

## LEADERSHIP PROFILE



**Executive Director**  
**The Alleghany Foundation**  
**Covington, Virginia**

---

**“A catalyst for positive change  
in the Alleghany Highlands.”**

--from The Alleghany Foundation’s mission statement

### THE ORGANIZATION

Since its creation fifteen years ago, The Alleghany Foundation has been committed to the health, well being and vitality of the people and communities of the Alleghany Highlands, a part of western Virginia embracing Alleghany County, the City of Covington, the Town of Clifton Forge and neighboring communities.

The Alleghany Foundation was formed upon the sale of Alleghany Regional Hospital to Hospital Corporation of America (HCA), a for-profit hospital management company. The bulk of the proceeds from the sale, about \$35 million, became the corpus of the new charitable foundation. Since then, The Alleghany Foundation has awarded approximately \$32 million in grants to some 62 organizations. Through prudent investment of its financial assets, the Foundation’s corpus has grown to about \$60 million.

The Foundation awards grants semi-annually. In May 2010, the Foundation announced its most recent grants; despite the recession’s impact on its corpus, the Foundation announced awards of \$2.6 million to 12 area organizations, marking one of the highest levels of giving during a semi-annual cycle in the Foundation’s fifteen-year history.

From the start, the Foundation has been governed by a dozen or so trustees drawn from the leadership of the larger community. Some of the trustees have served on the Foundation's board since its inception; others are more recent additions to the board. Several are natives to the area, whereas others relocated to the Highlands as adults. All share an abiding passion for the Alleghany Highlands, a deep commitment to the region and its people, and an abiding faith in the Foundation's aspirations.

Until her untimely death in December 2009, the day-to-day operations of the Foundation were overseen by Beth Webb. An employee of the Foundation since its very early days, she had been named Executive Director in 2007. For the past several months, the Foundation has been led on an interim basis by Ward

Robens, a former head of the Foundation. The search for a permanent successor was launched in May 2010.



Further information on The Alleghany Foundation, including a list of all grants made since inception, can be found on the organization's [website](#).<sup>1</sup>

In April 2008, the Foundation completed the first of three studies regarding the Foundation and the communities it serves. The first

report, by K. W. Poore & Associates (now known as [Community Planning Partners](#)<sup>2</sup>) of Richmond, Virginia, was entitled "Challenges for Economic Growth in the Alleghany Highlands." The second report, issued a month later, was entitled "Options for the Future for the Alleghany Highlands."<sup>3</sup>

Collectively, the Poore reports identified several important trends and challenges facing the region, principally relating to the impact of declining population and employment in the area and the potential leverage available from coordinated, cooperative efforts in economic development and job creation.

Perhaps of equal importance, the reports helped identify and spark a willingness by the Foundation board to examine the core precepts that had guided the Foundation's grantmaking from its very beginning. The Foundation then engaged in a comprehensive study of its own activities, guided by

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.alleghanyfoundation.org>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cpppartnersinc.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Both reports are available on the Foundation's website

consultants from [MDC](#)<sup>4</sup> of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a nonprofit that helps organizations and communities close the gaps that separate people from opportunities. For over a year, the Foundation undertook a process known as *Reflective Practice*, developed by MDC to help a foundation build a shared understanding of the history, emerging context, and philanthropic traditions that should inform its strategy; to determine the best options for strategic investment of resources; and to produce a plan to implement strategic grantmaking.



The results of the *Reflective Practice* were endorsed by the Foundation's board in November 2009. Given the untimely passing of the Executive Director, the board chose to delay implementation until the appointment of a permanent successor.

