MARIA MITCHELL ASSOCIATION
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION PROFILE

BACKGROUND

For more than a hundred years, the Maria Mitchell Association (MMA) has educated and engaged residents and visitors to Nantucket; conducted research; and promoted the legacy of astronomer Maria Mitchell, a unique pioneer in the natural sciences, astronomy, and education. Today, the organization operates two small observatories, a natural science museum, and an aquarium; boasts an internationally renowned undergraduate astronomy research internship program; and preserves the historic birthplace of Maria Mitchell.

Roughly one-third of the organization’s $1.5 million operating budget is earned via programs, events, and admissions, while the remaining two-thirds are contributed. Maria Mitchell Association has 15 full- and part-time employees, 45 interns, 30 volunteers, and hosts about 10,000 visitors and program participants at its various properties throughout the year.

As we look toward the future, we are excited and energized for the next phase in our evolution: the plan to create a new, state-of-the art Science Center in downtown Nantucket that unifies the many facets of our organization into a must-see attraction for visitors to the island and a gem in our community’s crown.
OUR MISSION

“The Maria Mitchell Association creates opportunities for all to develop a lifelong passion for science through education, research, and first-hand exploration of the sky, land, and sea of Nantucket Island.”

In delivering on our mission’s promise, we recognize the historic persona of Maria Mitchell, the foremost American woman scientist and educator of the 19th century, and her potential impact on contemporary thought by passing on her legacy of intellectual curiosity, respect for and love of nature, and learning by doing.

The MMA provides scientific resources and educational programs for the community, uses Nantucket Island as an exceptional natural laboratory in which to study science and the environment, and maintains research and comprehensive collections of Nantucket’s biodiversity.

We strive to delight our members, supporters, and visitors by providing high quality programs, services, and facilities. We ensure our financial viability, and our commitment to the preservation of historical buildings and the important collections in our care, so that current and future generations can share in this legacy. We strive to collaborate with other institutions (both on- and off-island) to share our assets to accomplish these objectives, obtain cost efficiencies, and reduce our impact on the environment.

OUR VISION

“The Maria Mitchell Association will be recognized as the essential gateway to the natural world on Nantucket.”

While the MMA has a rich and storied history and has achieved remarkable growth and success since its founding in 1902, our next goal is to be recognized as the essential portal for exploring and interpreting the natural world in our community.

Our strategic goals are:

1. Provide unique, personal, and inspiring science learning opportunities for diverse audiences.
2. Develop and maintain facilities and resources that align with our mission and enable excellence.
3. Build and nurture a culture of philanthropy.
4. Ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the organization.
5. Broadly communicate a clear organizational identity.
6. Commit to best practices in governance, including ongoing leadership development and self-evaluation.
ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Born in 1818 on Nantucket to Quaker parents, Maria Mitchell was a life-long learner. This trait extended through the many aspects of her life as an astronomer, librarian, naturalist, and educator.

As a young girl, Maria developed her love of astronomy from her father’s tutoring on surveying and navigation. She became the Nantucket Atheneum’s first librarian and continued to acquire astronomical equipment and conduct observations. In 1847, from the rooftop of the Pacific National Bank on Main Street in Nantucket, she spotted a small blurry object that did not appear on her charts—an object that turned out to be an undiscovered comet. This event propelled her to fame and changed the face of science and education throughout the world.

In 1865, Maria became Professor of Astronomy at the newly-formed Vassar College, a role she held until her retirement in 1888. In her teaching, she believed in “learning by doing” and the capacity of women to achieve what their male counterparts could.

More than a century later, the Maria Mitchell Association remains dedicated not only to preserving Maria’s personal legacy, but also to educating Nantucket residents and visitors about the flora and fauna of Nantucket and the wonders of the waters and skies, which Maria dedicated so much of her life to observing.

