madison children's museum

POSITION TITLE: Director of Exhibits
DEPARTMENT: Exhibits
SUPERVISOR: Co-CEOs
FLSA STATUS: Full-time, Exempt
COMPENSATION: $75,000-$95,000, depending upon experience

About Madison Children's Museum

Play is a vital part of childhood development and central to our mission. Since 1980, Madison Children's Museum (MCM) has connected children with their families, their communities, and the world beyond through discovery, learning, and creative play. MCM's unique programs and custom, artist-designed exhibits are widely recognized for excellence, leading to the museum's regular ranking among the top children's museums in the country. Our team is composed of dedicated, professional individuals who take play and living our organizational values very seriously. We come from amazingly diverse backgrounds and are committed to the ideals of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion in everything we do, and in modeling environmental sustainability through our work.

Summary of job scope and responsibilities

The Director of Exhibits is a key leadership position responsible for overseeing the planning, interpretation, design, and implementation of rich, artful interactive experiences that communicate MCM's brand and values through exhibits on site at the museum and its outreach exhibits, partnerships, and external collaborations. The Director of Exhibits creates a climate for creativity, collaboration, and innovation in exhibit design that supports young children and families. This position is building on a rich history of leadership in sustainable exhibit design and collaborations with artists.

The Director of Exhibits oversees strategy, project development, community engagement, design, budgets, organization, fabrication, installation, evaluation, maintenance, and dissemination of all exhibition projects, including internal, contracted, exhibit partnerships, and new capital projects, to meet the museum's mission, and strategic priorities. The Director of Exhibits is responsible for coordination and oversight of exhibit research, exhibit sales and rentals, and external projects, working with a wide array of local artists, designers, fabricators, researchers, and community partners.

The Director of Exhibits is a member of the six-person senior leadership team, and directly supervises the exhibit department, helping advance the institutional vision that supports strategies for excellent visitor experiences in exhibitions. The Director of Exhibits works directly with MCM leadership, board, and staff, as well as external stakeholders, designers, donors, project developers, and key project partners as needed to accomplish goals.

Essential Duties

Exhibit development, design, fabrication, installation and maintenance

- Oversees exhibit development, design, fabrication, installation, and maintenance direction for all MCM's exhibit-related experiences, on- and off-site projects, creating compelling educational exhibit experiences for MCM's core audience.
- Leads the in-house exhibit team and external exhibit partners for new and expanded exhibit experiences to advance the mission of MCM.
- Hires, trains, and supervises exhibits department staff and contracted fabricators/artists.
- Writes compelling exhibit narratives, summaries, and staff training guides to relay project big ideas, goals, objectives, and outcomes.
- Oversees a high standard of excellence for exhibit care and maintenance and ensures that MCM's exhibits are in excellent working condition.
- Coordinates the design and production of design-related assets for exhibits and signage with Graphic Designer and Visual Storyteller, and contracted graphic designers as needed. This includes the development of graphic identity for all new exhibits and outreach materials, as well as the routine maintenance of graphic assets, environmental graphics, and signage.
- Leads staff in developing plans and making decisions about temporary exhibits and experiences.
- Supervises, mentors, and leads staff in optimizing the exhibit experience for visitors, working closely with the Visitor Services and Education departments on training and exhibit evaluation.
- Works with internal and external UW-Evaluation teams to ensure that MCM's exhibit goals and objectives are measured, analyzed, and documented, and that positive feedback loops help improve institutional, exhibit, and visitor learning outcomes.
- Creates and coordinates diverse exhibit advisory committees for new projects, helps MCM conduct community listening sessions, and incorporates community/staff feedback into project plans.

- With the Advancement team, collaborates on funding strategies and messaging to attract, retain, and increase donor and prospect support for exhibit experiences.
- With the Education and Advancement teams, supports the development of education programs, visitor experience goals, and communication strategies to achieve successful audience impact.
- With the Facilities teams, coordinates exhibit and facility maintenance and repairs.
- Ensures that MCM maintains a strong exhibit maintenance database, up-to-date and accurate.
- Works closely with the Madison arts community to foster new artistic partnerships and collaborations and build on MCM's rich tradition of artist-made exhibits.
- Creates monthly reports to document departmental activities that advance the museum's agenda.
- Provides a high level of support to internal and external customers.

