



Candidate Brief for the position of Executive Director The Samara Centre for Democracy

February 2021



Contents

About the Samara Centre	3
Opportunity	6
Key Responsibilities	7
Organization Chart	9
The Individual	10
Steps in the Selection Process	12
Additional Information	13
Candidate Charter	14

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About the Samara Centre

The Samara Centre for Democracy is a non-partisan charity dedicated to strengthening Canada’s democracy, making it more accessible, responsive, and inclusive. The Samara Centre produces action-based thought leadership—as well as tools and resources for active citizens and public leaders—designed to engage Canadians in their democracy.

When cofounders Michael MacMillan and Alison Loat set up Samara in 2007, their mission was to create an organization that would steward the long-term health of Canada’s government and public space. Today, terms such as “populism” and “polarization” have become part of the daily political vocabulary and the public recognizes that democracies, even in places like Canada, are often more vulnerable than first thought.

Over the past decade, the Samara Centre has successfully grown its audience and its reputation to become a sought-after voice on political issues and has deepened its hold at the centre of Canada’s representative democracy.

The Samara Centre for Democracy is committed to maintaining its non-partisan reputation even as much of its activity touches highly political spaces and people. Sourcing from different vantage points within the democracy ecosystem, Samara’s reports are based on independent research conducted by the organization to expose aspects of Canadian public life to scrutiny.

Activities & Audiences

Central to the Samara Centre, remains its action-oriented research that, in conjunction with communications, education and advocacy, drives positive change in the way politics and engagement are done in Canada. The Samara Centre produces research which is put into action with tools and resources that everyday Canadians, active citizens, and public leaders can use to participate fully in our democracy. Its experts produce accessible, engaging and often-cited reports, hold in-person and virtual events, and speak to media, decision makers, and community-based leaders and teachers. The Samara Centre maintains a website and an extensive social media presence.

The Samara Centre carries out independent research on the state of Canada’s democratic institutions and attitudes Canadians hold about public life. Its efforts to date have focused on the federal level, though the organization’s findings have applications to provincial and local politics in Canada.

MISSION

Building a stronger democracy for a better Canada.

BELIEF

Only representative democracy can deliver fair, efficient, and universal solutions to Canada’s greatest problems.

CORE VALUES

<i>Non-partisan</i>	<i>Independent</i>
<i>Collegial</i>	<i>Collaborative</i>
<i>Knowledgeable</i>	<i>Trustworthy</i>
<i>Innovative</i>	<i>Accessible</i>



The Samara Centre’s ambitious national mandate is carried out by a team of experts with a main base of operations out of Toronto. The organizations’ efforts fall into three categories: Research, Education, and Programming.

Highlights From 2020

As governments around the world struggled to contain the pandemic, 2020 was the year that democracies learned to work from home. It was also a year that saw widespread protest against racial injustice and a highly fractious US presidential election. The Samara Centre pivoted to monitor Canada’s democracy in a time of emergency, and to bring Canadians together while staying physically apart. Here are some of the ways the organization fought for democracy in a year unlike any other.

The Samara Centre released the first in-depth and objective examination of the 42nd Parliament. [House Inspection](#) sheds light on the last Parliament’s scrutiny of Government, extent of partisanship, and quality of debate, and offers lessons for current parliamentarians.

Published in a series of seven reports, the Samara Centre’s [Democracy Monitor](#) tracks how public leaders and institutions reacted to the crisis.

Appearing before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Samara Centre outlined [Principles to guide the creation of a Virtual Parliament](#).

Published [Real House Lives](#), the long-awaited sequel to its “#1 bestseller, *Tragedy in the Commons*. Based on its latest round of MP exit interviews, *Real House Lives*, uses the stories and experiences of past parliamentarians to understand what is going wrong with national politics.

Hosted virtual national events and co-hosted Canada’s democracy summit [DemocracyXChange](#). For more events and videos, visit its [YouTube Channel](#).