In 1902, Maria’s friends, family, and former students formed the Maria Mitchell Association to commemorate Maria’s life and interests in astronomy and the natural sciences. Initially, MMA’s only property was Maria’s birthplace, which held photographs, scientific books, instruments, and specimens. Over time, the organization has expanded its physical and mission footprint. The organization added an observatory next to the historic house, where it offered public lectures in astronomy. In those early years, the organization also began to offer classes in natural science for adults and children.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ROLE

We are currently seeking a skilled, dynamic leader to become the next Executive Director of this historic organization. Maria Mitchell Association is poised for even greater impact and potential in terms of its educational, environmental, and conservation mission, and its connection to the community. At this time, we are in the midst of a very exciting moment: after several years of visioning and research, we are on the verge of moving into the planning phase for an exciting new Science Center, a state-of-the-art facility that will unify our operations and programs under one roof.

This job offers a tremendous opportunity to the right leader with a mix of skills and qualifications who can lead the transformation of the current organization to become an even stronger regional destination, a world-class environmental education leader, and a top-ranked center for discovery, learning, research, and science.

Key goals for this role include:

• Provide vision and inspiration so that MMA is recognized as one of the top tier scientific and cultural organizations on Nantucket, while increasing its influence as a leader, both regionally, nationally, and internationally.

• Create excitement and instill a passion for MMA’s mission, effectively and enthusiastically communicating science, research, and education value to the community.

• Play a lead role in cultivating and soliciting major donors, and in broadening and diversifying MMA’s philanthropic base.

• Build strategic partnerships in the scientific, educational, cultural, and business communities, and identify and implement creative opportunities that will help increase financial sustainability.

• Promote a positive team culture with high morale and a sense of shared purpose. Model and promote transparent and accessible internal communication and collaboration.

• Help expand and upgrade the MMA’s use of technology in its programming, communications, and operations.

• Attract, retain & develop the highest quality professional staff. Advance diversity, equity, and inclusiveness initiatives to ensure MMA’s team, volunteers, and audiences reflect the communities it does and should serve.
MMA is looking for a leader who is –

- **Visionary & Innovative** - Sees the big picture and can lead the way in taking the organization to new heights
- **A Team Leader** - Builds and maintains a high-performing organizational culture
- **Results Oriented** - Able to navigate ambiguity and drive projects to completion
- **Business Minded** - Has the ability to transform business and operating models
- **Curious & Enthusiastic** - Exudes excitement and passion for MMA’s mission and history
- **Socially Aware** - Can comfortably adapt to and perform in a range of business and social situations with a wide range of stakeholders
- **Collaborative & Influential** - Forges mutually beneficial partnerships & relationships
- **Connected in the Community** - Works to integrate themselves into the community
- **Supportive & Inclusive** - Creates an inclusive culture and celebrates team expertise
- **Excited & Engaged by Science** - Understands and can communicate the importance of MMA’s mission
- **Professional & Organized** - Can adeptly move from the details to the visionary, keeping track of what needs to get done
- **Grounded by a Set of Core Values** - Has demonstrated integrity, ethics, and values

**SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Executive Director of the Maria Mitchell Association is responsible for the overall strategic and operational leadership of the organization. The ED will exhibit a high level of collaboration, team building and influence to achieve outstanding performance throughout the organization. The ED provides leadership across the organization and inspires their staff towards excellence in all areas.

The ED reports directly to the Board and is the primary spokesperson for MMA. Working with the Board, they will develop the vision, identify opportunities, and provide solutions to advance MMA’s mission and create and execute strategies for implementation.

The ED manages the MMA’s resources, both personnel and fiscal, including attracting, retaining, developing and evaluating professional staff and volunteers. The ED sets the tone and culture of the organization, ensuring a high-performing, collaborative, and rewarding workplace.
LEADERSHIP

• Develop a compelling vision connected to MMA’s mission of education and learning, and elevate its status as a community asset, science leader, and attraction on the island;
• Nurture a positive and collaborative environment that recognizes the contribution of the MMA’s knowledgeable and talented staff;
• Cultivate an environment of creativity and innovation, encouraging the staff, volunteers and organization to develop unique solutions and offerings;
• Develop and direct the implementation of MMA’s Strategic Plans, bringing the staff and Board together around a common vision; and
• Ensure long-term financial sustainability for the organization.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS/FUNDRAISING

