

# Executive Director

Western Fairs Association

*Seeking a collaborative leader and excellent facilitator to lead a dynamic member-based trade organization based in Sacramento, CA*





## An Outstanding Career Opportunity

The Board of Directors for this highly respected regional trade association is seeking dynamic, engaging, and highly qualified professionals for consideration of the Executive Director (ED) position with the Western Fairs Association (“WFA” or “Association”). This is an exciting opportunity for an experienced executive with strong leadership skills to manage a member-centric organization and further expand the impact and reach of services offered on behalf of its membership. Following in the steps of a long-tenured and highly successful incumbent, the new Executive Director will be thoroughly committed to WFA’s mission. All interested candidates should have proven leadership, coaching, and relationship management experience combined with the ability to deal with a wide array of members, stakeholders, legislators, service members and supporting organizations in the exciting and fast-paced world of events, entertainment, expositions, and fairs throughout the Western Region.



## WFA's History and Future

Since being founded in 1922 (501c6 trade organization), the Western Fairs Association has provided membership exclusive benefits that advance the long-term sustainable profitability of fairs and expositions. Those benefits include legislative and regulatory representation, advocacy, training, education, buying programs, public relations, image enhancement, conference / workshops, networking, and leadership development. In addition to the trade organization, the Executive Director also oversees two subsidiaries: the California Fairs Alliance (CFA) as an advocacy group and the Blue Ribbon Foundation (501c3) as the charitable arm of the trade organization.



WFA is a member-driven (dues paying) organization that has been serving the fair industry for nearly a century. WFA will celebrate 100 years since inception in 2022. Membership in this organization ranges from small fairs to mid-size events/venues to larger fairs and expositions for a total of 133 member organizations plus 450 related business and service members. Members currently include 76 of 78 California fairs, 54 fairs in the Western Region, and three in Canada. WFA is responsible for the much acclaimed and flagship Annual Conference & Trade Show (rotated between Reno, Nevada, and Anaheim, California) every January and a smaller training event in the Fall known as the Management Conference for California Fair Executives. The successful Annual Conference generates more than fifty percent of WFA's revenue target each year with an increase in three-year attendance records exceeding 10% and hosting a sold-out Trade show for the past four years.



Reflecting on the Association's recent past, revenue has been growing by 5-7% for the past three years as it recovers from the great recession. Currently, the 2017-18 budget will exceed \$800,000 with an additional \$30,000-\$50,000 generated by the Blue Ribbon Foundation. Important to note, Western Fairs currently has a 25% operating reserve and no debts or loans outstanding.

Podcasts and webinars are slated to begin later this year to further support the geographically diverse membership in training as well as add to the continued development of revenue diversification.



In addition to the sub-committees, official (active) committees include:

- Achievement Awards
- Ag Council
- Industry Standards
- Leadership Development
- Professional Development
- Showcase Committee & Task Force

## Governing Structure

As an organization, WFA is committed to be a high service, high benefit, and high value association. Members expect and demand top quality results from staff. WFA is governed by a twenty-one member Board of Directors. Due to the small yet very efficient and effective size of the organization and the complexities of the issues, WFA arrives at its decisions through open debate and democratic voting. Every member, large or small, has one vote. If elected to the Board, the member participates in the direct governing body of the Association. WFA has found the committee structure to be most effective for addressing key issues. The Executive Committee and Finance Committee (Treasurer + five members) are sub-committees of the Board of Directors. The Executive Committee has six members comprised of President, VP, Treasurer, Immediate Past President, Prior Past President and CFA Chair.

The WFA office is located in the Cal-Expo area, near downtown at 1776 Tribute Road, Suite 210, Sacramento with convenient freeway access. The Board meets various times throughout the year and Committee meetings are done through conference calls due to geographic distance of members.





WFA has a small but talented staff of four individuals. Current staffing includes: Communication Director, Accounting Manager, Meetings & Trade Show Manager, and Membership Services Manager.

A seasonal support position is typically added November – February. Additionally, WFA has a number of contractors that assist throughout the year. The largest organizational need is related to California legislative activity. Professional guidance and lobbying is received by the firm of Kahn, Soares and Conway led by Louie Brown in support of the California Fairs Alliance Advocacy Team. Other contractors are for auditing services, printing services, website support, and merchant services.

The Board anticipates an increase in membership as WFA continues to advance following the post-recession era with a more focused approach to address future and on-going challenges facing its membership. Current major sponsors include Coca-Cola, Orange County Fair, Etix, Ray Cammack Shows, and California State Fair.

