



Executive Director Opportunity Guide



www.storycatcherstheatre.org

About Storycatchers Theatre



Storycatchers Theatre (SCT) guides young people to transform their life experiences into powerful musical theatre, developing the courage and vision to become leaders and mentors. By creating support for youth within the criminal justice system, Storycatchers prepares them to change their lives and emerge successfully from court involvement. With numerous dedicated resources, SCT strives to meet the complex needs of adolescents and young adults who have been touched by the justice system.

Youth impacted by the carceral state emerge from communities that have been shaped by decades of structural racism and generational poverty. They have enormous potential but face numerous obstacles to successful reentry upon release. SCT prepares them for self-advocacy and provides tools for them to envision and pursue productive futures of their choosing through a healing-centered creative youth development methodology that has been developed in collaboration with allies in the juvenile justice, trauma therapy, and advocacy communities.

SCT began working with justice-impacted youth in 1990 and, in 2002, initiated a remarkable, longstanding partnership with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ). Through the relationship with IDJJ, SCT established its nationally recognized, award-winning process of delivering creative youth development programs through a trauma lens. SCT has been conducting year-round programs in three separate facilities since 2010. In 2014, recognizing the need for comprehensive post-release support, the organization expanded into employment for young people returning home to Chicago with the Changing Voices performing arts jobs program.

All SCT programs guide participating youth to create meaningful, entertaining performances that amplify and elevate youth voices; and further their social and emotional development to successfully navigate court involvement and reentry. The organization's post-release jobs program, Changing Voices, employs cohorts of up to 21 young people, ages 17–24, for eight months. The program includes case management with the SCT licensed social workers as part of the performing arts curriculum, leveraging Storycatchers' healing-centered creative youth development methodology to help young people to develop the life and job skills required to navigate reentry successfully.

SCT by the numbers — 2019:

- 184 detained and incarcerated youth participated in programs.
 - 53 young people navigated reentry through employment.
 - 203 detained and incarcerated youth engaged as audience members.
 - 732 at-risk youth in the community became involved as audience members.
 - 2858 families and community members experienced youth-created performances, many followed by an ensemble-guided, interactive discussion to process the real-life stories and discuss positive alternatives or choices made by characters in the show.
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The COVID-19 pandemic propelled SCT to rethink and successfully recreate ways youth and audiences are engaged. All involved look forward to 2023 and the multiple platforms for sharing youth-created work and the empowerment of the youth in sharing their stories.

The Opportunity: Executive Director

Marking leadership's commitment and identity as a youth development organization that uses theatre as a vehicle for supporting the healing and growth of youth, SCT's next Executive Director (ED/Director) will reinforce a sense of stability after the planned leadership transitions of the past two years. The next Director will inspire an outlook that embraces and invites all stakeholders to contribute their voices regarding SCT's future direction and possibilities.

The Board of Directors (Board) strongly believes that the incoming Director will guide and develop, along with the Storycatchers Theatre staff, the next era of SCT. This new leader will be a passionate advocate, vision-oriented, justice-centered leader, and connector of resources and people supporting youth in the criminal justice system, ages 13-24. Building upon the organization's strong brand presence (like no other in this space), the ED will be tasked with collaborating to create a new vision and strategy, collaboratively with the Board and staff, for programs and impact, guiding SCT's next chapter of excellence in youth empowerment.

The Executive Director provides senior leadership to all internal and external functions of the organization with an annual budget of just under \$2 million. SCT's next leader will drive strategic efforts to mobilize the Board, recruit and educate donors/prospective investors, and empower the leadership team and staff (four direct reports/25 total staff) to continue delivering impactful programs, all with a lens of and commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity. The next Director will successfully oversee the implementation of all programs, ensure responsible management of all operation functions, including finance and human resources, and enhance the public image of SCT and the youth it empowers.

Meade Palidofsky, who served as the organization's founder and artistic director for nearly 40 years, transitioned from SCT in 2021. This was a planned but significant change for the organization, which led to an intentional shift from a dual leadership structure (Artistic Director + Executive Director) often found in theatre companies to a structure with a singular executive leader/Executive Director (ED). Priya Shah, current ED, has been with the organization since 2016 and has been a strong and consistent strength during this planned transition. She will step down from the role in 2022 to pave the way for the next era of leadership to take Storycatchers Theatre into its next strategic future.



