



**WELLSPRING
FOUNDATION**
OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Executive Director

**Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia
Abingdon, Virginia**

Mission Statement: To enhance the health and wellbeing for the Virginia residents of Washington, Grayson, Russell and Smyth counties by cultivating goal-oriented partnerships.

Executive Summary

In just a few short years, the [Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia](#) has become one of the most impactful and influential philanthropies in the region. As the founding Executive Director has announced his intention to retire by year-end 2026, the Board of Directors has launched the search for a successor who can build on the exceptional progress made in the foundation's early years to enhance the health and wellbeing of residents across Washington, Grayson, Russell, and Smyth counties.

The next Executive Director will build on the legacy of deeply respected leadership and a strong, committed staff. The new Executive Director will combine vision with disciplined execution, setting direction while ensuring that strategy is translated into action with clarity and follow-through.

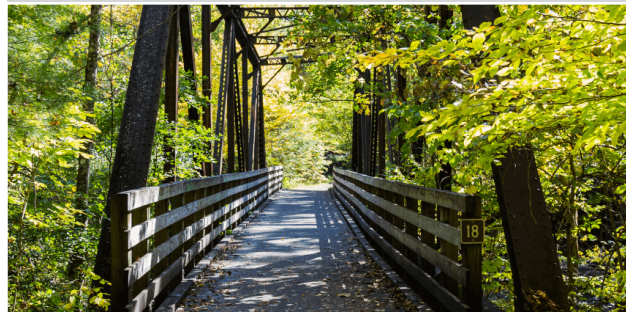
This role calls for a grounded and values-driven leader. The Executive Director will be a visible and trusted presence in Southwest Virginia, engaging authentically with communities and partners. They will bring integrity, humility, and sound judgment, and will prioritize relationships, both externally and within the organization, as the foundation for sustained and transformational impact.

Opportunity

Reporting to the [Board of Directors](#), the Executive Director will provide overall leadership and management of the Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia.

The Foundation represents a significant long-term investment in Southwest Virginia and is positioned to influence systems, not just support individual initiatives. Its approach centers on understanding community needs, convening partners, and aligning resources to create durable solutions.

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This includes planning efforts, cross-sector collaboration, and targeted initiatives that build momentum over time. Investments demonstrate understanding of complex issues at a systemic level, such as developing truly creative solutions for housing as a foundational consideration for all the Foundation's impact areas.

The Executive Director will have the opportunity to:

- Guide a philanthropic strategy focused on long-term, sustainable change
- Convene and align diverse stakeholders across sectors and communities
- Build on and foster strong existing partnerships and community trust
- Lead and grow a capable and committed team with deep regional knowledge
- Ensure that planning efforts translate into coordinated action and measurable progress

Southwest Virginia offers a distinctive place to live and lead. The region is defined by strong community ties and a deep sense of place. Like other rural communities in America, the counties served by Wellspring Foundation face challenges related to transportation, access, and shifting economic opportunities, including changes in the coal industry. Leaders here have the opportunity to engage meaningfully with communities, to see the direct impact of their work over time, and to foster collaboration, long-term solutions, and hope in addressing intractable issues.

This role is well suited for a leader who is both forward-looking and grounded; someone who can see possibilities while staying closely connected to community voice, organizational culture, and operational detail.



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Organization

The genesis of the Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia started in 2008 as the Johnston Memorial Healthcare Foundation, originally created to support Johnston Memorial Hospital during its merger with Mountain States Health Alliance. Following the merger, the Foundation held a minority ownership stake in the hospital, which later became part of Ballad Health. In November 2021, the Foundation exited this joint venture, with Ballad Health purchasing the community's remaining ownership interest through a structured payment agreement. This transition allowed the Foundation to convert from a supporting organization to an independent 501(c)(3) private foundation in 2022, adopting the name Wellspring Foundation of Southwest Virginia to reflect its autonomous, community-focused mission.

Since becoming an independent foundation, Wellspring Foundation has rapidly built its organizational capacity and launched a strategic, community-driven approach to grantmaking and regional investment. Wellspring Foundation focuses on serving Washington, Grayson, Russell, and Smyth counties, reflecting the patient population served by the hospital. The Foundation has prioritized initiatives that address health, education, and community wellbeing through both large-scale IMPACT grants and smaller HOPE grants, alongside targeted funding for planning and research efforts.

The HOPE grant is designed for organizations requesting one-time funding up to \$50,000 for a project. The HOPE grant has two cycles per year - May and October and is administered by staff. The IMPACT grant is designed for organizations requesting either a single-year or multi-year disbursement of funds for projects totaling more than \$50,000. The IMPACT grant has one dedicated application window per year and is decided by the board.