One key result of the board's recent work is a strong consensus for the Foundation's vision for the Alleghany Highlands and the role of the Foundation in helping to realize that vision:

**Vision: The Future the Foundation Desires**

*The Alleghany Highlands is a civically engaged, prosperous region that builds upon its assets to produce vigorous opportunities for its residents to succeed.*

**Mission: The Foundation's role in Shaping the Future**

*The Alleghany Foundation seeks to become a catalyst for positive change in the Alleghany Highlands. We use our multiple forms of capital to refocus the region's aspirations and goals, build the capacity of our grantees and partners, seed and support innovation, and measure and mark progress.*

Finally, the *Reflective Practice* engagement resulted in the identification of five substantive areas around which the Foundation will focus its resources:

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mdcinc.org>

## The Foundation's Focus

<b>Economic transformation</b>	Harness our strengths to develop a vibrant, diverse and higher-wage economy that can compete in the global marketplace
<b>Educational attainment</b>	Build the human capital base for a new economy that provides all Alleghany Highlands residents with a fair chance of success
<b>Community capacity</b>	Grow local institutions and organizations with the vision, will, wisdom and skills to work together to build a more prosperous, equitable, just and sustainable community
<b>Leadership and civic vitality</b>	Develop broad-based inclusive leadership that can sustain a forward-looking agenda for the community
<b>Health and wellness</b>	Help the residents of the Alleghany Highlands lead healthier lives and access the comprehensive health care they need

Fundamental to the Foundation's refined strategy is the opportunity to take a more proactive, strategic approach to philanthropic investment. Over the years, most of the Foundation's grants have focused on downstream activities and requests—addressing specific problems, challenges and symptoms. The board now recognizes a major opportunity to focus more of its attention on upstream grants—ones that address causes and underlying conditions.

The Foundation will of course continue to address needs of the community that are both compelling and immediate, but it is confident that a more proactive, strategic approach to grantmaking holds enormous long-term benefit for the people and communities of the Alleghany Highlands.

### THE OPPORTUNITY

The move to a more proactive approach to philanthropy creates an enormous opportunity for the next Executive Director of The Alleghany Foundation. Drawing on the collective wisdom of trustees, the experience of leaders throughout the Alleghany Highlands, and best practices developed by

grantmakers in community-based foundations serving other communities, the Executive Director will be expected to help the board convert its philanthropic vision and community commitment into an actionable plan that is embraced by the key stakeholders it is meant to serve.

The role of Executive Director will be a highly nuanced one. Historically, the Foundation’s board has performed many of the roles and responsibilities that elsewhere would fall to the Executive Director, and embracing a new management style will call for accommodations on many levels.

Nevertheless, there is solid consensus that the needs of the community and the mission of the Foundation require an experienced leader capable of being a full partner with the board and the larger community in effecting lasting change consistent with the stated aspirations.



## THE RELATIONSHIPS

The Executive Director will report to the board of directors of The Alleghany Foundation and will be supported by a small staff currently in place. Judicious additions to the staff may become necessary over time, but both the board and the larger community would view a substantial staff at the Foundation with skepticism.

Because the Foundation is by orders of magnitude the largest philanthropic entity in the region, effective working relationships with stakeholders are essential. Given the Foundation’s impact and visibility in the area, the range of constituencies and stakeholders is even larger that might normally be the case in a community-based foundation.

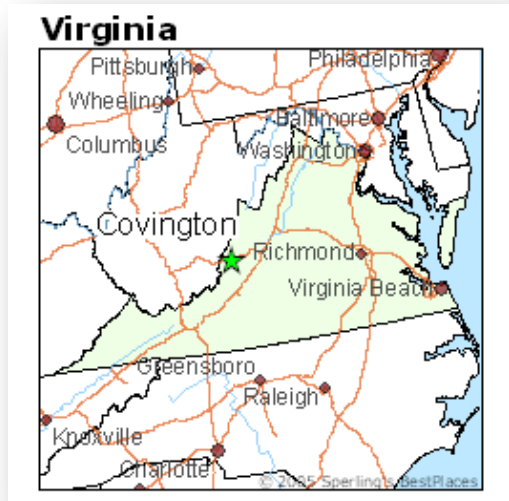
<b>Reports to:</b>	Board of Directors
<b>Manages:</b>	Team of colleagues responsible for grant administration and review, communications, and financial reporting
<b>Other key relationships:</b>	Wide array of leaders from the community’s key sectors: corporate employers, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, civic associations, governmental units and faith-based communities

## THE LOCATION

The Alleghany Foundation operates from leased space in downtown Covington, Virginia, in the heart of the Alleghany Highlands in the west-central part of the state (the green star on the adjacent map).

