



## Steps to Hiring a Main Street Director

### Getting Ready to Hire:

Before the program director selection process begins, the Main Street program's board of directors should take care of the following:

- As applicable, review your organization's bylaws, articles of incorporation and tax-exempt status documents and tax returns to ensure that you are operating in full compliance as a nonprofit organization.
- Review the Vision for downtown, the Mission of your downtown organization and the Plan of Work for the organization. (Update as needed)
- Develop or revise your annual Main Street budget in accordance with your plan of work.
- Develop or revise as needed, your nonprofit policies, including a conflict-of-interest policy, a personnel policy, and a fiscal policy.
- Establish/Revise/Review the Main street program's checking account and procedures for writing checks. A co-signature of a Main Street board member, preferably the president or treasurer, is recommended.
- Write a job description and job advertisement for the position. Determine if you require a resume, an application, samples of work or a portfolio, etc.
- Determine and develop the process for hiring a Main Street director. Decide how you will narrow down the candidates, how many interviews you will conduct, if you will conduct phone, Skype, Zoom, Teams or in-person interviews, if you will require candidates to complete any role-play exercises as a part of the selection process, if you will cover travel expenses for interviews, etc.
- Write interview, role play exercise and reference questions. (See below for examples).
- Determine the salary range based on your Main Street budget and the skill set that you desire.
- Advertise the position as broadly as possible to attract person(s) with the skill set that you require.
- Develop a form for conducting performance evaluations for the staff.
- Write an employment contract or agreement that outlines the expectations and responsibilities of serving the organization and outline the salary and compensation package that is mutually agreed upon.
- Establish salary payment procedures and benefits package.

- Gather all old and current documents relating to the downtown and the organization, including the most recent annual report and recent newsletters, a list of the board, the budget, the organization's plan of work and any downtown plans, market studies, architectural studies or inventories, chamber of commerce brochures and the history of the community. Provide a packet of information for each candidate that you interview.
- Secure and furnish the program director's office. A street-level storefront is best if it does not compete with retail demand for the space. If street-level is not available, an upper-floor office is best alternative. Furniture (desk, files, worktable, chairs), a good stock of office supplies, a computer and printer, a copy machine, a high-quality camera, a cell phone, and an office telephone and answering machine should be installed. It is best if the program director has privacy-not access to privacy, but his or her own office.
- Set up and confirm access to photocopying and administrative services, as needed. The board should establish any necessary charge accounts, in office supply stores and printing shops, for example.

## **Main Street Director's Job Description**

### **Work Objectives**

The Main Street program director coordinates activity within a downtown revitalization program that utilizes historic preservation as an integral foundation for downtown economic development.

He/She is responsible for the development, conduct, execution, and documentation of the Main Street program. The program director is the principal on-site staff person responsible for coordinating all program activities locally as well as for representing the community regionally, statewide, and nationally as appropriate. In addition, the program director should help guide the organization as it grows and as its objectives evolve.

### **Reporting Lines**

If the program director is a nonprofit employee, he/she will be principally accountable to the chairperson of Main Street Board and secondly to its Board of Directors. If the program director is a city/town employee, he/she will be principally accountable to their supervisor and serve as a liaison to the Main Street Board of Directors.

### **Full Range of Duties Performed by Program Director**

The program director should carry out the following tasks:

- Coordinate activity of Main Street program committees, ensuring that communication between committees is well established; assist committees with implementation of work plan items.
- Manage all administrative aspects of the Main Street program, including purchasing, record keeping, budget development and accounting, preparing all reports required by the state Main Street program and by the National Main Street Center, assisting with the preparation of reports to funding agencies and supervising part-time employees or consultants.
- Develop, in conjunction with the Main Street program's board of directors, downtown economic development strategies that are based on historic preservation and utilize the community's human and economic resources. Become familiar with all persons and groups directly or indirectly involved in the downtown commercial district. Mindful of the roles of various downtown interest groups, assist the Main Street program's board of directors and committees in developing an annual action plan for implementing a downtown revitalization program. The plan should define a five-year vision for downtown, a mission for the organization charged bringing the plan to fruition, an implementation strategy, economic development strategies, goals and objectives, and actions and tasks for implementation focused on four areas:
  1. Design/Historic preservation
  2. Promotion
  3. Organization/Management
  4. Economic vitality/development
- Develop and conduct ongoing public awareness and education programs designed to enhance appreciation of the downtown's architecture and other assets and to foster an understanding of the Main Street program's goals and objectives. Use website, social media, speaking engagements, media interviews and personal appearances to keep the program in the public eye.

