

Executive Director - Job Description

Location: Grass Valley, CA

Schedule: Full-time, includes evenings and weekends for events, donor engagements, and board meetings

Compensation: \$121,000 - \$142,000 per year depending on experience

Classification: Salaried, exempt

Reports to: President and Board of Directors

Supervises: Director of Finance & Administration, Director of Operations, Development Operations Manager

Organizational Overview

Since 2000, The Center for the Arts, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts organization, has been a cultural cornerstone of Nevada County. Presenting more than 100 events each year—including music, theater, dance, comedy, literary, and visual arts—The Center operates from a newly renovated, state-of-the-art venue in downtown Grass Valley. The facility includes the Main Stage, which accommodates up to 507 seated or 750 standing guests.

We seek a dynamic experienced leader with a passion for how live arts can transform a rural community and who will help raise the profile and funds necessary to sustain the organization into the future.

Position Summary

The Executive Director (ED) is the chief executive and chief fundraiser of The Center for the Arts, responsible for the organization's leadership, financial sustainability, and long-term success.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the ED sets strategic direction, leads fundraising and external relations, and ensures the organization has the resources, governance, and leadership capacity to fulfill its mission.

The ED leads the organization through a senior management team, establishing priorities, guiding strategic trade-offs, and retaining accountability for organizational performance, financial health, and risk while delegating operational execution to department leaders. The ED maintains a strong working relationship with the Board through clear communication, regular reporting, and ongoing board development.

First-Year Priorities

- **Build major-gifts capacity:** Establish and personally manage a portfolio of top prospects; cultivate, solicit, and steward at least 25 individual donors giving \$5,000+ annually.
- **Create a unified fundraising strategy:** Align membership, major gifts, sponsorships, and campaigns with clear goals, timelines, and metrics.
- **Develop the Board as fundraisers and ambassadors:** Implement clear expectations, tools, and training to increase board participation in donor cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
- **Stabilize organizational finances:** Lead financial decision-making during a period of growth and transition, ensuring reliable cash flow and clear communication with the Board.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

Executive Leadership & Strategy

- Serve as the organization's chief executive, accountable for overall performance, sustainability, and impact.
- Lead execution of the organization's strategic plan in partnership with the Board and senior staff.
- Set organizational priorities and make final decisions on resource allocation and strategic tradeoffs.
- Foster a mission-driven, accountable, and collaborative organizational culture.

Financial Leadership & Sustainability

- Carry primary responsibility for the organization's financial health, stability, and long-term sustainability.
- Supervise the Director of Finance & Administration, who serves as the organization's technical authority on accounting, compliance, and financial reporting.
- Lead financial decision-making during periods of constraint or uncertainty, in close consultation with the Director of Finance & Administration and Director of Operations.
- Partner with the Board Treasurer and Finance Committee on budgeting, forecasting, audits, and financial oversight.
- Communicate clearly and transparently with the Board regarding financial performance, risks, and mitigation strategies.

Fundraising & Resource Development

- Lead and personally participate in fundraising across individual giving, major gifts, sponsorships, foundations, and special events.
- Supervise the Development Operations Manager to ensure effective donor stewardship, accurate tracking, reporting, and campaign execution.
- Cultivate and steward relationships with major donors, sponsors, foundations, and institutional partners.
- Activate and support the Board in fundraising, donor cultivation, and ambassadorship.
- Ensure fundraising goals align with organizational capacity and strategic priorities.

Board Relations & Board Development

- Serve as the primary liaison between the Board and staff, providing clear reporting and strategic insight.
- Partner with the Board President to strengthen governance practices, committee structure, and meeting effectiveness.
- Lead board development efforts, including recruitment, orientation, training, and succession planning.
- Build a board culture that embraces fundraising, ambassadorship, and shared accountability.

Marketing, Communications & External Relations

- Provide strategic leadership for the organization's external presentation, public messaging, and brand identity.
- Work closely with the Marketing Manager on organizational messaging, audience-facing communications, and marketing initiatives that support development goals and institutional priorities.
- Partner with the Director of Operations, who provides day-to-day supervision of the Marketing Manager, to ensure marketing execution aligns with organizational strategy, programming priorities, and internal capacity.
- Serve as the organization's chief spokesperson and public representative.
- Build and maintain relationships with community leaders, civic partners, government agencies, media, and peer organizations, advocating for the organization's mission, programs, and community impact.

Organizational Oversight

- Lead the organization through a senior management team, delegating day-to-day operations, programming execution, and administrative systems to department heads while retaining responsibility for organizational priorities, cross-functional alignment, and performance accountability.
- Maintain oversight of organizational performance by setting goals, approving major initiatives, monitoring results, and intervening when risks, capacity constraints, or strategic misalignment arise.
- Ensure alignment between external commitments, financial realities, and internal capacity.

Qualifications

- 8+ years of senior leadership experience in nonprofit or arts organizations.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, including major gifts and sponsorships.
- Demonstrated ability to develop and execute strategic fundraising plans and meet financial targets.
- Demonstrated strength in organizational messaging, public presentation, and relationship-based communication.
- Experience in budget development and financial oversight for organizations in the \$2M-\$5M or more.
- Proven ability to inspire and manage teams and collaborate effectively with boards.
- Strong judgment, financial acumen, and comfort making complex tradeoffs.
- Excellent communication, relationship-building, and public leadership skills.
- Knowledge of the performing arts industry and nonprofit governance.
- Bachelor's degree required; advanced degree in arts administration, business or a related field preferred.

Benefits

- Paid Flexible Time Off (FTO); 4 weeks per year
- Flexible scheduling and hybrid work potential after onboarding
- Complimentary tickets to non-sold-out shows
- Discounts on workshops, merchandise, and bar service

Inclusion Statement

Don't meet every single requirement? Studies show that people from underrepresented backgrounds often don't apply unless they meet 100% of the qualifications. The Center for the Arts is committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace. If you're excited about this role but your experience doesn't align perfectly with every qualification, we still encourage you to apply.