

Executive Director

POSITION OVERVIEW



TBG

THE BATTEN GROUP
Executive Search & Consulting

About the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals

Founded in 1976, the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals (OBAP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging and advancing minorities in aviation and aerospace careers. For five decades, OBAP has worked to expand access, remove barriers, cultivate talent, and create pathways into an industry in which minorities have historically been underrepresented. Through education, mentorship, scholarships, professional development, flight training, and industry partnerships, the organization helps aspiring aerospace professionals move from early exposure to meaningful, successful careers.

OBAP's origins are rooted in both advocacy and opportunity. In September 1976, Ben Thomas, a young African American pilot with Eastern Airlines, invited 37 African American pilots—representing nearly half of all Black airline pilots in the industry at the time—to convene in Chicago. Their meeting led to the creation of the Organization of Black Airline Pilots, now the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals. From its beginning, OBAP has been committed to confronting discrimination within the aviation industry while preparing youth and young adults to pursue careers throughout the aerospace sector.

Throughout its history, OBAP has been an influential voice for greater equity and accountability. Organization leaders and members testified before Congress regarding discriminatory airline hiring practices, helping to elevate the issue nationally and strengthen expectations surrounding minority recruitment. OBAP also encouraged federal leaders to examine the nation's long-term pilot workforce needs. These efforts contributed to greater awareness, expanded opportunities for minority pilots, and increased minority participation within military aviation.

Partnership has remained central to OBAP's impact. The organization has worked alongside the Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., Black Wings in Aviation, the Federal Aviation Administration, the National Black Coalition of Federal Aviation, educational institutions, school districts, corporations, and other industry partners. These collaborations have helped preserve the history of African Americans in aviation, promote representation, strengthen educational programming, and connect emerging professionals with training and career opportunities.



BLACK. BOLD. BOUNDLESS. SINCE 1976

THE **LEGACY** LIVES ON

In 2005, OBAP further expanded its reach by establishing Centers of Excellence in Memphis, Louisville, Atlanta, Miami, and Houston. These community-based resources were designed to support young people from their earliest exposure to aerospace through education, training, and career entry. Through school-based engagement, summer academies, collegiate partnerships, flight programs, mentorship, and professional development, OBAP has built an increasingly comprehensive talent pipeline.

OBAP's signature programs include Aerospace Professionals in Schools (APIS), Aerospace Career Education (ACE) Academies, Explore Aerospace, the Luke Weathers Jr. Flight Academy (LWFA), Solo Flight Academy (SFA), the Ascension Program, scholarships, and the Aerospace Professional Development Program (APDP). Through these initiatives, participants gain exposure to aviation history, aerodynamics, air traffic control, aerospace technology, flight operations, and the breadth of careers available throughout the industry.

Today, OBAP serves more than 5,000 members throughout the United States and internationally. A professional staff of approximately 12 is amplified by a deeply committed national volunteer network that delivers programs in communities across the country. Together, staff, volunteers, members, educators, and industry partners create a continuum that can begin with a young person's first exposure to aerospace and continue through education, flight training, scholarships, professional development, employment, and career advancement.

OBAP stands upon a proud legacy of advocacy, education, partnership, and measurable impact. The organization continues to honor the pioneers who opened doors while creating new possibilities for the generations who will shape the future of aviation and aerospace.



The Executive Director Opportunity

OBAP is entering its next chapter at a moment of strength and possibility. With a respected 50-year legacy, a national member and volunteer community, and programs that reach students and professionals at every stage, the organization is positioned to deepen its impact and broaden its influence across the aerospace ecosystem.

The Board of Directors seeks a transformational Executive Director who can honor that legacy while strengthening the organization today and for the future. This leader



will serve as OBAP's chief executive officer, translating Board-level vision into a clear strategy, measurable operating plans, and disciplined execution through staff, volunteers, and partners.

This is both a strategic and hands-on leadership role. Internally, the Executive Director will assess the organization, create clarity and accountability, strengthen financial oversight and improve the systems and technology that support decision-making. This leader will also help the Board continue its evolution towards a strategic governance board by building the confidence in management's ability to lead day-to-day operations.

