

Leadership Profile

Executive Leadership

The professional board of artists and arts workers of A Blade of Grass is excited to announce the search for its next permanent executive leader(s).



| Participants of ABOG Fellow Simone Leigh's *Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter* convening pictured en-route to the New Museum. Image courtesy of RAVA Films.

Description

A Blade of Grass (ABOG) seeks Executive Leadership to re-establish the organization into a leading resource and support system for socially engaged artists across the country. We define socially engaged art as the collaborative creative shifting of power in social systems and institutional contexts. The Executive Director, Co-Directors or other leadership models will facilitate a process for setting a long-term vision that is responsive to current needs, conditions, and opportunities within the field of art and civic life. The Executive Leadership will work closely with a paid board of directors composed of artists and art workers to implement artist-centric and alternative models for non-profit sustainability.

Applications from an executive director, co-directors or other models are welcome, as are applications from practicing artists and individuals who are not in the arts sector.



Magazine Cover: Veronica Ramirez, the founder of *Mujeres en Movimiento*, a community of Latina immigrant women in Corona, Queens, poses as Comandante Ramona during a collaborative photography workshop organized by *Project Luz*, a project by ABOG Fellow Sol Aramendi. Image courtesy of Sol Aramendi.

Primary Duties and Responsibilities

ABOG seeks a visionary leader (or leaders) in the field of socially engaged art who thrives in a start-up culture, believes in an artist-centered approach to governance, and practices an ethics of care towards staff and community. The Executive Leadership is responsible for fully articulating the organization's mission, and collaborating with board, staff, and other stakeholders to clearly and consistently implement the vision of what the organization contributes to the communities it serves. This includes strategic planning; fundraising, sourcing and managing resources, day-to-day management, and representing the organization and mission.

The Executive Leadership will direct and oversee programs, ongoing assessment of program needs, and identification of potential funding streams to enhance program services. Additionally, the Executive Leadership will serve as a liaison with other arts, social justice and community leaders to ensure the integrity and integration of ABOG and its Fellows as drivers of socially engaged work.

The ideal candidate(s) will be adept at evaluating the current moment, reinitiating programs, and proposing new models for moving resources to socially engaged artists. The Executive Leadership is responsible for setting a long-term values-driven plan which includes hiring staff, organizational management, implementation of systems, institutional advancement, and top-line goal setting about the programs and fundraising plan for the organization in consultation with board and staff.

Leadership

- Articulate ABOG's mission and vision for implementation
- Ensure the Board of Directors has the information and resources necessary to govern effectively and responsibly
- Engage in regular strategic planning and implement the plan using continuous assessments, course-correcting in real time as needed; work with staff to ensure that programs, development, visual identity and so on are aligned with strategic vision
- Enable good governance by organizing Quarterly Board Meetings, regular working and committee meetings, email votes and assisting Board Chairs in conducting annual assessment with individual board members.

Resource Development

- Procure and manage resources by articulating ABOG's value proposition and identify potential revenue streams; work with the board to build toward long-term sustainability; build relationships that enact our value proposition(s); cultivate individual, foundation, and government donor base; and collaborate with Staff and Board to set and manage annual operating budget
- Create expansive infrastructures to support socially engaged artists through a Fellowship or another grantmaking opportunity, to facilitate critical discourse around socially engaged art, and to foster community amongst practitioners in the field

External Relations & Communications

- Manage external communications by representing ABOG publicly; building relationships with like-minded organizations and thought leaders in socially engaged art; cultivating speaking engagements; conducting interviews, and writing critical essays that position ABOG within a wider discourse
- Engage in community outreach to secure connections, in-kind donations, and other community resources for Fellows and their projects; and create partnerships that increase the visibility of and deepen the critical discourse around socially engaged artists, conducting interviews, and writing critical essays that position ABOG within a wider discourse

