

THE WORD

A STORYTELLING SANCTUARY

Executive Director

Denver, Colorado

Position Summary

The Word: A Storytelling Sanctuary is seeking a visionary and dynamic **Executive Director (ED)** to lead our mission of achieving cultural equity in the literary arts and drive sustainable and intentional organizational growth, supporting the values and vision that have made The Word a trusted community partner. Reporting directly to the Board of Directors, the ED is the organization's chief executive officer, responsible for the high-level oversight and strategic implementation across all facets of the organization's work. Key responsibilities include fiscal and fundraising oversight, board management, operations and human resources, and programmatic impact. The Word's 2026 budget is approximately \$450,000.

The ED will work closely with The Word's Founder and Artistic & Cultural Director, Viniyanka Prasad, whose part-time work focuses on strategic values-alignment and continuity for key funders, donors, and community partners. The ED is a full-time, exempt position that requires on-site, in-person work in Denver, CO for a minimum of one week per month. Local and national candidates, including members of historically marginalized groups, are encouraged to apply.

Organizational Overview

The Word: A Storytelling Sanctuary is a national literary arts 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to achieving cultural equity in the publishing world. Founded in 2016, its mission is to promote and uplift the voices of writers and creatives from BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, disabled, and neurodiverse communities. The organization directly challenges cultural erasure in publishing through high-impact programs, including:

- The prestigious **Editor-Writer Mentorship** program.
- The biennial **[margins.] Literary Conference + Book Festival**.
- The **#MarginsBookselling** initiative, which supports bookstore owners and booksellers from underrepresented backgrounds.

The Word provides a vital sanctuary and professional pathway for historically underrepresented storytellers, ensuring their narratives are honored and seen in literature, and is based in Denver, Colorado. To learn more about The Word, please visit our [website](#) and review the following: [The Word Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#).

Key Responsibilities

The Executive Director is the chief executive responsible for the strategic direction and operational health of The Word: A Storytelling Sanctuary. This role encompasses leadership across six domains:

Strategic Leadership and Governance

- Partner with the Board of Directors to set strategic priorities, ensure mission alignment, and uphold strong governance practices.

- Serve as the primary organizational liaison to the Board, preparing reports, facilitating meetings, and advising on strategic decisions.

Development, Communications, and External Relations:

- Lead all fundraising activities, including grants, major gifts, sponsorships, and donor cultivation.
- Oversee marketing, communications, and brand strategy to enhance visibility and public engagement.
- Build and maintain relationships with philanthropic, literary, and community partners.

Financial Stewardship

- Develop and manage the annual organizational budget.
- Ensure fiscal health and accountability through sound financial management, reporting, and compliance practices.
- Present accurate, transparent financial updates to the Board of Directors.

Human Resources and Organizational Culture

- Supervise/support staff, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and care.
- Lead implementation of equitable and trauma-informed HR policies and practices.
- Promote ongoing professional development and well-being for team members.

Operations and Administration

- Ensure the organization's internal systems, infrastructure, and operations support programmatic success.
- Oversee contracts, vendors, and administrative functions for efficiency and compliance.

Program Implementation

- Provide high-level guidance for all programs to ensure alignment with strategic goals and The Word's mission.
- Establish clear metrics for success and evaluate program outcomes using data-driven approaches.

Leadership Approach

Collective Abundance: Champions projects that center authentic storytelling from underrepresented communities as a movement to both joy and structural change; secures and allocates resources with a focus on building collective pathways, rejecting a scarcity-driven approach; leads with a focus on contributor and participant wellbeing; actively resists the imposition of subjective "standards of taste" on creative outputs.

Respect for Self-Identification: Embodies a strong commitment to community-led processes to provide engagement that is responsive to specific community needs; actively seeks to understand intersectional identities; ensures policies and communication reflect a deep respect for self-identified terms and unique and varied lived experiences.

Restorative Accountability: Leads difficult conversations with a focus on learning and repair; establishes clear, non-punitive pathways for reporting and addressing harm; holds self and others accountable to ethical standards of inclusion.

Authentic Community Partnerships: Evaluates partnerships rigorously against tokenism; centers community voices in program design and decision-making; actively seeks out collaborations that advance equity goals.

