

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

President
The Cameron Foundation
Petersburg, VA

"Striving for vibrant, healthy communities."

The Opportunity

For just the third time in its history, The Cameron Foundation is embarking on the search for a leader worthy of the complex array of challenges and opportunities ahead. The current effort is prompted by plans announced recently by J. Todd Graham, the Foundation's President, to retire by year-end, when he will have served ten years in the role.¹

Petersburg, VA, and the surrounding communities have faced many challenges in recent years. The physical and mental health impacts of the pandemic and ongoing economic disruption are shared by many communities. Other challenges are more specific to the Foundation's service area, such as periods of instability in key public institutions and financial mismanagement at the local government level. Throughout it all, The Cameron Foundation has been a steady presence and trusted partner working with community and nonprofit leaders to address opportunities and disparities in each of the Foundation's core funding areas: Health Care, Human Services, Community & Economic Development, Education, Historic Preservation & Conservation, and Arts & Culture.²

Such challenges, and the opportunities they represent, make the work of The Cameron Foundation more relevant than ever. As a financially strong private foundation, Cameron can take the long view: exploring new approaches to intractable problems, recruiting new partners and new funders, all while supporting—and raising—the community's aspirations and enhancing its capabilities. Such efforts have created significant momentum within the Foundation's home region, and the appetite for impact continues to grow.

¹ Read the March 2022 retirement announcement [here](#).

² For one view of recent challenges, see "The Rise and Decline of Petersburg, VA," from *Econ Focus*, the quarterly economics magazine of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, accessible [here](#).

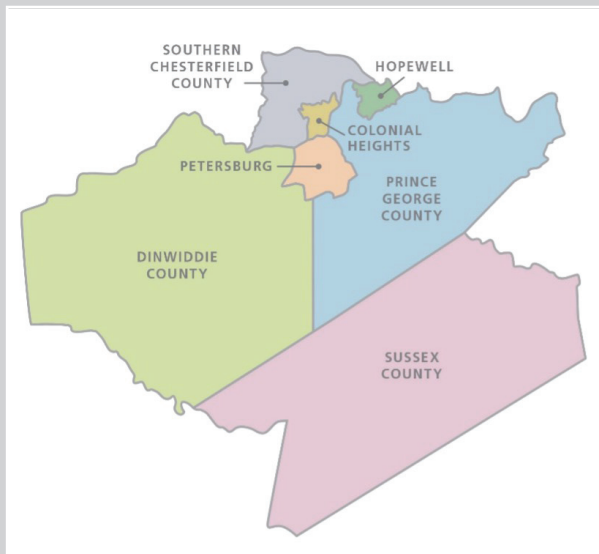


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The Foundation has been led by two very different Presidents, each “the perfect leader for the time,” according to a senior board member who worked with both. As the Foundation begins its third decade, the Board of Directors seeks an executive with the philanthropic experience, the managerial competence, the cultural sensitivity and the practice-based vision to ensure The Cameron Foundation continues to be a true force for progress for the region and its 200,000 residents.

The Organization

[The Cameron Foundation](#) is a private foundation formed in 2003 upon the sale of Southside Regional Medical Center. In its early years, the Foundation quickly gained respect as an effective philanthropic force and community advocate. Nearly twenty years later, the Foundation remains committed to improving the health and quality of life for people and communities within its footprint, shown in the adjacent map.³

By year-end 2021, the Foundation’s support for the area’s programs, people and institutions had totaled over \$100 million. The Foundation’s corpus at this writing is about \$150 million.⁴

In general, the Foundation’s grants fall into one or more of six interest areas: Health Care, Human Services, Community & Economic Development, Education, Historic Preservation & Conservation, and Arts & Culture.⁵

³ The service area includes the independent cities of Petersburg, Colonial Heights and Hopewell; the counties of Dinwiddie, Prince George and Sussex; and the portion of the county of Chesterfield lying south of Route 10.

⁴ Unaudited estimate.

⁵ A fuller description of the Foundation’s interest area can be found [here](#).

Until 2015, essentially all the Foundation's grants were responsive grants; that is, grants made in response to specific requests from area nonprofits, local governments or government-sponsored entities. Most such requests tend to speak to short-term needs, but collectively they reflect the demands of an under-resourced community. The scarcity of philanthropic resources in the region means that a few organizations have depended on Cameron's support for their very survival.

