



“The study of geography is about more than just memorizing places on a map. It's about understanding the complexity of our world, appreciating the diversity of cultures that exists across continents. And in the end, it's about using all that knowledge to help bridge divides and bring people together.”

-- Barack Obama

About the AAG

The American Association of Geographers (AAG) is a nonprofit scientific and educational scholarly association with 12,000 members who hail from nearly 100 countries. Founded in 1904 as the Association of American Geographers, the AAG has contributed to the advancement of geography for more than a century, helping members to share interests in theories, methods, and practices of geography through the AAG's [Annual Meeting](#), scholarly journals ([Annals of the American Association of Geographers](#), [The Professional Geographer](#), the [AAG Review of Books](#) and [GeoHumanities](#)), and the online [AAG Newsletter](#). The AAG also oversees an array of programs that seek to advance professional studies in geography and encourage the application of geographic research in education, government, and business for the benefit of the discipline and of society. The organization was renamed the American Association of Geographers in 2010 to reflect the organization's growing diversity and global scope.

Headquartered in Washington, DC, the AAG office is much like the organization itself – it sits at the intersection of research, public policy, education, business, world affairs, and technology. The [Meridian Place](#) row house that AAG calls home is a renovated historic building in one of DC's most desirable neighborhoods.

AAG has been invited into some of the most important conversations taking place all over the world. Whether the topic is climate change, health care, poverty, food security, social and environmental justice, biodiversity loss, geospatial legislation, or one of many other important topics directly impacted by geography, AAG senior leadership and members are called upon as thought partners by some of the most renowned and influential leaders of our time. The AAG continually monitors, intervenes, and updates its membership and the public on key issues that have a clear impact on geography or in which the discipline can serve as a valued stakeholder in shaping viewpoints and policy outcomes. For example, the AAG [played a role](#) in the recently passed Geospatial Data Act, and a number of [public policy activities](#) remain ongoing. [Collaboration](#) with strategic partners such as the American Association of the Advancement of Science allows the AAG's impact to reach far beyond the immediate scope of geography.

The AAG enjoys a sound financial footing. The organization has an annual operational budget of \$6.4M and a supplementary endowment of over \$12M. Currently, the organization's operations are financed

through the annual meeting, membership dues, publications activity, research contracts, and investments; the endowment has not been a necessary funding source for operations in recent years.

Members

AAG members are an increasingly diverse community of geographers and related professionals who work in the public, private, and academic sectors. They work in a wide range of careers and include, but are not limited to, college instructors, federal, state, and local government employees, planners, cartographers, scientists, nonprofit personnel, entrepreneurs, businesspeople, elementary and secondary educators, students, law and policy makers, and university administrators.

Nineteen members volunteer for elected offices on [AAG's Council, and more than 280 members serve](#) on other committees and groups. AAG membership is available to individuals as well as to corporations. The AAG promotes discussion among its members and with scholars in related fields, in part through the activities of its [affinity groups and more than 60 specialty groups](#). The meetings and activities of regional divisions provide the opportunity to network with colleagues locally.

Governance

The Council is the governing body of the AAG. The Council consists of elected officers and councilors, the most recent past president, and an executive director (*ex officio*). Presidents and vice presidents serve one-year terms, national and regional councilors serve three-year terms, with the exception of the student councilor, who serves for a term of two years.

The roles and responsibilities of the Council, executive committee, and executive director are outlined in the [Constitution of the American Association of Geographers](#).

About the role of Executive Director

After 17 years of distinguished service, [Douglas Richardson](#) is retiring from the post of executive director leaving the AAG well positioned, both financially and structurally, for continued excellence in the field of geography. The next executive director will build upon the successful organizational renewal of the AAG, which has expanded its membership greatly, developed strategic new research and educational initiatives, and extended the AAG's international reach and programs substantially. Reporting to the Council, the executive director oversees the strategic planning and operations of the AAG and serves as an *ex officio*, non-voting member of all administrative committees and on other committees as requested by the Council. The executive director sits in and has oversight for the central office in Washington, DC, which currently has a highly talented staff of 23. Direct reports include: director of finance and accounting, director of program management and research, director of operations, director of AAG meetings, director of communications and design, government relations manager, publications manager, and the senior advisor for geography education. The executive director leads the concept development of initiatives for the Council to consider and serves as a key figure in setting the strategic direction of the organization.

