

Orange Show Center for Visionary Art

Houston, TX

Executive Director

The Board seeks an operationally astute fundraising Executive Director to drive successive capital projects that build out a museum and redevelop the 10.5-acre campus that includes art, exhibition, education, programming and maker spaces.

This leader will manage all campus business operations, drive earned income from ticketed experiences and cultivate donors with a passion for Houston's outsider and visionary art scene that celebrates individuality, creativity and originality.

[Orange Show Center for Visionary Art](#) offers engaging experiences of visionary artists through extravagant, boundary-challenging events, exhibitions, installations, ArtHomes, maker spaces, education and programming. The Center has its genesis in thinking that connects self-taught outsider artists through history, from cave painters to today's artists working with more sophisticated tools. The core of visionary art challenges conventions of what art is, who artists are, which tools are used for creating art, how art functions in society and in people's lives, and how art can be experienced and enjoyed. The emphasis here is on joy, creation, and an embrace of new ideas that is open to, and actively engages with, different ways of being.

BACKGROUND

[The Orange Show Monument](#) is the Center's beating heart. The work of outsider artist (and retired mail carrier) Jeff McKissack, this work was created between 1956 and 1979 within a 3,000 square foot lot now owned by the Center and on the National Register for Historic Places. Also owned by the Center is [The Beer Can House](#) created by outsider artist (and railroad employee) John Milkovich between 1968 and the late 1980s, and [Smither Park](#) which has extensive public art installations.

Inspired by such artists, other Houstonians transformed old vehicles into moving works of art and held the first parade of these popular and idiosyncratic works in 1986 with 11 art cars. In 1988 there were 40 art cars, and the event continued to grow into the Annual [Houston Art Car Parade](#) which in 2027 will enter its 40th year and will feature approximately 300 art cars and 350,000 visitors, making it the largest single-day event in Houston and Texas. Other events and programs that have emerged since include an Art Bike Festival and Parade, the Artist-In-Residence program and a broad range of festivals, installations and educational programs, including a planned Neurodivergent Art Studio for Adults. The Center is adjacent to the 13-acre Fonde Park and The Bayou Greenway & Bikepath.

The [Orange Show Campus Plan](#) was created by Rogers Partners. Features of the design include:

- **The Art Car Museum** with 20–25 art cars exhibited at any one time, which is expected to attract over 100k visitors in their first year of operations;
- **The Houston Visionary Art Center**, which involves the conversion of an existing 31,000 sq. ft. warehouse building into a flexible exhibition and performance space;
- **The Plaza** – open space for installations, concerts, events, booths, gatherings and parking;
- **The Ramp and Big O** – a utilitarian work of art in the form of a ramp that can be used by cars and pedestrians and that visually connects the entire campus;
- **Education Center and Maker Spaces** – education and maker spaces for art car and other artists and creator teams;
- **The Neurodivergent Art Studio for Adults**, which will host 50–60 adults with disabilities, enabling them to develop their art and integrate artmaking into their lives.

Orange Show Center for Visionary Art Executive Director

The Center's management structure includes an Executive Director and an Artistic Director who work closely together. **The Executive Director** reports to the Board and leads all campus business functions, including setting the operating vision for the organization, fundraising, finance, HR/payroll, marketing & communications, ticketed events, stores & merchandise, rentals, food services, facilities & maintenance, security, all non-arts professionals and functions, and all contractors and outsourcing agreements. **The Artistic Director** also reports to the Board and manages the artistic team, which currently includes all curatorial, program and education staff. The current staff includes 7–9 professionals, a campus staff contingent that is expected to triple by the time the Art Car Museum is delivered in full. A range of contractors are also employed by the Center as the year unfolds. The Center's staff and contingent of contractors are expected to continue to grow rapidly as the campus buildout gets underway.

The capital and endowment campaign is expected to be \$45m, of which about \$10m has been raised. The 2026 annual operating budget is \$2.9m, and will grow to \$3.4m by the end of 2027. The Board is led by a nine-member Executive Committee, and there are 14 other members. The Board is expected to evolve over the coming years along with the campus. The plan is to deliver the full campus by 2031.

The first deliverable on the Orange Show Campus Plan will be the construction of the Art Car Museum. Most of the funds required have been raised for this, and the Museum is expected to be completed by 2028. The next deliverable will be the Education Center and Makers Spaces.

The new Executive Director must be a creative and innovative strategic thinker, a driven and fearless fundraiser, an astute manager of people and financial resources, and embrace the importance of outsider art and art experiences.

BASIC FUNCTION

Reporting to the Board through its Chair and Executive Committee, the Executive Director will lead the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art as it delivers innovative, exciting, engaging, fun and enriching experiences for residents, visitors, students of all ages, educators and community members. The Executive Director will advance the Center's strong regional reputation as a distinctive, thought-provoking place of experiential learning for curious adults, families and children, including neurodivergent people, and ensure that the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art delivers constantly refreshed avenues of discovery through visionary art.