Museum leadership

- Works within the museum's strategic goals to advance the museum's work in the community.
- As a member of MCM's senior leadership team, contributes to developing and advancing the museum's strategic plan, annual priorities, strategies, and budgets to advance the mission and through the museum's exhibit experiences and the built environment.
- Creates, oversees, and manages annual budget, external exhibit project budgets, and capital project budgets, in partnership with the finance team.
- Represents MCM in local, regional, and national exhibit-related leadership projects, and advances MCM's visibility through these partnerships.
- Exhibits exemplary leadership qualities that foster an environment for attracting, developing, and retaining quality staff, board, and external partners.
- Represents MCM positively in the community through participation in our community partners' events, as available.
- Represents the exhibit program on board and staff committees as needed.
- Other duties and special projects as assigned.

Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's Degree or relevant work experience required.

- Master's Degree preferred in visual/design fields, including architecture, industrial design, exhibition design, sculpture, art, or related field.
- 10 + years of progressive responsibility in these fields, including extensive experience with project management, overseeing successful teams and external partners.
- Commitment to supporting MCM's Mission, Vision, Values, Access & Inclusion and Sustainability principles.
- Ability to work cooperatively with Co-CEOs, staff, community, outside contractors and Board of Directors.
- Proven ability to work as a team player with diverse groups of people and excellence in managing and developing teams.
- Excellent interpersonal skills. Ability to work with staff, senior leadership team, Co-CEOs, Board members, donors, project partners, and others with poise, to garner respect, to demonstrate confidence and communicate with candor.
- Superior communications (both written and verbal) skills, including public speaking experience.
- Highly motivated, action-oriented self-starter with strong project management and organizational skills, especially planning and coordination. Ability to excel in a fast-paced environment.
- Ability to develop, track, and monitor multiple project budgets simultaneously, and prioritize workflow for the team.
- Excellent time and task management skills as evidenced by a proven ability to efficiently and effectively handle multiple tasks at the same time as well as appropriate delegation.
- High level of integrity, professional maturity and sound judgment.
- Availability to work outside of traditional business hours, to travel locally and occasionally regionally/nationally.
- Excellent skills and experience with Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook; AutoCAD; Adobe Creative Suite, or other design visualization, project management and related software.

Desired Qualifications

- Experience overseeing exhibits at a children's museum or science center.
- Decision-making skills in changing environment; ability to adapt, plan for and manage multiple projects in a fast-paced setting.
- Passion and experience embedding sustainability principles into all exhibit projects.

- Sense of humor, creativity, and an appreciation of the role of collaboration in building community.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Ability to communicate with poise, to garner respect, to demonstrate confidence and communicate with candor.
- Knowledge of innovative use of integrative technology in public settings is a plus.

Additional knowledge and skills

- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Detailed oriented time management and organizational skills.
- Experience managing multiple simultaneous projects with strict deadlines.
- Ability to work across departments with a variety of staff members.
- Flexibility to adapt quickly to new opportunities and challenges.

Working Conditions and Atmosphere

The Director of Exhibits works collaboratively on a team and independently with minimal supervision. The job requires physical stamina and strength, the ability to lift 50 pounds, stand on a ladder, and work on exhibit installation teams, working in office, museum, and fabrication settings. While performing duties of this job, the employee is required to use close vision, regularly use hands and body to test and experiment with exhibit prototypes. Work will often be performed with a variety of competing deadlines. Regular office hours, evening, and weekend hours are occasionally required. The employee must be able to fulfill all essential duties with or without reasonable accommodation. This job description is not intended to cover or contain a comprehensive list of all activities, duties, or responsibilities that are required of the employee. Duties, responsibilities, and activities may change, or new ones may be assigned at any time with or without notice.

Reasons to join our team

- Flexible schedule to balance work and play
- Collaborative, creative team bringing learning and community to families
- Convenient downtown location on the Capitol Square, good bike access and public transportation
- Health, vision, and dental insurance. Participation in our offered employee benefit plans is effective on the first of the month following the date of hire.
- Life Insurance
- Long-term disability insurance

- Paid time off (vacation, sick time, paid holidays)
- Participation in 401(K) Retirement Plan after two months of employment with a 2% match.
- Free MCM membership with reciprocal benefits at thousands of other museums
- Free admission to select MCM events and parties, including Adult Swim

Disclaimer

The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by people assigned to this position. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and skills required of personnel so classified. Madison Children's Museum is an Affirmative Action Plan/Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of sex, age, race, color, religion, marital or student status, disability/handicap, national origin or ancestry, income level or source of income, arrest or conviction record less than honorable discharge, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or political beliefs. Offers of employment are contingent upon the completion and approval of a background check.

To Apply

Email cover letter, resume, three references, and portfolio link/website, if available, in one PDF file to mcmjobs@madisonchildrensmuseum.org.

For best consideration, apply by September 30, 2026.

Find this job posting and more information at madisonchildrensmuseum.org/about/work-at-mcm/employment/

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