Opportunities and Challenges

The next executive director will have a number of key priorities as outlined below:

Advancing the Visibility of Geography – Serving as the face of the premier organization for the discipline of geography, the executive director will secure the pipeline for the next generation of geographers. She or he will work with a range of educational institutions to support student interest in geography as a career path with a range of viable opportunities. In addition, the next executive director will travel

nationally and globally to participate in important discourse related to the field of geography, both directly and tangentially.

Policy and Professional Practice Advocacy – Recognizing opportunities and challenges arising for geography and for geographers and advocating on behalf of the discipline and its members to governmental bodies, agencies and other organizations both in the United States and abroad. This may take the form of individual actions by the AAG or coordinated actions with other similar organizations.

Diversity and Inclusion – Building on the momentum of the increasingly diverse membership, the next executive director will continue fostering an organizational culture and create strategic initiatives that encourage diversity across a number of facets including, but not limited to: gender, race, nationalities, socioeconomics, educational institutions, and geography sub-disciplines. The next executive director will also provide intellectual leadership and serve as a champion for equity and inclusion, providing opportunities for underrepresented participation and contribution, both within the central office and at AAG events and external engagements.

Organizational Leadership – In collaboration with AAG staff, members, and the Council, the next executive director will assess the effectiveness of the current organizational structure and make improvements where needed. This executive director will hire integral members of staff and ensure the empowerment, professional development, and mentorship of existing staff. In addition, she or he will look for opportunities for shared decision making across a range of organizational constituencies.

Strategic Planning and Partnerships – The executive director will guide the AAG's strategic direction by providing well-thought-out initiatives and opportunities for the Council to consider. The successful candidate will build strategies and recommendations, rooted in both quantitative and qualitative assessment, that not only speak to the AAG's present goals but also consider the organization's future needs. Partnerships and collaboration are a key factor in the AAG's reach and success. Therefore, the executive director will also maintain and increase the AAG's strategic partnerships to leverage synergies, reduce waste in resources, and increase the organization's visibility and impact.

Financial Stability – The executive director will protect and ensure the AAG's financial stability for years to come by closely monitoring the organization's financial planning and operations and seeking opportunities for new revenue generation and cost reduction. Moreover, the executive director will participate in fundraising efforts and ideally possess a network of sponsor and donor relationships with interests in geography. The successful candidate will continue to develop sustainable revenue pipelines, such as the existing long-term agreement with Taylor & Francis that runs through 2028.

Desired Qualities and Attributes

1. Leadership and Management Experience.

- Experience with the opportunities and challenges facing geography's academic arm (*e.g., growing interests in the geosciences, encroachment from and competition with interdisciplinary programs, overall restructuring of higher education*);
- Ideas for expanding geography's disciplinary footprint and impact across a range of higher-education institutions (*4-year universities/colleges, community colleges, minority-serving institutions, etc.*);

- A strong record of experience in leading, inspiring, and empowering a diverse and complex organization with multiple constituencies including staff, members, institutional partners, and government agencies;
- A present and accessible leadership style across all levels of the organization and a willingness to be based out of and regularly present in the DC office;
- Demonstrated commitment to staff development and mentorship;
- Previous experience with highly entrepreneurial, complex nonprofit organizations, businesses, or governmental organizations;
- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to deliver subject matter expertise and/or represent the organization and its priorities in a global context; and
- Experience with 360-degree self-evaluations, self-reflection, and openness to constructive feedback.

