

# MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS FOR THE ARTS

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EXECUTIVE SEARCH • PLANNING • ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

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## **Position Profile OPENING ACT Executive Director New York, NY**

### **OPPORTUNITY**

Opening Act, a premiere New York City organization offering accessible and transformative theater education experiences to youth throughout the city, is seeking its next Executive Director to guide the vision and resource development of the organization into the future. The Executive Director will steward the organization with a love for theater and arts education combined with a talent for strategic leadership. In New York City's crowded cultural and arts education community, the Executive Director will find new ways to ensure that Opening Act can continue to grow and provide schools and young people with increased access to programming experiences through its superb team of staff and teaching artists. The Executive Director will take the time and care to understand the special character and culture that has been defined over Opening Act's rich history and collaboratively work with Board and Staff to ensure a strong base of operations, increased philanthropic support, and new opportunities for the organization to take a more prominent place in the greater New York City cultural community.

### **BACKGROUND**

Founded in 2000 by an intrepid collection of artists, activists, and educators, Opening Act was created for a simple purpose: to use theater to give young people living in NYC something to look forward to after school. Committed to closing the arts education access gap in NYC, Opening Act centers the voices of students of color through free, high-quality theater programming. Opening Act puts young artists and leaders center stage, using inclusive theater education at under-resourced public schools to set students up for success regardless of their ultimate career path, by developing confidence, fostering community, teaching collaboration, and inspiring creativity.

Since its inception, Opening Act has grown to reach over 7,000 young people at over 50

under-resourced schools throughout New York City. This includes partnerships with District 79 (the city's alternative school district) and expansion into middle school. After graduation, Opening Act alumni join its Act 2 program, which sets them up for academic, professional, and artistic success. *YesFest* is Opening Act's annual spring production of student-generated plays presented for public performances in New York City. Opening Act also hosts play readings by working professionals from the Broadway and Off-Broadway community and other special events focused on theater and theater education.

The organization operates on a \$1.4 Million annual budget and is governed by a 24-person Board of Directors and a 12-person Junior Board, currently staffed by five full-time employees, and supported by around 25 part-time teaching artists. An Artistic Advisory Board of significant artists working in theater and film exists to support programming and help raise organizational awareness. More information about Opening Act can be found at <https://openingact.org/>.

## **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

During a period of transition over the past several years, Opening Act has taken time to evaluate its current state of operations and where it feels the organization should focus most for continued growth and impact. Following the departure of its most recent Executive Director in early 2023, Opening Act has employed an Interim Executive Director who will serve in that capacity into the summer of 2024.

The Board and interim leadership of Opening Act have been engaged in internal discussions and evaluation of operational needs over the past several months. Some important themes have emerged that Opening Act feels are important to articulate and address as it looks forward to the future:

- Programming continues to be strong and deeply respected, with in-school programs continuing to grow back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Opening Act's commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, access, and belonging has been a fundamental part of its connection to young people, but the organization sees a need to more specifically embed these values in all areas of the organization.
- There is a critical need to build a stronger fundraising infrastructure and amplify a compelling need for support of Opening Act to a broader base of untapped resources—essential to an organization currently almost entirely supported through board and institutional fundraising revenue.
- Evaluate communications strategy to ensure maximum awareness of programming to community and supporters.
- And while programming is high-quality and expertly run, the organization needs

to formalize streamlined, efficient processes to ensure excellent operations and service to New York City's youth.

The new Executive Director will be expected to work on these and other organizational priorities that will emerge from collaborative engagement and inspiration of a Board and Staff deeply committed to the work of the organization.

## **POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Executive Director will serve as Opening Act's top Staff leader and report directly to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will lead with inspiration, clarity, and a collaborative spirit, promoting an atmosphere of inclusion, passion for theater and arts education, and support for young people. Expanding Opening Act's base of financial resources and ensuring that the organization is appropriately organized and prepared for further growth will be leading priorities for the next Executive Director. The top priorities for the role will include:

### **Strategic Leadership**

- Develop and communicate Opening Act's vision in a manner that honors the organization's rich history, takes input from multiple sources, and keeps an eye towards an even brighter future.
- Constantly challenge assumptions and monitor programmatic successes and failures to improve upon all activities.
- Work closely with Opening Act's Director of Programs on program development and growth.
- Continue to energize Board engagement, development, and participation in governance and oversight.

### **Resource Development**

- Serve as Opening Act's primary fundraiser, build out a strong development team and expand our fundraising capacity.
- Find new resources for traditional, contributed, and earned revenue.
- Inspire Opening Act's Board of Directors to take a significant role in the development and expansion of funding opportunities and to continue to build a diverse network of supporters.
- Activate Opening Act's Artistic Advisory Board and alumni network and find ways for their participation in philanthropic efforts as ambassadors and storytellers.

### **Teams and Operations Management**

- Lead a tightly connected staff with support, clear direction, and a collaborative sense of purpose.
- Develop budgets and lead all operational planning.
- Establish structures and systems to more nimbly report and track all expenses

and revenue and forecast Opening Act's financial position.

- Ensure compliance in all legally binding contracts and financial matters of the organization.

### **Promoting Belonging and Community**

- Excite the community-at-large about all of Opening Act's offerings.
- Strategize on new ways to engage with schools, students, and families for a richer, mutually beneficial experience.
- Serve as a spokesperson and advocate on the local and regional scene.
- Ensure that Opening Act has a clearly defined set of values around inclusion, diversity, equity, access, and belonging and that there are clear and attainable goals implemented around those areas in all organizational activities.

Ideally, the successful candidate will possess these skills and experience:

- Proven talent as a dynamic and talented fundraiser who can build and lead a development team focused on long-term growth.
- A fundamentally strategic thinker with strong attention to detail.
- Senior management experience with a track-record of progressive responsibility in an environment of creativity and innovation.
- A skill for collaboration, putting the good of the organization first and foremost in all discussions of programs, staffing, and new initiatives.
- Demonstrated skills in budgeting and administration of budgets.
- An ability and desire to do forensic evaluation of all operations to gauge effectiveness and impact of programs, and how sustainable models can be fostered that support Opening Act's' mission.
- Ability to interact effectively with and inspire a voluntary Board of Directors and talented Staff.
- Clear and effective communication skills.
- Creative problem solver.
- Knowledge of and passion for theater and arts education in particular.
- Experience in the not-for-profit arts sector preferred.

### **COMPENSATION AND START DATE**

The annual salary for the Executive Director will be between \$125,000-\$140,000 and includes a benefits package commensurate with other organizations of its size. Opening Act hopes to make its decision by the summer of 2024 with the chosen candidate taking on the position shortly thereafter.

Opening Act is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, national origin, ethnic origin, citizenship status, disability, race, religion, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law in its

employment policies. In addition, Opening Act will provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

Shruti Adhar and Jonathan West are the team from MCA facilitating this search.

Interested and qualified candidates should submit the following items for consideration:

- A current resumé
- Cover letter (no more than 1page)
- Four professional references
- Salary expectation

All documents should have the candidate's name as part of the file name. Submissions should be made through Management Consultants for the Arts' website at:

<https://www.mcaonline.com/searches/executive-director-opening-act>