



**HANDS ON!**  
children's museum



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Recruitment Profile

# OUR MISSION

Hands On! inspires and empowers children ages one to ten to realize their full potential in the areas of STEM, arts, and culture through the power of interactive play.

# OUR VISION

To inspire the next generation of thinkers, makers, and problem-solvers by championing playful learning that is accessible to all children.

## THE OPPORTUNITY



The Hands On! Children’s Museum Board of Directors is seeking a visionary, collaborative leader to guide the museum into its next chapter as it approaches its 20th anniversary. This is a unique opportunity to shape the future of a beloved community institution dedicated to learning through play.

The ideal candidate is an innovative and relationship-driven professional with demonstrated experience building strong community partnerships, securing philanthropic and earned revenue, and advancing creative, mission-focused programming within a nonprofit, educational, or children’s museum environment.



Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Executive Director provides strategic leadership, thoughtful planning, and effective management to ensure the museum’s long-term sustainability and growth. The Executive Director leads and inspires the Museum’s leadership team, cultivating a culture of collaboration, excellence, and innovation.

At the heart of this role is a deep commitment to strengthening community through play—ensuring that all children in our region have access to joyful learning experiences that support lifelong opportunity and well-being. The Executive Director will work closely with public, private, and nonprofit partners to advance this vision and expand the museum’s impact across the region.

# OUR COMMUNITY



Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the City of Hendersonville sits just 22 miles south of Asheville and serves as a gateway to the natural beauty and cultural richness of Western North Carolina. Hendersonville has a population of roughly 16,000 residents, and maintains the charm of a small mountain town while sitting within a broader network of interconnected Western North Carolina communities totaling over 400,000 people across the region.



Hendersonville and its surrounding counties function collectively as Western North Carolina's center for Healthcare, Education, Industry, Agriculture, and Tourism. The region is renowned for its natural beauty, offering mountains, waterfalls, scenic byways, and thousands of acres of protected public lands. Its moderate climate, access to nature, medical services, cultural offerings, and growing economy make it an excellent place to live, work, retire, and raise a family.



# ABOUT OUR MUSEUM



Hands On! began as the vision of a local mother who, after visiting a children's museum in the early 2000s, imagined bringing a similar hands-on learning experience to children and families in Hendersonville. In 2004, a feasibility study confirmed strong community enthusiasm and support for the idea, leading to the museum's incorporation as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The following year, Hands On! launched a pilot exhibit that welcomed more than 3,100 visitors in just 44 days—clear evidence that the community was ready for a place dedicated to playful, interactive learning.

Inspired by this response, the Board of Directors secured a 5,600-square-foot unit within the former Belk-Simpson Department Store and Rosdon Mall in historic Downtown Hendersonville. After a year of renovations and exhibit development, Hands On! officially opened in 2007. Following its 10th anniversary, the organization rebranded from *Hands On! – A Child's Gallery* to *Hands On! Children's Museum*, reflecting its evolving vision and impact.



In 2018, the organization launched a new strategic and master planning process that set the stage for substantial growth. This momentum culminated in a capital campaign initiated in 2020 and successfully completed in 2022, transforming Hands On! into a world-class children's museum.

Today, Hands On! spans 20,000 square feet, featuring 13,500 square feet of immersive STEAM-themed exhibits. Annual visitation has grown from 28,000 to 60,000, supported by an operating budget nearing \$1 million. The building features an independently owned and operated coffee shop, adjacent to the museum's main entrance. The lower-level of the building, currently leased as office suites for small businesses, has the capacity to support a future expansion of the museum.



Since its opening in 2007, Hands On! has benefited from consistent, professional leadership, having had only two Executive Directors. A leader among the region's most popular and impactful museums, Hands On! is poised for continued, sustainable growth as it nears its 20th anniversary.

