Jersey City Free Public Library

Draft Version – 8/25/2026

The Position

Title **Executive Director**

Compensation Compensation will be competitive and based on the ALA Guidelines for a multibranch system with a population in excess of 100,000. The anticipated salary range is $200,000 to $240,000 based upon the caliber and skills of the candidate.

There is a competitive array of benefits.

Responsibilities The Executive Director will be an inspiring leader who will continue to grow and develop the Jersey City Free Public Library ("JCFPL") as New Jersey's largest municipal library and urban library leader. They will:

- Transform the JCFPL into a major Urban Library.
- Manage, delegate, and direct the JCFPL's staff, finances, programs, and operations and ensure that such areas are closely tracked and monitored to yield data that corroborates impact and progress.
- Demonstrate a seamless ability at being culturally fluid in relating to and connecting with staff, Jersey City's disparate diverse communities, civic groups and the corporate and philanthropic sectors.
- Expand and further diversify the JCFPL's audiences and promote deeper engagement with community groups, corporate and foundation sectors, artists, teachers, and learners – with particular attention to the ways emerging technologies help make this possible.
- Forge strong working collaborative relationships within the City of Jersey City and with its leadership and departments.
- Build strategic partnerships with other institutions in order to create collaborative centers and community engagement; and to

help establish a robust and active placemaking platform within the various libraries.

- Recruit, motivate, mentor, inspire and retain a highly skilled professional staff; create an atmosphere that rewards initiative as well as cross-departmental and cross-institutional collaboration.

- Pursue best practices in urban library management and endeavor to enhance collecting, preserving, managing and making materials accessible to community groups, the corporate and foundation sectors, and the general public to advance knowledge and a well informed and engaged citizenry.

- Continue to promote the use of the JCFPL's outstanding collections through marketing, programming and outreach and to grow its collections.

- Define all fundraising goals and the critical path to achieve them. As the chief or primary ambassador of the JCFPL, enthusiastically participate in corporate and foundation fundraising and friend-raising efforts in close cooperation with the JCFPL's development staff, JCFPL Foundation Board members, and other key stakeholders.

- Keep the Board continually abreast of his/her fundraising objectives and pitches to prospects to ensure there is continuous progress and momentum by providing periodic written reports to the Board.

Reporting Relationships

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director is responsible for carrying out the strategic priorities established by the Board and for providing the leadership, vision, and direction to the JCFPL on both an everyday basis as well as within a strategic framework.

Key Issues

The significant immediate and longer-term core issues that the new Executive Director will be called upon to address are:

- Update or revise the Strategic Plan, to the extent necessary, in conjunction with the Board with the ultimate goal of transforming JCFPL into a national model of an Urban Library.

- Lead the library's efforts to expand the Main Library with the $10 million State/City construction grants. This will need an additional $5 million raised from the private sector.

- Initiate the preparation of a sound Fundraising/Development Plan to reduce the dependence on government funding from 96% to 75%--to include: devising immediate fundraising efforts;

serving an integral role in robust fundraising efforts and strategizing how to implement such efforts; and creating a separate plan for enhancing the Foundation Board with more active and influential board members who have financial capacity and/or critical connections to those who do.

- Conduct a review of the staff and their needs, develop a plan and budget for training and development, for anticipated retirements, and for the recruitment and hiring of new staff and their assimilation into the new JCFPL Urban Library culture and values.

- Reinvigorate community engagement at all levels in order to make the JCFPL more visible in the community and by being a **highly visible** Executive Director who interacts frequently with the broader community/neighborhood groups, the corporate community, and foundation or philanthropic sector.

- Be highly engaged, accountable, and enthusiastic to inculcate and instill a sense of high morale and dedication among staff.

- Generate incremental revenues by finding ways to bring in more ancillary funds such as a Space Rental Program for the JCFPL's common spaces similar to NYPL and creating retail spaces such as coffee shops or cafes in underutilized premium spaces to help cultivate placemaking in the City.

The Organization

Mission*

The JCFPL promotes lifelong learning and cultivate equity in our community through innovative programs, engaging collections, welcoming spaces, and committed staff. The JCFPL is deeply committed to Accessibility, Belonging, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (ABIDE) in everything it does. The JCFPL believes that every individual—in celebration of their race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity—should feel valued, respected, and supported. To this end, the institution strives to foster a sense of belonging where both staff and patrons feel empowered to be their authentic selves. The JCFPL also works tirelessly to ensure that every aspect of its collections, programs, services, and spaces reflects the rich diversity of the community it serves.