Externally, the Executive Director will be one of OBAP's principal ambassadors, storytellers and relationship builders. This person will steward relationships with existing sponsors, cultivate new corporate and philanthropic partners within and beyond aviation, engage members and volunteers, and clearly communicate the impact and value of OBAP's mission.



Priorities for the Next Executive Director

Strengthening the Operating Foundation

The Executive Director will assess and ensure that the organization's resources are aligned with its strategic priorities and will establish clear decision-making authority, strengthen accountability, and introduce consistent performance expectations across the organization. Equally important, the Executive Director will cultivate a healthy, high-performing culture grounded in trust, service, collaboration, follow-through, and continuous improvement.

Grow and Diversify Revenue

The Executive Director will develop and lead a sustainable revenue strategy that strengthens OBAP's longstanding relationships with airlines and aerospace companies while expanding support from adjacent industries, foundations, individual donors, and other mission-aligned partners. This requires someone who can be an active and credible ambassador who is comfortable building relationships, articulating OBAP's value, making the ask, and demonstrating meaningful returns for partners.

Bring Financial Clarity and Discipline

The Executive Director will strengthen OBAP's financial infrastructure by establishing rigorous practices for budgeting, forecasting, cash-flow management, internal controls, and organizational performance reporting. This leader will provide the Board and staff with timely, accurate, and decision-ready financial information, enabling greater transparency and more informed planning.

Elevate the OBAP Story

The Executive Director will shape a clear, compelling, and integrated narrative that brings OBAP's history, programs, people, and outcomes to life. This story must resonate across a range of audiences and settings, including corporate boardrooms, philanthropic conversations, industry events, schools, member gatherings, and digital channels. By connecting OBAP's distinguished legacy with its present-day impact and future potential, the Executive Director will use storytelling to inspire greater participation, partnership, investment, and pride in the organization.

Advance Board and Management Partnership

The Executive Director will serve as a trusted advisor and strategic partner to the Board, strengthening communication, transparency, and shared accountability. The Executive Director will support the Board's continued evolution toward strategic governance while preserving meaningful engagement and harnessing the expertise, relationships, and commitment of its members.

Position Duties and Responsibilities

Organizational Leadership and Team Management

- Partner with the Board of Directors to refine OBAP's long-term vision and strategic priorities, then translate those priorities into actionable plans, budgets, performance measures and clear organizational accountability.
- Assess OBAP's organizational structure, staffing levels, roles, contracts and workflows; align resources with strategic priorities; address performance issues; and ensure the right people are in the right roles.
- Lead, develop and hold accountable professional staff; establish clear goals, decision rights and performance expectations; encourage cross-functional collaboration; and build a culture of trust, service, follow-through and continuous improvement.

Board Governance and Leadership

- Serve as a trusted advisor to the Board; maintain transparent, proactive communication; provide timely, decision-ready reporting; and support the Board's continued transition from operational involvement to strategic governance.
- Equip the Board with accurate financial, programmatic and organizational information; clarify the distinction between governance and management; and ensure appropriate follow-through on Board direction and decisions.

Fundraising and Revenue Development

- Develop and execute a sustainable revenue-growth strategy that strengthens existing corporate sponsorships while diversifying support through new industries, foundations, individual philanthropy, strategic partnerships and other mission-aligned opportunities.
- Personally cultivate, solicit and steward high-level sponsors, donors and partners; articulate a compelling value proposition; understand partner objectives; demonstrate return on investment; and ensure strong sponsorship activation and fulfillment.

Financial Stewardship, Operations & Technology

- Provide responsible financial leadership for an annual budget of approximately \$4-\$5 million, including budgeting, forecasting, cash-flow oversight, internal controls, risk management and regular reporting on revenue, expenses and organizational performance.
- Champion technology, data and digital tools that improve operational efficiency, financial and program reporting, member engagement, fundraising, communications and organizational decision-making.
- Ensure compliance with applicable nonprofit, employment, financial and regulatory requirements and maintain effective policies, controls, vendor oversight and enterprise risk-management practices.