2. Resource Development.

- Adept at the balancing act between scaling a growing organization and meeting the needs and expectations of the existing membership;
- Visionary with regard to how existing resources (*e.g., the endowment*) can be usefully aligned with an organization's mission;
- Responsive to the resource needs of different parts of a complex organization (*i.e., the regional AAG divisions, students, professional members, etc.*);
- Grant-writing experience, particularly vis-à-vis federal agencies (*e.g., National Science Foundation*);
- Experience and ability to enlist and work with individual donors, corporate donors, and other potential external supporters of the AAG;
- Experience with the financial aspects of scholarly publications, which represent an important source of revenue for the AAG, and willingness to think creatively about how to reach a wider audience beyond fee-bearing academic publications; and
- Ideas about additional streams of revenue that benefit members and geography programs, while also increasing access to the discipline of geography to a wider audience.

3. Membership Development.

- Experience with and/or ideas about growing association membership, particularly at underrepresented institutions, while continuing to foster a tight-knit geographical community; and
- Ideas for making association membership more accessible/attractive to students, beyond conference attendance.

4. Business/Finance Expertise.

- Previous oversight of large operating budgets with teams of both direct employees, contracted employees and other key stakeholders; and
- Excellent financial acumen, including experience managing complex resources, multiple revenue streams, and investments.

5. Integrity and Interpersonal Skills.

- Sustained commitment to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of AAG work/activities;
- An impeccable reputation for integrity and the highest standards of ethical behavior;
- Ability to foster collaboration and facilitate conflict resolution among a diverse team of AAG staff and members; and
- Highly collaborative and adept at building and managing productive external relationships and partnerships.

6. Commitment to Associational Goals.

- Ability to quickly learn the institutional landscape of an association;
- Metrics-driven in evaluating and measuring associational successes and failures; and
- Ability to effectively prioritize associational goals and create a solid long-term plan to meet them.

7. Public and Inter-organizational Relationships and Communications.

- Willingness to form mutually productive relationships that greatly benefit both the AAG and partner organizations (*i.e.*, *National Geographic Society, National Council for Geographic Education, American Geographical Society, Society of Women Geographers, International Geographical Union, Canadian Association of Geographers, Royal Geographical Society*) and to work with other organizations, such as the Council of Social Sciences, the National Science Foundation, and the National Academy of Sciences, other governmental entities, and industry;
- Ideas for enhancing, expanding, and improving AAG communication and outreach; and
- Ability to enthusiastically represent the AAG and display a passion for geography itself; willingness to travel up to one week per month.

8. Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.

- Commitment to ensuring that the AAG and its activities are spaces where all members feel respected, valued, and championed;
- Commitment to diversifying AAG membership to increase the presence of underrepresented groups; and
- A record of achievement in furthering inclusive excellence, including a proven ability to attract, retain, and support a diverse membership base and staff.

9. Public Policy Expertise.

- Deep understanding of how policies affect the AAG's staff and members' ability to conduct research and pursue funding opportunities; and
- Ability to engage in advocacy for the discipline and geographers on the Hill, with state and local governments and agencies, foreign governmental and non-governmental agencies, and educational institutions both domestic and foreign. Success in engaging legislatures, their staff, government agencies, NGOs, and others in driving policy decisions.

10. An Understanding of Academic Context and Professional Geography.

- Experience with academic programs, preferably in geography or similar fields;
- Understanding of the challenges graduate students face in the academic and professional job markets; and
- Awareness of geography's reach beyond academia (*industry, nonprofits, government, military, etc.*).

Information for Candidates

Please send all nominations, inquiries and expressions of interest, in confidence and electronically, to:



& ASSOCIATES

Jim Sirianni, Partner

Susan VanGilder, Partner

Holly Jackson, Senior Associate

AAGExecDir@storbecksearch.com

AAG, an equal opportunity employer, values diversity and is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination and harassment as defined by federal, state and local law. As such, AAG does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran's status, or genetic information in its hiring or programming.