## Responsibilities of the Executive Director

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will have overall strategic and operational responsibility for the Association staff, programs, expansion, and execution of its mission. He or she will develop deep knowledge of the industry as well as the Association's core programs, operations, and business plans and ensure that the Association's fiscal operations, fundraising, marketing, human resources, technology, and programmatic strategies are effectively implemented across all segments of the organization. This executive level position is "at-will" and the career opportunity is the result of a pending retirement of a long-tenured and very effective Executive Director.

In addition to the Annual Convention & Trade Show, the Executive Director works specifically with the Professional Development Committee and partners to provide cutting edge programming, often facilitating at standing meetings as well as targeted programs on a wide variety of topics. Other areas of responsibility and oversight include: Effective Board Management, Administrative and Fiscal Management, Public Safety, Marketing, and Industry Trends.

# Responsibilities of the Executive Director (Cont.)



## Administration and Fiscal Management

- Oversee all financial activities including management of budget and related fiscal activities and ensure the ongoing fiscal health of the organization through retention and expansion of membership, sound financial reporting, and cost-effective operational activities.

## Leadership, Management, and Collaboration

- Ensure on-going excellent level of performance as well as rigorous evaluation and consistent quality of finance and administration, fundraising, communications/public relations, and systems; recommend timelines and resources needed to achieve strategic goals.

## Advocacy and Communications

- Provide active and engaged involvement in legislative and advocacy activities on a statewide basis, working collaboratively with WFA's lobbyist and holding periodic meetings with elected officials, furnishing testimony as needed.

## Membership Programs

Contribute to and oversee all marketing and communication activities including:

- *Fair Dealer* magazine (Quarterly Publication);
- Oversee Annual Membership Report as well as the Date List & Membership Directory; and
- Assist with membership relations, when and where necessary, including off-site travel.

## Strategic Planning and New Business Development

- Build partnerships in new markets and establish relationships to creatively expand revenue sources, as well as, enhance allied business relationships – and, perhaps most importantly, be seen as the public face of the organization and the spokesperson for Western Fairs Association.



## Strategic Partnerships with Associations / Agencies

As has been the history of Western Fairs, the Executive Director will work extensively with an array of strategic partners, professional organizations, associations and agencies that include the following:

- **California Fair Services Authority (CFSA)** – Ongoing training partnership focused on the Fall Management conference and new CEO services. Serves as the Association’s landlord, and includes a variety of successful collaborations.
- **California Authority of Racing Fairs (CARF)** – Coordinated advocacy program with CFA and a designated seat on the WFA Board.
- **California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)** – Ongoing training and development partnership focused on California fair executives and fair directors.
- **California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly)** – WFA is responsible for the Agri-Fair Endowment which has over \$400,000 in trust to support education programs including the Fair Management courses at the University. Cal Poly also hosts the WFA and Merrill collection in its library and supports several industry scholarship programs.
- **International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE)** – Training and related partnership and integrated Board positions. IAFE Zone 7 and 8 Directors serve on the WFA Board.
- **National Independent Concessionaires Association (NICA) & NICA West** - NICA Food Show embedded in the WFA Trade show.
- **Rocky Mountain Fairs Association (RMFA), Washington State Fairs Association (WSFA), Canadian Association of Fairs & Expositions (CAFE), Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** – ongoing training collaboration.
- **Oregon (OFA) and Arizona Fairs Associations (AFA)** – Training related partnerships including state designated Board positions.





## Desired Characteristics

The ideal candidate for the position of Executive Director of Western Fairs Association will have an engaging personal style and willingness to lead, support and drive this professional trade association to the next level. Being a strategic leader will not only involve conceptualizing but putting into action future steps for years to come. Top candidates will also have a strong appreciation for the geographic diversity of the regional membership and be willing to travel fairly often to observe, connect, and participate with member fairs on an on-going basis.

Candidates should have unquestionable personal integrity and display honesty in their commitment to lead and manage on behalf of the membership. The Executive Director will also be a self-assured individual with the ability to exercise a high degree of common sense and sound judgment with superb public speaking skills for frequent presentations at conferences, events, legislative testimony, and periodically to the media. Additionally, the ideal candidate will approach this position with an energetic and enthusiastic style that welcomes and solicits input. The Executive Director will also have a commitment to teamwork and be comfortable working in a small, hands-on environment.

