

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION DESCRIPTION

AWBURY ARBORETUM

About Awbury Arboretum

The Awbury Arboretum Association is a nonprofit membership organization operating a 56-acre public garden and farm nestled in a densely populated neighborhood of Philadelphia. Over 60,000 people visited in 2025 including families, neighbors, summer campers, field studies students, community gardeners, birders, dog walkers, goat lovers, and anyone seeking nature's healing. All were welcomed, free of charge, every day of the year.

Forty acres of the arboretum are protected by a Natural Lands conservation easement. This area contains features designed by prominent landscape architects hired by the founding Quaker families. Notable features include sweeping meadows, fields, ponds, flower gardens, and a multitude of plants, shrubs, and several State Champion Trees. Of special interest is the historic Francis Cope House, which contains administrative offices, as well as indoor and outdoor rooms used for weddings and other public and private events. AdventureWoods, a natural-materials playground enjoyed by local children enrolled in Awbury's summer camps, is a more recently-designed and installed element surrounded by stone walls constructed by Depression-era WPA craftsmen.

The other 16 acres, known as The Farm, include an almost 50-year-old thriving community garden, an open-air pavilion used for a variety of programs and events, an education center, and land used by nonprofit partners, such as the Philly Goat Project, Weavers Way Co-Op, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and the Philadelphia Beekeepers Guild. The entire arboretum is a nationally designated historic site and is listed as a Philadelphia Historic District. Awbury is a member of Historic Germantown, a partnership of 20 historic houses, destinations, and museums in Northwest Philadelphia that have joined together to protect, preserve, and share some of the city's prized historical assets.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission: To be a free public garden and farm serving Northwest Philadelphia. Building on the social justice values of our Quaker founders, we make a positive environmental impact, educate children and adults, and nurture an inclusive community.

Vision: To be a breath of fresh air. We serve as an accessible greenspace that welcomes the pursuit of learning, recreation, and peace. As a beacon of historical and environmental stewardship, these grounds shelter and protect both social and biological diversity. We envision Awbury as a vital part of a greener, healthier Philadelphia that encourages an ever-deepening integration of city life and the natural world.

Values:

- *Stewardship*
- *Inclusivity*
- *Play*
- *Integrity*
- *Learning*
- *Relationships*
- *Sustainability*

Overview of the Role

The Awbury Arboretum Association seeks a dynamic Executive Director (ED) with vision and drive who will elevate Awbury to a world-class public garden and accredited arboretum. This individual will be a seasoned, mission focused leader who is passionate about nature, education, community, and building a stronger nonprofit—someone who sees the larger picture and is not afraid to dream big. Awbury already is well on its way, having just successfully addressed the first year of its Strategic Plan. This plan has three broad goals:

Care for the Land—Prioritize accessibility, site planning, and stewardship of our historic landscape and facilities. A new horticulture volunteer program will help ensure excellence in care and maintenance.

Care for the Community—Expand environmental education, deepen community partnerships, and ensure that all area children can access transformative, nature-based learning experiences.

Care for Awbury Arboretum Association—Strengthen support for our staff, stimulate board agency, and secure long-term sustainability by planning for fair compensation, exceptional training, and responsible growth.

Reporting to the Board of Directors the, ED leads a highly dedicated team of 14+ employees and ensures alignment between Awbury’s mission, Strategic Plan, and day-to-day operations. The ED, with oversight from the Board and input from staff, determines and ensures execution of the overall organizational vision, the Strategic Plan, the Landscape Stewardship Plan, tactical goals, operating policies/procedures, staffing requirements, fiscal policies, fund raising, and the operating budget.

The ideal candidate will be a curious and energetic leader, a strategic thinker with a strong background in nonprofit leadership (ideally in public gardens), a track record of successful fundraising, the ability to manage multiple priorities and projects concurrently, and the ability to inspire others. The ED will serve as Awbury’s public face and be able to nurture existing relationships with adjacent neighborhood associations, elected officials, community partners, donors, and charitable foundations, as well as forge new ones.

