



Request for Proposals Executive Search Firm Chief Executive Officer, Maryland Humanities

Issued: October 8, 2026

Proposals Due: November 6, 2026

Summary

Maryland Humanities is seeking proposals from qualified executive search firms to assist the Board of Directors in recruiting and selecting the organization's next CEO.

The CEO serves as the chief executive of Maryland Humanities and works in partnership with the Board of Directors to advance the organization's mission, strategy, financial sustainability, programs, partnerships, and organizational health.

This leadership transition comes at an important moment for Maryland Humanities. The organization is seeking a search partner who can help the Board thoughtfully assess its leadership needs, engage key stakeholders, develop a compelling position profile, and conduct a comprehensive search resulting in a diverse and highly qualified pool of candidates.

The selected firm will work primarily with the Board-appointed Transition Committee and its Chair, with appropriate participation from staff and other stakeholders throughout the process.

About Maryland Humanities

Maryland Humanities is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and supporting educational experiences in the humanities that inspire all Marylanders to embrace lifelong learning, exchange ideas openly, and enrich their communities.

As Maryland's state humanities council, Maryland Humanities develops and supports programs that bring people together around history, literature, culture, and the ideas that shape our lives and communities. Our work includes statewide programming, grantmaking, educational initiatives, partnerships with cultural and community organizations, and support for humanities organizations and practitioners throughout Maryland.

Maryland Humanities is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, with a staff of 14 employees and a statewide reach. Additional information about Maryland Humanities, our programs, and our work is available at www.mdhumanities.org.

Scope of Services

Maryland Humanities seeks comprehensive executive search services. The selected firm is expected to:

- Conduct an organizational and leadership needs assessment, including engagement with staff and other key stakeholders to gather perspectives on the organization's priorities, opportunities, and leadership needs;
- Develop the position profile and candidate qualifications in collaboration with Maryland Humanities;
- Develop and implement a comprehensive recruitment and outreach strategy;
- Identify and recruit a diverse, highly qualified pool of candidates;
- Screen and assess candidates and present qualified candidates for consideration;
- Support the Transition Committee in developing evaluation criteria, interview processes, and candidate assessment tools;
- Conduct or coordinate reference checks, background checks, and other appropriate due diligence;
- Support the finalist selection and offer process; and
- Provide guidance and consultation to the Transition Committee throughout the search.

Maryland Humanities anticipates that the search will take approximately 90 to 180 days. Firms should propose a timeline based on their recommended approach.

Proposal Requirements

Firm Overview and Approach

Provide an overview of your firm and describe your philosophy and approach to nonprofit executive search.

Describe your experience conducting executive searches for nonprofit organizations, particularly organizations comparable to Maryland Humanities in size, mission, or scope.

Proposed Search Process

Describe your approach to conducting an organizational and leadership needs assessment. How would you gather input, such as through interviews, surveys, meetings, or other methods, and how would that information inform the search?

Candidate Recruitment and Outreach

Describe how your firm builds a candidate pool, including how you identify and engage prospective candidates who may not be actively seeking a new position.

Consider including:

- Your approach to developing a diverse pool of candidates;
- The geographic scope of your candidate outreach;
- Your networks and experience within the nonprofit sector, particularly humanities, arts and culture, and related fields;
- Your networks and experience within Maryland; and
- The recruitment channels, professional networks, and other resources you would expect to use for this search.

Racial Equity

Describe your firm's approach and specific methodology for advancing racial equity throughout the executive search process, from development of the position profile through candidate recruitment, assessment, and final selection.

Consider including:

- How racial equity informs the development of the position profile and candidate qualifications;
- Strategies for developing a racially diverse candidate pool;
- Practices used to identify and mitigate bias in candidate screening and assessment; and
- How racial equity is incorporated into interview design, candidate evaluation, and finalist selection.

Fees and Service Structure

Provide a detailed quote for the proposed services and explain:

- Your pricing model, such as fixed fee or percentage of compensation;
- What is included in the proposed fee;
- The proposed payment schedule;
- How expenses and other additional costs are handled; and
- Any optional services and associated costs.

Timeline

Estimate the start and end dates for each phase of the search process

Guarantees

Describe any guarantees your firm provides, including the terms of any replacement search should the selected candidate leave the organization within a specified period.

References

Provide at least three references from organizations for which your firm has conducted comparable executive searches. Please include the organization, position recruited, client contact, email address, and telephone number.

Evaluation Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- Demonstrated experience and expertise in nonprofit executive search;
- Experience with humanities, arts and culture, or comparable mission-driven organizations;
- Deep professional roots and established networks across the State of Maryland, with a proven, documented history of successful executive placements within the state's unique civic, nonprofit, and cultural landscape;
- Demonstrated commitment to and documented track record of applying racial equity frameworks to executive search processes, including specific experience in proactive outreach to and successful placement of candidates from underrepresented communities;
- Quality and appropriateness of the proposed search process;
- Approach to developing a diverse and highly qualified candidate pool;
- Relevant professional and geographic networks;
- Experience and qualifications of the proposed search team;
- Proposed timeline;
- Fees and overall value;
- Guarantees; and
- References and demonstrated record of successful placements.

RFP Timeline

Maryland Humanities anticipates the following schedule:

Milestone	Date
RFP issued	October 8, 2026
Proposals due	November 6, 2026
Anticipated Start Date	December 2026

Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted electronically as a single PDF to Lou Williams at Lwilliams@mdhumanities.org

Subject: Executive Search Proposal - Maryland Humanities

Proposals must be received by November 6, 2026, for consideration.

Questions and Clarifications:

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to Lou Williams at Lwilliams@mdhumanities.org

To ensure that all prospective firms have access to the same information, Maryland Humanities will post responses to questions that provide clarification or additional information relevant to the RFP [here](#). Firms are encouraged to review this page periodically for updates before submitting a proposal.

Additional Resources:

The following materials are available to provide additional context about Maryland Humanities and the President & CEO role:

- Brief History of Maryland Humanities
- CEO Job Description
- Maryland Humanities' 2020-2025 Strategic Plan
- Organization Reporting Chart
- Organization's Mission, Vision, and Values

[View Additional Resources Here](#)

Terms and Conditions

Issuance of this RFP does not commit Maryland Humanities to select a firm, award a contract, or reimburse any costs incurred in preparing a proposal.

Maryland Humanities reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, request additional information or clarification, conduct interviews with one or more firms, negotiate the scope or terms of an engagement, or modify or cancel this RFP when doing so is in the best interests of the organization.