



**An Invitation to Apply for the Position of
Executive Director**

Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)

“Advocate for the Social and Behavioral Sciences”

Search Summary

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) seeks a dynamic leader in the field of social science advocacy to serve as its next Executive Director. COSSA fills a unique role in the public policy arena, representing the broad spectrum of social science, as opposed to any one discipline. Since its creation in 1981, COSSA has been an effective champion for social science with an impressive record of achievement. The current political climate solidifies the need for COSSA’s advocacy and lobbying work and underscores the importance of aggressively pursuing new ideas and strategies to increase the organization’s impact.

The next Executive Director will build on the excellent reputation the organization has earned and the valuable contributions it has made. The Board is looking for a leader who can bring new perspectives, new ideas and new energy to COSSA. The ideal candidate for this position will have a deep and broad connection with social science, in academic, policy and/or managerial roles; possess outstanding abilities to be an effective advocate for social science on Capitol Hill, in Federal agencies, and in the public arena; have experience building and managing successful coalitions; be a persuasive, forceful and respected spokesperson; and have strong management and strategic leadership skills.

COSSA has engaged Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist with this important search. Inquiries, nominations and applications should be directed in confidence to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

The Current Policy and Political Context

COSSA operates within the context of U.S. science policy. An important goal throughout its existence has been to ensure that the social and behavioral sciences have a seat at the table during consideration of science policy making. To that end, COSSA helped create the National Science Foundation's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate, the National Institutes of Health's Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research, and the position of Assistant Director for the Social and Behavioral Sciences in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Over the years, the social and behavioral sciences have endured attacks on their research and attempts have been made to eliminate the NSF directorate and federal funding for these sciences. In recent years, during these times of constrained budgets, the questioning of federal support for the social and behavioral sciences has accelerated. COSSA has worked with its members, its allies in the scientific community and the higher education community to thwart many of these challenges. Nevertheless, they continue and will likely do so into the future.

In addition, COSSA has been active on non-budgetary items such as monitoring research management issues, advocating for confirmation of federal appointments in key agencies, defending merit review, protecting human research participants, upholding human rights in science and for scientists, promoting privacy and confidentiality for survey respondents, and policymaking with regard to open access to research.

The Organization

- **History and Mission**

COSSA began in the late 1960's as an informal group of social science associations which met to exchange information and discuss common problems. In May of 1981, the disciplinary associations, responding to large proposed budget cuts for the social and behavioral sciences at the National Science Foundation, used the informal COSSA collaboration to establish a Washington-based advocacy effort.

With strong support from the Social Science Research Council and from major universities, COSSA was formally established by a small group of disciplinary-based social and behavioral science organizations. Additional organizations became involved over the years. As of July 2013, COSSA's membership includes 17 Founding Governing Members, 27 Additional Membership Organizations, 58 Universities and 14 Centers and Institutes.

While COSSA's creation was triggered by defending the National Science Foundation against major budget cuts, the organization has had, from the outset, a broad and multi-faceted mission which is to:

- Serve as a bridge between the academic research community and the Washington policymaking world
- Promote the social and behavioral sciences and the results of their research to policymakers and the public, and
- Enhance federal support for the conduct of social science research and for the training of the next generation of social and behavioral scientists.

In 2011, COSSA celebrated 30 years of successful advocacy. Ken Prewitt, then President of COSSA, former Census Bureau Director and a key actor in COSSA's creation, presided over the meeting which featured a retrospective on the past thirty years, including the political and economic landscape, and the contributions of the social and behavioral sciences to the period's public policies. The 2011 meeting also took a special look at the realities of a budget constrained policy era with a focus on future research topics and data collection for social science.

- **Governance**

COSSA is governed by a 39-member Board of Directors which includes two representatives of each of the 17 Governing Members and 5 at-large members. The Board meets annually to approve the COSSA budget, review programs and set policy. A 17-member Executive Committee, composed of the Executive Directors (or designees) of COSSA's Governing Members, meets more regularly and works closely with the Executive Director on an ongoing basis.

The Society's current President is Dr. James Jackson, Daniel Katz Distinguished University Professor of Psychology and Director, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The Chairman of the Executive Committee is Dr. Steven Breckler who is Executive Director for Science at the American Psychological Association. Dr. Breckler is beginning a two year term as COSSA's Chair and is also chairing the Executive Director Search Committee.

- **Staff**

The current Executive Director is Dr. Howard Silver, who joined COSSA in 1983 as the Associate Director for Government Relations and who has very ably served as Executive Director since 1988. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from Ohio State University. Dr. Silver is widely known in Washington DC as the "go to" person on social science funding and regulatory issues. He has chaired a wide variety of advocacy coalitions and writes a weekly newsletter which is considered

required reading for those interested in social science policy and funding. Dr. Silver will retire from COSSA at the end of calendar year 2013.

