

# **Executive Director**

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Position Specification  
2026

# AUCD

## Organization Overview

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The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is a national association that supports Network members in their research, training, education, and service so that together, AUCD and Network members can promote the quality of life, health, and well-being of people with disabilities.

**Mission:** To amplify and advance the work of the AUCD Network to promote community inclusion and quality of life for people with developmental and other disabilities and their families.

**Vision:** AUCD envisions a future where people with developmental and other disabilities live the lives they want in fully inclusive and accessible communities.

### The AUCD Network members consist of:

- 68 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs)
- 60 Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LENDs) Programs
- 15 Eunice Kennedy Shriver Intellectual and Developmental Disability Research Centers (IDDRCs)

### AUCD 3-Year Strategic Plan Goals 2024 - 2027

#### Goal 1

AUCD facilitates education, connections and collaborations among member organizations, as well as governmental, disability, corporate, and other community partners.

#### Goal 2

AUCD strengthens Network member organizations within their university and other settings to ensure autonomy and sustainability.

#### Goal 3

AUCD seeks funding opportunities to sustain the organization and support the work of the Network.

#### Goal 4

AUCD implements a comprehensive operational plan to achieve sustainable growth and innovation in the field of developmental and other disabilities.

#### Goal 5

AUCD leads Network efforts in reducing disparities experienced by people with disabilities.

# AUCD

## Our History

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The first university-based entities for people with developmental disabilities were created under Public Law 88-164, signed by President John F. Kennedy in October 1963, 22 days before his assassination.

Before signing this act, President Kennedy created a panel that produced one of the most comprehensive, well-researched reports in the disability field.

The concept of University-Affiliated Facilities (UAFs) for people with developmental disabilities came from the panel's recommendations. These facilities were designed to support training and clinical experience for a range of professionals, including physicians, therapists, and educators. The proposed UAFs could also address other priorities from the panel's report, such as a continuum of care, community-based services, employment, parent training, strengthening families, and prevention.

The panel's report called for:

- Research and statistical data
- Buildings and facilities to conduct research and provide service and training programs
- Training to address the critical shortage of trained personnel
- The role and responsibility for Federal government agencies, and coordination with state agencies, to support research and training

The University-Affiliated Programs were later renamed University Centers for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD).

Congress also created and funded a network of research centers, now called IDDRCs, to better understand the causes of IDD and to develop effective therapies.

LEND programs started from 1950s efforts to identify children with disabilities as a Title V program priority.

Sources: <https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/ddnj> - Volume 1, Issue 1, Article 4  
<https://www.aucd.org/urc-dd-act-history> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8320680/>



# AUCD

## A National Network



AUCD supports and promotes a national network of university-based, interdisciplinary programs.

- University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL)
- Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities programs (LENDs) funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRCs) funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

## 2025 Impact

<b>1 Technical Assistance</b> Helping communities and professionals find resources and answers	<b>634,599</b> <b>participants served</b>
<b>2 Clinical Services</b> Offering medical, diagnostic, and research-based support	<b>998</b> <b>different types of services</b>
<b>3 Continuing Education</b> Providing high-quality professional development	<b>1,180,017</b> <b>participants served</b>

## The Role of AUCD

- Leadership on major social issues affecting all people living with developmental or other disabilities or special health needs
- Public policy advocacy
- Partnering with other national organizations to advance the network’s national agendas
- Promoting communication within the network and with other groups by collecting, organizing and disseminating data on network activities and accomplishments
- Providing technical assistance on a broad range of topics

# AUCD

## This Moment in Time

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### Policy Issues Raised by AUCD

Decisions about healthcare, housing, transportation, education, workforce development, civil rights, public benefits, technology, and community infrastructure all shape the lives of people with disabilities. Because disability intersects with every aspect of society, all policy issues are disability policy issues.

At AUCD, we work from the understanding that disability is a natural part of the human experience and that people with disabilities must be meaningfully included in every policy conversation that affects their lives. While our work spans the full spectrum of public policy, AUCD and our network focus particular attention on the following core areas:

- [Rights](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Employment and Economic Security](#)
- [Healthcare](#)
- [Foundational Disability Systems](#)

### State Profiles

AUCD's State Profiles provide state-level data related to disability, services, and systems. These profiles offer a snapshot of key indicators to support policy analysis, education, and advocacy at the state and federal levels.

State Profiles are commonly used by Network members, policymakers, and advocates to understand trends, compare states, and inform policy discussions.

[State profiles](#)

[AUCD centers and programs](#)



## The Executive Director Position

- Position Title:** Executive Director
- Location:** Silver Spring, Maryland
- Salary Range:** \$250,000 - \$300,000
- Reports To:** [The AUCD Board of Directors](#)
- Candidates:** [Apply for the role](#)
- Referrals:** [Refer a candidate](#)

### Position Summary

AUCD has a long history and foundation in advancing disability research, training, services, and advocacy. For decades, it has served as a national organization connecting UCEDDs, LEND programs, and IDDRCs, supporting leadership development and systems change. With this legacy continuing to be a source of pride and credibility across the network, the Executive Director will lead AUCD into its next chapter.

