

Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH) Chief Operating Officer

MFAH seeks a tested professional to manage its campus, buildings, grounds, gardens, parking and other facilities; electrical, mechanical, plumbing, HVAC and in-gallery environmental control systems; traffic flow, security, safety and emergency response infrastructure; and diverse services provided to patrons.

The COO must have experience supporting professional teams that orchestrate experiences, providing a kind of invisible connective tissue that gracefully supports all museum activities, personnel and visitors.

The Museum of Fine Arts Houston functions as an integrated visual arts experience centered in one of the nation's great cities. Counted amongst North America's largest museums, [MFAH](#) has [permanent collections](#) spanning more than 6,000 years of history with 64,000 works from six continents. A transformative [Campus Redevelopment](#) has been in process since 2012 and is nearing completion, with opening celebrations scheduled at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021. During this time annual attendance reached a high of 1.25 million despite significant construction.

The Susan and Fayez S. Sarofim Campus encompasses 14 acres in the heart of Houston's Museum District, with buildings contributed by [world-renowned architects](#) housing permanent collections; 450,000 square feet of permanent and temporary exhibition spaces; a variety of public plazas and visually stunning gardens, fountains and outdoor exhibition areas; restaurant, café, and arts-themed retail shops; school, classrooms, research and lecture hall facilities; archives, libraries and conservation facilities; and administrative offices. Enlivened by site-specific art installations by renowned artists from around the world, MFAH's physical features include:

- **The Caroline Wiess Law Building** is the first building, opened in 1924, designed by William Ward Watkin and expanded in a number of phases. Collections of non-Western art are exhibited there, including Oceanic art, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Korean art, as well as the Glassell Collection of Pre-Columbian Gold of the Americas and African Gold, the largest assemblage of its kind in the world. The Cullinan Hall and the Brown Pavilion wings designed by Mies van der Rohe opened in 1958 and 1974 respectively. With 24,000 square feet of uninterrupted exhibition space, Brown Pavilion in particular delivers one of most visually stunning special exhibition experiences of visual art in North America.
- **The Audrey Jones Beck Building**, designed by Rafael Moneo, opened in 2000 and features several galleries for changing exhibitions as well as permanent collections of European art. Collections survey the art of Europe from Greek and Roman antiquity, to Renaissance works, to early modern painting, sculpture and decorative arts. Galleries for American painting and sculpture until 1914, and the Museum's shop are also located in the Beck Building.
- **The Nancy and Rich Kinder Building** was initiated in 2012 with the selection of Steven Holl Architects, and will provide 183,528 square feet overall and over 100,000 square feet of space dedicated to 25 configurable galleries and presentation of works of art after 1900. The Kinder Building integrates with the adjacent Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, and an expanded Glassell School of Art, and also includes

educational areas, a theater, a cafe and a restaurant. Also provided are 53,685 square feet of belowground parking on two levels.

- **Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden** was designed by US-born artist and landscape architect Isamu Noguchi and houses over twenty-five masterworks by acclaimed artists from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries from the MFAH and other major collections. The garden itself is a sculpture that unites the pathways between the Caroline Wiess Law Building and the Glassell School of Art.
- **Glassell School of Art** was founded in 1929, and renamed in 1979 when it moved to a new building designed by S.I. Morris. It has just been installed in enlarged quarters designed by Steven Holl Architects. The School serves as the teaching wing of the MFAH, with a variety of classes, workshops, educational opportunities for students diverse in age, interests, and experience, from pre-school to senior citizens, and hosts the Core Artist-in-Residence Program. The new L-shaped 80,000 sq ft building sits atop an extensive underground parking garage, features a ramped amphitheatre that leads up to a walkable rooftop garden, and opens onto Noguchi's sculpture garden.
- **Central Administration Building, 5100 Montrose** – The building, opened in 1994 and designed by Texan architect Carlos Jimenez, houses many of the museum's administrative functions.
- **The Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation Center for Conservation**, a 17,000 square feet facility designed by Lake/Flato Architects to house studios, laboratories and offices for the Museum's conservators and scientists.

In addition to the Susan and Faye S. Sarofim Campus, MFAH includes:

- **Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens** features one of the nation's finest collections of American decorative art and furniture. This architecturally significant former home of Life Trustee Ima Hogg is situated on 14 acres of formal and woodland gardens five miles from the main museum campus and functions as a historic house museum documenting American decorative and fine arts from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. It is esteemed as one of the nation's premier museums of decorative arts.
- **Rienzi** is the former residence of Carroll Sterling Masterson and Harris Masterson III situated on 4.4 acres in Homewood Addition surrounded by Houston's River Oaks neighborhood. The structure was designed in 1952 by John F. Staub, the same architect who designed Bayou Bend. Rienzi is located four miles from the main museum campus and functions as a historic house museum setting for European decorative arts.
- **Park 288 Storage Facility** sits on 14 acres 6 miles south of the Sarofim Campus, comprising a new 65,000 tilt-wall storage building and several landscape facilities.

MFAH employs over 663 permanent and temporary staff, while 400 docents support the educational mission and 1,500 volunteers support a broad range of MFAH activities. The COO has a full-time staff of about 300, with departments that include: Engineering and Facilities, Horticulture and Landscape, Housekeeping & Parking, and Security. MFAH's overall annual budget is approximately \$70 million, and the COO has an annual budget of \$16 million. Certain decisions might increase the scope of COO responsibilities.

