



## Washington State Association of Counties

Olympia, Washington

### *Position Profile:*

Executive Director

### **Summary**

The [Washington State Association of Counties](#) (WSAC), Washington state's leading advocate for counties, is seeking a strong, experienced, and collaborative leader who is a champion of and enthusiast for local county governments. Following a 17-year+ executive and an interim Executive Director of one year, the ideal candidate for this role will be a respected leader in organizations undergoing change, entrepreneurial, and with a high level of professionalism, drive, political acumen and diplomacy in group dynamics and political environments. They will be a leader who strives to support the collective strength and voices of local county elected commissioners, councilmembers, and county executives. The new Executive Director will manage and oversee all aspects of this dynamic, respected, and diverse 501(c)(4) statewide nonprofit association, particularly responding to emerging needs of members, driving revenue growth, and supporting and retaining a strong professional staff. As a highly visible leader, the new Executive Director will have the opportunity to engage with state-level and national policymakers on complex topics, and to support county governments to be able to effectively carry out their functions, within strong revenue and policy frameworks.

### **Organizational Overview**

The Washington State Association of Counties, established in 1906, is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) organization that represents counties in the state. The organization's mission is to be a voice for Washington counties through advocacy, education, programs, services, and collaboration. As a unified voice for county governments, WSAC values and strives to support strong local governance, promote efficient county administration, and address shared challenges. WSAC's highly dedicated 18-member staff is comprised of experts in the issues that Washington counties face, and who lead the development and deployment of targeted advocacy strategies, leading-edge education and training, data collection, research, and analysis. WSAC strives to work across political and jurisdictional divisions to identify common issues, challenges, and solutions to achieve a greater impact.

**WSAC Membership:** Most voluntary members are elected county commissioners from the 32 non-home rule counties. In the remaining member counties, where there is some form of county



administrator/county executive and county council form of government, WSAC members may join from both the executive and legislative branches. Membership dues are paid by the county government, allowing any of these member county leaders to engage with the Association.

**Sister Organization:** WSAC also works closely with its sister organization, the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO), which serves independently elected county officials, including assessors, auditors, treasurers, prosecutors, coroners, clerks, and sheriffs, and comparable appointed officials in charter counties, as well as its affiliate organizations. Together, WSAC and WACO also own and operate the WA Counties Building that house their offices in the WA state capital, Olympia.

**Affiliates:** While voting within the organization is limited to county commissioners, council members, and county executives, the Association also serves as an umbrella organization for affiliate organizations representing:

- County Road Engineers\*
- Local Public Health Officials\*
- County Administrators
- Solid Waste Managers
- County Human Service Administrators
- Planning Directors
- Clerks of County Boards

\*Staff leads employed by WSAC

## **Programs/Activities**

WSAC utilizes multiple tactics and strategies to achieve its goals, facilitating convenings and forums, in-person and on-demand training, interactive data tools, technical assistance, legislative and policy research, and a county job board. WSAC's main program/activity areas are:

- 1) **Support for strong county governance & best practices.** As a voluntary 501(c)(4) association, the organization seeks to be responsive to the professional development interests of its members and their local county priorities, with some flexibility to work on new strategies and issues as they arise. Through member engagement, WSAC convenes a Legal Committee, and various issue and regional caucuses (e.g., Coastal, Columbia River, Timber, Solid Waste) to leverage member expertise and develop and execute high-level coordination, information-sharing, policy, and legal strategies.

- 2) **Advocacy for county needs.** WSAC deploys 4 policy staff and 7 contractors that support the policy, lobbying and contract work (including affiliate staff housed within WSAC and contract lobbyists), each holding deep topical/issue area expertise, to perform policy and budget research, engage the legislature, and bring forward member voices on the annual WSAC legislative agenda. WSAC's Legislative Steering Committee, comprised of members, is a key actor in developing the legislative agenda. WSAC's priorities are generally defensive, although the organization has taken on issues such as elimination of the 1% property tax cap and indigent defense in the past.
- 3) **Strategic partnerships, litigation & communications.** Through supporting state-level appointments of county representatives to boards and commissions, strategic litigation, and working in direct advocacy partnership and communications with other organizations such as Association of WA Business, Association of WA Cities, County Roads Administration Board, and WA Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, WSAC supports county interests by leveraging knowledge, relationships, and the collective voice of local elected officials.