• Working together with the Board and the Director of Advancement, serve as MMA’s lead fundraiser, cultivating donors and overseeing philanthropy for both operating support and capital projects included in the master plan;
• Demonstrate leadership with local civic and community groups and social activities in the area;
• Build partnerships with nonprofits and cultural entities on the Island, as well as complimentary groups to advance the MMA’s mission and to be a good community partner;
• Become identified as the ‘face of MMA,’ actively promoting it within the community and the region;
• Actively position MMA as one of the top tier cultural and philanthropic organizations on the Island, building and cultivating relationships and partnerships with cultural and civic stakeholders; and
• Oversee broad-based marketing, promotion and fundraising campaigns.

MANAGEMENT

• Lead and motivate the full time, part-time, and volunteer staff;
• Attract, retain, and develop a high-performing leadership team;
• Recognize, support, and mentor staff and volunteers to realize their potential;
• Strengthen opportunities to inspire guests and connect them with the MMA’s mission;
• Lead the organization in maximizing opportunities to generate revenue with varied earned income streams,
• Oversee and ensure the success of education programs and initiatives;
• Formulate annual operating and capital budgets, and maintain the overall financial integrity of MMA by monitoring associated operating revenues and expenses, contributions, capital expenditures and other related financial matters;
• Create plans to manage and maintain, using sound fiscal strategies, the range of MMA’s physical properties; and,
• Perform other duties as assigned and exercise sound judgment in those situations not covered by established policies and procedures.
BOARD MANAGEMENT

• Strengthen and engage the Board of Directors with a transparent communication philosophy;
• Collaborate with the Board in confirming the mission of MMA and setting future strategic direction;
• Engage the Board on important and critical matters; and
• Recognize and utilize the Board’s talents, expertise, and resources in realizing MMA’s mission.

The following are necessary for this position:

• A leader of people, with the ability to create a strong and values-based organizational culture;
• Proven experience in leadership and management either within a nonprofit or a business setting;
• Expertise in fundraising and development, with ability to build and cultivate donor relationships and secure major gifts to support the growth of MMA;
• Track record of building and sustaining innovative partnerships and working with diverse stakeholders, including community members, public officials, and professional colleagues;
• Demonstrated ability and experience working a range of stakeholders to advocate for MMA and identify and develop a range of support;
• Prior success in working on or with a Board of Directors, volunteers, civic and community leaders, the media, government and professional associations;
• Proven business acumen. Focus in setting realistic priorities, meeting or beating goals, and running a fiscally sound operation; history of growing revenue;
• Proven experience in creating, managing, and monitoring operational and capital budgets as well as strategic, master, and construction plans;
• An understanding of technology applications to maximize performance; enhance experiences; and reach new and diverse audiences;
• Experience in dealing with the media and an understanding of crisis communications; and
• Understanding of developing or overseeing public and education programs.
LIFE ON NANTUCKET: ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES ON EARTH

Candidates for the Executive Director position must be willing to relocate to and reside on Nantucket island full-time. Living here is a unique experience—there is just nowhere else like it. Located 30 miles off the coast of Massachusetts and accessible by airplane or ferry, the 100 square mile island is home to some of the richest biodiversity in the United States. The town of Nantucket (home to the Maria Mitchell Association main campus) is bustling with restaurants, independently owned small businesses, cultural attractions, and historic buildings. The community is tight knit, and features annual festivals celebrating the island’s rich heritage and history. During the summer peak-season, Nantucket bursts with vitality and action. Winters are quiet and serene. Island residents enjoy miles of deserted beaches, hiking trails, and protected grasslands. It is truly one of the most beautiful places in world.

SALARY & BENEFITS

The salary and benefits package for this position is competitive and includes a housing allowance.

TO APPLY: SEND COVER LETTER & RESUME TO DAVID WALSH, PRESIDENT, ZOO ADVISORS at DWALSH@ZOOADVISORS.COM