Current staffing, in addition to the Executive Director, includes a Deputy Director and two Assistant Directors who work on a wide variety of coalition, public affairs and outreach activities. COSSA is a 501(c) 6 organization which permits it to lobby Members of Congress.

- **Budget**

COSSA's annual budget is currently \$570,000 which is primarily derived from membership dues paid by the Consortium members.

The budget does not adequately convey the current and potential resources available to COSSA. COSSA staff collaborate with member organizations on an ongoing basis to expand and coordinate advocacy priorities and to share resources. Also, university members contribute valuable resources to COSSA initiatives when scholars testify on Capitol Hill or participate in Congressional briefings. Finally, COSSA leads and is a member of many coalitions which not only increases the voice supporting social science research but also creates many opportunities for resource sharing and leveraging.

- **Ongoing Activities**

External events drive a sizable portion of COSSA's advocacy agenda. These range from funding threats or regulatory initiatives which would be detrimental to COSSA members to opportunities to present information and participate in events that advance COSSA's goals. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director to maintain a careful balance between being responsive to these needs and opportunities while ensuring that COSSA's advocacy agenda is not exclusively dictated by external factors.

Following are brief descriptions of the organization's major ongoing advocacy activities which serve as proactive initiatives in social science advocacy by developing and sustaining important relationships in the social science community and keeping members informed and engaged.

- **Coalition Leadership and Participation**

COSSA has not only participated actively in many different coalitions, but has served and continues to serve in key leadership positions. COSSA's current Executive Director has chaired the Coalition for National Science Funding and its Deputy Director, Angela Sharpe, co-chairs the Coalition to Promote Research and the Coalition for the Advancement for Health

Through Behavioral and Social Science Research, and leads the Collaborative for Enhancing Diversity in Science.

Other major coalitions in which COSSA is a current member include the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research, Census Stakeholders Group, Friends of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Friends of the National Institute on Aging, Friends of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Friends of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition.

- **Annual Meeting**

Each year, in conjunction with its Board of Directors meeting in the Fall, COSSA holds an annual meeting which typically attracts over 100 people from across the nation. Key Washington policymakers including White House officials, National Science Foundation Directors, Members of Congress, and other thought leaders are invited to present and discuss key trends and issues related to social and behavioral science.

Last year's Annual Meeting, held on November 29 and 30, 2012 was titled the "Colloquium on Social and Behavioral Sciences and Public Policy." Over 125 people attended and engaged in a series of talks and panels which highlighted the current political situation, how to broaden participation in science, opportunities and challenges for social and behavioral science, and how social science research is used by policymakers.

- **Congressional Briefings**

Since its creation in 1981, COSSA has organized close to 100 Congressional briefings. Recent topics have covered an extremely wide landscape of social, economic and national security issues ranging from Aging in Rural America; Social Science Research on Disasters; Preventing Repeat Offending; Better Data; Better Decisions; Violent Crime; Cancer Care for the Whole Patient; Protecting Privacy; Transforming the Middle East; Risk and Crisis Communication; Obesity; Rebuilding the World Community; Welfare, Children and Families; and Election Reform. Speakers have included prominent university scholars, Federal agency officials and leaders of COSSA member organizations.

- **Newsletter**

To keep its constituency informed, the Consortium produces a biweekly newsletter, the COSSA Washington Update, that covers federal policies

and debates relevant to social and behavioral scientists, sources of federal support for research, and developments related to the Administration's

budget related to social science. Each year, a special issue of the newsletter analyzes the President's proposed budgets for over 50 agencies that fund social and behavioral science research. Issues since 2000 are archived on the COSSA website.

- **Organizational Self Assessment**

In 2005-2006, COSSA's leadership undertook a comprehensive self assessment looking at the organization's mission, practices and policy spaces, alliances, impact, resources and governance structure. Although there were no recommended changes to the central mission and focus of COSSA, the self assessment did identify a number of areas for continued attention that could increase the organization's impact including more targeted Congressional briefings; more focus on science training programs; expanding relationships with social scientists in universities, research institutes and in federal agencies; more communication with key journalists; and improvements to COSSA's annual meeting, website and reports.

For additional information about COSSA, please visit the organization's website at www.cossa.org.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Executive Director

Reporting directly to COSSA's Executive Committee, the Executive Director is responsible for designing and carrying out a strong advocacy agenda for social science and social science funding, for keeping COSSA members informed of major federal funding and policy developments related to social science, and for managing COSSA's staff and day-to-day operations.