For more information on WSAC's program priorities and recent work, see the organization's website at [WSAC.org](https://wsac.org).

## **The Position and Key Priorities**

### **Recommended Priorities for the First 18 - 24 Months of the Executive Director Tenure**

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will oversee and lead all aspects of association management, including budgeting, legal, regulatory, membership, board relations, committees, communications, personnel, and risk management. Playing the unique role of bringing elected county commissioners, councilmembers, and county executives together in a nonpartisan environment to identify and champion what is best for counties, the new leader will continue to navigate successfully a challenging political environment, centering a value proposition on common priorities that are best for counties.

The new Executive Director will inherit an organization that is in transition after the retirement of a long-time executive director and yet which retains a strong staff and long-time contractors with deep knowledge of county needs and interests. Over the past several years, the organization has also grappled with divergences in small and large county needs, resulting in a change to both its dues structure and the process by which policy priorities are set. Nevertheless, the state's largest county, King County, remains a non-paying member since 2024 with ongoing organizational efforts to continue to resolve and regain its full participation. Assuring that WSAC can represent all 39 counties in the future will require continued relationship development, problem-solving and creative approaches to current and future work, including engaging with the Board of Directors and staff (and potentially external consultants) during a thoughtful 'reinvention' process. WSAC is committed to developing new

ways of working that best ensure a strong value proposition for all counties and drive commensurate opportunities to grow programs and revenues.

At the beginning of their tenure, the new Executive Director will need to build trusting relationships with the Executive Committee and board members, and work with Board leadership to help guide and develop the Board, including developing and expanding a proactive succession strategy for volunteer leadership. Externally, the Executive Director will need to develop relationships with key stakeholders including legislators, the Governor, and executive branch leaders (many of whom are newly elected/appointed in 2025), agency staff, partner organizations/associations and thought leaders. Building upon these foundational relationships, the new Executive's priorities for their first 18-24 months include:

- **Provide strong leadership and support, development, and continuity for staff.** Foster continued strong, respectful, collaborative, and collegial culture; address staff workload and identify and fill gaps, retaining talent. Support Affiliate managing directors' unique roles/affiliate needs and align all staff around common goals and strategies. Get to know staff's strengths and contributions to the organization and support staff development.
- **Build strong communications and teamwork,** with regular collaboration between volunteer board leaders and staff leaders to align the organization behind emerging/new value propositions.
- **Drive and engage in strengthened relationships with all counties, including WA's largest counties,** seeking and achieving strongest possible engagement leading to new ways of working together.
- **Ensure financial stability.** Working with the senior staff, Executive Committee, and the full Board of Directors, continue to address and communicate the value proposition for all members, develop and execute strategies to diversify revenue, including strategies for increasing non-dues revenue, and address any dues/restructuring issues precipitated by membership changes through **entrepreneurial business development.**
- **Support emerging/new WSAC value proposition and solidify and engage with association membership** (increased number of participating county elected officials) in conjunction with the Legislative Steering Committee and Executive Committee.
- **Learn member / county issues and needs** through strategic engagement and **develop personal relationships and effective communications** with members. Develop relationships and trust with counties requiring extra attention. Learn county policy issues and develop early baseline understanding to prepare for adoption of the legislative agenda (process starts in May, is refined in September, and agenda adopted in November), including monitoring legislative agenda development.

