

Request for Proposals: Executive Search Services for Stonewall Columbus Executive Director Search

Issued: Monday, July 6, 2026

Proposal Deadline: Friday, July 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. ET

Submit Proposals To: secretary@stonewallcolumbus.org

Questions/Inquiries: secretary@stonewallcolumbus.org

I. Purpose

The Stonewall Columbus Board of Trustees is seeking proposals from qualified executive search firms or consultants to support the Board in conducting a fair, thoughtful, inclusive, transparent, and effective search for Stonewall Columbus's next Executive Director.

The Board seeks a search partner with demonstrated experience supporting nonprofit executive searches, strong stakeholder engagement and facilitation skills, the ability to build a diverse and highly qualified candidate pool, and cultural competency and humility in working with LGBTQ+ communities and other diverse communities.

The goal of this process is to identify a strong leader who can build on Stonewall Columbus's current success, advance its mission and vision, and help guide the organization into its next chapter of impact, service, visibility, and community leadership.

II. About Stonewall Columbus

Stonewall Columbus is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving LGBTQ+ communities in Columbus and Central Ohio. Stonewall Columbus's mission is to increase visibility, inclusion, and connection for the LGBTQ+ community.

Stonewall Columbus envisions an Ohio where every LGBTQ+ individual is visible, included, and connected, leading fulfilling lives without fear of discrimination. Guided by the values of history, visibility, inclusion, connection, and accountability, the organization works to support, connect, and uplift LGBTQ+ residents, families, organizations, and allies through community programming, visibility, partnerships, and year-round engagement.

The Executive Director serves as the organization's chief executive and is responsible for leading Stonewall Columbus's staff, operations, programs, partnerships, fundraising, external relations, and long-term strategic direction in partnership with the Board of Trustees. The next Executive Director will play a critical role in stewarding the organization's mission, advancing its vision, strengthening internal operations and culture, representing Stonewall Columbus in the community, and positioning the organization for continued growth and success.

III. Scope of Services

The firm will work with the Board to develop a clear search plan, timeline, process, and communication structure. This should include regular updates to the Board or designated search committee, coordination of key milestones, and guidance on best practices for an inclusive and effective nonprofit executive search.

1. Search Planning and Project Management

The firm will work with the Board to develop a clear search plan, timeline, process, and communication structure. This should include regular updates to the Board or designated search committee, coordination of key milestones, and guidance on best practices for an inclusive and effective nonprofit executive search.

2. Candidate Profile Development

The firm will assist the Board in developing a candidate profile for the next Executive Director. This may include reviewing organizational materials, understanding Stonewall Columbus's current priorities and opportunities, and helping define the qualifications, leadership attributes, experiences, and competencies needed for success in the role.

3. Stakeholder Engagement

The firm will support appropriate engagement with key internal and external stakeholders to inform the search process and candidate profile. Stakeholders include Board members, staff, donors, volunteers, community partners, elected officials, LGBTQ+ community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders.

The Board expects this engagement to be thoughtful, respectful, and appropriately tailored to the organization's needs and timeline.

4. Candidate Outreach and Recruitment

The firm will develop and implement a recruitment strategy designed to attract a strong, qualified, and diverse pool of candidates. This should include proactive outreach, use of relevant networks, and attention to candidates with experience in nonprofit leadership, LGBTQ+ community work, fundraising, organizational management, public-facing leadership, and community partnership.

5. Screening and Evaluation

The firm will conduct initial candidate screening and assist the Board in evaluating candidates against the agreed-upon candidate profile. This may include resume review, preliminary interviews, candidate summaries, evaluation tools, and guidance on interview processes.

6. Interview and Selection Support

The firm will support the Board through the interview and selection process, including helping develop interview questions, facilitating or advising on interview structure, supporting candidate communications, and advising on finalist selection.

7. Reference Checks and Finalist Support

The firm will conduct or support reference checks and other appropriate due diligence for finalist candidates. The firm may also assist with compensation benchmarking, offer strategy, and transition planning, as appropriate.

8. Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency

The firm should demonstrate the ability to conduct this search with cultural humility, respect, and understanding of LGBTQ+ communities and the diverse communities Stonewall Columbus serves. The Board is particularly interested in firms with experience working with LGBTQ+ organizations, community-based nonprofits, or organizations serving historically marginalized communities.

IV. Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be concise and should include the following information:

1. Firm Overview

Briefly describe your firm, including size, location, history, and areas of focus.

2. Relevant Experience

Describe your experience conducting nonprofit executive searches, particularly for community-based organizations, LGBTQ+ organizations, membership organizations, or organizations serving diverse communities.

3. Approach and Methodology

Describe your recommended approach to this search, including how you would structure the process, engage stakeholders, develop the candidate profile, recruit candidates, and support the Board through selection.

4. Project Team

Identify the primary individuals who would work on this search, including their roles, qualifications, and relevant experience.

5. Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Describe how your firm approaches diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and cultural competency in executive search work, including outreach to diverse candidate pools.

6. Proposed Timeline

Provide a proposed timeline for conducting the search, including major milestones.

7. Fee Proposal

Provide a clear fee structure, including professional fees, anticipated expenses, reimbursable costs, and any other charges.

8. References

Provide at least three references from recent or relevant executive search clients, preferably nonprofit clients.

9. Sample Searches or Placements

Provide examples of comparable searches completed by your firm, including the type of organization, role filled, and general outcome.

10. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Respondents should disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest that may be relevant to this engagement. This includes, but is not limited to, any current or recent professional, financial, contractual, or personal relationships with Stonewall Columbus, members of the Board of Trustees, current or former staff, known prospective candidates, or other parties that could

reasonably be viewed as affecting the firm's independence, objectivity, or ability to conduct a fair and impartial search. If no relevant conflict exists, respondents should affirmatively state that in their proposal.

Proposals should be submitted as a PDF. To keep the process manageable, the Board encourages proposals to be no more than 8–10 pages, excluding optional attachments such as resumes, sample materials, or reference lists.

V. Anticipated Timeline

The Board anticipates the following timeline:

- **RFP Issued:** Monday, July 6, 2026
- **Proposal Deadline:** Friday, July 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. ET
- **Board Review of Proposals:** Late July 2026
- **Potential Firm Interviews or Presentations:** Late July 2026
- **Anticipated Firm Selection:** Late July or early August 2026
- **Search Launch:** As soon as practicable following selection and contract approval

The Board may request that one or more firms present their proposal or participate in an interview with members of the Board before a final selection is made.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Relevant experience conducting nonprofit executive searches;
- Experience working with LGBTQ+ communities, diverse communities, or mission-driven organizations;
- Strength and clarity of proposed search process;
- Ability to support stakeholder engagement and inclusive candidate recruitment;
- Qualifications and experience of the proposed project team;
- Demonstrated understanding of Stonewall Columbus's mission and leadership needs;
- Proposed timeline and ability to meet the organization's needs;
- Fee structure and overall value; and
- References and prior search outcomes.

The Board is committed to an ordered, fair, transparent, and thoughtful selection process consistent with Stonewall Columbus's bylaws, organizational policies, and Board-approved governance procedures.

VII. Questions

Questions regarding this RFP may be directed to the Stonewall Columbus Board of Trustees at secretary@stonewallcolumbus.org.

VIII. Reservation of Rights

Stonewall Columbus reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal, request additional information, interview one or more respondents, negotiate the final scope of services and fee structure, modify the timeline, or decline to select a firm. Submission of a proposal does not guarantee selection or create any contractual obligation on behalf of Stonewall Columbus.

IX. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted by email to secretary@stonewallcolumbus.org no later than Friday, July 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. ET.

Please include the subject line: Executive Search Services Proposal – [Firm Name]

The Board appreciates the time and effort of all firms that submit proposals and looks forward to identifying a search partner to support this important leadership transition.