources to enhance community building initiatives. The ED will build on existing relationships with a wide array of constituents and partners from leaders of community-based agencies, government officials and corporate officers and will expand this base of support.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

One of the reasons JAS has proved successful over the last 50 years is its ability to adapt to a changing environment, changing funding sources and changing needs of its community. With the JAS board, the new Executive Director will lead Just-A-Start in developing and implementing real estate/housing development and community building initiatives to meet the needs of this challenging environment. The Executive Director will supervise a 45-member staff of experienced and versatile professionals, some of whom have joined in recent years and some have been with the organization for a good part of their career. Their grasp of institutional

history, insights and experiences, are assets to be valued and leveraged by the new Executive Director.

The Board has established the following objectives for the next Executive Director:

Develop a strategic plan while preserving JAS's core values.

The next ED will collaborate with the Board of Directors, staff, residents and other stakeholders to develop and implement a new strategic plan that aligns the budget, staff, and priorities with JAS's core mission and programmatic goals. Understanding the needs of the residents and other community stakeholders is essential to being able to offer programs that align with their aspirations. The plan will ensure that the organization is positioned to take advantage of any new developments and funding possibilities for affordable housing and community development initiatives, and educational programs.

Develop a culture of philanthropy and increase fundraising.

As a non-profit that relies heavily on external funding, JAS must think creatively about ways to leverage financial resources from private, corporate, government and foundation sources to ensure the financial stability of the organization. Over the past couple of years, the resource department has made significant strides in bringing in national and local corporate funding and foundation support. They continue to face challenges in terms of expanding the individual donor base. The ED will work closely with staff and Board to design and implement a more strategic and sophisticated development strategy with an eye to continued expansion in corporate, foundation and individual giving and special events to raise awareness of the organization and its work. Fundraising efforts will help to elevate the organization's public profile in the local community while solidifying its public relations strategy.

Strengthen local and state presence.

The ED will represent JAS both locally and within the state on community committees and advisory groups. Developing and maintaining strong partnerships and networks with other neighborhood and business associations, civic leaders, affordable housing advocates, housing finance officers, government agencies and other relevant organizations are key to the continued success of JAS. Significant progress has been made in the development of the website, annual report, messaging and social media. This investment has helped to expand community awareness of the organization and will need to be maintained and expanded to support improved fundraising activities. The next ED will reinforce existing relationships with constituencies and recognize and create opportunities for strategic alliances appropriate for the organization.

Optimize internal and external communication and improve JAS's organizational culture.

The incoming ED must continue to professionalize and streamline the organizational systems and best practices that support efficient internal operations and communication. He or she must have the ability to motivate and inspire people to do their best work, to place individuals in situations where they are most likely to succeed, to hold them accountable, to encourage their creativity, and to develop leadership from within.

There has been a successful restructuring at JAS since the departure of the long-standing and founding ED five years ago. Moving forward, JAS would like to continue to attract a diverse workforce and expand professional development opportunities to attract employees who can advance their careers at JAS instead of seeking other opportunities.

Engage and expanded Board of Directors.

JAS has made significant progress in Board development in the past five years. By-laws have been updated and a plan to increase the board to as many as 22 members has been introduced. As a result of these efforts, of the current 17 people on the board, 13 were brought on progressively as board members in the past 5 years.

The incoming ED will be expected to work closely with the Board to help recruit additional new members, especially ones that are able to help secure financial resources for JAS and to keep JAS in touch with its constituents. The new members will be diverse and inclusive and include civic, corporate, community, and philanthropic leaders who are highly engaged and willing to leverage and secure additional funding. The Board can help to review JAS's structure and goals through a new strategic planning process and work collaboratively with staff to make the necessary changes to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, coordination and communication.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate must be committed to JAS's mission and values and be able to demonstrate this commitment through his/her previous experience. The person selected to fill this position must have a strong background in several of the following areas: real estate portfolio development and management, neighborhood planning, employment and social programming, funding development, finance and management. The next Executive Director must be entrepreneurial in approach and passionate about the mission of JAS. The Board of Directors and the Search Committee are open to a variety of professional backgrounds in candidates and expect that the next Executive Director will bring many of the following skills, experiences, and personal attributes:

- A Bachelor's degree, preferably an advanced degree or equivalent experience.
- Solid competencies in long-term planning, fiscal management, and general operational management based on a minimum of ten or more years of successful experience as a senior manager in a medium to large non-profit organization, with an equivalent multi-million-dollar budget.
- A passion for the mission of JAS and sensitivity to the needs of the population it serves.
- A proven record of success managing a complex organization that has developed and managed real estate and/or delivered social services/education in a fiscally sound manner.
- A deep understanding of cities and passionate commitment to their success; experience in a leadership role in a comparably complex and diverse urban setting.
- Integrity, honesty, fairness and an ability to communicate in a timely and transparent manner.
- The ability to operate with grace and ease in a multicultural, multilingual environment.
- The ability to recognize threats to the "well-being" of the organization and its mission, and the discipline to protect the organization in times of risk.
- An ability to be a credible and effective spokesperson/advocate/representative who is able to listen to and inspire others.

- Excellent communication and diplomatic skills; articulate and persuasive, comfortable in the spotlight, without necessarily seeking it; someone with the strength of ego to take the heat but share the credit, to defer as appropriate and confront as necessary.
- Personal credibility and stature to win the respect of political, philanthropic, industry and community leaders.

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations, cover letters, and resumes may be submitted to:

Monroe “Bud” Moseley, Partner
Donna Cramer, Managing Associate
Emily McCarthy, Associate

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Electronic submission of application materials is strongly preferred.

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