

Executive Director
Steam Railroading Institute | Owosso, Michigan
Full-Time | Exempt Position

Reports directly to the SRI President of the Board of Directors

The Steam Railroading Institute is dedicated to preserving, operating, and sharing the experience and history of steam railroading. Through historic locomotives, excursion operations, public programs, and its visitor center, SRI connects people to the technology, history, and living experience of steam railroading. The Executive Director serves as SRI's chief executive officer and is accountable to the Board of Directors for organizational performance. Within Board-approved policies, strategic direction, budget, and established limitations, the Executive Director has authority to manage SRI's staff, operations, programs, resources, organizational structure, and day-to-day affairs. The Executive Director is expected to make timely management decisions and to keep the Board informed of significant organizational, financial, legal, safety, and reputational risks. The Executive Director is responsible for establishing clear roles, decision-making authority, reporting relationships, and accountability among staff and volunteers. Board members interact with staff and volunteers in ways consistent with established governance policies and through the Executive Director's management structure.

SRI is a volunteer-centric organization. Volunteers are not supplemental labor but essential partners in preserving, operating, and sharing the experience of steam railroading. The Executive Director is responsible for building an organizational model in which paid staff and volunteers work together effectively, safely, respectfully, and accountably in service to SRI's mission.

Key responsibilities include:

- **Volunteer-Centric Leadership and Organizational Culture:** Lead and sustain SRI's volunteer-centric operating model, recognizing volunteers as essential partners in accomplishing the mission and a critical component of SRI's workforce and organizational capacity. Build the infrastructure, culture, and volunteer pipeline necessary for staff and volunteers to work together successfully. Ensure effective systems for volunteer recruitment, screening, onboarding, training, placement, supervision, communication, recognition, conflict resolution, retention, and evaluation. Establish clear roles, decision-making authority, expectations, and accountability for staff and volunteers, and ensure staff are equipped and expected to effectively support and engage volunteers. Foster a welcoming, respectful, equitable, and accountable culture in which volunteers have meaningful opportunities to contribute and their knowledge, expertise, and commitment are valued.
- **Volunteer Development, Leadership and Succession:** Build a sustainable, multigenerational volunteer pipeline by creating accessible pathways for new volunteers to become engaged, develop skills, assume greater responsibility, and become volunteer leaders and mentors. Ensure that mission-critical technical and institutional knowledge

held by experienced volunteers is intentionally documented, transferred, and developed in others through mentoring, cross-training, and succession planning. Regularly assess volunteer engagement, retention, experience, capacity, and emerging leadership needs and use that information to strengthen SRI's volunteer program.

- **Revenue Development and Financial Sustainability:** Lead a comprehensive development strategy that includes individual giving, sponsorships, corporate partnerships, grants, special campaigns, and planned giving. Cultivate and steward donor relationships to support capital improvements and long-term sustainability.
- **Strategic and Financial Management:** Provide executive leadership for SRI's strategic and financial sustainability. Partner with the Board of Directors to establish long-term strategic direction and organizational priorities, and lead implementation within Board-approved policies and resources. Develop and manage the annual operating and capital budgets; monitor financial performance, cash flow, revenue, and expenses; and make appropriate management decisions within the approved budget and established financial policies. Regularly assess organizational capacity—including paid staff, volunteer workforce and leadership, facilities, equipment, technical expertise, and financial resources—and ensure SRI's strategic and operational commitments are realistic, appropriately resourced, and sustainable. Provide the Board with timely, transparent financial reporting and identify significant financial, operational, or organizational risks requiring Board awareness or action.
- **Program Oversight and Operations:** Evaluate existing and proposed programs, events, visitor experiences, and activities for mission alignment, financial sustainability, operational capacity, volunteer capacity, safety, and strategic value; make decisions regarding continuation, modification, expansion, or discontinuation within Board-approved strategy, policy, and budget. Ensure programs and operations are designed with realistic expectations of volunteer capacity and do not create unsustainable dependence on a small number of individuals.
- **Organizational Capacity:** Regularly assess organizational capacity, including staffing, volunteer resources, finances, facilities, systems, technical expertise, and leadership capacity, and align organizational commitments with available resources.
- **External and Community Relations:** Serve as the public face of the organization, building strong relationships with business partners, railroads, civic organizations, government entities, and the broader community.
- **Governance Leadership:** Support strong governance by maintaining transparent and timely communication with the Board, preparing meaningful information for Board decision-making, supporting effective Board and committee work, and clearly distinguishing matters of governance from those appropriately delegated to management.

Provide the Board with regular information regarding the health and sustainability of SRI's volunteer workforce, including engagement, retention, recruitment, capacity, experience, and succession risks, while maintaining clear distinction between the Board's governance role and management's responsibility for day-to-day volunteer engagement.

Ideal Candidate Qualifications will have at least 5 years' experience with:

- Demonstrated leadership experience in a nonprofit or business environment, with a preference for experience in 501(c)(3) organizations.
- Proven success in fundraising, including major gifts, grants, and donor stewardship.
- Strong operational and financial acumen, including budget development and reporting.
- Demonstrated experience successfully leading in a volunteer-intensive organization, including building effective relationships between paid staff and volunteers and creating systems that support volunteer recruitment, engagement, supervision, development, recognition, retention, and accountability. Experience working with a nonprofit Board of Directors and engaging in strategic planning processes.

In addition, candidate should also have:

- Exceptional communication, interpersonal, and public speaking skills.
- Commitment to safety, regulatory compliance, and operational excellence.
- Familiarity with the railroad industry or historic preservation is strongly preferred.
- Ability to work on-site in Owosso, Michigan, with occasional travel required
- Post-secondary degree, at the associate level or higher, preferred.

Physical Requirements: Must be able to safely access rail equipment and facilities, including climbing stairs and ladders.