In addition to proactively keeping the Director updated on the status of MFAH facilities and operations, the COO closely collaborates with the CFO, Chief Development Officer, Chief HR and

Diversity Officer and others on a daily basis. In particular, the COO views the Directors of Bayou Bend, Rienzi, and the Glassell School as customers, and a strong customer service sensibility informs the interactions of the operations team with other members of the team. In addition to other project, a significant \$3-5M renovation of the banks of Bayou Bend's Buffalo Bayou will commence in the next years. This will require close coordination with City and County departments, and selection and direct management of engineers and contractors.

The COO manages, maintains and secures all physical facilities, buildings, gardens and support systems used by curators, educators, staff & contractors, and MFAH patrons & visitors of all ages.

The COO manages a team of accomplished and dedicated operations professionals functioning as the connective tissue of the institution, whose irreplaceable value is in an uncanny ability to be taken for granted by MFAH professionals and visitors.

BASIC FUNCTION

Reporting to the Director, the COO is responsible for MFAH's operations infrastructure, capital projects, security, diverse services provided to museum staff and patrons, and vendor & contract compliance functions related to the above.

The COO must possess strong experience in project planning, budgeting, definition of critical path dependencies, organizational design, and project accounting. Some projects will involve a form of matrix management and budgeting across departments functions, with budgeting structured by the finance function to roll up to particular projects or departments. The COO must combine an understanding of project accounting with an ability to bring structure and controls to ambiguity, and a high degree of emotional intelligence in service to the differing constituencies supported by the Operations department.

The COO will function as the operations management extension of the Director, with the understanding that the Director will set and periodically adjust the organization's course and the COO will translate these plans into actions taken by various departments reporting to the COO.

The COO will catalyze, coordinate and implement change across the organization in accordance with the Director planning for MFAH; proactively collaborate with the Director and other members of the leadership team, various partners, consultants and vendors; and make the MFAH a hospitable, safe and enjoyable environment for all who support and enjoy the facility.

INITIAL PRIORITIES

- Understand the Museum of Fine Arts Houston as a whole— its history, culture, structure, facilities, budgets, finances, revenue streams, collections, exhibitions, programs, projects, visitors, volunteers, docents, and the surrounding communities, including individuals and organizations served through programs and MFAH partners; establish productive and collaborative working relationships with colleagues, board members, patrons, volunteers, partners and vendors;
- Review the current state of play of the museum's operations, taking charge of in-process departmental work; provide for a secure, safe, high quality working and operating environment for staff and patrons, and for timely, efficient, accurate and effective workflows, reports, controls, etc; with the CFO, implement responsible planning and budgeting, strong cost controls, and accurate reporting systems on all operations;

- Develop an in-depth understanding of the Director’s intent for MFAH as a visual arts platform; partner with the Director to transform his vision and ideas into discrete actionable projects with budgets, assigned staff and subcontractor resources, discrete measurable objectives and timeframes; manage day-to-day activities and implementation of special projects;
- Serve as a visible proponent for MFAH locally and more broadly, assuring that the interests of MFAH are advanced and fully understood, and are at the forefront of museum practice and innovation; appropriately manage various relationships with oversight agencies, partners, vendors and contractors; work closely with the Director to advance MFAH as an institution of unique importance within the museum field.

IDEAL EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The ideal candidate should have the following experience and qualifications:

- Proven managerial, problem-solving and planning capabilities and significant financial, administrative, human resources, and day-to-day operating responsibility in a museum, experiential learning, living history museum, university, hospital, or similar institution of significant size and scope; prior experience as a facilities or operations professional with a significant facilities management experience in a university, living history museum like Colonial Williamsburg, large-scale museum-like institution, hospital, performing arts center, botanical garden, etc; and/or experience as a Museum Director or Deputy Director or equivalent is desirable;
- Advantageous would be a strong, hands-on understanding of museum workflows, the challenges of moving and safeguarding exhibited objects, project accounting, project budgeting/planning/management; an understanding of the strategies and mechanics of managing the operating expenses of a museum institution undergoing significant transformation would be useful; facility and comfort with technology; knowledge of and experience with project accounting other applications systems is highly desirable;
- A mature level of judgment and decision-making in a changing, forward-thinking operating and customer service environment; exercises tact, skill and diplomacy when engaging in negotiations with colleagues, other entities, officials, contractors, employees and their representatives; formulates and expresses ideas concisely, clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing; the ability to guide and counsel colleagues, partners, employees and others;
- A high energy level with a high degree of patience, attention to detail, good humor and fortitude in managing relationships with various parties within a museum context, including with vendors and other partners; an ambassador for the MFAH coordinating neighborhood relationships within the Museum District;
- Demonstrated ability to forge mutually-respectful and effective relationships with a diverse group of personalities in a collegial and cooperative manner, including staff members at all levels, members of the Board, volunteers, staff, supporters, auditors, accrediting orgs, government officials, vendors, etc;
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills, including the means to address issues in non-confrontational and non-polarizing ways, but nevertheless with

determination; the presence and credibility to serve as an effective spokesperson for the MFAH, especially in operational and financial matters.

- A team builder and mentor with outstanding human qualities; one who is straightforward, flexible, shares information easily, listens as well as gives advice, and respects the abilities of others; someone who projects trustworthiness, integrity, and solidity and guides others in a similar vein; the ability to coach others, leaving those being mentored free to deliver while the COO monitors.
- Results-oriented, adept at seeing the big-picture, planning, prioritizing, organizing, and following through; a hard worker with a high energy level; emotionally mature with a sense of humor and an ability to maintain balance and perspective.

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