Key Duties and Responsibilities

General

- Raise the arboretum’s profile as one of the city’s key natural and community assets by furthering relationships with city decision-makers; environmental, educational and cultural organizations; neighbors and civic groups; and local businesses.
- Promote Awbury locally and nationally as a leading voice in urban public gardens and nature-based learning.

The ED, in partnership with the Board, Board committees, and staff, as appropriate, will be expected to do the following:

Fundraising, Development and Membership

- Devote a minimum of one day a week to donor cultivation and grant identification.
- Create and implement clear fundraising strategies with annual goals and a revenue development plan, including seeking and preparing grant applications and growing the endowment.

- Identify, cultivate, and solicit financial contributions from individual donors, foundations, and business entities.
- Engage Board members in ongoing fundraising and development activities.
- Oversee an overall membership strategy that ensures the retention of current members and the recruitment of new members.
- Oversee all special events, including the Harvest Fest, the annual Spring Gala, the annual appeal, and other fundraising activities.

Fiscal/Fiduciary Management

- Prepare and present the annual operating budget for Board approval and quarterly financial statements for Board meetings. Manage and monitor cash flow to ensure that expenditures are within the budget.
- Oversee accounting activities, coordinate the annual financial audit, and ensure responsible management of funds including the endowments.
- Coordinate and oversee activities with professional advisors such as legal counsel, auditors, and accountants.
- Oversee compliance with all governmental requirements, including tax filings, maintenance of the arboretum's federal nonprofit 501(c)(3) status, and compliance with the Pennsylvania charitable solicitation and reporting requirements.

Operations

- Develop short- and long-range plans for the arboretum in alignment with the Strategic Plan.
- Plan for future revenue needs and resources to maintain the historic buildings and landscape; grow adult and youth educational programs; and fund general operations.
- Work to increase earned income from programming and rentals, and identify new grant prospects and other funding opportunities.
- Negotiate contract with wedding caterers and oversee leases for tenants at The Farm.
- Ensure regular review and updating of the Landscape Stewardship Plan.
- Attend neighborhood civic association meeting at least once a quarter.

Human Resources

- Ensure diverse and inclusive hiring practices and management of staff.
- Provide guidance and supervision of staff.
- Provide staff training and enrichment programs, as needed.
- Ensure staff are motivated, understand the arboretum's goals, and have up-to-date job descriptions.
- Conduct staff performance evaluations.

Experience and Skill Set

Core Competencies

- Demonstrated donor relations skills with the ability to nurture existing relationships and develop new ones.
- Minimum five years of managerial experience, ideally in public gardens, landscape horticulture, or nonprofit organizations.
- Experience managing a budget, including tracking and presenting financial documents.

Other Skills

- Demonstrated track record of successful fundraising, strongly preferred
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, including:
 - Being comfortable engaging with a range of audiences, such as elected officials, business leaders, foundation staff and trustees, civic association leaders, and neighbors.
- Comfort with technology, familiar with donor databases, QuickBooks, and Microsoft and Google platforms.
- Bachelor's degree required, master's degree preferred.

Key Personal Characteristics

- Has an abundance mindset and can see Awbury as full of opportunities.
- Visionary; able to see the big picture and develop and implement new initiatives to create a road map for Awbury's future.
- Strong leader able to accept and manage conflict, motivate others.
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Team-oriented and collegial.
- Curious and energetic.
- Sense of humor.
- Willingness and ability to work outside regular business hours, as needed.

Compensation and Benefits

- \$95,000 -105,000 per annum.
- 3 weeks annual leave.
- 6 days sick leave.
- 3 personal days.
- 85% health and dental insurance paid.
- Comp time available.
- Some workplace flexibility
- 11 paid holidays.

To apply, please send cover letter and resume to Shanna Halpern at boardchair@awbury.org. by February 1, 2026.

Awbury Arboretum Association is an equal opportunity employer. It values the diverse backgrounds of its employees and works to create and maintain an atmosphere of trust, honesty, and respect

This job description is not designed to contain or be interpreted as a comprehensive inventory of all duties, responsibilities and qualifications required for the position.