CMOM Job Description

POSITION: Chief Executive Officer and Director
LOCATION: 212 West 83rd Street, New York, NY 10024
WEBSITE: www.CMOM.org

The Vision & Opportunity

What children do, see, and think in the very first years is critical in shaping who they will become, how they connect to one another, and what they value in themselves. Yet, with increasingly standardized curricula at schools and more time on digital media, research shows that kids—even very young kids—are experiencing more stress and peer pressure. They are missing out on the kinds of creative, experiential learning that we know contributes to healthy and happy childhood development. In New York City, home to 2 million kids—30% of them at or below the poverty line—there remains a gap between public and private efforts to provide age-appropriate, cross-cultural learning experiences and services for all families.

Over the past 45 years, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan has served children and families across New York City, evolving from a grassroots collective offering much needed arts education into a beloved cultural institution. CMOM’s mission is to be the steward of early childhood and to help our youngest citizens grow and develop into their best selves. In carrying forth this vision, CMOM seeks to advance society’s perception of childhood and its understanding of healthy child development and to nurture the next generation of creative global citizens.

CMOM is poised for unprecedented growth with its new home at 361 Central Park West (opening 2023), and seeks an innovative leader to help propel its future through an experience encompassing immersive and imaginative exhibits, dynamic cultural programming, a thriving community hub, and impactful outreach, all anchored by scientific research and infused with NYC ingenuity.

The History & Legacy of Impact

Since 1973, the Children’s Museum of Manhattan (CMOM) has been a favorite destination and valued educational resource for children and families. Through groundbreaking interdisciplinary exhibits, workshops, performances, and outreach programs, CMOM touches the lives of more than 400,000 people annually, including 75,000 visitors from around the world. It offers joyful experiences at the intersection of the arts, sciences, and humanities that help children of all backgrounds build the intellectual, emotional, physical, and social skills they need to thrive.

CMOM grounds its programming in research, using informed assessment models in combination with artistry and a deep understanding of how children learn to create experiences that are both fun and educational. In partnership with the National Institutes of Health, CMOM created the EatPlayGrow™ curriculum, a model for early childhood health education which is replicated around the country. In partnership with Johns Hopkins Science of Learning, Department of Education and Administration Children’s Services, CMOM created early childhood literacy programs and materials utilizing the Museum’s All the Way to K and Beyond! curriculum.
CMOM’s research has led to exhibits that embrace complex issues, making them accessible to families, including EatSleepPlay™, which targets childhood obesity, and America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far, which targets Islamophobia. Its commitment to research has also led to strong to other meaningful partnerships, including those with Barnard College and New York University.

CMOM’s influence extends far beyond the four walls of the museum. Exhibitions and programs designed and evaluated at CMOM are replicated at sites across the city. In homeless shelters and Head Start centers, CMOM has developed health and learning hubs that incorporate permanent museum-quality installations, wall graphics, and hands-on education focused on developing healthy lifestyles and literacy. CMOM also hosts weekly programs for children with cancer and for those on the autism spectrum. Schools and libraries across the five boroughs benefit from CMOM’s programs. Communities across the nation enjoy the Children’s Museum’s travelling exhibitions, several of which have become models of best practices in the field.

CMOM currently has an annual operating budget of $5.9M and a dedicated staff of 85, as well as a 28-member Board of Directors.

The Plan for the Future

After over 40 years in its original location, and to accommodate its rapidly growing audience, CMOM purchased the landmark church at 361 Central Park West at West 96th Street in 2017. This vast new site, when renovated and repurposed, will reimagine the curiosity, excitement, and fun of CMOM and serve more than 750,000 visitors a year. CMOM is committed to creating the children’s museum experience of the 21st century in America’s cultural capital, furthering its role as a gateway for families to explore the wonders of New York City and the world. The building is scheduled to open in 2023.

This is a time of dramatic expansion for CMOM that will ultimately yield the first new museum, one dedicated to children and families, on Central Park in more than fifty years. CMOM has launched a $200 million capital campaign to transform this historic building into a 21st-century facility, with compelling exhibitions and programming, improved infrastructure, and an endowment to secure CMOM’s future as a financially sustainable institution for generations of New York’s youngest residents and their families.

Working with the renowned architecture firm FXCollaborative, CMOM is converting the space into a state-of-the-art museum. To prepare for the creation of this new institution, CMOM has undertaken a transformational planning process in collaboration with the innovative design company IDEO. The resulting internal playbook will act as a guide for CMOM’s experience design, to be interpreted and created by a best-in-class exhibit design partner. The new CMOM will feature static and changing activations connected by the core themes of arts and creativity, health and wellness, and global cultures and the environment. The “smart” building will integrate new technologies to enhance the visitor experience in the exhibitions, studios, theatre, classrooms and public amenities.