Organizational Management

- Manage day-to-day operations including recruiting, onboarding, managing, and evaluating all Staff; provide appropriate support and supervision; developing a nurturing environment that fosters staff satisfaction, mentorship, and retention; collaborate with Staff on setting effective workflow procedures including timeline management; review Staff expenses, work contracts and so on; conduct annual review of employees' performance; and ensure regular Staff training and development opportunities
- Refine and grow ABOG's infrastructure, including systems, policies, etc. and ensure ABOG is compliant with 501c(3) and other government regulations.



| Produced by A Blade of Grass, *I Speak for the Trees: A Mock Trial* brought together lawyers, activists, and artists to “rehearse” the legal argument that art copyright law could be used to halt construction of a natural gas pipeline, as proposed by ABOG Fellow Aviva Rahmani. Photo courtesy of RAVA Films.

Compensation & Benefits

We believe in a culture of care that includes health insurance for employees and their families, parental leave, flextime, paid and sick time off, annual stipends for remote working costs, and professional development. We plan to offer additional benefits (coaching, wellness fund, sabbatical after 5 years, etc) once resources become more readily available.

- Salary: \$150,000 (pending leadership model)
- Health insurance through TriNet, including dental and vision
- 3% Employer contribution towards 401k retirement plan
- 12 paid holidays and starting with 10 vacation days per year (ABOG's office is closed between December 25 and January 1)
- Flexible work schedule

**Please note we are open to discussing compensation and benefits based on the suggested leadership model.*



ABOG Fellow Mary Mattingly aboard her project *Swale*, a floating food forest welcoming visitors to harvest food for free, and offering educational programming throughout New York City's harbor. Photo courtesy of RAVA Films.

Desired Qualifications

Executive Leadership should demonstrate cultural competency, exhibit a commitment to social justice, and have a keen understanding of socially engaged art. They should have a demonstrated commitment to ABOG's mission and vision, and value an artist-centered approach to governance. Prospective candidates must be able to manage multiple priorities simultaneously as well as exhibit excellent written and verbal communication, analytic, computer and organizational skills.

The ideal candidate(s) will possess the following skills and experiences:

- Strong leadership, facilitation and managerial skills, including proven recruitment, supervisory, staff development and retention, program management, and budgetary skills
- Creative problem solver(s) with the demonstrable ability to think strategically
- Ability to manage deadlines and stressors productively and professionally
- Comfortable with ambiguity and novelty
- Appetite for experimentation, risk-taking, and implementation of bold ideas
- Ability to understand and enable a number of specialized efforts such as legal issues, fundraising, programs, web maintenance, video production, tax and finance in collaboration with external vendors
- Maintain a strong network of artists, relevant practitioners, and funders
- A minimum of ten years relevant experience in fields connected to social impact and/or the arts

After one year, we expect to have achieved the following together:

- A “thought partner” relationship between the Executive Leadership and the Board that effectively utilizes its collective professional knowledge
- A complete assessment of ABOG's programming history, archive, management systems, fundraising tools, relationships, and assets
- A thoughtful programs development and implementation schedule informed by ABOG's rebuild research
- Savvy use of existing funding relationships to ensure continued visibility and sustainability of the organization
- Strategic building of new donor relationships and funding opportunities to ensure support of the organization's efforts
- A credible three year plan to incrementally rebuild the organization and its programs to an appropriate level of staffing and funding (previously \$1.25M)

Reporting Relationships

Executive Leadership reports and serves as a thought partner to the Board of Directors and directly supervises the Programs and Operations Manager. Executive Leadership will be responsible for further developing the team

Work Environment

We are open and flexible to various work models, the below reflects our current work environment.

- The position is currently envisioned as full time (40 hours per week) with flexible hours
- This position currently functions in a hybrid in-person/remote capacity, based in New York City, where current staff is based
- The position currently does not require national or international travel, but this will likely change once programming is defined

How to Apply

Please send a cover letter and CV to executivesearch@abladeofgrass.org. Applications from co-directors or other alternative models are welcome. Please explain any particular models in the cover letter, demonstrating the viability of the collaboration or co-working model. It is not ABOG's intention to hire individuals and then pair them.