- Assist individual tenants or property owners with physical improvement projects through personal consultation or by obtaining and supervising professional design consultants; assist in locating appropriate contractors and materials; when possible, participate in construction supervision; provide advice and guidance on necessary financial mechanisms for physical improvements.
- Assess the management capacity of major downtown organizations and encourage improvements in the downtown community's ability to carry out joint activities such as promotional events, business recruitment, parking management and so on. Provide advice and information on successful downtown management. Encourage a cooperative climate between downtown interests and local public officials.
- Advise downtown merchant's organizations and/or chamber of commerce retail committees on Main Street program activities and goals; help coordinate joint promotional events, such as seasonal festivals or cooperative retail promotional events, in order to improve the quality and success of events and attract people downtown; work closely with local media to ensure maximum coverage of promotional activities; encourage design excellence in all aspects of the promotion in order to advance an image of quality for the downtown.
- Help build strong and productive working relationships with appropriate public agencies at the local and state levels.
- Utilizing the Main Street program format, develop and maintain data systems to track the process and progress of the local Main Street program. These systems should include economic monitoring, individual building files, thorough photographic documentation of all physical changes and information on job creation and business retention.
- Represent the community to important constituencies at the local, regional, state, and national levels. Speak effectively on the program's directions and findings, always mindful of the need to improve state and national economic development policies as they relate to smaller communities.

### **Resource Management Responsibilities**

The program director supervises all necessary temporary or permanent employees, as well as professional consultants. The director participates in personnel and program evaluations. The program director maintains local Main Street program records and reports, establishes technical resource files and libraries, and prepares regular reports for the state Main Street program and the National Main Street Center. The program director monitors the annual program budget and maintains financial records.

### **Education & Experience**

Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university with a BS or BA degree preferred. Five -years' experience in community development, business, or downtown development. Any equivalent combination of education and experience, with additional education substituting on a year for year basis for the required experience.

The program director should have education and/or experience in one or more of the following areas of study:

- Architecture
- Historic preservation

- Economics
- Finance
- Public relations
- Design
- Journalism
- Planning
- Business administration
- Entrepreneurship
- Public administration
- Retailing
- Volunteer or non-profit administration/ and or small business development

### **Job Requirements**

- Excellent oral and written communication skills are essential.
- Dynamic self-starter.
- Marketing or advertising skills desired.
- Good organizational skills.
- Fundraising experience.
- Professional and/or academic economic development experience strongly desired.
- Historic preservation skills desired.
- Experience in administrative management.
- Strong Computer skills including word processing, database, and spreadsheet applications.
- Supervisory skills are desirable.

The program director must be sensitive to design and preservation issues. The director must understand the issues confronting downtown businesspeople, property owners, public agencies, and community organizations. The director must be entrepreneurial, energetic, imaginative, well organized, and capable of functioning effectively in an independent situation.

### **Physical Demands**

The physical demand described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Work is performed primarily in office setting. Some outdoor work is required. Hand-eye coordination is necessary to operate computers and various pieces of office equipment.

While performing the duties of the job, the employee is frequently required to talk, be able to hear, sit for periods of time, use hands to finger, handle, feel or operate objects, tools, or controls; and reach with hands and arms. The employee is often required to stand or walk.

The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 25 pounds.

## Interviewing Candidates

### Examples of Behavior-Based Questions and Follow Ups:

What an applicant has *done* is a better indicator of future job success than what the applicant believes, feels, thinks, or knows. The following questions are useful in getting applicants to discuss work realities rather than notions or suppositions.

- Tell me how you increased teamwork among a previous group with whom you worked.
- Describe what you liked and disliked about how you were managed in previous positions.
- Recall a time when you made what you consider a mistake or a bad decision on the job. How did you handle the situation?
- In your past work life, what kind of co-workers or clients rubbed you the wrong way? How did you respond?
- Tell me about a time when you set specific work goals for yourself. How did things turn out?
- Describe a time when you had to criticize or discipline the performance of someone who worked with you or for you. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?
- Walk me through the major highlights of your career so far and tell me where you want to go next.
- Tell me about a work emergency or crisis of some kind in which you were involved. What was your role? What did you do?
- We've all felt stress in our work lives. Tell me about work-related situations that cause stress for you. How do you typically handle such stress?
- In your most recent position, what did you learn? How did you apply this knowledge?
- Tell me about a challenge you faced in a previous work situation. How did you respond?
- Every director must learn to delegate well. Describe a work situation in which you delegated responsibility successfully. Then tell me about a time when your delegation of responsibility did not work out well. How did you handle that situation?
- What approaches worked best for you in the past in communicating with your boss? With your co-workers? With your subordinates?
- Tell me about a time when you took charge as a leader in a work situation without being formally assigned to that role by your boss.
- What experiences have you had working with people of different ethnicities, age, or physical ability levels?
- Tell me about a time when you felt you went beyond the call of duty in helping a client.

### Useful Probes for Interviewing:

Although probing for more extensive answers from candidates is not allowed in strictly structured interviewing environments, the practice is still widely used. It can be applied fairly if each candidate is given the advantage of approximately the same degree of probing by interviewers.

