



Executive Director • Gunston Hall

Position Guide • June 2025

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OVERVIEW

Position Executive Director

Reports to Board of Regents

Location Mason Neck, VA



HOME OF
American Rights

MISSION

To stimulate the exploration and understanding of principles expressed by George Mason in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights.

VISION

Present the life and work of George Mason IV to promote and enrich the understanding of American democracy.

VALUES

- **Authenticity:** We seek accuracy and transparency in our scholarship and interpretation of history, and we demonstrate integrity and respect in all our activities and operations.
- **Inclusiveness:** George Mason's writings reveal a man of bold ideas grounded in Enlightenment principles. We apply these principles by encouraging an open exchange of ideas and opinions while simultaneously acknowledging that diverse perspectives enhance insight and understanding.
- **Stewardship:** We are dedicated to the responsible conservation of intellectual, monetary, and material resources of Gunston Hall. Through adherence to best practices, we strive to maintain a high standard of excellence in the areas of operations, preservation, governance, and service.
- **Civic Engagement:** We encourage civic participation by promoting an understanding of the rights and privileges of citizenship through programs, projects, and exhibits. We recognize and honor the intrinsic rights of the individual stated in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, documents that embody the ideas conveyed in George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights.

As the primary author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Constitution, George Mason had a profound influence on the foundation of our country.

Built between 1755 and 1759, Gunston Hall is the estate of George Mason, one of the founders of the American republic. Mason's seminal work, the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights, was the first to enshrine in law fundamental liberties such as religious tolerance and freedom of the press. Later, as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Mason pressed for a formal recognition of individual rights to be included. Ultimately, when his demands were rejected, he refused to sign the Constitution. Eventually, the Bill of Rights — ten constitutional amendments largely modeled from the Virginia Declaration of Rights — was introduced in the first Congress by James Madison and ultimately ratified in 1791.



The property occupies 554 acres on Mason Neck overlooking the Potomac River, just outside of Lorton, Virginia, and twelve miles south of Mt. Vernon. The property includes George Mason's modest but elegant Georgian mansion, other historic and ancillary structures, extensive historical landscapes, and an educational, research, collections, and administrative center.

After George Mason's death in 1792, the house remained a private residence for many years. In accordance with a Deed of Gift from its last private owners, Eleanor and Louis Hertle, Gunston Hall was donated to the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1949. Management of the property is vested in the private Board of Regents of Gunston Hall, Inc., a 501(c)3 organization composed of members of The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA).

The Board of Regents opened Gunston Hall to the public in 1952 as a memorial to George Mason. Today the organization maintains the historical mansion, visitor's center, and the surrounding 554-acre

ABOUT GUNSTON HALL, *continued*

property for public recreational and event use. Additionally, it operates an active archeological program and maintains collections of archeological materials, fine arts, domestic and family artifacts. Gunston Hall is dedicated to preserving George Mason's legacy. An extensive archive and research collection on Mason and his family are housed in the administrative center's library and archives.

Gunston Hall also hosts scholarly and educational programs, special events and exhibits, and guided tours of the grounds, museum, and mansion.

Gunston Hall's governance and financial model is a hybrid (public-private partnership). The operating budget is currently \$3 million, which comes from a combination of public funds, private philanthropy, investment income and earned income. Public funding comes from the Commonwealth of Virginia's General Fund, Maintenance Reserve Fund and Capital Fund. Private philanthropy takes the form of individual donations and foundation grants. Investment income is provided by two separate investment portfolios that support operations – a \$1.5 million fund managed by the BRGHI and a \$7.5 million fund managed by the Gunston Hall Foundation, which serves as an endowment. Earned income is generated by the museum shop, event rentals, and admissions. In addition, a Collections Fund is held by the Commonwealth of Virginia exclusively for additions to, and the care of, the collections and currently has a balance of \$1 million.

Gunston Hall employs 15 full-time and 8 part-time professionals who provide expertise in the areas of Finance and Administration, Operations & Mission Impact, Business Enterprise & Guest Engagement, Grounds, and Development. The Operations & Mission Impact team includes a Director of Education, a Senior Curator, an Archaeologist, and a Horticulturist. Gunston Hall also maintains a dedicated corps of over 50 volunteers who provide essential support for educational and additional programs.



On the precipice of America's Semiquincentennial, the ideals espoused by George Mason remain both timeless and more relevant than ever. As a member of Virginia's American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250), Gunston Hall is primed to play a prominent role in commemorating the birth of the country whose conception of individual rights was shaped by George Mason's writings.