Home to about 20,000 people, the Alleghany Highlands is rich in history and blessed with incomparable natural resources. Two world-class resorts—The Greenbrier and The Homestead—are each just 20 miles away, but the charms of the Highlands are available at little or no cost to anyone with even a passing interest in hiking, fishing, kayaking, cross-country skiing, hunting and other outdoor activities.

Unlike many rural communities in the South, the Alleghany Highlands is not beset by deep poverty. Median household income does lag the Virginia state average by a significant amount, but the actual poverty rate—between 11% and 13%, according to 2003 Census Bureau estimates—is only marginally higher than the statewide average of 10%. Of material concern are the related issues of a shrinking workforce, unemployment, underemployment and a declining population, all of which inform the Foundation's focus on economic transformation, education, capacity-building, leadership vitality, and health and wellness.



Information on the Alleghany Highlands and its communities is available from [Wikipedia](#)<sup>5</sup>, the [Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce](#)<sup>6</sup>, and the [Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation](#)<sup>7</sup>. There are also websites for the City of [Covington](#)<sup>8</sup> and the town of [Clifton Forge](#)<sup>9</sup>. A number of the Foundation's grantees have websites as well, among them [Dabney S. Lancaster Community College](#)<sup>10</sup>, the [YMCA](#)<sup>11</sup>, [Jackson River Enterprises](#)<sup>12</sup>, and [Alleghany Highlands Arts and Crafts Center](#)<sup>13</sup>.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES

<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alleghany\\_County,\\_Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alleghany_County,_Virginia)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ahchamber.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.allhighlands.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.covington.va.us/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cliftonforge.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.dslcc.edu/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.alleghanyhighlandsymca.org/site/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.jacksonriverenterprises.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.highlandsartsandcrafts.com/>

**The Alleghany Foundation seeks a compelling, experienced foundation head capable of leading the evolution of the Foundation from reactive grantmaking to proactive philanthropy while reinforcing an absolute commitment to a vital, prosperous and engaged community.**



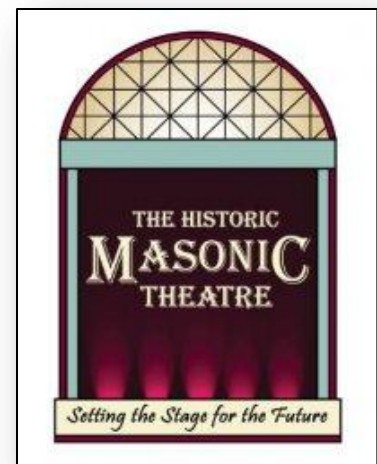
Working in tight collaboration with a highly engaged board of directors, the Executive Director must be a servant leader of the first order—engaging the community in thoughtful pursuit of an aspirational future while both guiding and reflecting the board’s engagement in issues and initiatives relevant to the Foundation’s stated focus.

As the most visible day-to-day champion of the Foundation’s mission and work, the Executive Director must wear the burden lightly, balancing strength of conviction

about the Foundation’s role in the community with a deep willingness to listen, learn and adapt.

The executive’s responsibilities can be expected to fall into four broad categories:

1. *Strategic leadership.* With the recent *Reflective Practice* as a guide, the Executive Director will be expected to lead the board and, by extension, the larger community in an evolution from reactive grantmaking to proactive community-building, while remaining highly sensitive to the immediate needs of the Foundation’s constituencies and its ongoing charitable commitments.
2. *Board partnership.* The board has been the key driver of the Foundation’s focus to date, and it will be essential for the new Executive Director to establish and maintain a respectful, collaborative and transparent partnership with the board as current plans evolve into action. The best candidates will be deeply experienced in working with a variety of boards through several generations of organizational maturity.
3. *External relations.* The Executive Director will be charged with stewardship of the



Foundation's relations with the larger community and must be fully comfortable in such a capacity. Utilizing the Foundation's power as convener and facilitator, the ED will be expected to reinforce the Foundation's reputation for commitment, collaboration and care with its external stakeholders, to the point of seeking opportunities for proactive engagement with the Foundation's various publics. Both the board and the community will expect the Executive Director to be a personally engaged member—and resident—of the Alleghany Highlands community.