CMOM will continue to support and grow its hubs through the five boroughs, its digital offerings, and its role as a national leader.
The Role

The Board of Directors of CMOM seeks an inspiring, creative, entrepreneurial, and strategic leader with a passion for the mission of the museum and a commitment to engaging and educating children and families. That leader needs to appreciate the ambitious vision of the organization, and to successfully launch and manage its growth into the new building. Reporting to the Board, the Chief Executive Officer/Director will oversee all aspects of CMOM’s strategic planning, programmatic development, operations, finances, fundraising, earned income, marketing, technology, external partnerships, and internal culture. He or she will also work with CMOM’s staff and Board members, as well as with outside architects and designers, to create the museum’s new physical home and visitor experience. Given the once in a lifetime opportunity to lead the creation of a new, cutting-edge children’s museum on Central Park, the ideal candidate must have proven success in leading a multifaceted institution through a time of organizational evolution, in managing a sustainable business model, and in overseeing a capital campaign.

The CEO/Director will serve as the driver of CMOM’s ongoing organizational success, as well as of the formation of the new museum at 361 Central Park West, bringing to life the vision set forth by the Board of Directors. He or she will oversee the development of a truly compelling strategy of programmatic offerings and an unparalleled visitor experience that will enhance CMOM’s reputation as a leader in learning innovation and will elevate CMOM’s reputation as a leading organization of its kind. Critical to the success of this enterprise will be the ability to productively and effectively partner with the Board and senior staff in service of CMOM’s mission.

The CEO/Director will serve as the primary fundraiser for the organization, in partnership with the Board of Directors and the development team, responsible for securing the financial future of CMOM. He or she must be skilled in stewarding donors, developing new funding opportunities and revenue streams, and guiding the development team in its efforts during and beyond the current capital campaign. Initial funding for the new museum has come from the CMOM Board of Directors, from major gifts of early visionary patrons, and from generous civic support. Looking forward, it is important to continue to diversify funding sources and garner support for CMOM’s mission from funders throughout New York and across the nation.

The CEO/Director will need to foster an environment of innovation, collegiality, collaboration, and fun, while being both transparent and unifying. He or she will need to leverage the expertise of staff and Board to provide the best experience possible for museum’s diverse visitors and stakeholders. Ultimately, the Board of CMOM seeks a leader who is captivated by the opportunity to successfully launch a new and entirely unique institution, and who embraces a spirit of creativity and joy in all aspects of its operations.

Candidate Profile

CMOM seeks a leader with a passion for the impact of experience and who believes in the power of play as a central strategy to help children grow and thrive. While this person does not need to be an expert in early childhood development or family engagement, he or she should be excited to connect ideas, themes, and skills across the arts, sciences, and humanities to advance our understanding of health and wellness, creativity, global cultures, and the environment. Furthermore, the successful candidate should be enthusiastic to bring the spirit and ingenuity of New York City to life inside the walls of this museum, referencing the city’s environment and its intersection of diverse cultures to help children learn from and about the world around them.
CMOM also seeks a change agent with a strong capacity to lead through transformation. CMOM is a solid institution today, and yet it will be fundamentally transformed in the coming years – physically, strategically, operationally, and experientially. This role requires a candidate who will excel and thrive in partnering with the Board and team to run the current institution while creating a new model institution for next gen audiences.

Key Competencies

Strategic Leadership
- Understand this as a compelling opportunity to change the field of children’s museums.
- Provide strategic vision and leadership, in partnership with the Board of Directors, as CMOM plans for, builds, and opens its new, cutting-edge museum.
- Effectively set priorities, creating and achieving annual and long-term plans, and leading organizations to success.
- Demonstrate experience successfully directing an organization through a time of growth and change.

Fundraising and Resource Development
- A record of success cultivating individual and institutional donors and raising funds to reach budgetary goals.
- Experience leading capital and endowment campaigns, with knowledge of the NYC philanthropic community, is a plus.
- Track record of growing revenue and earned income in a museum or other comparable setting.
- Experience identifying and cultivating typical and novel revenue streams.

Managing Teams & Resources
- Experience managing people and resources on the scale of the CMOM of the future.
- Ability to attract, retain, and motivate talent, and leverage skillsets and expertise of staff.
- Inclusion and valuing of diverse opinions among the staff and other stakeholders.
- Decisive setting of priorities, delegating responsibilities, pro-actively using analytics, and ensuring accountability.
- Ability to make and communicate hard decisions and handle crises.

Governance & Board Partnership
- Demonstrate collaborative leadership and foster a culture of engagement and empowerment throughout the organization.
- Encourage transparency, openness, and mutual respect, embodying integrity and humility.
- Effectively engage with the Board.
- Be knowledgeable about and support Governance best practices.

Communication & Relationship Building
- Serve as lead spokesperson for CMOM, passionately articulate and inspirational about the mission and vision.
- Able to communicate and build strong relationships with diverse stakeholders and partners, demonstrating strong emotional intelligence.
- Encourage others to share the spotlight and visibly celebrate and support the success of the team.
- Demonstrate a genuine commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and an ability to respectfully engage with donors, visitors, and community members of varied backgrounds.
Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search, and prospective candidates are invited to contact Russell Reynolds Associates directly. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential. For more information or to apply for the role, please reach out to CMOMCEO@russellreynolds.com. All applications should include a resume and statement of interest.