Words alone are not enough, however. JCFPL recognizes that its commitment to ABIDE is a continuous journey, requiring action, accountability, and collaboration.
**[adopted December 8, 2020 and February 7, 2025]*

History/Overview

The Jersey City Free Public Library has a long history of innovation and service and serves a host of patrons in the most diverse city in the United States. The historic Main Library, six regional branches, three neighborhood branches and a Bookmobile are hubs of activity, with a wide variety of programming for children and adults. The Library has New Jersey's largest and most extensive collection – *Biblioteca Criolla* -- dedicated exclusively to Spanish-language works, and to presenting Latino culture from all Spanish-speaking nationalities. The Greenville Branch is home to the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Society Museum. The Five Corners Branch specializes in works related to music and the fine arts, and is a gallery space.

On May 13, 1889, seven men met in the City Hall office of Mayor Orestes Cleveland to organize the first free public library for Jersey City. These newly appointed library trustees chose as their president Leonard Gordon, M.D., a long-term advocate for a public library. Their first task was to file a suit to force the city's Finance Board to appropriate the funds mandated by state law.

With 15,515 books in stock and with no fanfare, the new library opened on July 6, 1891, in rented, gaslit rooms in two adjacent bank buildings on Washington Street near York Street. To move from one part of the library to the other, the public had to go out into the street. Clearly, a new structure was needed, one designed to house a large book collection and to provide seating capacity for a city with a population nearing the 200,000 mark.

Working throughout the 1890s, the trustees acquired land at Jersey Avenue and Montgomery Street, hired a supervising architect, Professor A.D.F. Hamlin of Columbia University, and announced a design competition. The architectural firm of Brite and Bacon of New York was selected, and, on August 16, 1899, the cornerstone was set in place. On January 14, 1901 the new building, today's Main Library, was dedicated.

As Jersey City grew, so did the library system. The Hudson City Branch opened in 1911 in rooms on the second floor of 337 Central Avenue. Its success, with over one hundred thousand books circulated in the first year, demonstrated the need for additional branches. The Bergen Branch opened on Jackson Avenue in 1915 and the Greenville branch on Danforth Avenue the following year. The inadequacy of these rented quarters soon became apparent and, starting in 1917 with the Zabriskie Street Library (now known as the Heights Branch), new branch buildings were constructed. The Miller Branch on Bergen Avenue and the Greenville Branch (now known as the Morgan Branch) on Kennedy Boulevard have become neighborhood landmarks.

Physical expansion continued into the 1920s, and the Main Library itself was enlarged. But the Great Depression took its toll, curtailing additional growth for a long time after that project was completed. It was not until 1962 that the Library added a new building, located on Newark Avenue at Five Corners.

The Library added services throughout the next few decades. Biblioteca Criolla, a Spanish-language branch, opened in 1972. Storefront branches were added throughout the city. Media services were expanded and video rentals introduced. Additional programming, access to online databases, and the use of microforms, maps, and photographs have augmented the book and periodical collections.

Now in its second century of service to the people of Jersey City, the Library has automated its catalog and its circulation procedures. Through the online catalog, patrons can search the collection from their homes as well as from computer terminals available for public use. In 2004, the Library celebrated the opening of the first new branch built since 1962, when the Glenn D. Cunningham Branch Library & Community Center opened on Martin Luther King Drive.

The Main Library will be undergoing major renovations; the West Bergen completed a move to a new location; and the Five Corners Branch, which is one of JCFPL's busiest locations, is the next location for major renovations as it is currently closed due to critical HVAC issues and other infrastructure deficiencies.

The Jersey City Free Public Library is about to embark on significant new direction. As Jersey City is increasingly becoming a major secondary 18-hour city attracting a diverse array of people to live here, the JCFPL must play an integral role as a critical third space and be a pivotal part of the City's placemaking efforts.

Locations

The JCFPL consists of the Main Library, twelve (12) other locations, and a Bookmobile.

The Main Library is located at:
472 Jersey Avenue,
Jersey City, NJ 07302

www.jclibrary.org

Jersey City is the second largest city in New Jersey and is soon-to-be the largest with a population of 292,449 per the 2020 U.S.