Collaborated with a variety of public-minded organizations, such as CBC Radio’s Ideas, the Library of Parliament, and the Royal Society of Canada.

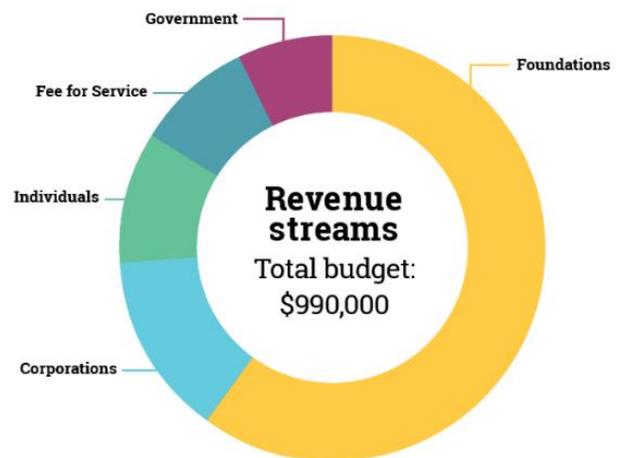
For more information, check out a selection of [news coverage](#) and [opinion pieces](#).

The Samara Centre has an impressive track record of strengthening public knowledge about governance while fostering citizen engagement. Samara’s community of experts can help us envision a better future in which our cherished democracy can flourish as never before.

The Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell
Lieutenant Governor of Ontario

Revenue Streams

The Samara Centre currently has a revenue budget of just under \$1M per annum. Its revenue streams are diversified and include charitable foundations and trusts, individual donations, government subsidies and grants, corporate sponsorships, special events, and income from services provided by the Centre.



Governance

The Samara Centre for Democracy’s Board of Directors and Advisory Board is comprised of Canadian thought leaders and business leaders who provide guidance to the Centre as it continues to execute its goal to defend and strengthen democracy.



Board of Directors

Chaired by Michael McMillan, co-founder of the Samara Centre for Democracy, the Board has ten members who bring a range of skills and experience, including charitable activity, diversity and inclusion, culture, government, and public affairs.

- Michael MacMillan, co-founder and Chair
- Stephanie MacKendrick, Vice-Chair
- Janet Yale, Vice-Chair
- Leen Al Zaibak
- Hamlin Grange
- Rick Mercer
- The Honourable Ratna Omidvar, C.M., O. Ont.
- Ruth Ostower
- Chad Rogers
- William Young

Advisory Board

Samara's Advisory Board includes a widespread cross-section of prominent leaders who help inform and shape the Centre's outreach, educational and research efforts. Members include:

- Keith Archer
- Isabel Bassett
- Suresh Bhalla
- Heather Conway
- George Cooper
- Margaret Huber
- Jane Hilderman
- Alison Loat
- Kevin Lynch
- Robert Prichard
- Perry Spitznagel

To learn more about the Samara Centre for Democracy, please visit www.samaracanada.com. Additional information can be found on Twitter ([@SamaraCDA](https://twitter.com/SamaraCDA)), Instagram ([@samaracda](https://www.instagram.com/samaracda)), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/samara-canada/>) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/SamaraCanada).



Opportunity

The Board is seeking an Executive Director to lead the organization through the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. The Samara Centre for Democracy is seeking a visionary leader to lead the national office in Toronto and to work in partnership with its Board of Directors to continue the organization's growth and to build the resources needed to deliver on its vision.

This is a tremendous opportunity for a talented strategic leader passionate about democracy, who will spearhead the Samara Centre's mission to make Canadian politics more accessible, responsive, and inclusive. The Executive Director will inject fresh insight and perspective into the organization and continue building on its impressive accomplishments.

