

Position Specification

MASS MoCA

Director

Our Client

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA embraces all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works that defy easy classification. Much of the work MASS MoCA shows in its light-filled spaces, on its technically sophisticated stages, and within its lovely network of late 19th-century courtyards is made there during extended fabrication and rehearsal residencies that bring hundreds of the world's most brilliant and innovative artists to North Adams all year round. Through innovative collaborations, MASS MoCA helps artists and their supporters create and show important new work, bringing to its visitors bold visual and performing art in all stages of production, while also creating a stimulating center of creativity and commerce that brings life and economic vibrancy to its hometown.

If conventional museums are protective boxes, MASS MoCA strives instead to be a dynamic open platform—a welcoming environment that encourages free exchange between the making of art and its enjoyment by the public, between the visual and performing arts, and between its extraordinary historic factory campus and the patrons, workers, and tenants who once again inhabit it. That is, MASS MoCA strives to make the whole cloth of artmaking, presentation, and participation by the public a seamless continuum that is invigorating, enjoyable, and inclusive. MASS MoCA wants you to feel at home, whether it's your 100th visit to a contemporary art museum or your first.

MASS MoCA's performing arts residencies offer well-equipped and professionally staffed technical facilities and stages, and a sophisticated, diverse, and sympathetic audience for new work. Its vast galleries and expert fabrication staff offer visual artists the technical tools and time to create works of a scale and duration difficult to realize in the time-constrained and space-cramped conditions of most museums. While supporting the production of new work, MASS MoCA also takes every opportunity to expose its audiences to all stages of art making; rehearsals, sculptural fabrication, and developmental workshops are frequently on view.

If MASS MoCA's mission is to nurture and present exciting new art of the highest quality in all media—and in all phases of its production—then the organization works equally hard to leverage that activity as a catalyst for community revitalization: the creation of new markets, good jobs, and the long-term enrichment of a region in economic need are all central to its purpose. MASS MoCA and all members of its team are ardent believers in the power of the creative economy at MASS MoCA and are convinced that advancement of the arts, increased tourism, deeper community participation, and regional economic redevelopment are mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked – that the arts create and bestow community identity. A strong sense of identity and pride rallies confidence, hope, productivity, and economic vibrancy. Those are base conditions for a healthy community; they cannot be created, however, without risk, adventure, and the willingness to embrace the new, all of which implies having the courage to fail from time to time.

MASS MoCA is a place where unexpected and wonderful things happen, where artists can imagine and create, where people of all backgrounds and interests can gather, wander, and wonder, without constraints of time or space. MASS MoCA is unpretentious, relentlessly optimistic, and inclusive. MASS MoCA is also committed to listening, learning, and building a better future together, working against racism in all its forms. That begins with work inside the organization. MASS MoCA remains committed to supporting artists and communities of color and those whose work poses hard questions about justice and equity.

MASS MoCA acts on these beliefs and values through a multidisciplinary approach which include:

- **VISUAL ARTS:** MASS MoCA exhibits art by both well-known and emerging artists, focusing on large-scale, immersive installations that would be impossible to realize in conventional museums. The broad-shouldered, raw industrial character of its soaring galleries (with 250,000 square feet of open and often naturally lit space) has proven both inspiring and liberating to artists.
- **PERFORMING ARTS:** MASS MoCA presents more than 75 performances across more than 40 weekends year-round, including contemporary dance, alternative cabaret, world music dance parties, indie-rock, progressive bluegrass, outdoor silent films with live music, documentaries, and avant-garde theater. Indeed, the word “museum” in its name is misleading because 50% of MASS MoCA’s programmatic resources, staffing, and emotional bandwidth is devoted to the performing arts, and this commitment extends to hosting work-in-progress showings, residency workshops, and support of experimental R&D.
- **EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE:** MASS MoCA offers a wide range of participatory learning opportunities for students, teenagers, teachers, adults, and families, including: hands-on art-making classes; lectures; Art Assembly performances for schools; artist Q&As; docent-guided tours; art camps; after-school programs; and Kidspace, a child-centered art gallery and hands-on studio that offers in-depth art education through curricular-based classroom programs with local schools, as well as free public admission all year round.

MASS MoCA thrives on helping artists make work that is fresh, forward-looking, and engaging of the mind, body, and spirit, and believes that both their guest artists and audiences should enjoy their time at MASS MoCA. The campus features free parking, affordably priced cafés, a full-service restaurant, delicious ice cream, great coffee, and an innovative microbrewery that spotlights locally malted grains and hops grown in its own Berkshire valley.

MASS MoCA also partners with a range of local and regional organizations and community leaders, including a range of nonprofits in close proximity which attract students, visitors, and local residents. Nearby there are several colleges and two other world-class museums, as well as performing arts organizations and festivals.

