



Position Specification

Northwest Arkansas Council

Executive Director, Workforce Housing Center

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Our Client

Established in 1990 by Sam Walton, John and Don Tyson, J.B. Hunt, Mark Simmons and other business leaders, the Northwest Arkansas Council is a private, nonprofit organization working to advance job opportunities, talent recruitment, workforce development, physical infrastructure, health care, DEI, and quality of life in the region. Most of the Council's more than 100 members are companies, including Walmart, Tyson Foods, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc., Simmons Foods, George's, Inc. and the University of Arkansas.

Over the years, the Council led the effort to open a new regional airport to serve the thriving business community, and it continues to play important roles in the investments into businesses, entrepreneurs, highways, water systems, schools, arts and cultural centers, and thriving downtown squares.

With core funding from the Walton Family Foundation, the Walmart Foundation and its members, the Council excels at identifying challenges and championing solutions to enhance the prosperity of the Northwest Arkansas region. Learn more about the Council's work at <https://nwacouncil.org>.

About Northwest Arkansas

Northwest Arkansas is one of the nation's fastest-growing metro areas, with a population near 550,000 that's expected to increase 80% over the next 25 years. Fayetteville is home to the University of Arkansas, and the nearby cities of Bentonville, Rogers and Springdale are primary contributors to the business and population growth of the two-county area.

U.S. News & World Report put Northwest Arkansas at No. 8 on its ranking of the nation's 150 Best Places to Live in 2020-21.

Walmart, the world's largest company based in Bentonville, is building a new headquarters in the city, leading what has been a dramatic increase in corporate expansions in the region in recent years. The corporate headquarters of Tyson Foods and J.B. Hunt, as well as many of the region's 1,400 Walmart supplier offices, have expanded, increasing their corporate footprints in Northwest Arkansas.

In addition, the investments in quality-of-life amenities across the region are notable. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville has welcomed 5 million visitors since its 2011 opening, and its satellite contemporary arts space The Momentary opened in February 2020. The Walmart AMP amphitheater in Rogers, a children's museum in Bentonville, a professional performing arts center in Fayetteville and a 36-mile bike/pedestrian trail that cuts through all of the region's largest cities are examples of the projects completed in the past seven years.

The outdoors are a centerpiece of what's happening in Northwest Arkansas, and Beaver Lake has remained a reliable boating and fishing destination for decades. The lake, hikes in the rugged Ozarks and almost 500 miles of paved and natural-surface trails draw thousands of tourists every year.

[Finding NWA](#), a website maintained by the Northwest Arkansas Council, provides information about the cities, schools, the arts, quality of life and businesses for people considering a relocation to the region.

The Role

The Northwest Arkansas Council will use its strong regional and statewide relationships to build a new program focused on providing more and better housing for the region's workforce. This commitment is the result of a study with over 500 community participants, the regular involvement of 22 housing committee members, and a review of publicly available data that revealed that teachers, nurses, firefighters, and other essential workers are among those who must make difficult tradeoffs as they decide what they can afford. Rent is increasing faster than income, making housing less affordable over time, the study found.

The report based on the study's findings was a "call to action," and it indicated that over 80,000 families are projected to move to Northwest Arkansas' four largest cities by 2040. Without action, existing and future residents will struggle to find enough attainable housing in proximity to employment centers, services and amenities. Earlier this year, funding was committed by the Walton Family Foundation to establish the Northwest Arkansas Council's new Workforce Housing Center and to begin the long-term, multi-faceted effort that will lead to better, more plentiful housing for all people who live in Benton and Washington counties.

The Center will provide technical assistance, educational programming, advocacy, and capacity building to promote housing opportunities for lower income, working families in Northwest Arkansas. The region's companies, philanthropic organizations and cities have a strong history of putting financial support behind top priorities, and there's broad recognition that housing affordability is a rising concern.

As part of the Northwest Arkansas Council, the Center provides the opportunity to develop strategies for increasing the attainable, well-designed housing supply to meet the demand in Northwest Arkansas over decades, as well as the opportunity to craft multiple public-private housing partnerships.