Trust-Based, Active Listening: Engages community feedback throughout processes and operations; demonstrates non-judgmental reception of concerns; ensures decisions are visibly informed by what has been heard from the community.

Cultural Humility: Dedicates attention to expanding the viewpoints collected and engaged in organizational processes and learning; regularly initiates reviews of organizational policies and values; models intellectual curiosity and openness to changing one's perspective based on new learning.

Qualifications & Experience

- 5+ years in a Senior Leadership/Executive role in a nonprofit organization.
- Proven history of successfully managing and collaborating with a Board of Directors, including setting agendas, reporting on performance metrics, and facilitating strategic planning sessions.
- Proven track record of securing significant funding (grants, major gifts, corporate sponsorships) of approximately \$500k to \$1m annually.
- Experience in stakeholder relations, specifically building consensus among board members, senior staff, and external partners.
- Exceptional strategic thinking and vision-setting capabilities.
- Superior communication, negotiation, and public speaking skills.
- Demonstrated ability to motivate and inspire a team toward organizational goals.
- Expertise in fundraising best practices and donor cultivation/stewardship.
- Oversight in generating and analyzing financial statements for board review.
- Experience developing and managing an organizational or programmatic budget including financial forecasting, risk management, and fiscal controls.
- Knowledge of program development, implementation, and evaluation, ensuring programs are aligned with the strategic plan and achieve measurable impact.
- Ability to translate complex program outcomes into compelling public narratives.
- Data-driven approach to program management and performance metrics.
- Experience overseeing day-to-day operations of the organization, including facilities, IT, and administrative functions.
- Direct experience in HR policy development and oversight, ensuring compliance with labor laws, managing compensation structures, and driving a positive organizational culture.
- Deep knowledge of relevant legal and regulatory requirements (e.g., non-profit compliance, employment law).
- A strong, demonstrable commitment to fostering an organizational culture that is supportive and collaborative, prioritizes team wellbeing, prioritizes building vision and approach as a team, and driven by an equity lens.
- Proven ability to embed principles of equity and inclusion into all phases of organizational operations.

Compensation and Benefits

The Word offers a competitive compensation and benefits package, flexible work environment, and 32-hour work week. The hiring range for this position is \$85,000 to \$95,000 annual salary.

The position is based in Denver, Colorado. The Word works on a hybrid schedule that is typically Monday through Thursday. Throughout the year, programs are offered during evenings and weekends requiring employees to work during these hours. Limited travel within Colorado and some nationally is also anticipated.

The Word's employee benefits include:

- Paid time for vacation, personal, and sick leave (paid time off is not restricted so long as all job duties are sufficiently and satisfactorily met)
- Health care benefits package that includes medical, vision, and dental
- 401k retirement plan with employer match

In addition to nine paid holidays, The Word closes its office for one week in late May, and for two weeks at the end of December to allow employees time for rest and recovery.

Key Relationships

Reports to: Boards of Directors

Direct reports: Director of Programs (FT) and Office Coordinator (PT)

Peer relationship: Founder and Artistic & Cultural Director, Viniyanka Prasad

Other key relationships:

- Contractors and consultants
- Donors, institutional, and philanthropic partners
- Local, state, and national literary and publishing partners

To Apply

The search is being led by Marisol Solarte-Erlacher and Sonya Ulibarri with [Cultura Leadership Consulting](#). Candidates should submit a cover letter, outlining their interest and qualifications, along with their resume to info@culturaleadership.com. Applications will be reviewed as they are received until the position is filled. We encourage submissions by the priority date of 11:59 pm on December 7, 2025.

Anti-Discrimination Statement

The Word, A Storytelling Sanctuary, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose charitable purposes include services for communities historically marginalized based upon racial, cultural, ethnic, or religious identity; gender identity; sexual orientation; physical, cognitive, or emotional disability; socioeconomic adversity; and personal experiences of adversity or injustice. In doing so, we provide service to individuals from a vast variety of backgrounds. We review applications for employment, volunteer, and program service opportunities from all qualified individuals and do not exclude or discriminate against any individual based solely upon sex, race, color, creed, religion, ethnic or national origin, native language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, transgender status, age, pregnancy, genetic information, ancestry, marital status, leave status, disability, veteran or draft status, military status, political service, and/or any other characteristic or status protected by national, federal, state, or local law.