External Relations, Storytelling and Strategic Partnerships

- Serve as OBAP's ambassador and gifted storyteller across corporate boardrooms, philanthropic settings, industry events, the national conference, member gatherings, schools and community forums.
- Build an integrated communications and brand strategy that captures OBAP's extensive impact stories, strengthens digital and social engagement, supports fundraising and membership, and positions OBAP as an influential voice across the full aerospace ecosystem.
- Cultivate partnerships across aviation, aerospace, education, government, technology, engineering and adjacent industries to broaden career pathways and extend OBAP's reach and relevance.
- Represent OBAP nationally and travel approximately 20-30% to meet with sponsors and partners, engage members and volunteers, oversee key programs, attend industry events and support the annual conference.

Programs, Membership and Volunteer Engagement

- Oversee the quality, reach, financial sustainability and measurable impact of OBAP's member services, youth education, flight training, scholarships, professional development, collegiate initiatives and major events.
- Strengthen relationships with OBAP's members, regional leaders and extensive volunteer network; create meaningful opportunities for engagement; and ensure volunteers receive the communication, tools, support and recognition needed to succeed.



Candidate Qualifications

- A mission-driven executive with significant senior leadership experience in a complex organization; prior service as an Executive Director is valued but not required for a candidate who demonstrates readiness and a strong record of comparable leadership results.
- Demonstrated success leading organizational operations, people, budgets and change, with the ability to move fluidly between enterprise strategy and hands-on execution.
- Strong financial and business acumen, including experience managing budgets, evaluating staffing and operating models, establishing controls and using financial and performance data to guide decisions.
- A record of growing revenue and building high-value relationships with corporate sponsors, foundations, donors or strategic partners; confident making the ask and engaging senior corporate and philanthropic leaders.
- Experience working in or closely with a membership-based organization is strongly preferred; understanding of nonprofit governance, volunteer-led delivery models or chapter/regional networks is highly desirable.
- Exceptional executive presence and communication skills, with the credibility to command a room and the versatility to connect authentically with students, members, volunteers, staff, Board members, sponsors, public officials and C-suite leaders.
- Compelling storytelling and brand-stewardship ability, including skill translating programs, outcomes and personal stories into messages that inspire participation, partnership and investment.
- Demonstrated success building, coaching and holding teams accountable; willingness to make timely, sometimes difficult decisions in the best long-term interest of the organization.
- Sound understanding of the distinction between governance and management, with experience building a transparent, productive and trust-based partnership with a volunteer Board.
- High emotional intelligence, self-awareness and interpersonal maturity, along with the ability to navigate conflict, build consensus and earn influence across diverse constituencies.
- Strategic, entrepreneurial and forward-looking orientation, with the discipline to prioritize, execute, measure results and adjust as circumstances evolve.
- Digital fluency and an appreciation for technology and data as tools for member engagement, program delivery, fundraising, reporting and operational scale.
- A demonstrated commitment to expanding access, representation and opportunity in aviation, aerospace or other fields; knowledge of the aviation and aerospace ecosystem is preferred but not required.

- Bachelor's degree or an equivalent combination of education and relevant executive experience; an advanced degree is welcomed.
- Ability and willingness to work remotely, maintain a national presence and travel approximately 20-30%.

Location & Travel

This is a remote position with a national presence. The Executive Director will travel approximately 20 to 30 percent to meet with sponsors and partners, engage members and volunteers, oversee key programs, attend industry events and support the annual conference.

How to Apply

The Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals has retained The Batten Group, a national executive search firms specializing in mission-driven leadership recruitment, to conduct this search.

To express interest or recommend a candidate, please contact:

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Policy on Placement and Recruiting

The Batten Group and the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals are committed to a recruitment process that identifies and advances highly qualified candidates. Candidates will be evaluated based on their demonstrated experience, leadership capabilities, accomplishments and alignment with the requirements of the position and the mission of OBAP. The Batten Group does not discriminate in employment or recruitment practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.