The Executive Director will collaborate with senior leadership across corporate, philanthropic and institutional levels and will work alongside non-profit housing partners on common efforts to proactively ensure the quality of life in Northwest Arkansas continues to be accessible to a range of income levels.

Specifically, the Executive Director of the Workforce Housing Center will be responsible for launching and leading the Center's focus in the following areas:

- **Education and Technical Assistance:** Create an enabling environment for housing development, including through technical assistance to municipal and non-profit partners for the design of land use/zoning codes that remove barriers to incentivize workforce housing.
- **Advocacy:** Where permitted, advocate for a regional, cross-sector workforce housing approach, amplify best practices in workforce housing development, and educate local and state officials on the need for workforce housing in Northwest Arkansas. Conduct policy research and collect data to track progress against goals and benchmark compared to peer regions.

- **Building Public Will:** Increase the understanding of and support for the need for more workforce housing development among the region’s residents as well as public and private sector stakeholders through educational opportunities, exposure to best practices and communications efforts.
- **Soft Infrastructure and Capacity-Building:** Build up strategy-aligned nonprofit partners in the region and work with developers, financial institutions, and other agents to enable them to provide capital to support workforce housing projects. Engage regional or national partners to provide technical assistance, guidance and recommendations on strategic philanthropic investments that achieve greatest impact.
- **Direct Investments:** Direct investments in specific programs including, but not limited to, equity investments, subsidies and incentives.

Candidate Profile

The successful candidate will likely bring experience in workforce housing finance and/or with housing organizations to develop attainable housing for a variety of projects, including mixed-income, mixed-use, and urban infill. They will have the ability to work across sectors and be familiar with the development and/or management of housing funds, including the design of financial solutions for workforce housing.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Building Relationships and Using Influence

- Ability to connect and build strong relationships with others, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence and an ability to communicate clearly and persuasively.
- Demonstrated experience operating within complex environments with multiple stakeholders across a number of constituencies.
- Inspiring trust and motivation in others through passion for the mission and the product.
- Strong communication skills and ability to connect to a wide variety of people, both in intimate and large group settings.
- Ability to build coalitions and accomplish goals through networking and broad influence.
- Ability to identify and proactively tackle external and internal pressures; addressing conflicting perspectives in a productive manner in which issues do not linger unresolved.

Knowledge and Expertise

- Fluency with capital markets and affordable housing deal structures.
- Experience with structured finance, tax credits, municipal finance, and real estate.
- Knowledge of different kinds of grant and assistance programs at the local, state, and federal levels that could be used for workforce housing.
- Experience and track record to serve as a critical advisor and subject matter expert for financial deal structures.
- Understanding of affordable housing stakeholders and working group deal dynamics.

Setting Strategy

- An entrepreneurial and creative approach to developing new, innovative ideas that will push the boundaries within the industry and in the region.
- Challenges the status quo; encouraging people to question existing methods, practices, and assumptions.
- The inclination to seek and analyze data and information from a variety of sources to support decisions and to align others with the Center's overall strategy.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty; the ability to adapt nimbly and lead others through complex situations; able to shepherd ideas and lead a team from concept to execution.
- Ability to transition from strategy to daily execution.

Executing for Results

- Ability to set clear and challenging goals for the Center; tenacious and accountable in driving and delivering results.
- Ability to grow a talented and diverse team.
- A risk-taker who seeks data and input from others to foresee possible threats or unintended circumstances from decisions; someone who confidently takes smart risks and ensures others understand decisions before moving forward.
- Experience in functional and general management roles in complex, fast-moving organizations.
- Skilled at building organizational infrastructure to support goals.

Judgement and Curiosity

- A commitment to equitable and inclusive work on behalf of the region; encourages and promotes practices that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Integrity, character, and vision with superior interpersonal and communication skills.
- High degree of integrity and forethought in their approach to making decisions; acts in a transparent and consistent manner while always considering what is best for the organization.
- Demonstrated ability to enable others to act, allocating appropriate decision-making authority and/or responsibility to others to maximize organizational and individual effectiveness.

Contact

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