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Wellspring Foundation emphasizes collaboration, alignment, and sustained impact. Rather than addressing issues in isolation, the Foundation works across sectors to identify shared priorities and support coordinated solutions.

In just a few years, the Wellspring Foundation has committed millions of dollars to community organizations and projects, demonstrating both strong demand for its resources and its growing role as a catalyst for coordinated, long-term change across Southwest Virginia.

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The current Executive Director is the founding leader of Wellspring Foundation and served as CEO of Johnston Memorial Hospital for nearly 14 years (2003-2016). It is his intention to retire at the end of 2026.

Currently, there is a staff of eight professionals that report to the Executive Director, including three staff dedicated to the Foundation's wholly owned subsidiary, Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners (AHHP). Direct reports to the Executive Director include an Administrative Assistant, and four Directors: Engagement, Operations, Finance, and AHHP.

The Wellspring Foundation moved from the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator to its beautiful permanent office space in Abingdon, Virginia in late 2025. In addition to staff offices, the site has community meeting rooms and an office for the Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE), a capacity-building resource center for nonprofit organizations.



Spotlight: The Washington County Promise Program

The Washington County Promise Program reflects Wellspring Foundation's deep commitment to the transformational power of education as a driver of long-term opportunity and regional vitality.

Launched in partnership with Virginia Highlands Community College (VHCC), the program ensures that eligible Washington County students can pursue higher education or workforce training without the burden of tuition costs. By covering remaining tuition and fees after other financial aid, and providing additional support for books and supplies, the program removes financial barriers that limit access to postsecondary education.

This initiative represents one of the Foundation's most significant and sustained commitments, with nearly \$20 million invested over a 16-year period.

Beyond individual student benefit, the Promise Program is designed to have lasting impact on the region by strengthening workforce readiness, supporting economic mobility, and helping to build a more stable and prepared community.

Through its partnership with VHCC and its focus on access, continuity, and outcomes, the program reflects the Foundation's broader approach: investing in systems and opportunities that create meaningful, enduring change for individuals, families, and Southwest Virginia as a whole.



Spotlight: The Center for Nonprofit Excellence

As the Wellspring Foundation started its grantmaking, staff and leadership realized that the opportunity to apply for grants at the scope and scale they were looking for was new for many of their nonprofit partners and that there was good capacity-building work to be done in the sector.

In response, the Wellspring Foundation partnered with Virginia's Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE), headquartered in Charlottesville. There is now a CNE satellite site co-located with the Foundation.

CNE works in partnership with the Foundation to develop targeted, responsive, and high-quality programs and services that enhance the ability of nonprofits to manage change and deepen impact. Programs and services are available to nonprofits in the Wellspring Foundation footprint at no cost, and range from strategic planning, financial management, grant writing, and board development.



Spotlight: Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners

Appalachian Highlands Housing Partners (AHHP) represents the most significant and complex initiative undertaken by the Wellspring Foundation.

Established in November 2024 as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Foundation, AHHP is designed to address one of the region's most pressing challenges: access to attainable workforce housing across Washington, Grayson, Russell, and Smyth counties. Rather than relying solely on traditional grantmaking, this initiative reflects a more direct, operational approach – building capacity, infrastructure, and systems to expand housing availability over time.

AHHP is actively in a build-out phase. Since its launch, the organization has begun assembling a team and laying the groundwork for long-term implementation, including the hiring of a Director (January 2025), an Workforce & Education Consultant (July 2025), a Home & Land Services Coordinator (November 2025), and a Project Manager (March 2026).

Early efforts have also included the acquisition and sale of initial housing units, the purchase of land for future development, and the acquisition of a 92,000-square-foot facility in Lebanon, Virginia. This facility will serve as the hub for AHHP's modular home construction and assembly operation, RidgeBuilt, as well as its workforce education and training initiative, HOMEWorks.

The scale and scope of AHHP extend well beyond a traditional program. It involves real estate development, construction, workforce training, and long-term operational planning. You can read more in [AHHP's 2025 Annual Report](#).

The next Executive Director will play a key role in guiding this work and ensuring that the initiative is structured effectively, aligned with community needs, and positioned for sustainable growth. This will require strong management, the ability to oversee complex, multi-faceted efforts, and a willingness to engage deeply in both strategy and execution.

AHHP may serve as a model for future investment and accelerator opportunities for Wellspring Foundation. It will certainly serve as a national model of response to the housing issue impacting regions throughout the country.



The Executive Director will provide leadership across Community Engagement & Partnership, as well as other core domains.