With a small staff and a large, geographically diverse membership base, the Executive Director is often in direct contact with Board members and member agencies addressing immediate needs, interpreting policies, and providing guidance. Importantly, the new Executive Director will have outstanding leadership skills necessary to lead with passion, idealism, integrity, and a positive attitude, being mission-driven and self-directed. A good sense of humor and a “glass half full” outlook would also complement all of these attributes and contribute to a good balance both professionally and personally. Having fun in the workplace is also part of the spirit of WFA and that same level of enthusiasm is desired by the membership in support of all WFA does for its members.



## WESTERN FAIRS ASSOCIATION

### Facts & Stats

76 54 3 450

CA  
FAIRS

FAIRS IN  
10 STATES

CANADIAN  
FAIRS

SERVICE  
MEMBERS



## Education and Experience

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree in public or business administration or a related field is strongly desired; qualifying experience may be substituted on a year-for-year basis for applicable college work. An advanced degree may be a plus. Significant management experience including a track record of effectively leading and managing an outcomes-based organization is ideal. A proven track record of having developed operationalized strategies for growth and expansion is an added plus, as is experience with a member-based association or trade organization.



Candidates with non-profit, public sector, or private management experience with transferable executive-level skills are also encouraged to consider this opportunity.

**Ability to Travel Requirement** - This position does require the ability to travel for both one-day (air and car) trips as well as those involving multiple days away and requiring overnight accommodations. While the majority of travel is within California, the membership base and professional interaction will require periodic out-of-state travel and on occasion, to visit members at the three Canadian locations. Travel is planned well in advance and allows for coordination and appropriate planning.





## Compensation and Benefits

The total annual compensation for this position is up to \$150,000. Flexibility in building this total package (salary + benefit costs) will be addressed during the final selection / negotiation stage.

Benefits currently offered include:

- Deferred compensation plan;
- Health insurance with zero deductible (provided by Western Health Advantage);
- Dental provided by Delta Dental;
- Vacation, holiday, and sick leave plus a four-day seasonal work schedule (Monday-Thursday) from Memorial Day to Labor Day;
- Life insurance and disability;
- Use of an automobile for business and personal (taxable) use including full gas and maintenance;
- Business / travel budget; and
- Technology including smart phone, internet access and other tools as needed.

The Board will negotiate a mutually agreed upon employment agreement, which may include reimbursement for moving and relocation expenses. The employment agreement will be an initial three-year term with an option to extend by mutual agreement. The Executive Director will be expected to reside in the greater Sacramento area, offering an array of housing for either rental or purchase.

## To Be Considered

This is a highly confidential process. The closing date for submittal of materials is Friday, September 8, 2017. An electronic version of all materials is required. ***Submittals should be sent via email to [apply@ralphandersen.com](mailto:apply@ralphandersen.com).***

To be considered, candidates must submit a compelling cover letter, comprehensive resume, and current salary. ***Professional references will be required later in the process once mutual interest has been established.*** A release will be required by top candidates at a later date to verify employment and education. In addition, extensive background and reference check will be conducted.

This will be a multiple part evaluation and selection process, including a panel interview and presentation(s) to the Search Committee. A tentative schedule has been provided below for informational purposes. Ideally, the new Executive Director will join WFA in November 2017 and be presented/introduced at the Annual Management Conference and also to the full membership and partners at the Annual Convention (Go West!) and Trade Show (four-day event) in Anaheim beginning in January 2018.

**If you have questions or would like to discuss the opportunity further, please call Ms. Heather Renschler at 916.630.4900 or email [heather@ralphandersen.com](mailto:heather@ralphandersen.com). Confidential inquiries are welcomed.**

For more detailed information about Western Fairs Association visit [www.westernfairs.org](http://www.westernfairs.org).



## Executive Director Recruitment Timeline

**Open Search on:** Monday, July 10, 2017

**Close Search by:** Friday, September 8, 2017

- **Resumes Presented to Search Committee:** Mid-September 2017
- **First Round of Interviews:** Late-September 2017
- **Second Round of Interviews, Including Meet & Greet:** Early-to-Mid October 2017
- **Final Selection/Offer:** Late October 2017
- **Start Date:** November 2017 (or by Mutual Agreement)
- **Annual Management Conference November 7-9, 2017 (Sacramento, California):** Reception/Introductions
- **Annual Membership Convention & Trade Show January 3-6, 2018 (Anaheim, California):** Reception/Introductions



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