First-Year Priorities

- Learn the Organization: Gain a deep and broad understanding of the organization, its culture, mission and current needs and drivers. Learn about the opportunities, challenges, and trends in the industry. With this knowledge, position the organization to capitalize on emerging opportunities and to address relevant issues.
- Learn the Role: Work with the Board of Directors to understand the role's expectations and objectives. Gain feedback and insight in order to define operational and strategic priorities and develop initiatives to act on these priorities.
- Actively Participate in the Development of the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan: Provide leadership and input for the development of The Samara Centre's three-year strategic plan. Support the objectives and tactics identified and ensure alignment of operational activities with plan objectives and priorities.
- Working closely with the Board of Directors, the Executive Director will lead the development and execution of a multi-year fundraising plan.
- Lead the development and execution of a multi-year fundraising plan.
- Build Relationships and Team Trust: Build strong rapport and trusting relationships with the team by being transparent about expectations, key decisions, and goal setting.
- Help the Team Embark on a New Journey: Provide leadership to engage a high-performance team, while establishing clear direction of responsibilities, objectives, goals, and measurement of performance as the organization positions itself.



Key Responsibilities

The Executive Director, reporting directly to the Board of Directors is responsible for the successful leadership, management and delivery of programs, services and initiatives which support the organization's mission and vision.

The Executive Director serves as a principal spokesperson and representative of the organization. A fundamental function of the Executive Director role is to promote the Samara Centre for Democracy as an active advocate for advancing the health of democracy in Canada through quality research leadership in Canada.

The Executive Director will be a strategic leader with a track record of executing on a vision. This individual will understand the demands of leading a not-for-profit organization, and is able to communicate confidently, both internally and externally. She/he will bring to the role the breadth and depth of experience needed to challenge the status quo, encourage innovation in its approaches thereby continuing to add significant value to the democracy ecosystem.

Strategic Leadership and Board Relationship

- Participate with the Board of Directors in developing a long-term strategic direction for the organization that supports the mission, aspirations, values, and desired results for the long-term success of the Samara Centre.
- Identify and evaluate the risks to the organization's people (clients, staff, management, and volunteers), property, finances, goodwill, and image and implement measures to control risks.
- Develop an operational plan which incorporates goals that work towards the strategic direction of the organization.
- Monitor trends, issues and events affecting or likely to affect the organization and ensure the Board of Directors is kept abreast.
- Provide leadership in developing programs, organizational and financial plans with the Board of Directors and carry out plans and policies authorized by the board.
- Ensure the association undertakes strategic updates on a regular basis, in consultation with the Board of Directors.

Internal Organizational Leadership

- Oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization and overall management of affairs and activities, including events, fundraising activities, media and stakeholder relations.
- Inspire, motivate, coach, mentor, develop and lead a team of dedicated professionals, creating a culture of clear accountability and high performance to achieve excellence at all levels and continuously improved results.
- Be responsible for creating and managing the yearly budget.
- Ensure the strategic direction and initiatives are clearly understood and executed by the team, monitor progress and milestones.



- Empower a strong, capable, and cohesive team to provide stability and accountability across the organization and to lead an effective, positive work culture.
- Ensure compliance and quality control of the organization's research, education, and programming activities.
- Uphold Samara's core values as set out above and foster a culture of collaboration, inclusion and respect.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Lead on strategic engagement with key stakeholders and maintain Samara's non-partisan reputation.
- Engage and maintain professional and collaborative relationships with multiple stakeholders including, engaged citizens, political parties, academic researchers and other civil society researcher organizations, governmental agencies, foundations, and donors.
- Foster networking and partnering opportunities with stakeholders.
- Promote and raise the profile of the organization by attending and presenting at conferences, events, corporate symposiums, seminars, and workshops. Represent the organization at various provincial, regional and local meetings and events.
- Project a positive image and foster a strong reputation for the organization internally and externally. Act as a senior liaison between the public, media, government, and the organization.

External Relations/Media Relations

- Serve as the official face and voice of the Samara Centre. Represent the organization publicly and with key stakeholders.
- Develop and implement effective external communication strategies, including media relations.
- Serve as an Ambassador and Spokesperson for Samara and build relationships with the media and other communications outlets that help promote and impact the organization.
- Evaluate and seize relevant opportunities to engage with the media, ensuring that the organization is a sought-out voice and part of the news cycle.
- Cultivate and enhance meaningful relationships with targeted, high-level external audiences, including the media and key influencers.

