



Job Announcement

The American Association of Variable Star Observers seeks an Executive Director: a person who knows astronomy and our programs, will develop a vision for our future, and can expand AAVSO's reach in the world of astronomy.

AAVSO: Who Are We?

We are citizen scientists who want to contribute and be involved in astronomical research. That is our core mission. For more than 100 years AAVSO has served as an umbrella organization for observers world-wide. We teach the skills that observers need to make efficient and accurate photometric measurements. We provide the necessary resources in the form of star charts, comparison star sequences, and tools for measuring the images that observers take. We accept, validate, and archive our observations for research by the astronomical community.

To supply these services, the AAVSO engages volunteer help and a paid, professional staff to direct and focus our efforts. We offer the following services to every member:

- Access to the variable star databases we maintain.
- Ability to make and add observations to the AAVSO.
- Expert help in choosing scientifically interesting stars.
- Accurate and up-to-date finding charts with comparison star sequences.
- Comprehensive International Variable Star Index (VSX).
- Observing sections focused on specific areas of variable star astronomy.
- Instruction and mentoring in observing skills and techniques.
- Our peer-reviewed astronomical journal, the *JAAVSO*.
- An "alerts" service about observations needed by professionals.
- Annual meetings, forums, seminars, and webinars.

AAVSO was one of America's first "citizen science" organizations. Today we serve the world.

We are proud that our work and our contributions aid researchers, astronomers, astrophysicists, students, and scientists. Our databases hold stories told through more than a century of stellar histories, and observers provide new, critically needed data to further ongoing research.

In sum, the AAVSO is a world leader in promoting, supporting, and tapping the energies of non-professional astronomers in support of astronomical research. We foster public interest in astronomy. We offer anyone anywhere the opportunity and the means to make a real contribution to astronomy. The Executive Director leads, manages, and promotes our work.

AAVSO Executive Director: Job Description

The Executive Director has three primary responsibilities: To foster collaboration between amateur and professional astronomers, maintain a high level of membership satisfaction, and to preserve the sound financial position of the organization.

As the public face of the organization, the Executive Director works with both amateur and professional astronomers. The Executive Director explains to researchers the ability of modern non-professional astronomers to make accurate photometric, spectroscopic, and exoplanet observations. In addition, often on short notice, we are asked to provide observational support for orbiting observatories.

For the amateur community, the Executive Director identifies and promotes observing programs needed by researchers. AAVSO provides the training and tools necessary to carry out these observations. AAVSO observer participation and satisfaction depends on knowing that these tools and techniques produce high-quality data, and that their observational and analytical work is acknowledged and valued by the professional community. Furthermore, the Executive Director recruits, engages, encourages, and retains members who are not observers but who support the work of the association through volunteer work and donations. The Executive Director must inspire and expand AAVSO membership by reaching out to the world-wide and diverse community of citizen scientists to attract and train new observers and members to AAVSO.

Finally, the Executive Director secures outside funding to augment our annual endowment withdrawals, so we have the resources needed to continue our existing work and add new programs. These new programs will grow our membership by attracting a broader, more diverse community, and take advantage of the technology now available to amateurs. The Executive Director is the key player in a robust fundraising program that will include government grants, foundation support, donations, and our annual member campaign.

The tools and methods of astronomy are changing rapidly. We seek an Executive Director receptive to new ideas and proposals, willing to embrace necessary change, and able to communicate effectively with the membership, the staff, our observers, and the researchers who draw upon and use AAVSO data.

Organization and Reporting

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the AAVSO. We are a non-profit corporation based in the state of Massachusetts. The Executive Director reports to the Board of Directors and serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the association. The Executive Director of AAVSO is an administrative and management position. The Board neither requires nor expects the Executive Director to function as a research astronomer. The role requires the Executive Director to manage staff, support and facilitate the work of the association, and seek outside funding.

The Executive Director must be an accomplished, dynamic, and visionary leader; a team player; a competent project manager; an excellent communicator; a capable CEO; and a knowledgeable scientist who can work cooperatively with the Board and the Officers of the association. AAVSO currently employs five paid staff members, two of whom are administrative and three who comprise the science team, as well as contract workers and external consultants. Approximately one hundred volunteers work on committees and workgroups to create charts, write software, design sequences, and other essential functions supporting the work of the observers. AAVSO currently has 1400 dues-paying members, 800 actively contributing observers, and a pool of some 5000 registered observers. The Executive Director is expected to motivate and guide the staff, dues-paying members, non-dues-paying observers, as well as potential observers worldwide.

At this time, AAVSO operates from a small office environment in the Cambridge, MA area, but by June 2022, will occupy a small rental office. During 2020 and 2021, staff members worked from home. In the future, the work environment may become hybrid, combining work from home and in-person work in the office workplace. Preference will be given to candidates willing to relocate to the Cambridge, MA area.

Preferred background and experience

- An advanced degree or equivalent in astronomy, or
An advanced degree or equivalent in a scientific field, or
A combination of similar credentials.
- Management of a non-profit science-based organization, or
Experience directing an educational non-profit association, or
Professional experience in a public education organization, or
A combination of non-profit/science-based experience.

Compensation

Compensation offered will depend on the applicant's experience.

Benefits

AAVSO offers a robust suite of benefits, including 100% employer-paid health insurance, 100% employer-paid dental insurance, a 401k with a match of employee contributions up to 5% of your salary, 100% employer-subsidized life and short/long-term disability insurance and a \$500 annual FSA employer contribution.

Questions and Applications

To apply (send a cover letter plus resume or CV) or to ask questions about the AAVSO Executive Director position, please email us at:

directorsearch@aavso.org

If we have a genuine interest in your application, we will ask for more supporting materials and schedule an initial interview. Successful candidates will interview with members of the Board and with the staff.

AAVSO is an equal opportunity employer. We make hiring decisions based on qualifications, merit, and our organization's needs. We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy, or any such status protected under federal, state, or local law. We require all employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19.