Performance Expectations

Vision and Advocacy

- Champion the organization's mission, vision, and values. Promote equity and an inclusive-driven environment. Remain current with service trends to ensure the ever-changing and diverse population of youth continues to receive quality services and programs. Have a mindset towards growth when appropriate to achieve these goals.
- Leverage visibility within the Youth Empowerment and Arts space to encourage the general public to experience and support SCT and the youth it serves; expand outreach into the community through multiple channels.
- Engage with the juvenile justice community to support the current direction towards a community-based, rehabilitative approach to juvenile justice.
- Lead, in partnership with the Board, SCT through its next stage of strategic growth, planning, and development. Recommend and implement decided-upon measurable objectives, strategies, budgets, funding goals, and timelines. Create a safe space for program staff and youth participants in contributing to the deliberate direction and outcomes.
- Prioritize the importance of ensuring the infrastructure and related employee compensation/policies are contemporary and designed to attract and retain a high-caliber workforce.
- Provide collaborative leadership in maintaining a positive and productive working relationship among the Board, staff, funders, partner organizations, and volunteers. Build, foster, and support a strong leadership team.
- Manage advocacy relationships, including advocating for youth within the system and increasing workforce opportunities with background-friendly employers. Serve as a champion of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the workplace, programming, and in partnership opportunities.
- Practice a proactive leadership approach. Commit to producing results through collaborative discussions and respectful debate to ensure SCT's best interests are achieved.

Revenue Development and Philanthropic Strategy

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- Steward consistent relationships with public leaders to ensure SCT representation and revenue expands in the:
 - state and county juvenile systems;
 - post-release network;
 - state, and local government; and
 - broader public.
- Provide top leadership for the organization's philanthropic efforts. In conjunction with SCT's Director of Development, maximizing community partnerships, cultivating top donors and community leaders, and developing and implementing fundraising plans that support SCT priorities.
- Work with the Board to ensure a culture of philanthropy and community partnership. Foster Board involvement in fundraising and donor stewardship.
- Cultivate investors and ambassadors that will extend the reach and message of SCT to all types of donors and supports, including but not limited to individuals, institutions, foundations, corporate social responsibility leaders, and potential third-party supporters.



Performance Expectations



Board Relations, Partnerships, and Community Building

- Provide the Board and its committees with consistent and timely communication and reporting, and from appropriate staff, with the current work, upcoming activities, successes, and any challenges of the organization to ensure the Board can provide necessary oversight in its governance and leadership role.
- Utilize the Board member's expertise and resources to supplement the ongoing operating needs of SCT.
- Support the Board Resource Committee to identify, recruit, and onboard new prospective Board members.
- Develop and oversee an outreach plan aligned with the strategic plan, making SCT the recognized leader for empowering youth to share their life stories.
- Promote the mission, programs, and values at conferences, discussion panels, media, etc.
- Coordinate with the staff and Board to cultivate and sustain an existing, and growing, network of support on behalf of youth in the system, including workforce partnerships that create pathways to post-program employment for youth.
- Cultivate corporate partnerships, in a cohesive strategy with Board and staff, that provide strategic support and opportunities for youth interactions and event sponsorships.
- Participate in task forces and forums to increase SCT's visibility.

Management and Operations

- Ensure the future of SCT grows from a well-developed infrastructure and streamlined operations. Accordingly, develop and implement measurable objectives, budgets, funding strategies, and timelines. Establish control mechanisms to ensure established systems are consistently followed or revised, as necessary.
- Create the annual operating budget for Board approval before the end of the current fiscal year. Regularly, at least every month, monitor budgets, P&L, and cash flow statements, to ensure the organization operates within budget guidelines. Report status of finances to appropriate Board Committees (Finance/Executive/etc.) at regularly scheduled Board committee meetings.
- Manage the staff through the lens of flexibility, openness to suggestions, and the ability to resolve/mitigate conflict.
- Develop programs with SCT directors to provide staff with opportunities for essential self-care and open/safe staff communication.
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and efficient use of all resources per the regulations and guidelines attached to ethical funding streams and best practices.
- Oversee the annual Audit, interface with the Audit Team and Board to ensure reporting, process findings, and implement recommended controls.