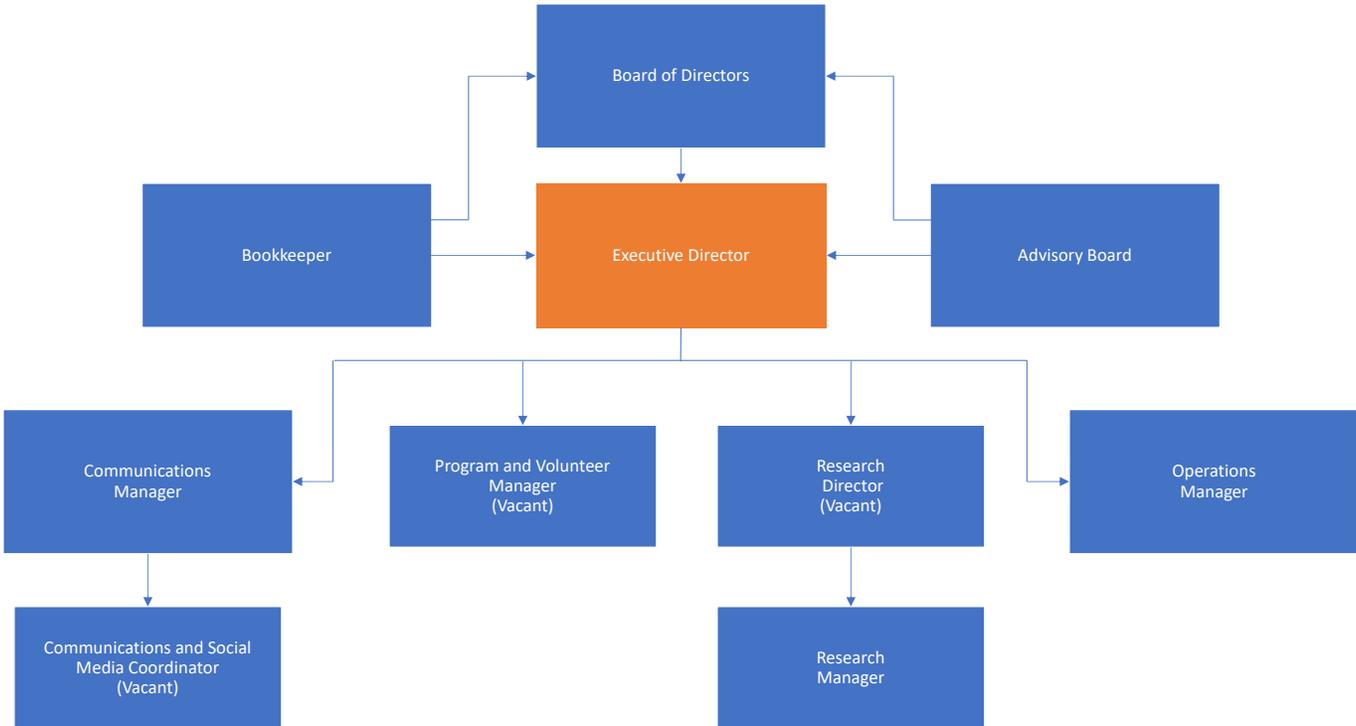
Fundraising

- With the Board of Directors, devise, create and review fundraising strategies to maintain sustainable revenues and develop new programs to meet the organization's ongoing and long-term objectives.
- Actively seek out fund development opportunities through grants, individual and corporate donations, partnerships, and sponsorships.
- Network and build relationships with existing and potential donors.
- Oversee the organization's fundraising activities, including special events and donor development.