The ability to drive contributed and earned revenue is central to this leader's success. The Orange Center requires a leader who can deploy people and assets for institutional advancement using conventional and evolving fundraising methods. As the campus is built out, the Executive Director will maximize earned income through ticket sales, rentals, retail operations, traveling exhibits and special event sales, and they will work with schools, school districts and educators to promote funded field trips, camps and remote learning opportunities.

The Executive Director collaborates closely with the Artistic Director who manages all curators, programs and education. The Executive Director will ensure that the staff and Board teams and the organization's programming reflect a commitment to engaging all audiences in outsider art experiences, and will encourage the creation of programs, exhibitions, events, installations and facility upgrades that serve the mission of the Center to advance visionary artists and experiences.

DETAILED RESPONSIBILITIES

LEADERSHIP & GENERAL MANAGEMENT

- Lead, inspire and promote the vision and goals of the Orange Show Center; manage day-to-day campus operations, including hiring, supervising, motivating, developing and evaluating staff; ensuring the team's competencies are appropriate to the organization's needs as it evolves; ensuring that staff and Board composition map to the community of donors, audiences, artists, makers and patrons of the Orange Show Center and reflect the sensibilities of these diverse communities;
- Execute on the Strategic Plan that is approved by the Board and periodically refined; develop and implement accountability systems, performance metrics and annual reviews for all personnel; supply the Board with complete, accurate and timely reports;
- Develop meaningful and productive ongoing relationships with government, business and community leaders and partner organizations, including K-12 and higher education leaders, in order to advance the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art's events, exhibitions, programs, education, artists and allies;
- Ensure that the organization's finances are responsibly managed, strong controls are in place and financial reports and other documents are prepared in a timely and accurate manner;
- Manage implementation of an array of capital projects and upgrades that require coordination among architects, contractors, City of Houston officials, partners and others, including strong cost controls, visitor and collection safety measures, project accounting and vendor contracting and compliance; experience with project accounting workflows and in managing significant capital projects or facilities upgrades will be an important skill set;
- Along with the Artistic Director, work on strategically planning and delivering all artistic endeavors.

FUNDRAISING

- Serve as chief fundraiser for the Center; work with the Board and senior staff to drive annual fundraising and campaign solicitations; lead the development and execution of the fundraising strategy to build out the full Orange Show Center Campus;
- Drive individual, corporate, foundation and public funding; develop, implement and monitor progress toward funding the various capital projects noted above while also ensuring that the organization meets its annual contributed revenue objectives in order to fund annual programs and events; steward a portfolio of major and principal donors and prospects.

EVENTS, EXHIBITS, EDUCATIONAL AND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

- Work closely with the Artistic Director and the Artistic Team to support their development of new, informative, inspiring and interdisciplinary events, exhibits and public programs; leverage campus people and resources, buildings, exhibition spaces, maker spaces, galleries and classrooms in ways that deepen the user and visitor experience;
- Support the Artistic Team's delivery of all events, ensuring that they are produced to the highest standards, well-attended, secure, delivered on time and on a financially sound basis and having the desired impact on the community.

EARNED AND CONTRIBUTED INCOME

- Expand and diversify earned income revenue streams from admissions, facility rentals, store, programs, events and other sources;
- Grow the unrestricted and restricted endowments, enabling the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art to continually upgrade exhibitions, enhance the facility and provide for financial stability as the institution matures.

MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

- Position the Center as a top-of-mind, unique, not-to-be-missed, repeat experience; study the shifting audience landscape, employ concrete metrics to highlight strengths and weaknesses of visitor engagement and to drive audience engagement; engage current audiences and those that do not yet consider themselves to be part of the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art family;
- Serve as an advocate for the organization, assuring that the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art's interests are fully understood, advanced and embraced throughout Houston.

BOARD RELATIONS

- Improve and implement Governance Board policies; provide ongoing communication to the Board; with the Board Chair, coordinate the efforts of various committees and encourage Board member involvement in fundraising, program evolution and financial and operations oversight; proactively bring recommendations to the Board in matters related to objectives, policies and long-term strategy;
- Help identify and recruit new Governance Board members whose talents, commitment and fundraising abilities are congruent with the needs and mission of the Orange Show Center for Visionary Art.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates will have a combination of the following types of leadership experience, qualifications and skills:

- Significant senior management experience in arts festivals, museums, campus operations, art schools and/or associated institutions that are also known for artmaking, interactive learning, innovative programming and cultivating strong community ties;
- Experience working successfully with Boards, diverse donors and community leaders to drive capital expansion projects while financially strengthening institutions; measurable success increasing earned and contributed revenue; strong understanding of financial management practices;
- Strong leadership in public-facing community engagement with outstanding oral and written communication skills; desire to engage with the region's residents and visitors as well as peers throughout Houston's unique cultural landscape; dedication to driving attendance to Orange Show Center events, properties and exhibitions;
- A leader adept at planning, prioritizing, organizing and following through who can shape a team that meets the needs of the institution; a hard worker with a high energy level who welcomes accountability; a team player and team builder who is a good listener and strategist, cultivates trust and can also make personnel changes when the institution needs it; an individual who is

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straight-forward, shares information easily, celebrates diversity, receives as well as gives advice and respects the abilities of others.

The compensation range for this position is \$180,000 – \$240,000.

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