MASS MoCA has an annual budget of approximately \$13 million, a team of 165 (at full capacity), and an endowment of \$30 million. The organization is governed by the MASS MoCA Foundation Board of Trustees, which includes 32 members from around the world, and benefits from the advice and guidance of its Trustees Emeriti, Director’s Advisory Council, and Cultural Development Commission.

The Opportunity

MASS MoCA is looking to its future, with an astonishing history defined by tenaciousness, vision, risk-taking, artistic excellence, and a commitment to the revitalization and economic growth of the region in which it is situated. The organization’s next leader will be challenged to honor this legacy and continue this work, to mine and harness the core values and tenets on which the place has been built, and also to define and lead the path forward at a time when museums and all arts organizations must reevaluate their role and relevancy in society.

The next Director of MASS MoCA will join the organization at an exciting and pivotal moment in its history. Working in close collaboration with the Board of Trustees and team, the Director will lead the organization forward boldly, building on the current strategic plan that set goals for the expansion of visual arts, performing arts, and educational programming. They will have the responsibility to navigate the organization’s current response to the pandemic and will have the opportunity to further define an operating model that allows MASS MoCA to achieve its mission in a post-COVID environment where creativity, collaboration, and flexibility will be more important than ever. The new leader must define their own voice and vision for MASS MoCA, furthering its reputation through innovation, evaluation, and, when called for—reinvention.

The Role

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Director works in tandem with the Deputy Director, leadership, and staff to ensure that MASS MoCA fulfills its mission and realizes its goals for artistic, financial, and organizational success. The Director is the driver of MASS MoCA's creative vision, as well as long-term planning and goal setting. They have overall responsibility for internal leadership, including senior team management, program development and administration, fundraising, institutional marketing, operational business management, and financial sustainability. They also play the lead role in representing MASS MoCA externally. The Director will build new and sustain existing relationships with a wide range of individuals who feel ownership of MASS MoCA, including North Adams residents and artists, as well as cultural, business, education, and civic leaders, and the organization's extensive network of exhibiting and performing artists.

Specific responsibilities of the Director include:

- The Director articulates a clear, collaboratively developed vision and strategy, and ensures that all team members understand how their work fits into that vision. They shape MASS MoCA's goal setting and priorities, internal organizational structure, and resource allocation to support the organization's mission and vision, and they ensure that its strategic and programmatic objectives are fully articulated, and transparently and effectively pursued.
- The Director fosters and maintains an environment that supports creativity, programmatic excellence, service to artists, community partnerships, and regional, national, and international visibility. Together with staff they develop partnerships, programs, and collaborations that advance the mission of MASS MoCA while providing the best contemporary art and performing arts experiences for diverse audiences of all ages.
- The Director supports a culture of diversity and inclusivity at all internal and public-facing levels, from programming, to staff training, to Board development and community relationships. They take action to prioritize anti-racist principles and work actively to attract diverse talent to MASS MoCA's staff, Board, and region, to create an equitable and inclusive culture, to include diverse perspectives in strategy and decision-making, and to be a champion for equity and access at MASS MoCA.
- The Director, with the Deputy Director, implements sound fiscal management and assures the financial sustainability of MASS MoCA, including strong financial and operational systems and budgetary processes; makes decisions efficiently and communicates them with transparency. They approach the financial oversight of MASS MoCA with discipline and balance, exerting an even-handed and reasoned approach to budgetary decision-making in full transparency and collaboration with the Board of Trustees.
- The Director serves as the public representative and spokesperson for MASS MoCA with external and internal stakeholders. The Director develops and promotes the MASS MoCA brand in the region and beyond to increase public awareness of its programs and grow visitation across all venues, while also building the organization's presence worldwide. The Director productively and effectively partners with a wide range of artists, creative producers, and peer institutions.
- The Director is a champion of regional collaboration and synergy and plays a lead role in furthering the organization's identity and mission as a driver of economic growth in the North Adams and Northern Berkshires region. They advance MASS MoCA's leadership role as a major contributor to the economic stability of the local community.

- The Director is the organization's chief fundraiser. Working with the Director of Institutional Advancement, the Director provides guidance, impetus, and support to the fundraising efforts of the Board. The Director establishes and maintains productive relationships with individuals, foundations, corporate sponsors, and local civic funders to ensure that MASS MoCA achieves or exceeds its contributed income goals from all sources. Expanding and diversifying the museum's circle of supporters is critical.
- The Director works closely with the Board Chair and Trustees to identify and recruit board members, to ensure effective governance, and create continuity of leadership for the organization. The Director provides staff support to the Board and its committees and ensures that the Board has the timely and accurate information it needs for decision-making. The Director will prioritize Board cultivation and engagement, understanding that Trustees are key partners and ambassadors that are critical to not only the museum's financial stability, but in ensuring its visibility and promoting MASS MoCA.
- The Director recruits, motivates, supervises, evaluates, and provides leadership to a high caliber staff in an organization that values teamwork, is committed to transparency, welcomes new ideas, and encourages personal development. They will promote an open environment of curiosity and experimentation among staff, and continue to foster culture that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive.
- The Director balances best business practices with risk-taking and non-traditional methods of getting things done. They encourage innovative thinking and support, both artistically and through fundraising, the creation of innovative and exceptional art.