4. *Management and administration.* The new head will be responsible for effective stewardship and management of the Foundation's activities, people and resources, consistent with board-approved policies, from grantmaking protocols to asset management. The Foundation's corpus is managed by third parties and overseen by a committee of the board, but the Executive Director will be directly accountable for the soundness of the Foundation's operating finances, including budgets, control and audit functions and grant evaluations.

The new leader can expect to spend much of his or her time in conversation with the community—learning while leading, leading while learning, and helping to shape the Foundation's work, deliberations and community investments in concert with the board.

## THE CANDIDATE

The best candidates will be experienced leaders deeply grounded in community-based philanthropy. Ideally, the Foundation's next Executive Director will have enjoyed considerable success at or near the top of a similar grantmaking organization, especially one serving a community that has embraced strategies similar to those adopted by the Foundation. Among the assets being sought are the following experience, credentials and cultural values:

### 1. Experience and capabilities

- Consequential leadership success within a significant organization known for its broad regional impact regionally, especially one requiring creative collaboration, pragmatic thinking and a charitable spirit.
- The managerial heft to assume capable hands-on leadership of a dynamic organization leveraging considerable human and financial assets.



- Demonstrated success in framing and tackling a community's toughest issues in concert with an engaged board; a facility for building community capacity to address root causes, not just symptoms.
- A strong record of leadership development, both internal to the organization from which the new ED comes and external to the larger community.
- The ability to engage other leaders (and potential leaders) in causes important to the Foundation

and the communities it serves; the knack for being a magnet for resources, ideas, people and capital.

- Genuinely superior communications skills in all relevant vehicles
- Hands-on experience with a compelling combination of upstream grantmaking, economic development, and creative community engagement.

## 2. Credentials

- An advanced degree in a field relevant to the Foundation's work (such as public policy, nonprofit management, business administration, law or finance) or comparable experience within continuous learning environments.
- A record of success with entities respected for their approach to communitywide issues and for their impact on those issues.
- A tangible history of deep commitment to community-based philanthropy, especially within a context of proactive pursuit of a cogent philanthropic strategy rather than simple reactive grantmaking.
- A proven sensitivity to the interconnection between economic development, leadership development and community development.

## 3. Cultural values

- Absolute integrity and discretion, combined with a commitment to transparency.
- Respect for process informed by a commitment to solutions.
- A servant leader who understands and respects the special sensitivity required to lead the largest philanthropic entity in the region.

- A personal style that attracts, engages and motivates people around common vision, goals and strategies; the ability to drive results across geographies and beyond self-interest.
- A full participant in the community. Spectators or those with an aloof management style will not succeed here.
- Deeply ingrained admiration and respect for the values of a rural community, combined with an infectious enthusiasm for the possibilities ahead.
- Personal humility in pursuit of the Foundation's vision and objectives.



- Genuine comfort in working closely with people of diverse backgrounds, interests, education and economic circumstance.
  - Comfort with the special dynamics of a proud rural community
  - Respect for lean operating environments; a community-driven approach to philanthropy, not a staff-driven approach.
  - The absence of any personal agenda beyond effective community-based philanthropy.
- A penchant for hard work and the attitude of an entrepreneur.
  - A patient but persistent management style; a constructive attitude; a courageous leader wise enough to know when to push and when to hold back.
  - The demonstrated willingness to take smart risks.

Day-to-day management of The Alleghany Foundation will require a delicate balance of leadership and listening skills. From the very first day on the job, the Executive Director will be one of the area's most visible and influential citizens. The search committee of the board will be especially interested in knowing how candidates would respond to such an environment and how their prior experience has prepared them for such a role.

**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email**  
**[Alleghany@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:Alleghany@BoardWalkConsulting.com)**

**or call**

**Sam Pettway or Joan Schlachter**  
**at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).**

**For the current status of this and other searches, please visit**  
**[www.BoardWalkConsulting.com](http://www.BoardWalkConsulting.com)**

---