Organization Chart

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the ED will supervise a small team and continue to build capacity through recruitment and the development of staff. The current organizational chart is below:



The Individual

The Samara Centre for Democracy is seeking a proactive transformational leader who has demonstrated the ability to lead an organization with an ambitious mandate – within the unique world of representative democracy. Success in this challenging role will require a very special mix of leadership, intellectual and personal qualities, which may have been gained through leadership experience within a similar not for profit, association, research, charitable or governmental organization.

Qualifications and Skills

- A passion for democracy and a desire to make Samara relevant throughout Canada.
- An undergraduate degree is required, a postgraduate degree is preferred.
- At least ten years of professional experience, with at least five in a leadership role, preferably relating to public policy, research, economics, journalism, democracy advancement, or politics.
- Demonstrated leadership experience possibly in public/not-for-profit sector at a management level.
- Experience building and maintaining trusting relationships with a board of directors.
- Compelling and inspirational speaker comfortable addressing media, government officials, and donors.
- Expertise in developing, implementing, and managing diverse communications plans, programs, policies, services, and support in the areas of internal and public communications, stakeholder engagement, issues management, reputation risk management and media relations.
- Well-honed social skills and diplomacy. Superior verbal communication skills; an exceptional listener.
- Demonstrated success in producing high quality documents supported by exceptional writing skills.
- Stature, gravitas, and confidence to gain credibility and respect.
- Proven track record of opening doors, establishing new partnerships and opportunities and exposure to fundraising.
- Advanced knowledge of practices that maintain effective stakeholder relations.
- Demonstrated ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent. Coaching and mentoring skills.
- Experienced change agent – proven track record in successfully advancing an organization and achieving ambitious goals.



Abilities

- Ability to foster a culture of inclusion, empowerment, collaboration, innovation and resourcefulness to rally the organization behind the vision and values, and to guide the plan and activities towards achieving it.
- Ability to foster a high level of transparency, respect and trust within the organization.
- Ability to be an active, effective champion and spokesperson for the organization locally and nationally.
- Ability to effectively build, influence and leverage internal and external resources and decision makers to the benefit of the organization and the achievement of its vision, mission, and goals. Partner with other organizations as needed.
- Proven ability to turn bold ideas into big impact, while working in an uncertain and changing environment.
- Ability to think 'out of the box' and to change tactics/operating framework due to changing opportunities or challenges both within and external to the organization.
- Innovative and able to bring best practices to the organization, as appropriate.
- Ability to deal simultaneously with important projects and issues having a high level of complexity.
- Proven ability to generate new ideas, processes, and strategies. Has an innovative approach to operational management.

Professional Personal Characteristics

- Team player who is positive, motivated, and able to build engagement. Values the sharing of information and common goals; is open and honest.
- Strong leadership and interpersonal skills; relates to a variety of styles and can build trust and consensus in a team.
- The skill and confidence to be inquisitive, asking the tough or strategic questions in a team-oriented and respectful manner.
- Demonstrates a high level of self and team awareness and empathy.
- Charismatic & curious by nature/motivational by style (i.e., leads by example; celebrates solutions and successes).
- Result-oriented and a bias for action. Champions best practices, change initiatives, creative thinking, effective planning, and timely decision-making.
- Adaptable, empathetic, purposeful, and cooperative.
- High degree of professionalism, integrity, and transparency; collaborative, approachable and open style. Evidence of positive impact with multiple organizations.



Steps in the Selection Process

Announcing Your Wish to be Considered

To confirm your interest, please submit your application online at <http://www.odgersberndtson.com/en/careers/16983>. For more information regarding this opportunity, please contact Mary-Katherine Bouchard, Engagement Manager, at maryk.bouchard@odgersberndtson.com. Rest assured, all your personal information will be kept in the strictest confidence.

Interviews with Odgers Berndtson

If your qualifications and background are commensurate with the position, we will reach out for a preliminary phone or videoconference interview to further explore your interest and fit. If your candidacy is retained following this initial interview, you will be invited to meet with Odgers Berndtson for an in-depth, in-person or videoconference interview.

After the Interview

We will let you know as soon as possible after the interview if your candidacy is moving forward. If both parties wish to proceed, we will ask you to begin gathering any information that might have an impact on your final decision, including family considerations, relocation, and cultural fit.