Candidate Profile

MASS MoCA seeks a welcoming, flexible, and fearless leader with a passion for and thorough working knowledge of artistic production. The next Director will be a strategic thinker and skilled decision-maker with a big-picture view of the cultural sector and a track record of evaluating options and achieving positive outcomes. The candidate will possess the ability to work effectively with creative talent, to engage diverse audiences, and to champion education – formal and informal – through the arts. The ideal candidate will have a deep appreciation for the mission of MASS MoCA and both the desire and the ability to advance a vision for the years ahead.

The next Director will bring an authentic interest in and commitment to expanding audiences for contemporary art and exploring unconventional approaches to cultural production, as well as deep relationships across the international art community. They will be able to build a sense of trust among staff and artists alike, creating conditions where people can do their very best work, without fear of failure. The ideal candidate will care about the broader prosperity of North Adams and its inhabitants, understand the role the arts can and do play in a rural and post-industrial community, and will be eager to set down roots in the community.

The ideal candidate will have excellent communication skills, including the ability to be an articulate advocate for the arts, arts education, and life-long learning. They will be an enthusiastic fundraiser, with the ability to build ideological and financial support for major initiatives, to cultivate and maintain relationships with donors, to solicit funds effectively, and to provide excellent stewardship for all gifts. The Director will be as adept, inspiring, and effective in a North Adams community meeting as on the global stage of art and philanthropy.

The candidate will have a track record of success managing teams and resources, including being a careful steward of organizational assets. They will be able to guide the continued development of the physical campus, thinking expansively about the highest and best use of key buildings, the campus's edges, and open spaces,

asking, “how can the current and future use of the campus meet our goals for diversity, equity, inclusion and access; community connection; innovation; economic vitality; and artistic excellence?”

The next Director of MASS MoCA will embody core values that set a standard for institutional culture that insists on: diversity and equity (in thought and opportunity); integrity; transparency and effective communication; empathy, respect, fairness, and self-awareness; clear and defined purpose in the work, for everyone; learning opportunities; teamwork; recognition.

In terms of the performance and personal competencies required for the position, we would highlight the following:

Strategic Thinking and Vision

- An entrepreneurial and creative thinker with the ability to develop and implement a creative and strategic vision. This individual will demonstrate an expansive knowledge of the key global cultural trends influencing MASS MoCA’s mission.
- Ability to guide, shape, and continually enhance MASS MoCA’s organizational identity including its vision, mission, culture, and strategy while protecting the integrity of its uniquely imaginative and courageous spirit and mix of innovation, collaboration, and generative challenge.
- Track record of strong fiscal and strategic discipline and outcomes; results-oriented, thoughtful, and courageous; will take calculated risks and use resources creatively in terms of innovation while demonstrating pragmatism with respect to both expenses and revenues.

Passion for the Mission and Credibility in the Field

- Exhibits a thorough knowledge of and passion for the production of contemporary art across disciplines; possesses the intellectual curiosity and imagination to interact effectively with artists, staff, partners, and other individuals and communities locally, nationally, and globally on behalf of MASS MoCA.
- Passionate about the performing arts, the vital importance of education, and groundbreaking exhibitions.
- Committed to up-and-coming visual and performing artists as well as household names.

Fundraising and Resource Development

- Experience in building an institution’s funding base – including from individual, corporate, and foundation funders – as well as through fresh pathways for earned income; demonstrates an ability to engage prospective funders and partners locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Proven success forging and maintaining mutually productive relationships with peer institutions and partners to further MASS MoCA’s impact and the economic development of the region.

Building Relationships and Community Leadership

- Exhibits a consensus-seeking, but decisive approach to problem solving that enables them to effectively build support for MASS MoCA’s initiatives.
- A truly skilled internal and external communicator with an ability to engage effectively and inclusively with a diverse range of audiences, partners, and audiences.

Management and Operational Excellence

- Demonstrated success enabling a team to translate organizational strategy into clear goals and objective as well as aligning key constituents around key institutional decisions.
- Proven ability to carefully steward organizational assets, balance budgets, and make smart decisions with limited financial resources.
- Comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, and able to adapt quickly and flexibly to unforeseen challenges and lead others through complex situations; capable of flexing between practical and operational problem solving and long-term strategy.
- Recruits and develops top talent, delegates effectively, and manages performance with accountability; widely viewed as a leader who develops others, and who trusts and leverages the expertise of staff; fosters a culture of collaboration, respect, and empowerment.
- Brings deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of the organization's work.

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search. Given the need for confidentiality throughout this process, prospective candidates are invited to reach out directly to our search consultants at MASSMoCA@russellreynolds.com with a CV and brief explanation of interest.

MASS MoCA is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, race, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or status as a protected veteran.