Mandate

The Executive Director will provide vision and leadership that drives alignment, deepens relationships, and strengthens the Foundation's impact across the region. They will be responsible for the following core domains:

Strategic Leadership & Systems Change

- Guide long-term strategy focused on lasting, systems-level impact
- Ensure that planning efforts lead to coordinated, actionable outcomes
- Identify opportunities to accelerate progress through alignment and partnership
- Balance vision with attention to detail and execution

Community Engagement & Partnerships

- Build authentic, trust-based relationships across Southwest Virginia
- Convene diverse stakeholders, including nonprofit, healthcare, civic, and community leaders
- Foster collaboration and shared ownership of regional priorities
- Maintain a deep understanding of community context and culture

Organizational Leadership & Culture

- Lead, support, and develop a strong and committed staff including exploring opportunities for ongoing professional development
- Foster a culture that values collaboration, respect, and accountability

- Prioritize a whole-person approach to staff support, including a family-first orientation
- Maintain a workplace environment grounded in trust, transparency, and shared purpose

Operations, Stewardship & Governance

- Ensure responsible stewardship of the Foundation's resources
- Partner closely with the Board of Directors
- Maintain strong operational systems and organizational effectiveness
- Uphold the highest standards of integrity and accountability

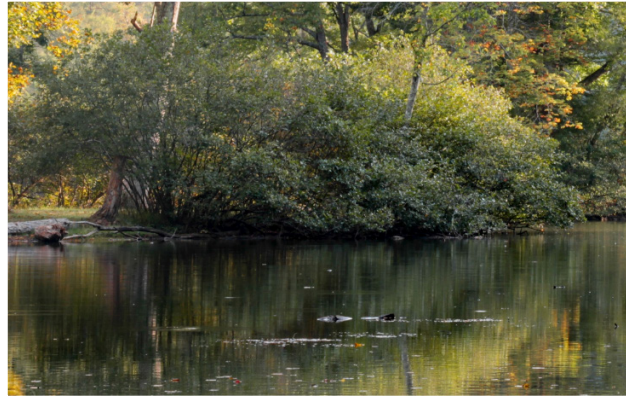
Regional Leadership

- Serve as a visible and credible representative of the Foundation
- Communicate clearly about priorities, progress, and impact
- Strengthen the Foundation's role as a regional leader and convener

Candidate

The next Executive Director must be a person of integrity, who appreciates the challenges facing rural communities and who demonstrates a forward-looking and visionary perspective grounded in practical execution. The Executive Director will demonstrate:

- Exceptional integrity, sound judgment, and ethical leadership
- A genuine, humble leadership style with the ability to build trust across communities, engage diverse stakeholders, and foster collaboration



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- Commitment to supporting staff as whole people and fostering a collaborative work environment with respect for work/life balance
- Strong management and operational skills including leading teams and building organization effectiveness with tools, systems, and processes
- Understanding of Southwest Virginia specifically or rural communities broadly and their unique dynamics; ability to truly become part of the community and understand its needs
- Ability to consider immediate and long-term implications for complicated and transformational initiatives during times of planning and growth
- Financial acumen relevant to overseeing sophisticated, multi-pronged organizational budgets and resource allocation, with an understanding of the importance of long-term, financial sustainability
- Experience working with nonprofits including board-level engagement

Relationships

The Executive Director reports to:	Board of Directors
Supervises:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director of Engagement ▪ Director Operations ▪ Director of Finance ▪ Director of AHHP ▪ Administrative Assistant
Collaborates with:	Staff, community partners, nonprofit organizations, city and county civic leaders, and regional stakeholders

Compensation

Wellspring Foundation benchmarks executive compensation against the annual survey of foundations from across the nation produced by the Council on Foundations.

Location

The Wellspring Foundation is headquartered in [Abingdon, Virginia](#), and the Executive Director will be based in Southwest Virginia.

Abingdon offers a strong sense of community, historic character, a strong food and entertainment scene, and access to both cultural and natural resources. Its walkable downtown, locally owned businesses, and active civic life create an environment where relationships matter and people are engaged in the life of the community.

The town is home to world-class institutions such as the [William King Museum of Art](#) and [Barter Theatre](#). It sits at the start of the Virginia Creeper Trail and offers access to excellent fishing, hiking, and outdoor recreation, including at South Holston Lake.

Abingdon is part of a broader regional ecosystem with smaller communities with their own character and strengths. The area is supported by key educational institutions, including [Virginia Highlands Community College](#) and nearby [Emory & Henry University](#), which provide pathways for higher education, workforce training, and community engagement.

Abingdon and the surrounding Southwest Virginia region offer a lifestyle that is balanced and enriching; a place where it is possible to build a meaningful career while also enjoying access to the outdoors, strong schools, and a vibrant arts and cultural scene. With its affordability, natural beauty, and strong sense of community, the area provides space to live comfortably and connect deeply.



For potential consideration or to recommend a prospect, please email Wellspring@BoardWalkConsulting.com or call **Sam Pettway**, **Sarah Gaines** or **Lysondra Somerville**, at 404-262-7392.
