



League of Chicago Theatres

Executive Director

Organization

The League of Chicago Theatres (the League) is a nonprofit service organization that supports and is governed by an alliance of theatres dedicated to ensuring that theatre continues to thrive in Chicago. The League pursues this goal in collaboration with more than 230 nonprofit and commercial theatres and performing arts organizations by leveraging their collective strength to support, promote, and advocate for the industry. The League serves many direct functions for the community including audience building, advocacy, government relations, grant-making, and professional development.

The League was founded in 1979 by a small group of theatres formerly known as the Off Loop Producers Association. In the 1980s, when groups began protesting the allocation of funds to the National Endowment for the Arts, the League successfully organized advocacy efforts aimed at continuing funding for the arts. During the 1990s, the League continued to grow and address the needs of members in new ways, such as organizing annual showcases for members, hosting community retreats, starting an advertising co-op and raising the profile of Chicago theatre through public relations efforts and advertising campaigns.

The League's membership is a diverse list of theatres of all sizes and located throughout the city and suburbs. 75 percent of their members are located within the city limits and the remaining 25 percent outside of the city as far north as Waukegan, south to Chicago Heights, and west to Aurora. The list includes not-for-profit and commercial organizations, many itinerant, all-volunteer organizations, as well as large regional theatres. Two-thirds of the membership are organizations with budgets under \$250,000. The needs and interests of the community are as diverse as their membership and the League strives to serve them through an evolving and robust list of programs and events.

Through their programs the League strive to foster an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, supportive, and collegial. The League primarily does this by bringing together all their members to collaborate on programs and to gather to share knowledge at networking events and workshops. Even in the most difficult times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, League members know they are not alone and are supported by the League and the entire member support network. Last year the League held more than 20 workshops and networking events that served more than 1000 theatre professionals.

The League continues to operate Hot Tix, a flagship audience development program facilitating promotion and sales of half-price tickets for member productions and events. In addition to being the most valued program of the League by its members, this program represents a major source of earned revenue for the League itself, selling more than 100,000 tickets in 2019. Alongside Hot Tix, the League operates ChicagoPlays.com, the online hub for information about Chicago theatre productions with a searchable directory and show calendar. Other promotional and membership support programs include Chicago Theatre Week, the Cooperative Advertising Program, publicly facing industry job and audition boards, membership trainings and networking events, the SmartTix program for college students, a company retreat program for Chicago theatres, a Business Affiliates program, access performance and opening night calendars, and many others. The League has partnered with the MacArthur Foundation on the Performing Arts Venue Fund, and with ComEd on the Powering the Arts grant initiative which funded 12 new projects that reached new and diverse audiences in northern Illinois.

The League offers a suite of equity and inclusion training opportunities, including Equity Quotient's Erasing Racism workshop, Land Acknowledgement workshops with the American Indian Center of Chicago, Trans-Inclusive Casting Workshops, and Bystander Intervention Trainings with the Alliance of Local Service Organizations. The League also administers The Samuel G. Roberson Jr. Resident Fellowship, a one-year grant to fund a residency for an early to mid-career Black theatre artist. The League continues to develop and expand anti-racism resource lists for the membership.

The League achieves all their work with a staff of seven full-time employees who perform all operational and programmatic work of the organization. The Board is structured through the bylaws to require representatives from every budget category of the membership, fulfilling a commitment of the League that all voices are heard when decisions are made. Programming is determined by board and staff working together to address the greatest needs in the theatre community. Activities are evaluated through formal and informal feedback from membership, including through regular online evaluations. Responses from the membership guide where the League is succeeding, falling short and where the League needs to focus in the future.

The League has a 30-member board led by Chair Heidi Thompson Saunders who meet six times a year. Deb Clapp has served as Executive Director for 15 years and will conclude her tenure in Summer 2022. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, the League reported a total revenue of \$1.2 million and total expenses of \$1.5 million.

Community

Chicago is the third largest city in the United States with a population of 2.7 million residents. Located along the shores of Lake Michigan, the city has a unique spirit and community distinct from large cities on the two coasts. Known for a robust cultural life, ranging from passionate sports fans to world-renowned architecture and its own renowned styles for pizza and hot dogs, Chicago is a diverse and vibrant place to live drawing individuals from all over the world. The city has one of the strongest theatre communities in the United States, with the League's vast membership including nationally recognized regional institutions with five Tony-award winning theaters, many mid-sized and emerging theatres of all sizes and artistic visions, and the five downtown theatres that make up Broadway in Chicago.