Advocacy Program Development and Implementation: The Executive Director's primary responsibility is to develop and implement an active and successful program of advocacy for social science and social science funding. The Executive Director is the "public face" of COSSA and represents the organization at Congressional hearings, conferences, press conferences and other major policy venues.

Management and Administration: The Executive Director is responsible for the overall day-to-day management of the organization, including oversight of all finances, communications, staffing, contractual relationships and membership.

Governance: The Executive Director reports to and is an *Ex Officio* member of COSSA's Executive Committee, and serves as the Secretary-Treasurer of the

Corporation. The Executive Director organizes the agendas, materials and minutes of Executive Committee meetings, Board meetings and any special

committees and task forces, and provides periodic updates on issues and new developments to all institutional and university member organizations.

Major Challenges and Opportunities for the Executive Director

The Executive Director position at COSSA offers a singular and exciting opportunity to be a leading champion of social science in the Nation's Capitol. The Executive Director will be able to leverage the organization's strong reputation and the strength of its institutional and university members to (1) help protect federal funding for social science research, (2) enhance understanding by policy officials and the public of the valuable contribution of social science research to addressing critical issues in all areas of public life, and (3) advocate for policies that ensure social science research can be conducted and published as effectively as possible. To achieve these goals, the Executive Director must be able to address the following three inter-connected challenges and opportunities.

- *Sustain existing services, members and relationships which have served COSSA so well over the years and which contribute to COSSA's excellent reputation while being willing to re-evaluate and re-prioritize them to enhance COSSA's overall impact, effectiveness and prominence.*
- *Expand COSSA's revenue and membership base both to strengthen the organization's voice and to produce additional revenue so that COSSA is able to undertake new initiatives. More than likely, this will involve multiple initiatives which could include launching a membership campaign, revising COSSA's dues structure, seeking foundation support, and pursuing new alliances and coalitions.*
- *Enhance COSSA's visibility and impact in the future. Since the last organizational self assessment was completed in 2006, it is time for COSSA to develop a new strategic agenda. The Executive Committee will look to the Executive Director to provide leadership and innovative ideas in creating and implementing this agenda.*

Qualifications

COSSA seeks an energetic and entrepreneurial leader and an extremely effective advocate for the social sciences to serve as its next Executive Director. The following qualifications represent the broad set of skills and personal attributes deemed important for success in this role.

- Genuine interest in and commitment to the mission of COSSA.

- Ambition for the organization to achieve greater impact and prominence.
- Deep and broad connection to social science research in academia, in federal government and/or in relevant research or advocacy organizations. Exposure and interest in multiple fields is more valuable for this role than deep expertise in one field. It is important that the Executive Director understand how social science is conducted, and how social science practitioners and faculty members think and operate.
- Strong academic credentials are required; a Ph.D. is desired.
- Substantial experience in and a sophisticated understanding of national policy formulation, both on Capitol Hill and in the Executive Branch. Experience working on Capitol Hill, as a lobbyist or as a federal government relations executive would be highly valued. Also, experience with Federal budget and regulatory processes is highly desirable.
- Strong network of relationships in Washington, DC with the ability to work with many different stakeholders. Someone who is open-minded and willing to interact with a wide variety of interests and policy and political perspectives is important.
- Willingness to be an articulate and energetic spokesperson and representative of COSSA but also willing to “share the spotlight” and to effectively groom others to be effective advocates. Natural networking abilities with outstanding ability to develop and sustain professional relationships. Experience working with the media and interacting with reporters would be extremely helpful.
- Orientation toward action, a sense of urgency and an entrepreneurial spirit. An ability to seize opportunities, quickly mobilize support, scale up initiatives as well as an ability to be strategic, focused and balance reactive and proactive initiatives.
- Ability and willingness to manage and leverage limited resources through creative and prudent management, focus and ability to set priorities, effective involvement of members and coalition partners, and other means.
- Ability to become an effective and trusted partner with the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.
- Strong management and organizational abilities and experience, business acumen, and financial integrity. Leadership and/or senior management experience in a non-profit organization is desired.

- Comfort with technology and the opportunities presented by social media to extend and enhance advocacy efforts would be highly valued.
- Personal attributes including: high energy; transparency, emotional intelligence, exceptional written and oral communication skills; persistence and flexibility.
- Willingness to make a long term commitment to the organization.

If a potential candidate does not meet all of these qualifications, but believes that their background and interest position them to be an outstanding Executive Director, we suggest they apply and their application will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Application Procedure

Evaluation of prospective candidates will begin immediately. Applications, including a resume and cover letter responding to the qualifications and challenges outlined above, should be sent to the following electronic mailbox: 4838@imsearch.com.

Inquiries and nominations should be addressed to:

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations is an equal opportunity employer and welcomes a diverse pool of candidates for this search.