### Position Responsibilities

Network-level responsibilities:

- Lead and strengthen AUCD's national network of UCEDDs, LEND programs, and IDDRCs by fostering collaboration and ensuring members receive clear value.
- Align a wide array of programs around a shared mission to advance research, training, services, and systems change in the disability community.
- Build trust and cohesion across the network through clear, consistent communication and active listening.
- Facilitate meaningful connections across member organizations to support collaboration and shared learning.

Organization-level responsibilities:

- Lead AUCD's staff and operations, ensuring a high-performing, inclusive, and accountable organizational culture in which staff can grow and thrive to their full potential.
- Oversee AUCD's budget, evaluating resources, maintaining fiscal stability, and identifying opportunities to support long-term financial sustainability.

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# AUCD

## The Executive Director Position (continued)

### Organization-level responsibilities (continued):

- Ensure the infrastructure, systems, and talent are in place to effectively support the network and deliver on AUCD's mission.
- Enhance a culture of trust by identifying needs and aligning resources with AUCD's mission.
- Strengthen internal operations, including systems, processes, and role clarity, to support staff effectiveness and retention.

### Board-level responsibilities:

- Refine and communicate AUCD's value proposition, ensuring members understand and experience the benefits of engagement.
- Partner closely with the Board of Directors to set and execute organizational strategy and ensure strong governance and financial stewardship.
- Provide clear, consistent communication and cultivate Board relationships to support effective decision-making and alignment.
- Help the Board champion a cohesive vision for AUCD's future.

### External partner-level responsibilities:

- Serve as AUCD's primary ambassador, representing the organization with federal agencies, policymakers, and partner organizations.
- Strengthen AUCD's national presence, influence, and partnerships to advance its mission and expand its impact.
- Build upon relationships within the disability and policy landscape at a local, state, and national level.
- Identify and cultivate new partnerships and funding opportunities to support long-term sustainability.
- Build and sustain strategic relationships across the broader ecosystem, including councils, special interest groups, alumni, trainees, emerging leaders, and faculty, to create opportunities for research, shared learning, and leadership development.
- Engage beyond disability networks to establish new relationships and partnerships in support of AUCD's mission.

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# AUCD

## The Executive Director Position (continued)

### Required Qualifications

- Executive leadership: experience leading a complex organization of comparable size, scope, or structure, with accountability for strategy, operations, and outcomes.
- Federated or network-based model expertise: experience leading across various stakeholders, balancing national priorities with state and local needs.
- Financial management: demonstrated ability to effectively manage budgets, ensure fiscal responsibility, and steward organizational resources.
- Board of Directors engagement: experience partnering with a governing board on strategic alignment, effective governance, and informed decision-making.
- External partnership cultivation: experience working with federal agencies, policymakers, academic institutions, and other organizations to advance shared goals.
- Change management: experience navigating complex transitions, building trust, and generating support and enthusiasm around a shared direction.
- Stakeholder alignment: success communicating effectively across different audiences, fostering transparency and collaboration.
- Disability advocacy: demonstrated leadership and commitment to advocacy with and for the disability community.

### Preferred Qualifications

- Deep understanding of disability, informed by lived experience, close personal or family connection, and/or sustained professional experience with and impact in the disability community.
- Field of disability or AUCD network experience with UCEDDs, LENDs, IDDRCs, or the disability ecosystem of research, training, and advocacy.
- Understanding of federal funding and policy environments, including knowledge of federal grant structures, appropriations, and relationships with key government agencies.
- Understanding of complex political landscapes and federal funding systems to secure, maintain, and increase funding for an organization.
- Familiarity with navigating the complexities and evolving dynamics of university systems and the broader higher education landscape.
- Organizational brand work, with experience strengthening an organization's dynamic external presence, positioning, and influence on a national level.
- Experience developing leadership pipelines and talent ecosystems, with demonstrated success supporting emerging leaders and/or professional development pathways.

# AUCD

## Commitment to Accessibility & Inclusion

AUCD is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

### Disability Culture and Inclusivity at AUCD

As a disability organization, AUCD is committed to working for disability inclusion both inside and outside the organization. Following the longstanding commitment to “nothing about us, without us”, AUCD believes that people with disabilities have the right to be a part of all decisions that affect them and their lives.

Some examples of disability inclusion include:

- Using person-first or identity-first language as guided by people with lived experience throughout the disability community.
- Using plain or accessible language in our policies, procedures, publications, mass media materials, and on our website.
- Understanding and respecting the different ways in which people learn and process information (ensuring that everyone can participate fully).
- Holding accessible events and meetings at every level of our organization as well as when supporting our network members.
- Implementing an AUCD Accommodations Guide that empowers all staff to succeed.

### Commitment to Candidate Experience

We are committed to providing a welcoming candidate experience.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to make your experience inclusive and accessible.

Candidates may [request accommodations via this form](#). ProFound Executive Search will follow up.

## About the Search Firm

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ProFound Executive Search specializes in identifying and advancing exceptional leaders for nonprofits, foundations, corporations, and other mission-driven organizations.

We deeply value our personal connections and partnerships with the disability community. Our search process is designed to be accessible, inclusive, and respectful of all candidates.

We are honored to serve as AUCD's search partner.

## Contact Us

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