

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PART-TIME)

THE WEST FOUNDATION

MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN



The West Foundation

The West Foundation's purpose is to strengthen the Manitowoc/Two Rivers area community by supporting the arts, preserving local heritage, and investing in humanitarian, educational, cultural, and civic initiatives that enrich the lives of future generations.

The West Foundation has partnered with Spano Pratt Executive Search to identify their new Executive Director. For a confidential conversation and to learn more about this opportunity, please contact Lisa Maddox or Lindsey Kriete.

Spano Pratt Executive Search

Lisa Maddox, Executive Search Consultant
lisa@spanopratt.com
(571) 215-7656

Lindsey Kriete, Practice Director
lkriete@spanopratt.com
(414) 234-9033

ORGANIZATION

The Ruth St. John and John Dunham West Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to enriching the Manitowoc/Two Rivers area through philanthropic investment in the arts, education, humanitarian initiatives, civic organizations, and historic preservation. Established in 1957, the Foundation continues the legacy of John and Ruth West, whose lifelong commitment to community service and quiet philanthropy has had a lasting impact on Manitowoc and the surrounding area. Through strategic grantmaking and stewardship of significant cultural assets, the Foundation seeks to strengthen organizations that enhance the quality of life for current and future generations.

The Foundation's origins are rooted in the vision and generosity of its founders. John West, an engineer and longtime leader of the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company, and Ruth St. John West, shared a deep appreciation for community, culture, and the natural environment. Together they transformed their Lake Michigan property into the renowned West of the Lake Gardens, a six-acre botanical destination that remains one of the region's treasured landmarks. Today, the Foundation continues to support and preserve the Gardens as both an historic site and a place for public enjoyment.

Beyond its stewardship of West of the Lake Gardens, the Foundation is committed to advancing organizations whose work benefits the Manitowoc/Two Rivers area community. Grant funding supports humanitarian, educational, cultural, and civic initiatives that promote community well-being, encourage artistic expression, preserve local heritage, and strengthen public life. The Foundation's philanthropic philosophy reflects the belief that investing in nonprofit organizations and public institutions creates lasting opportunities for growth, enrichment, and meaningful community impact.

The West legacy extends beyond the Foundation through their enduring support of the Rahr-West Art Museum, where their personal contributions helped expand the museum and build its permanent collection. Following the passing of John and Ruth West, the majority of their estate was dedicated to sustaining the Foundation's charitable mission, ensuring their commitment to philanthropy would continue for generations. Today, the Foundation remains dedicated to preserving the founders' vision by funding the gardens and by supporting organizations that foster vibrant communities, celebrate culture, and improve the lives of residents throughout the Manitowoc/Two Rivers area.

POSITION OVERVIEW

The Executive Director (ED) serves as the chief executive of the Ruth St. John and John Dunham West Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) private philanthropic organization founded in 1957 and based in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The Foundation owns and operates West of the Lake Gardens, a 6-acre historic garden open to the public, and has distributed grants to Manitowoc-area nonprofits throughout its distinguished history.

The Executive Director translates the Board's strategic intent into vision- and mission-aligned programs, grounded in the Foundation's core values, sound financial stewardship, and measurable community impact. This is a hands-on executive role requiring a sophisticated blend of strategic leadership, governance partnership, philanthropic expertise, and authentic community engagement. The ED manages a small professional team. The ED also monitors grant applications for completeness and provides them to the Board for decision-making, oversees operations of the Gardens, and serves

as the Foundation's principal external representative, including with governmental, regulatory, and community stakeholder entities. The ED is expected to support the Board in cultivating meaningful partnerships with local government and civic institutions in service of Manitowoc-area residents. The ED shares responsibility with the Office Manager for implementing the Foundation's operating policies, procedures, and Board decisions, leading strategically while the Office Manager leads tactically.



West of the Lake Gardens is located along the shores of Lake Michigan in Manitowoc, WI, featuring beautiful scenery and vibrant gardens.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1. Strategic Leadership & Mission Stewardship

- Serve as the chief steward of the Foundation's vision, mission, and values, ensuring all programs, grantmaking, and operations advance the founders' charitable purposes
- Guard against mission drift; keep the founders' priorities of maintaining the Gardens, supporting arts, culture, education, and human services in Manitowoc central to all decisions
- Monitor trends in philanthropy, community needs, and the social sector; bring forward well-researched, data-informed strategic recommendations to the Board as warranted
- Lead and facilitate the annual strategic planning cycle in collaboration with the Board; translate approved plans into actionable goals with measurable outcomes and clear accountability for staff and self

2. Governance & Board Partnership

- Serve as a trusted partner and primary advisor to the Board of Directors; support the Board Chair in preparing focused, action-oriented agendas aligned with strategic priorities
- Keep the Board fully and transparently informed on financial performance, program outcomes, operational issues, and external developments at every regular meeting
- Facilitate clear, appropriate separation between governance (Board) and management (ED); proactively reinforce roles and prevent boundary confusion
- Support the Board in committee development, new member orientation, and Board member effectiveness
- Ensure annual execution of required governance processes, including conflict-of-interest disclosures, Board self-evaluation, and ED performance review

3. Operational Management & Program Delivery

- Oversee the full grantmaking lifecycle: community outreach, application administration, proposal review, due diligence, funding recommendations to the Board, grant agreements, and post-grant impact assessment
- Strengthen and formalize grant processes, including incorporating grantee voice, community-needs alignment, and equity considerations into evaluation criteria
- Oversee West of the Lake Gardens operations — maintenance, staffing, public programming, capital improvements, and event planning — in accordance with the founders' intent and sound property management principles
- Establish and maintain robust administrative systems: technology infrastructure, records management, grant management software, HR processes, and document retention policy
- Set a forward-looking technology vision for the Foundation; implement tools that improve efficiency, transparency, and stakeholder engagement
- Evaluate and steward physical assets and capital resources; develop and present multi-year capital plans to the Board as needed

4. Financial Stewardship & Fiduciary Accountability

- Develop and manage the annual operating and grants budget in close collaboration with the Board Treasurer and Finance Committee, subject to full Board approval
- Provide accurate and timely financial reporting to the Board at each meeting; proactively communicate analysis of data
- Implement and enforce strong internal financial controls; oversee bookkeeping, payroll, and the annual independent audit; present the audit report to the Board
- Work with the Board and investment advisors to implement and monitor the Foundation's Investment Policy Statement; regularly report on investment portfolio performance and long-term sustainability
- Ensure accurate and timely filing of IRS Form 990-PF and all required federal, state, and local filings; maintain full compliance with private foundation rules (IRC §§4940–4945)

- Monitor the Foundation's payout rate and spending policy in relation to investment performance and grant commitments; advise the Board on sustainability and impact tradeoffs

5. Human Capital & Organizational Culture

- Recruit, develop, supervise, and retain a high-performing, mission-aligned team; conduct regular performance evaluations tied to clear expectations, organizational values, and measurable goals
- Assess the current staffing model and recommend structural changes to the Board as needed
- Model and reinforce the Foundation's core values of Stewardship, Integrity, and Community Well-Being
- Maintain current, accurate job descriptions, equitable compensation structures, and legally compliant HR policies
- Foster an inclusive, respectful workplace culture; implement and enforce anti-harassment and antidiscrimination policies consistently
- Uphold the Foundation's Whistleblower Policy; ensure zero tolerance for retaliation against any individual who raises concerns in good faith
- Build leadership capacity within the team; develop and maintain a written, board-reviewed emergency succession plan for the ED position and other key roles

6. External Relations & Community Engagement

- Serve as the Foundation's principal external representative and spokesperson; articulate the Foundation's vision, mission, history, values, and community impact to diverse audiences
- Build and sustain authentic, trust-based relationships with grantees, community leaders, civic officials, peer foundations, and regional and national philanthropic networks
- Actively solicit and incorporate community stakeholder perspectives — including from nonprofits, local government, and residents — to ensure grantmaking remains responsive to evolving community needs
- Identify and develop strategic partnerships and co-investment opportunities with local government, schools, healthcare systems, and other funders
- Maintain appropriate, visible engagement in the Manitowoc community; represent the Foundation professionally at public events and in media within boundaries appropriate for a 501(c)(3) private foundation
- Develop and regularly communicate a compelling, accessible narrative of the Foundation's community impact; steward the Foundation's reputation with care and consistency

7. Risk Management, Compliance & Ethical Integrity

- Ensure full compliance with IRS private foundation regulations, the Foundation's Bylaws, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Policy, Whistleblower Policy, and all applicable Wisconsin statutes to include applicable employment laws
- Proactively identify, monitor, and mitigate organizational risks — including operating cost escalation, succession risk, investment volatility, and community demand exceeding resources — and present risk mitigation strategies to the Board

- Maintain appropriate and current insurance coverage (Directors & Officers liability, commercial property, general liability, employment practices liability) and conduct periodic coverage reviews with the Board
- Enforce the Foundation's Code of Conduct obligations for directors and officers: duties of care, loyalty, and obedience; conflict-of-interest compliance; and confidentiality obligations
- Lead by example on ethical standards; communicate the Foundation's values consistently and address any violations promptly, fairly, and decisively
- Ensure the Foundation's public disclosure obligations are met, including timely public availability of Form 990-PF as required by IRC §6104



The Pond Garden – one of the newest additions to the West of the Lakes Gardens

QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

Education

- Bachelor's degree required
- Advanced degree (MPA, MBA, Nonprofit Management, or equivalent) strongly preferred

Experience

- Minimum 7–10 years of progressive senior leadership experience in the nonprofit, philanthropic, or mission-driven sector
- Demonstrated success managing multi-million-dollar budgets and financial operations in not-for-profit or for-profit contexts

- Proven track record in staff leadership: hiring, coaching, performance management, and team development
- 3–5 years of operational experience spanning human resources, finance, technology, and administration
- Meaningful experience working with or serving on a Board of Directors in a governance-partnership model
- Experience in foundation grantmaking, private foundation regulations, or philanthropy strongly preferred
- Experience with historic property management, public gardens, or cultural assets a plus
- Familiarity and understanding of Manitowoc community and the Two Rivers area is required

COMPETENCIES & ATTRIBUTES FOR SUCCESS

Mission-Centered Strategic Leadership

- Honors West family legacy
- Connects deeply with Manitowoc
- Balances tradition and modernization
- Leads values-aligned decision-making
- Protects gardens and grantmaking mission
- Collaborates with the Board of Directors to implement changes in policy, procedures, or processes
- Enhances sustainable long-term direction
- Exercises sound stewardship of investment portfolio

Collaborative Organizational Development

- Communicates clearly across staff levels
- Builds trust with garden teams
- Navigates complex personalities constructively
- Leads with approachability and presence
- Resolves conflict without escalation
- Listens before making major changes
- Balances decisiveness with collaboration
- Creates inclusive, team-oriented culture

Operational and Financial Management

- Applies disciplined business practices
- Strengthens policies and documented processes
- Builds staff training and cross-coverage
- Oversees compliant grant administration
- Establishes accountability and performance systems
- Manages resources with fiscal discipline

Board Engagement

- Clarifies board-management decision boundaries
- Serves as a trusted partner and primary advisor to the Board
- Keeps the Board fully informed
- Provides financial reporting and analysis to the Board

COMPENSATION

The West Foundation offers a competitive compensation package commensurate with qualifications and experience, including:

- Competitive base salary \$90,000 - \$110,000 at approximately 50% full-time (estimated 20-25 hours/week)
- Health and dental insurance benefits
- Paid time off (vacation, sick leave, and holidays)
- Professional development and continuing education support
- Retirement plan

LOCATION: MANITOWOC, WI

This position is based in Manitowoc, WI and the leader is expected to be actively engaged within the community with major funders, community leaders, superintendents, and CEOs, as well as balancing oversight of the regional locations.

Travel is required to meet with regional leaders and attend local events as needed.



Known as the “Maritime Capital of Wisconsin,” Manitowoc is famous for a plethora of historic and cultural sights. The city's history is deeply connected to shipbuilding, brewing, and industry, traditions that have helped shape its identity while contributing to the economic growth of northeastern Wisconsin. Today, Manitowoc successfully blends its historic character with a thriving arts scene, recreational opportunities, and a welcoming community atmosphere.

Life in Manitowoc is centered around its scenic waterfront and abundant outdoor amenities. Residents enjoy access to miles of shoreline, public parks, beaches, trails, and waterways that support year-round

recreation, including kayaking, paddleboarding, hiking, cycling, and a variety of community events. The city's commitment to preserving its natural resources and expanding recreational opportunities makes it an attractive destination for families, outdoor enthusiasts, and those seeking a balanced lifestyle.

Manitowoc also boasts a rich cultural landscape that celebrates both local history and the arts. Institutions such as the Rahr-West Art Museum, housed in the historic Rahr-Vilas Mansion, feature nationally recognized works alongside rotating exhibitions that enrich the community's cultural experiences. The Wisconsin Maritime Museum preserves the region's storied relationship with Lake Michigan and honors the city's contributions to American shipbuilding and World War II history, while the Manitowoc County Historical Society and Farm Wisconsin Discovery Center offer engaging opportunities to explore the area's agricultural, industrial, and cultural heritage.

With its combination of historic charm, strong civic pride, and diverse recreational and cultural amenities, Manitowoc offers residents and visitors a welcoming environment where history, innovation, and community come together. Its commitment to preserving its past while embracing future growth continues to make Manitowoc an exceptional place to live, work, and visit along Wisconsin's Lake Michigan shoreline.

To be considered for this opportunity, please submit a cover letter and resume to:

Lisa Maddox, Executive Search Consultant -OR-
lisa@spanopratt.com

Lindsey Kriete, Practice Director
lkriete@spanopratt.com

www.spanopratt.com