Chicago is often described as a city of neighborhoods, with 77 distinct communities characterized for their unique flair and offerings of local restaurants, businesses, and entertainment options. Chicago has a robust public transportation system, two international airports directly connected to local trains, and pre-pandemic job growth rate of 4 percent that outpaced the country in 2021. The Chicago Park District is the largest in the United States, with more than 8,800 acres of green space and 600 parks. Millennium Park, which opened in 2004, is the home to a host of summertime concerts at Jay Pritzker Pavilion and a variety of festivals, including Lollapalooza, the Chicago Blues, Gospel Music, and Jazz Festivals, and many more.

From a business perspective, Illinois is home to 36 Fortune 500 companies, 10 of which are headquartered in Chicago, including Boeing, McDonald's, United Airlines Holdings, Mondelez International, and Conagra Brands. Chicago's technology sector is growing rapidly, with nearly 100,000 workers in the city who enhance technological innovations world-wide. Over 5,000 foundations are based in Chicago include major arts funders including the John D & Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Prince Family Foundation, the Walder Foundation, the Driehaus Foundation, and many others.

Chicago embraces and celebrates its diversity. The 2020 Census found a city population that was 30 percent Latino, 29 percent African American, 7 percent Asian, and 31 percent white, with a growing multi-ethnic population. Chicago's cultural community strives to engage and support Chicagoans of all backgrounds in creative expression. Forty languages are spoken in Chicago households, with Spanish and Polish being the most common. Home to a vibrant LGBTQ+ community, Chicago is currently led by its first openly gay mayor, Lori Lightfoot, and includes North Halsted, the country's first officially designated gay neighborhood, and has a full month of Pride celebrations each year.

Sources: choosechicago.com, chicago.gov, census.gov, bls.gov, leagueofchicagotheatres.org

Position Summary

The Executive Director will be an inspirational, creative, and forward-thinking industry shaper with an exceptional understanding of the dynamics of cultural ecosystems in the United States. The Executive Director will have a passion for the performing arts, and solid managerial experience that can leverage the infrastructure of a small nonprofit to secure and prioritize the use of resources to create efficient and effective impacts for constituents. The individual will be responsible for leading and structuring the League's activities in a manner that successfully brings people together under one tent and strategically builds financial, social, and creative capital for the organization. The Executive Director will be accountable for collaborating with the board of directors in setting the long-term and implementing the short-term strategic vision and goals of the League. This individual will serve as the public face of the League, including in the organization's relationship to funders and civic leadership and by engaging in local, regional, and national dialogues to the benefit of the Chicago community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Visionary Leadership and Strategic Partnerships

- Provide dynamic, visionary, and strategic leadership and direction.
- Build awareness and engagement within and without the theatre community in Chicago through intentional and creative communication and partnership strategies.
- Strengthen the League's commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism in all its communications, trainings and activities, as well as internal practices such as hiring and board recruitment.
- Guide and partner around effective collective advocacy efforts at the municipal, state, and federal levels that benefit the theatre ecosystem.
- Build the League's vital relationships with colleagues in the field, including the City of Chicago, funders, partners, and related local and national networks.
- Leverage the resources and capabilities of members and partners for broader and deeper effectiveness in community initiatives than the League can do within its own budgets and human resources.
- Strategically build resources through fundraising, entrepreneurship, and innovative partnerships, with a particular eye towards building the League's capacity through community-wide efficiency efforts.

Organizational Management and Sustainability

- Manage the League's plans and commitments with a realistic understanding of the capacity of its human, financial, and technological resources.
- Develop and oversee an annual budget for board approval and manage the League's resources within the budget guidelines while maintaining its fiscal responsibility.
- Continually evaluate and evolve the League's programs, services, and business model through considerations of community impact, long-term sustainability, and risk.
- Serve as the League's primary development and fundraising officer, taking a central role for both individual and institutional contributions to the League's finances and overall resources.
- Seek out new sources of contributed and earned revenues through a lens of 'growing the pie'.
- Foster a dynamic awareness of developments in technology and other related industries and how those developments can be engaged to benefit the arts.
- Inspire, motivate, and mentor a dedicated staff to accomplish the League's strategic goals, provide quality service to membership, and spur ongoing innovation that addresses changing times and circumstances.
- Foster a healthy and welcoming work environment that encourages a trust-based dynamic, a collaborative atmosphere, staff ownership of programs and strategies, ongoing professional development, and staff satisfaction.
- Support operations and administration of the board of directors by advising and interfacing with board members and staff, keeping the board informed of developments in the organization, membership, and community.