## Essential Skills and Attributes

The new Executive Director will need to manage required travel while being an available, responsive, and strong staff leader; someone who can manage remote/flexible staff to maintain a collaborative and collegial organizational culture. The ideal candidate will have the following skills, experience, and attributes:

- **Track record of delivering successful public policy outcomes.**
- **Track record of delivering successful program outcomes**, including training and professional development programs.
- **Track record of delivering strong networking and connections** on behalf of organization.
- **Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and effectively on statewide public policy issues in partisan environments** utilizing nonpartisan approaches; a bridge builder who sees common ground for civic work; experience hiring/supervising policy staff; successful experience deploying strategic litigation is beneficial.
- **Experience in nonprofit or public sector management** and demonstrated record of accomplishment of program innovation, fostering volunteer and staff leadership, remote supervision/relations, and oversight; nonprofit association management experience a plus. Demonstrated leadership in innovative and strategic communication strategies to drive engagement and organizational value proposition. Entrepreneurial and creative.
- **Demonstrated financial acumen and budget restructuring experience**, including dues structures and association revenue creation through partnerships and other entrepreneurial efforts.
- **Relationship builder**: Experience brokering relationships with lots of different personalities, organizations, and views. Values collaboration.
- **Strategic thinker** with good organizational and assessment skills.
- **Excellent oral and written communicator**, listener, and collaborator; honest and transparent; willing to have hard conversations; demonstrated **effective group facilitation and negotiation skills**, can read group dynamics. Practices diplomacy from the middle. Experience with the media, public testimony, and public speaking.
- Thoughtful, respectful, decisive, and humble; able to lead a group of leaders; **emotionally intelligent**; responsive/open door for members and staff.
- Experience with **change management and making decisions in uncertain environments**, including any combination of managing changes in organizational processes, policies, and/or organizational restructuring.

- **Sense of humor** as a member of a team; track record of fostering an enjoyable workplace and demonstrated **value for work/life balance** is optimal.
- Able to **manage a high-volume work environment**, balance multiple relationships, prioritize and respond in a timely manner. Willingness to work outside business hours. Understands competing demands on elected officials' time and schedules.
- **Familiarity with association legislative work, legislative agenda development and legislative relations are a plus.** Experience/knowledge of Washington legislature, statewide, county, and local policy, legal and budget issues ideal.
- Bachelor's degree in public administration, Public Policy, Business, Pre-law, or a closely related field. Advanced degree preferred.

## Job Requirements

- Willingness and ability to travel statewide to meet with member counties and partners and nationally to coordinate with other states' statewide county associations.
- The position is based in Olympia, WA, and will work from the Olympia office as a base at least 3 days/week. Several staff work in-office year-round; other staff work in-office during the legislative session and are otherwise remote.
- The successful candidate may be required to pass a comprehensive civil, criminal, educational and/or credit background check.

## Compensation

\$200,000-\$240,000 base salary depending on experience. For this position, WSAC offers a robust, competitive package of benefits, including baseline 4 weeks annual vacation, 8 Federal holidays, and 4 floating holidays, plus sick leave. WSAC pays 100% of employee and family medical, dental and vision coverage, if desired. Additional insurance and benefits include HRA, Life/AD&D, Long-Term Disability, and Employee Assistance Plan. WSAC provides employer match to a 401k, a laptop, cell phone, and automobile for Executive Director use.

## Application Process

WSAC has retained [Glick Davis & Associates, LLC](#) to facilitate this search on their behalf. To apply, interested candidates should e-mail their cover letter and resume to: [WSAC@glickdavis.com](mailto:WSAC@glickdavis.com)

***WSAC will begin considering applications in early March 2025. Invited interviews are tentatively scheduled for April 17, 2025 and April 21, 2025.***

*Resume(s) received without cover letter will not be considered.*



WSAC is an equal opportunity employer. Equal employment opportunity applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including hiring, placement, promotion, demotion, termination, layoff, leave of absence, compensation, and training. The Association will not discriminate regarding race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, disability, gender identity, results of genetic testing, or service in the military. This includes the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability and as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Association will, in keeping with the requirements of law, provide reasonable accommodation to applicants and employees who, because of a disability, require accommodation to participate in the application process or to perform the essential functions of his/her job. Employees who believe they need reasonable accommodation shall discuss this with their supervisor.