# THE NEXT LEADER

The next Executive Director of the Hands On! Children's Museum will provide innovative leadership, effective planning, and resourceful management to sustain and grow the organization. **These responsibilities include:**

- ✔ Serving as the museum's chief fundraiser by leading all development efforts in partnership with the Board of Directors.
- ✔ Leading the development and implementation of the Museum's next strategic plan and operational strategy.
- ✔ Providing leadership and support to the board, staff, volunteers, and other constituents in achieving the organization's mission and vision.
- ✔ Supporting and enhancing a positive Museum culture that attracts and retains top talent at all levels, whether staff, consultants, board members, volunteers, or community partners.
- ✔ Maintaining highly efficient Museum operations that maximize resources, build opportunities, and further the Museum's mission.
- ✔ Representing the Museum positively at public events throughout the community, region, and state.
- ✔ Overseeing all facility operations to ensure the building, grounds, environments, and exhibits are maintained to the highest standards.
- ✔ Growing strategic partnerships throughout the region to further the Museum's mission.
- ✔ Working with the Museum's leadership team to implement the Museum's mission.
- ✔ Overseeing the Museum's daily financial operations, including cash handling and overall fiscal position.



# POSITION PRIORITIES

The Executive Director's core priorities will be to develop staff excellence, engage and enrich our community, and operate with financial sustainability. **Specific areas of priority include:**

## **ENSURE SMOOTH, HIGH-QUALITY DAILY MUSEUM OPERATIONS**

Maintain a safe, welcoming, and mission-centered environment for visitors while overseeing staff, policies, and facility management.

## **LEAD STRATEGIC PLANNING TO SUPPORT FUTURE GROWTH**

Facilitate a focused, time-bound planning effort that clarifies near-term goals and sets a 2-3 year roadmap for financial resilience, program growth, facility stewardship, and talent development.

## **PROVIDE STRONG FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP**

Manage the operating budget, cash flow, payroll, and financial reporting in partnership with the Treasurer and Bookkeeper.

## **SUSTAIN PROGRAM AND EXHIBIT EXCELLENCE**

Oversee ongoing programs, events, and exhibit development to ensure they remain safe, engaging, inclusive, accessible to children of all lived experiences, and fully aligned with the Museum's mission.

## **STRENGTHEN FUNDRAISING AND EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Serve as the public face of the Museum; nurture partnerships, engage donors, pursue grants, and coordinate the development of the Museum's annual fundraising strategy in collaboration with the Board of Directors.

## **INCREASE IMPACT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.**

Engage the Board of Directors by leveraging their strengths and support ongoing board development and recruitment to maintain a skilled, diverse, and engaged governing body.



# CANDIDATE PROFILE

## THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE WILL POSSESS MANY OF THE FOLLOWING COMPETENCIES:

- Inspirational and Effective Leadership
- Entrepreneurial Spirit
- Emotional Intelligence
- Integrity Without Compromise
- Strategic Thinking
- Relationship and Team Building Skills

## QUALIFICATIONS:

While an advanced degree is valued, experienced candidates from nonprofits, museums, or business management backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Highly preferred candidates will have at least five years of senior-level leadership experience in a cultural institution such as a children's museum, science museum, or similarly complex nonprofit—with demonstrated success in fundraising, marketing, communications, strategic planning, STEAM program development, and board engagement.

## PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

This position is required to stand and walk for long periods of time within a fast-paced and moderately loud environment. Must be able to sit; talk or hear, both in person and by telephone; use hands to handle or feel objects or controls; reach with hands and arms. Ability to stoop, kneel, bend, crouch and lift up to 50 pounds is required.

## COMPENSATION:

The salary range for this position is comparable with similar sized children's museums in North Carolina. Benefits include an annual performance-based bonus, health/wellness stipend, downtown parking permit, paid time off, and a collaborative and joyful workplace culture.

## APPLICATION PROCESS:

In one document please submit through email a cover letter, resume, salary expectations, and how you found out about the position, to [director@handsonwnc.org](mailto:director@handsonwnc.org). This position will remain open until filled. **No phone calls, please.**

**The first review of applications is scheduled for May 12, 2026.** Selected semi-finalists may be asked to give a brief presentation to the Board of Directors as part of the interview process. Finalists will be required to provide a minimum of three professional references, and a Criminal Background and Drug Screening will be conducted before a final offer of employment is made.

*Hands On! Children's Museum is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants for employment. We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic protected by applicable laws. We believe in fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace where all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. The statements within this recruitment profile are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by this position, and are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and skills required of personnel so classified.*