Member Engagement and Support

- Maintain an up-to-date understanding of the theatre landscape in Chicago, including current and longstanding challenges, dynamics and differences between segments of the membership, and the evolving leadership landscape and operational models throughout the community.
- Champion theatre professionals and advocates as a visible spokesperson and thought leader for theatre in the city, as well as serving as a spokesperson throughout Illinois and across the nation on behalf of the community.
- Effectively leverage the energy and enthusiasm of the membership with respect and an understanding of the obligations members and artists have in their daily lives.
- Design, manage, and strategically balance programming run by the League on behalf of membership with providing training and resources to build the capacity of members so they can operate more effectively.
- Embrace an open-door policy to members and facilitate the establishment and strengthening of relationships between members to anchor and grow the sense of a mutually supportive community.

Traits and Characteristics

The Executive Director will be a collaborative and visionary leader with a strong orientation towards deep listening and human understanding to foster authentic relationships with people of all kinds. The Executive Director will be motivated by spending time with individuals inside and outside the membership and staff and identifying practical ways to build partnerships and secure resources to drive transformational impact across the Chicago theatre scene. This individual will regularly support and empower the staff and engage actively on a peer basis with the board of directors. This individual will be an exemplary spokesperson for the value of theatre and its crucial role in the vibrancy of quality of life for the people who reside in and visit Chicago.

Other key competencies of the role include:

- **Leadership and Diplomacy** – The emotional and relational ability to engage a variety of stakeholders who have differing opinions and bring them together in an overarching common purpose and coordinated efforts.
- **Creativity and Forward Thinking** – The capability to combine an understanding of historic structures and data with current dynamics to develop effective new strategies that are uniquely appropriate for this place and this time.
- **Planning and Project Management** – The ability to clearly define priorities and balance competing goals with available resources to establish clear courses of action, and then to follow through with a team to execution those actions while embracing high adaptability to changing circumstances.
- **Self-Starting and Goal Orientation** – The inclination to pro-actively take responsibility for establishing specific, relevant, and attainable goals, and to have daily efforts driven by personal initiative and a sense of fulfillment gained from forward progress.

Qualifications and Requirements

A demonstrated ability to develop and communicate clear visions and build operational plans supporting those visions is required. A clear track record of management experience, preferably managing staff and budgets in a nonprofit organization environment, is essential. Demonstrated knowledge and applied experience around equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism initiatives, and overall cultural competency is highly valued. Exceptional communication skills in a variety of mediums, including in print, radio, television, and online interviews, and the ability to adapt quickly to a variety of constituencies and situations will be used daily. Experience in advocacy and government relations is recommended, as well as experience authentically building relationships in new communities. A strong working knowledge of performing arts management and theatre production is beneficial, as is knowledge of the Chicago cultural and funding environment.

Compensation and Benefits

The League offers a competitive salary commensurate with results-oriented experience. The benefits package includes paid time off as well as medical and dental insurance programs. The starting salary is expected to be in the range of \$120,000 to \$130,000.

Application and Inquires

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments, please click [here](#) or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact us at:

Douglas R. Clayton, Senior Advisor



201 West Lake Street, Suite 133

Chicago, IL 60606-1803

Tel (888) 234.4236 Ext. 202

Email LOCT@ArtsConsulting.com

The League of Chicago Theatres is an equal opportunity employer that is committed to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We prohibit discrimination and harassment of any kind based on race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, genetic information, pregnancy, or any other protected characteristic as outlined by federal, state, or local laws.

This policy applies to all employment practices within our organization, including hiring, recruiting, promotion, termination, layoff, recall, leave of absence, compensation, benefits, training, and apprenticeship. The League makes hiring decisions based solely on qualifications, merit, and business needs at the time.