The Qualified Candidate



Storycatchers Theatre seeks an Executive Director responsible for strategic planning, organizational development, financial sustainability, key partnerships, and stability of the organization (day-to-day and long-term). The ED reports to SCT's Board and directly supervises four positions: Director of Arts Education Programs, Director of Development, Director of HR and Operations, and the Changing Voices Case Manager.

In addition to the leadership and managerial duties, the next ED should be prepared to show up filled with energy, empathy, and compassion. This means showing up when there is joy and when there is sorrow — to program performances, graduations, organizational benefits, networking events, and personal life events of SCT youth. Sadly, this will include showing up to funerals for youth who are lost to street violence or at a program site when there is a challenging event that makes staff and youth feel less secure. SCT program staff meet youth impacted by the carceral state wherever they are in the system, and the team needs — and deserves — a leader who will show up and support them so that they can show up, support, and empower the SCT young people. The ED must advocate for the humane treatment of youth in the criminal justice system.

Specific Requirements Include:

- Unwavering commitment to the mission of SCT and its core values, with a proven track record of managing the strategic, operational, and financial aspects of an organization with a similar size, geography, and scope.
- Well-developed and strong business acumen with the ability to work effectively and collaboratively with the SCT Board.
- Proven ability to build strong external relationships with public leadership, partner organizations, youth, their families, and other stakeholders.
- Strong analytic and strategic-thinking skills, with a demonstrated ability to create, implement, and monitor complex plans and then translate those plans into goals and concrete strategies.
- Sustained success in building strong and productive work teams focused on mentoring and nurturing staff development with demonstrated ability to manage a collaborative team.
- Track record in financial management, stewardship, and strategies to successfully increase revenue (multiple types).
- Non-profit management experience desired, with preferred work experience in youth development, youth empowerment, theatre, and/or arts education.
- Fiercely organized with impeccable attention to detail, including the ability to make confident, reasoned, independent decisions. Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Career track record that shows stability with an organization and capacity to develop and nurture relationships culminating in overall success.
- A minimum of 5 years of progressive experience in leadership and management, with documented ability and at least 3 years of managing staff and leading teams.

How To Apply

Storycatchers Theatre (SCT) maintains a strong policy of equal employment opportunity. SCT seeks to achieve equal opportunity for all staff members as articulated by federal, state, and local laws. SCT actively seeks to recruit and employs individuals without regard to race, creed, color, religion, physical or mental disability, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status, national origin, ancestry, age, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition, genetic information, arrest record, order of protection status, military status, citizenship status, parental status, lawful source of income, credit history, or any other status protected under applicable law. Storycatchers Theatre seeks to recruit employees with demographic characteristics that reflect the clients we serve. Our equal employment opportunity philosophy applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training, promotion, transfer, job benefits, pay, and dismissal.

Compensation has recently been benchmarked by the Board and KEES and is competitive, and at market rate. Hiring is expected in the range of \$115,000 – \$125,000. In addition to salary, the Executive Director will have a 100% paid enrollment for specified health insurance plans for employees, a 403(b) plan, a generous policy regarding PTO, sick leave, and all federal holidays including a paid two-week winter break, and professional development support by mutual agreement with the Board.

This role operates from the offices in River North (Chicago). It is expected to frequently travel to program site locations in the Chicago metro area with occasional out-of-town travel. SCT currently operates with a remote work policy, and the new ED will help redefine the collective work environment. As a full-time, exempt executive role, evening and weekend work is occasionally required as the shifting needs of the organization often determine the schedule.

SCT is a smoke and drug-free environment and requires proof of vaccination against COVID-19.

APPLY HERE



To assure confidential tracking of all applicants, no applications will be accepted via email. **ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.** All candidate submitted materials and credentials will be reviewed for consistency and accuracy. Candidates can expect that KEES will verify employment/academic/background information both in the screening process and for the finalist(s) in a formal background check.

This search is being managed by Heather Eddy, President and CEO, and [Abby Johnson](#), Project Manager of KEES. Questions may be addressed to Ms. Johnson.

About KEES

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