In 2015, the President and Board expanded the Foundation's work to encompass proactive grants; that is, grants made at the Foundation's own initiative. These grants tend to be more strategic and take longer to develop and execute. They also typically call for formal collaboration with multiple partners, and they consistently attract investments from other funders, which to date have included governmental agencies, other private foundations and even for-profit corporations. By Cameron Foundation estimates, its proactive grants have leveraged some \$47 million from other sources since 2015, more than four times Cameron's own commitments.

Some examples of the Foundation's proactive grants and grantees:

- School-based health clinics have been launched within both [Petersburg High School](#) and [Hopewell High School](#), where each will provide low-cost, onsite access to primary care well beyond the capabilities of traditional school nurses. Each is operated by Central Virginia Health Services, with support from United Way and other partners.
- [Friends of the Lower Appomattox River](#) (FOLAR), for which the Foundation is supporting the development of the river trail's vital western entrance spanning Dinwiddie and Chesterfield counties and the City of Petersburg (further details [here](#)).



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Capital-intensive projects initiated by the Foundation have already attracted welcomed attention and resources to the area.



- [ArtistSpace Lofts](#), a 226-unit mixed-income apartment community with fifty residential rental units specifically set aside for vetted artists. A complicated undertaking, it took the Foundation and its partners eight years to bring the project to fruition.
- [Partners for Neighborhood Renewal](#) is a six-way collaboration designed to demonstrate that the region's historic neighborhoods can be saved with targeted and focused resources.
- The Virginia Governor's [Commonwealth Connect Fund](#), to which the Foundation has committed up to \$1.15 million to improve broadband service in two underserved communities, with significant implications for residents' health, health access and education.

These and other capital-intensive projects initiated by the Foundation have already attracted welcomed attention and resources to the area. Early results suggest the ripple effect from such grantmaking has the potential for impact far beyond the specific issue or project.

Some observers sense a shift in emphasis over the years from, say, social services to capital projects. In fact, the Board's commitment to parity between its responsive grants and its proactive ones reflects a both/and strategy. The precise mix might vary from year to year, but a balanced approach has the added advantage of supporting immediate needs while investing in the future.

The Cameron Foundation has a staff of nine. To a person, the group is proud of its work and grateful for the opportunity to contribute so meaningfully to sustainable impact. The staff is also a stable group: In just a few months, the newest member of the team will celebrate seven years with the Foundation.

The Foundation is governed by a volunteer board of nine leaders drawn from a variety of contexts across the service area. Members may serve for a maximum of five three-year terms.

For further information, consult the Foundation's [extensive website](#), especially the pages featuring past biennial reports, the latest Health Needs Assessments, and various studies commissioned by the Foundation, all available [here](#).

The Mandate

The core mandate for The Cameron Foundation's next President: Solidify and capitalize on the progress to date, ensure the Foundation's staffing and operations are in sync with its strategic objectives, and promote a level of engagement and connectivity to ensure the Foundation continues to nurture and support creative solutions to tenacious challenges.

Among the priorities the next President can be expected to inherit:

- **Strategic clarity.** The Foundation has been consistent in its aspirations for sustainable progress towards "a healthy, vibrant, and economically vital region," but it has not captured those aspirations in an actionable strategic framework against which its progress is measured. As the Foundation begins its third decade, greater strategic clarity should foster even greater impact.
- **Visionary leadership.** The Foundation has long had a solid reputation for visionary leadership supported by thoughtful, innovative approaches to community-based philanthropy. The Board expects the next President to build on its record of inspirational, aspirational leadership while applying lessons gleaned from experiences in other philanthropic contexts.
- **Leverage for Community Impact.** The Foundation has consistently been able to identify and attract external funders to support important projects in its service area. Cameron has also been able to identify and attract



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nationally recognized subject-matter experts and consultants to advise the foundation and local nonprofits on investments in core strategic areas of interest.

The Board expects the next President to continue to develop this network of external funders and thought leaders. Maintaining existing connections while identifying and attracting new ones will allow the Foundation to leverage its investments to even greater impact for the region.

- **Relationships and community engagement.**

As The Cameron Foundation's chief professional officer, the President sets the tone for the Foundation's overall approach to regional philanthropy, leading its strategy, its people and its processes while modeling the sort of visible, committed engagement that is at the heart of the Foundation's values.

Not all relationships need to reside with the President, of course, and individual Board and staff members are visibly engaged as advocates for the Foundation and its work. Still, the President is the primary model whom others look to, and it is important that any candidate be fully comfortable in such a role.

- **Management and operations.** The Cameron Foundation is a well-oiled machine. Even so, it will be incumbent upon the President to make sure the Foundation has the appropriate infrastructure, disciplines, resources and tools required by its strategy. The size of the Foundation's staff means opportunities for promotions are limited, and thus opportunities for professional development and engagement are all the more prized.