Gunston Hall is truly unique as far as historic sites associated with the founding generation are concerned. Whereas many of our counterparts focus on the legacy of a single man, our mission drives us beyond the enshrinement of any one person to focus instead on a set of ideals. These ideals — that all people are equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights — are as important today as they have ever been. Being a site dedicated to ideas means we are free to go beyond the lifespan of any one person and instead follow the trajectory of how these rights first written about by Mason in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights have evolved over the generations. How did enslaved and free African Americans in the 19th century fight for these rights that were supposedly inherent to everyone? How did women, 50 years later, tackle the same contradictions during the suffrage movement? How do people around the world today fight for equality and against injustice? These are the questions we hope to inspire people to ask and the topics we encourage them to explore through our permanent exhibit and educational programming.

This is an exciting time for Gunston Hall. Over the coming years, it is poised to make profound changes to its grounds and buildings, to its staff structure and composition, and in the way it serves the public.

In fact, Gunston Hall is poised to redefine the public we serve and the way we serve them.

We strive to:

- **Integrate the Mission into all corners of the Gunston Hall campus.** By telling more stories of more people in more places on the 554-acre campus, we will better be able to contextualize George Mason as a complex, three-dimensional historical figure.

- **Preserve the Historic Mansion while continuing to research the grounds.** The Mason Family, represented most tangibly by the historic mansion, will always be at the center of the Gunston Hall story. That said, the grounds hold more stories which are waiting to be discovered and told to enhance our current narrative.
- **Be an anchor and resource for the people of Mason Neck and surrounding communities.** Development continues to encroach on Mason Neck. Gunston Hall is a respite from urbanization that provides necessary services to a presently underserved area. Gunston Hall has evolved into a family-centered organization that focuses on the civic maturation of our youngest learners.
- **Broaden Gunston Hall's impact beyond Northern Virginia.** Gunston Hall has a message that is timeless and necessary. We aim to become a national leader in civics education while increasing international recognition of Gunston Hall as a resource for the understanding and application of human rights.
- **Position Gunston Hall for continued growth in mission impact.** Sustaining and amplifying our mission will require solid revenue streams comprising a “three-legged stool”: support from Commonwealth appropriations, strong and targeted philanthropic investment, and earned revenue from programs, events, and visitation.



In 2016, Gunston Hall adopted an ambitious Campus Master Plan. Developed over ten months and benefiting from insights gathered from a comprehensive guest survey and over 100 interviews with key stakeholders, the Plan articulates the following core goals for the future transformation of the site: to enlarge and enhance the historic core; to implement experiences focusing on youth and to provide facilities responsive to their needs; to conserve the site's

distinctive landscapes and natural resources; and to increase access to educational and recreational opportunities throughout the site.

THE OPPORTUNITY, *continued*

Pursuant to that Master Plan, Gunston Hall is currently undertaking two major capital projects. The first is the construction of a new archaeology center and the construction of a replacement maintenance facility. The new archaeology center will have public exhibit space as well as an archaeology lab viewable to the public, in addition to storage for our 80,000-piece archaeology collection. The second, called the East Yard Project, involves the archaeological investigation of the enslaved East Yard community and the construction of interpretive experiences. Additionally, because the existing Director's residence was constructed in the 1950s directly over the East Yard, this project involves its demolition and construction of a new residence elsewhere on site.



The Executive Director is responsible for realizing and fulfilling the mission of Gunston Hall and will play a leading role in positioning the institution as the “Home of American Rights” and as a center of learning and engagement for all audiences.

The Executive Director (ED) reports to the First Regent of the Gunston Hall Board of Regents and is an Agency Head of the Commonwealth of Virginia with accountability to the Secretary of Education. This leader is responsible for realizing and fulfilling the mission of the organization and upholding the values of authenticity, inclusiveness, stewardship, and civic engagement. In the performance of these duties, the Executive Director is expected at all times to maintain and model the highest standards of professionalism, financial stewardship, ethical behavior, and strategic leadership.