- Please clarify what you mean by ...
- How did you feel when that happened?
- Why do you think you reacted as you did?
- Did you consider other options at the time?
- Please give me more details about ...

- How do you think others felt about your actions at the time?
- Looking back on the experience, how do you see things now?
- What was going through your mind when you took that action?
- Did the outcome of your action satisfy you?

**Example of a Role Play Scenario:**

**From Uptown Lexington, Inc. – Grimes Mill**

- *Uptown Lexington, Inc. acquired Grimes Mill from SunTrust Bank in 20\_\_\_. The property has been on the Uptown Lexington, Inc. books for 10 + years. The property is a 2 ½ story plus basement structure with 1200 sq. ft. per floor on 3 floors, and 800 sq. ft. on the top floor. There is an additional 1600 square feet of land adjacent to the building that is part of the property. It is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is eligible for a local façade grant. There is no parking associated with the property and there is a development restriction attached to the deed of trust that prevents residential development.*

*Uptown Lexington needs to sell the property and must net \$50,000 for the sale to recoup the investment that the organization has made over the years. Formulate and present the steps that you would take to develop a plan and find an investor that will result in the redevelopment of this property. You have 24 hours to develop a plan.*

*The audience you will present to is the Board of Directors of Uptown Lexington, Inc. You will have 15 minutes to present your plan.*

**Example of a Role Play Scenario:**

**From Downtown Salisbury, Inc. - Salisbury Rowan Farmers Market**

- *The 20\_\_ season was the first year for the new Salisbury Rowan Farmers Market in Downtown Salisbury. The market has been successful but needs to increase sales by 20% this year. The market also needs to interface more with Downtown Businesses who want to gain exposure and business from the Market.*

*The Farmers Market has budgeted \$6,000 for advertising, promotions and events this year. Formulate and present a plan which will achieve these goals.*

*The audience you will present to is the Board of Directors of the Farmers Market. You will have 10 minutes to present your plan.*

**Observations for Selection Committee Members:**

After the interview, the selection committee should ask the following questions about each candidate:

- Does the applicant listen and respond well to the questions asked?
- Does the applicant make direct eye contact when responding?
- Does the applicant ask clarifying questions when appropriate?
- Does the applicant convey a sense of pride and accomplishment when speaking of past jobs and experiences?

- Has the applicant prepared for the interview by researching the city?
- Does the applicant appear to be outgoing, pleasant and easy to speak with?
- Does the applicant display a clear understanding of the ideas and issues involved in downtown economic development and provide examples of their application in past professional, volunteer or academic experiences?
- Do you think you could work with this individual?
- Do you think this individual will be accepted easily by your community?

### **Sample Reference Check Questions:**

The selection committee should also check references. The following is a list of sample questions that should be asked:

- How long have you known the candidate, and how has your association with him/her enabled you to evaluate his/her skills and abilities?
- Has the candidate had a good working relationship with co-workers and supervisors?
- Can you give examples of how the candidate has demonstrated efficiency and persistence in accomplishing assignments or projects?
- Can you give examples of how the candidate has used innovative approaches to resolve problems?
- Does the candidate prioritize projects well?
- We are seeking a Main Street director with the following skills and talents:
  1. The ability to get along well with a wide variety of people
  2. Research and organizational skills
  3. Ability to work with minimal supervision
  4. Self-motivation
  5. Good sense of humor
  6. Do you think the candidate has strengths in these areas? Why?
- What are the candidate's greatest strengths and weaknesses?

### **After the Main Street Director Arrives the Board Should:**

- Review the budget and program accounting procedures and responsibilities.
- Give the program manager thorough tours of the community.
- Develop a performance plan for the Main Street director, based on the organization's plan of work, but specific to his/her job duties that they will be evaluated on.
- Set-up individual interviews for the program director with all the board members and other key people in the community.
- Check with the program director to make sure all office needs are met.
- Hold a reception for the program director.
- Publicize the program director's arrival. Send press releases with the director's picture to all local media. If you hold a press conference, emphasize that the program director is not an expert on downtown revitalization yet-he or she will be going to training programs soon.
- After the program director is on board, set up regular, informal Friday beer or coffee meetings with one or two relevant people for the first few months.
- Give the Main Street director time to review existing materials about the downtown and community; the Main Street director should not be expected to begin new projects until the Main Street basic training program has been completed.

- Send Main Street director and board members to the N.C. Main Street Basic Training courses.
- Send Main Street director to the N.C. Main Street Directors' meetings held once a year.
- Send Main Street director and board members to the N.C. Main Street conference.

\*\*Please follow Human Resources best practices when interviewing candidates making sure to not ask illegal or inappropriate questions. If you have access to an HR Director who can be a part of an interview committee, we strongly encourage you to include them. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has specific guidelines on questions that are and are not allowed. The following links provide clarification: <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-interview-questions-that-are-illegal-1918488> and [Home | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission \(eoc.gov\)](https://www.eeoc.gov/) .