The Relationships

The President reports to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board of Directors, The Cameron Foundation
And manages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A nine-person team
While nurturing key relationships with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The contract CFO and the outside General Counsel, both of whom report to the Board but work very closely with the President⁶• Leaders from the broader community's key sectors: corporate employers, nonprofits, academic institutions, civic associations, governmental units and faith-based entities• Peers in other grantmaking foundations, especially those with overlapping missions, footprints or stakeholders• Area donors and philanthropists, both current and potential• Professional investment management advisors

The Location

The Cameron Foundation is located in downtown Petersburg, VA, in a historic home it purchased, refurbished and expanded to serve as a physical manifestation of the Foundation's commitment to a vibrant, prospering region.

In addition to housing its own staff, the Foundation's meeting space is in great demand for use by community organizations.

Petersburg itself is in the heart of one of America's historic centers, about 30 minutes south of Richmond, 90 minutes from the ocean, two hours from the Shenandoah Mountains, and 2½ hours from Washington, D.C.

The Foundation's support of restoration, renovation and rejuvenation of various neighborhoods, many encompassing historically significant properties, has added to the area's appeal to a new generation of residents.

⁶ Sam Johnson, Cameron's outside General Counsel and trusted advisor from the Foundation's very beginning, passed away suddenly on March 3, 2022. A search for a successor is underway.

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The ideal candidate will offer an inviting, collaborative leadership style coupled with the ability to make tough decisions.



The Candidate

The ideal candidate to lead The Cameron Foundation will be an experienced leader well versed in community engagement, nonprofit dynamics, and the intricacies of place-based philanthropy. The search committee is open to candidates who demonstrate exceptional leadership skills, a passion for the Foundation's work and a superior fit with its community of interests, but the committee has great respect for the added value inherent in experience gained in a relevant foundation.

The ideal candidate will offer...

- Deep experience developing and leading innovative, impactful place-based initiatives
- An inviting, collaborative leadership style coupled with the ability to make tough decisions
- Proven competency in people management, financial management and community-building
- Executive management skills commensurate with the needs and opportunities of a foundation with a nine-figure endowment
- Respect for diverse people, interests, constituencies and philanthropic initiatives
- Deeply ingrained appreciation for the dynamics and values of non-urban southern communities
- The proven ability to leverage the Foundation's reputation and resources by attracting external funders and thought leaders to support major projects in the service area
- A record of effective board engagement and leadership, especially with empowered boards drawn from various community contexts

- First-rate communications skills adaptable to a variety of settings, media and discussion partners
- Management or programmatic expertise in the special demands of rural philanthropy and the Foundation's areas of funding interest
- Passion for continuous improvement, both personal and organizational.

Culture: We seek a President who exhibits...

- Deep respect for the nonprofit sector, the Foundation's community of interests, and the staff who make the work possible.
- A passion for community progress, broadly construed, and a propensity for tangible results
- A seasoned philanthropic mindset
- A record of creative collaboration and innovation, internally and externally
- Comfort with accountability
- A healthy sense of humor and an attitude of humility coupled with a strong sense of self; someone who approaches the work with grace and confidence
- Respect for best practices, wherever they may have been developed, and the attitude of
- The cultural sensitivity to thrive in the Foundation's footprint. While the Board does not require that the President come from the area, candidates should be comfortable with the values, work styles and lifestyles attendant to the region
- A deft leadership touch, exercised with care and grace.



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Character: We expect to hire...

- An innovative, forward-thinking executive
- An authentic, accessible leader
- An energetic and talented executive who acts with subtlety and sensitivity; a leader who expects excellence and is willing to nurture it
- A President who prizes openness, transparency and respect in all dealings; someone quick to share responsibility and credit
- A careful steward of the Foundation's assets, whether its people, its resources or its reputation for thoughtful engagement
- A partner in learning.
- A skilled navigator who can balance project funding with a long-term commitment to real change in the region.

Day-to-day management of The Cameron Foundation requires a delicate balance of leadership and listening skills. As head of the Foundation, the President will be one of the area's most visible and influential citizens from the very first day, but respect will be earned by actions and impact, not by Board appointment.

As successor to a highly regarded leader, the new President must fashion his or her own way, building on the successes and investments of The Cameron Foundation's first twenty years while developing new ways to strengthen the health and vitality of the region.

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect,
please send an email with supporting materials to

Cameron@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or call **Patti Kish** or **Sam Pettway**
at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).