Census; with recent estimates falling roughly between 302,000 to 304,000.

Since the 1980's, Jersey City has undergone a renaissance due to the redevelopment of the waterfront in an area previously occupied by rail yards and factories. The rapid construction of numerous high-rise buildings increased the population and led to the development of the Exchange Place financial district, also known as *"Wall Street West"*. Today, it is one of the largest banking centers in the United States with large financial institutions such as UBS, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase Bank, Citibank, and Merrill Lynch which occupy prominent buildings on the Jersey City waterfront. Jersey City is also becoming a major life sciences hub, with several biotech companies and research organizations relocating from New York to the City.
Due to its proximity to Manhattan, Jersey City has evolved a globally cosmopolitan ambiance of its own, demonstrating a robust and growing demographic and cultural diversity with respect to metrics including nationality, religion, race, and domiciliary partnership.

The Person

Minimum Experience

The Executive Director must be a visionary and passionate advocate for innovating the breadth and depth of community engagement services to meet the changing needs of each diverse community as well as having a successful track record in creating a vibrant and proactive Urban Library. The ideal person will have:

- Five to ten years of experience working as a professional librarian in a managerial position in a public library or other senior high-level role in a non-profit organization;
- Demonstrable record of achievement in urban public library system, including the development and implementation of 21st century library services, programming, and technology.
- Success at conceptualizing, developing and implementing strategic plans
- Proven record of acuity in financial planning and management.
- A successful track record of major fundraising from private individuals, corporations, foundations, including cultivating and securing five and six-figure; and, ideally, seven-figure gifts.
- Familiarity with ILS automated systems;
- Proven team building skills and experience integrating multiple disciplines and partners

- Ability to manage a diverse and talented office staff as well as the ability to bring together a large group of library directors and trustees to work together for the best interests of the consortium
- Vision and creativity regarding the ever-changing landscape of public library services.
- Knowledge of the workings of the New Jersey public library community.

Education

A Master of Library Science, or equivalent degree, from an American Library Association (ALA)-accredited school and NJ State Professional Librarian certification from Thomas Edison State University.

Language Skills

English, with secondary language skills such as Spanish etc., would be a plus.

Personal Attributes

The ideal Executive Director will be a leader with strong professional credentials and great personal integrity, who also possesses the following attributes:

- A passion for developing a national model of an Urban Library;
- Strong, confident leadership skills;
- Open-minded with excellent listening and interpersonal skills;
- Dynamic, charismatic, articulate, approachable and personable with a strong work ethic;
- Astute sophisticated characteristics of advocate and ambassador serving multiple stakeholders;
- The flexibility of being able to combine strategic mindedness with attention to detail;
- Excellent communication skills in writing and presentation;
- An inclusive, collaborative teamwork, and team-building management style, leading by example
- Strong organizational management skills
- Someone who manages, not micromanages, and delegates.
- Someone who empowers by recognizing the achievements of subordinates and by giving credit where credit is due;
- An ability to work in partnership with the Board and Staff in carrying out the Mission and updated Strategic Plan;
- A willingness to learn about and understand the unique community and political issues in Jersey City and New Jersey;
- A nimble, highly innovative, and strategic thinker especially when it comes to fundraising as the City grapples with a

large deficit in the midst of certain JCFPL locations needing important infrastructure upgrades;
- Must be able to navigate the diverse ethnic and socio-economic community of the City;
- Demonstrated skills at multi-tasking, prioritizing and delegating while being cool headed under pressure, but without compromising quality and JCFPL's objectives because there are routinely many balls in the air, and complex issues to navigate and finesse.

Other Considerations:

Attraction of the Role

This position is ideal for someone who wants to foster dynamic change and innovation in an urban library setting, cultivate and inspire staff and hire new staff, and work in the most diverse City in the nation.

Jersey City offers a strong opportunity for eligible candidates to increase their visibility in the community, to grow and develop strong working and personal ties, to enjoy the arts, theatre, and acclimate oneself with the cultural and ethnic diversity of the City, while offering its citizens unique quality library services. Jersey City is close to New York City, and its many amenities.

The Board of Trustees are well informed and eager to assist and support the right candidate.

Disclaimer

The information in this job description indicates the general nature And level of work expected of the employee in this classification. It is Not designed to contain, or to be interpreted as, a comprehensive inventory of all duties, responsibilities, qualifications and objectives required of the employee assigned to this job.