Resumes will be reviewed as they are received, and initial conversations will be conducted on a rolling basis. After the initial conversation, a Search Advisory Committee made up of A Blade of Grass board members and external advisors will review applications and first round interviews will begin in late January 2023. Interviews will be conducted via Zoom video conference. We anticipate at least two rounds of interviews.

A Blade of Grass is an equal opportunity employer. We strongly encourage and seek applications from women, people of color, and bilingual and bicultural individuals, as well as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. We will not discriminate against any employee or job applicant on the bases of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.



Guests plant flowers chosen by incarcerated mothers in ABOG Fellow Jackie Sumell's cell-sized garden bed as part of *What It Takes to Be Free: Artists Respond to the Criminal Justice System* at the Lower East Side Girls Club, New York. Photo by Chris Green.

About A Blade of Grass

Since its founding in 2011, ABOG has provided resources to artists who serve as innovative conduits for social change and fostered dialogue around the importance of art to civic life. ABOG stands firm in the idea that creativity and art can be a shared resource that concretely and positively changes lives.

From 2013 to 2020 ABOG offered a high-profile, nationally recognized fellowship that quickly became a key career milestone for US-based socially engaged artists working across the country and abroad. The Fellowship has supported 57 artists and collectives, generated a large volume of research, print and media content, short films, and engaging programs that share the intimate process and relationship driven nature of socially engaged art. This Fellowship program was sunsetted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, ABOG began a restructuring process to explore new organizational models of support for socially engaged artists. As part of this process, ABOG's founders passed on the governance of the organization to artists and arts workers with a significant stake in socially engaged art.

Today, ABOG is in an exciting position to evaluate and respond to current challenges and opportunities, and emerge as a strong and values-driven organization—a leading artist-governed national funder for ambitious socially engaged art projects. Thanks to key individual and foundation support, we have embarked on fieldwide research centering on key questions about what socially engaged artists need, and what organizational models can most sustainably meet those needs.

Governance

Our board is comprised of artists and arts workers with a particularly deep commitment to socially engaged art, social justice and equity. They also have the practical skills and experience necessary for the effective stewardship of an arts nonprofit, including finance, community organizing, group facilitation, arts administration, fundraising, network development, and previous board membership. Each board member is compensated a \$15,000 annual honorarium for their service. This compensation was determined by an independent compensation consultant. We believe that paying a professional board increases the accountability and proximity of that board to the communities it serves; enables higher quality leadership; and enables a far more diverse group of board members.

Current Strategic Research

In our first nine years of operation, our research, content, and programming provided important resources and support to our Fellows and to the field as a whole. But that field—and the broader context in which it operates—have changed substantially enough to merit a complete reassessment of our program offerings and services. Even before the pandemic, socially engaged art was seen to be moving towards the mainstream. The structures of support and the discourse around socially engaged art continues evolving in ways that still have not been fully articulated. The pandemic and the social and political movements that have arisen in its wake have expanded and exacerbated dynamics that impact the lives of artists and the communities in which they work.

At this major inflection point, we have undertaken a research process that seeks to better understand the current ecosystem of socially engaged art, as well as the organizational landscape in which ABOG is working. We want to explore potential models for artist-led organizations, assess the current needs and desires of socially engaged artists nationwide, and determine the best practices for supporting socially engaged artists in alignment with the field at large. This research will be grounded in the experiences of alumni from our Fellows Program, as well as our extensive network of practitioners, community leaders, field experts, and partners in key external sectors.

Our findings will become the basis for a new business model and strategic plan for ABOG, and serve a broader field that is struggling with similar questions about dismantling traditional power structures, advancing equity, and ensuring sustainability.