The goal of gathering all of this information is to help you make an informed decision, as soon as possible, about the degree of your interest. In fairness to everyone, please do not go further if you think you are unlikely to accept the position should it be offered to you. If you have additional questions following our initial discussion, but your interest is tentative and you are still “exploring”, please let us know. We can help you acquire the additional information you need.

Interview with the Selection Committee

If there is a desire on both parts to proceed, we will ask you and the other shortlisted candidates to attend an interview with the Selection Committee. Our client plans to have at least one extensive interview with you on a scheduled day. A follow-up interview may be requested.

Steps Leading to an Offer

After you meet with the Selection Committee, we will advise you of their decision as soon as possible. If you are selected as a finalist candidate, you may be asked back for another interview with the Committee. At this stage, the client will ask us to conduct reference checks and, possibly, a psychometric test. If you are the preferred candidate, and the client is satisfied with the information received, you will be made a verbal offer of employment based on our preliminary discussions. The terms and conditions of the offer will be discussed in further detail with you and if it is accepted, you will then be given a written offer which you can review and evaluate.

Should you have any questions during the selection process, please feel free to contact Odgers Berndtson.



Additional Information

Your Personal Information

At Odgers Berndtson, we have always respected the privacy and the confidentiality of the personal information provided to us in context with our executive search assignments. This has been a fundamental value in building trust with our candidates and clients. We are committed to keeping your information secure and managing it in accordance with our legal responsibilities wherever we operate in the world, including the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act ("PIPEDA") in Canada.

For more information on your rights and to find out much more about how we process your personal data, a copy of our Privacy Policy is available for your review on our [website](#).

By providing us with a copy of your resume and any subsequent personal information directly or from third parties on your behalf such as references, you understand that it has been furnished with your consent for the purpose of possible disclosure to our client, who has agreed to comply with our Privacy Policy. We will not disclose your personal information to clients without your prior knowledge and consent.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Samara Centre for Democracy and Odgers Berndtson are committed to employment equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace; we welcome applications from all qualified candidates, including women, racially visible persons, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, persons of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and others.

In accordance with the Accessible Canada Act, 2019 and all applicable provincial accessibility standards, upon request, accommodation will be provided by both Odgers Berndtson and The Samara Centre for Democracy throughout the recruitment, selection and/or assessment process to applicants with disabilities.

Fostering equity, diversity and inclusion in recruitment practices is a key aspect of the Odgers Berndtson search process. Should you choose to self-identify as a member of a designated group please access: <https://form.jotform.com/202334630121034>

Contact Details

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

Mary-Katherine Bouchard | Engagement Manager
maryk.bouchard@odgersberndtson.com
☎ 514 497 5650



Candidate Charter

Talented people are our lifeblood

Whether we approach you about a specific opportunity, or you contact us to share your biography and career ambitions, we want you to have a constructive experience of engaging with Odgers Berndtson. We recognize that we have a commitment to you as well as to our client, and we undertake that our dealings with you will be professional, courteous, rigorous and honest.

We will:

- Approach you after considered analysis and in relation to roles where we think there is a strong match. Your time is valuable; we don't want to waste it.
- Work to make your candidacy as strong as it can be.
- Represent you effectively and discreetly to our client, based on accurate information that you give us in confidence.
- Be inclusive, open and fair-minded.
- Keep you informed, communicating outcomes promptly, and giving fair and honest feedback where we can.
- Celebrate your success in the event of a successful outcome, and share any lessons in the event of disappointment.
- Take a long-term view, recognizing that you have a multi-year view of your own career. Where possible, we will help you fulfil your ambitions.
- Embrace continuous improvement, for example by carrying out regular independent audits of those we shortlist for roles.

If ever you feel we have not lived up to the letter or spirit of this charter, we encourage you to contact our Chief Operating Officer, Deborah Lucas (deborah.lucas@odgersberndtson.com).





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