Working in close partnership with the Regents, the Executive Director will pursue the following priorities:

- Building a strong revenue base to ensure sustainable operations of all programming and educational initiatives as capital projects reach completion, to include strengthening Commonwealth support, private philanthropy and earned income.
- Developing internal systems and processes, including sound budgetary practices and strong financial controls, that will allow the organization to operate efficiently and effectively as its scale expands.
- Streamlining and operationalizing the organization’s vision to ensure resources are dedicated to the areas in which Gunston Hall’s impact is most pronounced.
- Maintaining a strong working relationship with the Virginia General Assembly, which provides Gunston Hall essential operating, maintenance, and capital funding.
- Increasing organizational visibility and leveraging Gunston Hall’s role on the VA250 Commission to broaden awareness and attract supporters.
- Nurturing a high-performing team characterized by high expectations, cross-functional collaboration, and a culture of mutual respect and accountability
- Reimagining Gunston Hall’s relationship with George Mason University and establishing additional partnerships.
- Continuing to build out the institution’s intergenerational programming.

POSITION SUMMARY, *continued*

Gunston Hall seeks a leader with high standards and sterling personal integrity. This leader will be able to articulate a strong, strategic vision and have the capacity to develop and implement organizational strategies, including the ability to prepare and present reports to the Board of Regents. A proven ability to develop and achieve goals, manage projects, implement budgets, and meet deadlines is essential.



Stewardship of the premises — including historic structures, contemporary buildings, and extensive grounds, trails, gardens, and landscapes — will also be an essential component of this role. The next leader will manage daily operations of a historic site that is open 300 days per year to the visiting public. They will lead, plan, and manage all capital and maintenance projects in support of the Campus Master Plan. They will also develop and implement land and facilities management policies and procedures necessary to ensure operational, administrative, and legal compliance with best practices.

The Executive Director will oversee the development and implementation of programs and services that reach targeted audiences and which realize the full educational potential of Gunston Hall's physical

resources.

The leader will reside in the Executive Director's residence on the property and will serve as "first responder" for all security and/or emergency situations on the site. This responsibility includes service as one of two "Duty Officers" for the property and requires, among other functions, being on, in proximity, and/or readily able to access the site when "On Duty" approximately 180 days annually. Travel is also required throughout the United States to promote and tell the story of Gunston Hall, engage new stakeholders, and visit members of the Board of Regents and the State Societies of the NSCDA.

They will accomplish the institutional vision of Gunston Hall through measurable outcomes and organizational accountability and will lead, inspire, supervise, and evaluate staff and volunteers to meet the institution's goals and objectives. The Executive Director will initiate and develop new partnerships and collaborations with other organizations, constituent groups, and public agencies and will nurture existing relationships to help expand public service and meet institutional goals.

Additional responsibilities include:

Financial Management and Fund Development

- Propose and manage the institutional budget, including Commonwealth of Virginia appropriations and special funds, as well as Regents' and other funds, with integrity and transparency to achieve annual goals and to provide for financial accountability and secure the long-term financial health of the organization.
- Supervise preparation of comprehensive and accurate financial statements.
- Design, develop, and implement aggressive fundraising efforts, including the active solicitation of funds, capital and membership campaigns, annual giving, major gifts, planned giving, public and private grants, and earned income (e.g., revenue derived from ticket sales, events, and functions) in order to meet institutional priorities and provide for long-term financial stability.

Governance

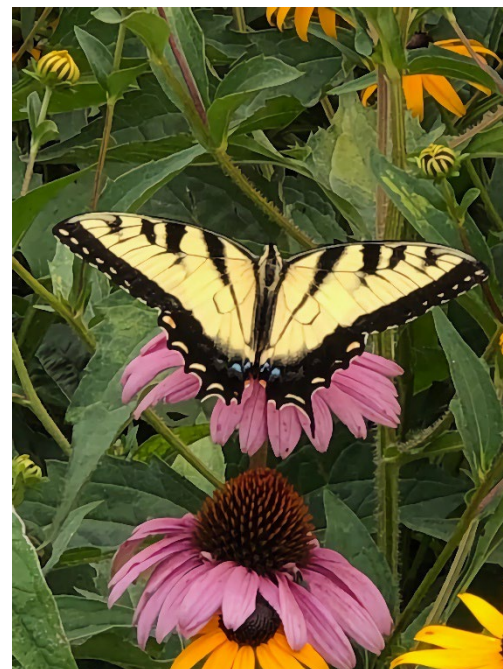
- Work collaboratively to ensure efficient governance by the Board of Regents.
- Provide for the timely and orderly management of all public and private governance functions and maintain a positive and productive relationship with the Board of Regents and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Education

- Facilitate development of education programs that fulfill the goal of telling more stories of more people in more places on the campus.
- Work with community advisors, other stakeholders and staff to expand the reach and impact of educational programs with contemporary audiences.
- Supervise expansion of collaborations with George Mason University and other educational institutions.

Brand Stewardship

- Lead brand implementation and ensure effective and consistent marketing, messaging and communications to all stakeholders internal and external to the institution.
- Strategically advocate on behalf of the institution with the Commonwealth of Virginia, Fairfax County, and other appropriate forums.
- Develop strategies and relationships in order to increase visitation.
- Positively present and represent Gunston Hall including service on appropriate boards and active volunteerism with local communities and constituent groups, public officials and agencies, media representatives, professional organizations and colleagues, and others.
- Serve as the primary external representative of the organization and possess strong communication skills to be the media spokesperson for the organization.



Gunston Hall seeks an energetic and ethical leader with strong financial acumen, fundraising skills, team-building expertise, outstanding communication skills, and experience working with state governments and nonprofit boards to serve as its next Executive Director.

The Executive Director of Gunston Hall is a strong visionary leader who will be able to collaborate with the Board of Regents, staff, Commonwealth agencies, local communities, and constituencies to design and execute strategic plans. This leader will have exceptional organizational skills and data-management capabilities, a commitment to excellence and high standards, and a creative approach to leadership with a willingness to embrace new ideas and possibilities. The leader will have a strong background in nonprofit finance and an enthusiasm for promoting Gunston Hall's work across a range of audiences. This person will be comfortable with unique organizational structures — including a hybrid, public-private operating framework and a large, geographically dispersed Board of Regents — and will be a thoughtful partner in co-constructing an institutional vision. While a background as a historian is not essential, the leader must possess an evident passion for the mission of Gunston Hall.

Desired skills and attributes include:

- Executive-level knowledge of the principles of government and non-profit accounting and financial management systems, including the basic concepts of fund accounting and related financial statements.
- Proven success in developing and managing non-profit and/or governmental budgets to meet targeted goals.
- Demonstrated success as a supervisor in organizing, motivating, leading, and managing paid and volunteer staff for best results in a nonprofit organization and/or government agency.
- Documented understanding of the roles and potential of history organizations and historical sites in contemporary society.
- Demonstrated appreciation of the requirements and roles of scholarship in museums, historical interpretation, public programs, and education activities.
- Documented success in setting, organizing, and meeting organizational fundraising goals in a competitive marketplace.

- Demonstrated success in conceiving and implementing creative public programs by working with and through others.
- Practical experience in establishing, measuring, and analyzing program goals and objectives.
- Proven success in presenting and representing a cultural organization or agency to funders, constituents and their communities, peer organizations, governing boards, public officials and agencies, and representatives of the press.
- Passion for American history, combined with a talent for sharing it with a variety of audiences through innovative methodologies and formats.
- Working knowledge of 18th century American and Virginia history, especially as it relates to George Mason's life and contributions to American governance.
- Exemplary written and oral communication, interpersonal, and diplomatic skills.
- Working knowledge of electronic information systems generally used in contemporary museums and non-profit cultural organizations.
- Working knowledge of education and advocacy before government bodies and the workings of the Commonwealth of Virginia administrative and budget processes.
- Demonstrated awareness of, and proven ability to take advantage of, the opportunities that continually evolving digital technologies and social media offer for expanding the impact of cultural organizations, history museums, and historic sites.

A bachelor's degree in a relevant field such as history, museum studies, public history, public administration, business or education is required. A master's degree or PhD is preferred. 8-10 years of progressive, relevant experience in leadership roles, particularly in non-profit associations, museum or cultural organization settings is essential. Previous experience as CEO or Executive Director of a non-profit organization is preferred.



Gunston Hall offers a competitive salary and benefits package.

The base compensation range for this position annually is between \$180,000–\$200,000. The position is based in Mason Neck, Virginia, as the Executive Director will be expected to live on the Gunston Hall premises in a newly constructed, rent-subsidized Director's Residence expected in mid-2026. Health, retirement, PTO, and other benefits are available.

How to apply

If you want to lead this dynamic organization, please confidentially submit a current resume and cover letter to Kittleman & Associates. The cover letter is an opportunity to showcase your passion for Gunston Hall's vision and mission, as well as organizational impact in current or prior roles.

The position will remain open until filled, but applicants are highly encouraged to submit their materials as soon as possible to ensure full consideration.

→ [SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO KITTLEMAN ONLINE HERE](#)
(CLICK THE APPLY BUTTON AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE)