



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OPPORTUNITY GUIDE

www.acornlive.org



The Acorn's Mission

To offer a broad range of high-quality arts and education programming that nurtures cultural experience, participation and community engagement among residents and visitors of all ages, and enhances the economic vitality of the region.

ABOUT THE ACORN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS (AKA THE ACORN)

The Acorn is the creative and performing arts epicenter of Harbor Country. Located in Three Oaks, Michigan, it draws audiences from Chicago, northern Indiana, and southwest Michigan. It is supported and managed by a passionate team of staff members, Board members, volunteers, sponsors, donors and community members.

With a budget around \$1M, The Acorn curates, highlights and supports local talent while also welcoming renowned performers such as Graham Nash, Jeff Daniels, and BoDeans, to name a few. Every performance year is filled with a breadth of diverse programming that ensures no two events are

alike. Performances span from Americana to indie/alternative to world music, from gut-splitting comedy to feel-good entertainment. Local stars premiere new works. Regional performers, playwrights, and songwriters springboard their careers. The unique, intimate environment of The Acorn bonds performers and audiences; it is a reputation it proudly fosters. Yet The Acorn is more than a building or a stage. It is a dynamic collaboration with nonprofits, schools, and area theater troupes. In the midst of the pandemic, The Acorn showcased its creativity with *Acorn Anywhere!*, a series of outdoor events hosted in and around Harbor Country and beyond, bringing performers and

audiences together for experiences that move and enlighten, bring joy and discovery, and create moments like no other. In 2021, planning is underway to offer traditional performances, when conditions are safe, and blend in new ways of promoting innovative material and arts programming.

As many good stories begin, The Acorn starts in 2002 with a writer, Chicagoan Kim Clark. Clark needed space for workshopping his theater projects. He connected with David Fink, a Chicago manufacturing executive. They learned that 70 miles from downtown Chicago, the historic Warren Featherbone Company building in Three Oaks was for sale.



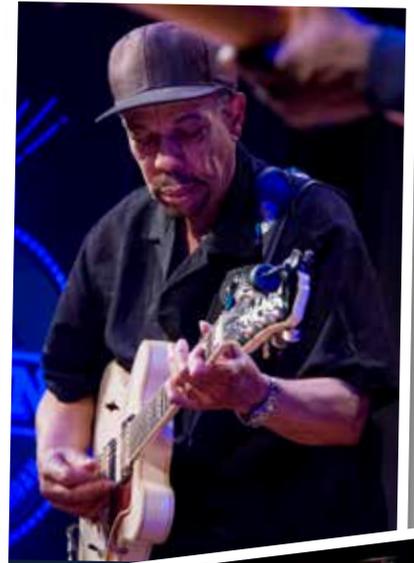
As new owners, Fink and Clark gutted the building and constructed an industrial-chic theater and loft-style apartment. The theater officially opened in 2003. Acorn buzz and creative energy were rampant those early years. Chicago and local talent took to the stage. The theater and apartment became regionally renowned as an art incubator for theater pieces, books, and a podcast. The New York Times ran a story about The Acorn and the renovation was featured on HGTV's show [Building Character](#).

In recent years, The Acorn community believed there was more they could do to enrich the performing arts. In 2015, the enterprise went from private ownership to becoming a nonprofit arts organization: The Acorn Center

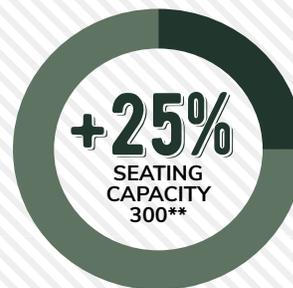
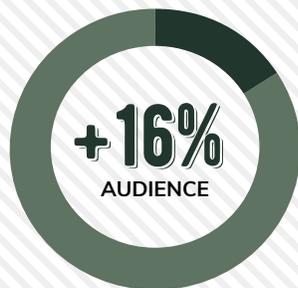
for the Performing Arts. This opened the doors to fresh ideas, diverse programs, and exciting collaborations. In a typical year, The Acorn offers over 140 shows.

2020 did not stop The Acorn. With 10 outdoor shows, online performances, grant activity and donor generosity, the Board was able to preserve most of the financial reserves.

Within the next year, The Acorn will further secure its future by becoming the owner of the current theater building. With that investment comes the theater's bar and the beautiful loft apartment on the second and third floors, which is a [VRBO rental](#). The future holds endless opportunities for The Acorn.



2019 vs 2018



***\$1,000,000**
TOTAL REVENUE IN 2019

****2020 THEATRE RECONFIGURATION**
EXPANDS SEATING CAPACITY TO 340



THE OPPORTUNITY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Acorn seeks an experienced and influential executive leader as its next Executive Director, who will provide strategic direction for the organization, strengthen its place as a cultural hot spot in Harbor Country, Michigan, and build relationships with audiences, performers, donors, local businesses, schools and other stakeholders.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, with the Board Chair as chief liaison, this leader will play a critical role in broadening The Acorn's presence as a nonprofit organization, and inspiring the community to further engage by volunteering, donating, attending events and identifying other opportunities for meaningful engagement. The Executive Director will establish priorities, develop annual workplans, and lead, supervise and mentor The Acorn staff and contractors, as performing arts professionals operating within a business venue. The crew consists of an Operations Manager and contracted services provided in the areas of programming (Artistic Consultant), facilities, marketing, and digital/online presence.

The Executive Director will provide leadership to The Acorn, ensuring the historic venue's role as the premier site for concerts, festivals, community events, and other arts and entertainment events in Harbor Country. An energetic and enthusiastic leader with a passion for the performing arts and a firm commitment to public service, this individual will ensure the effective business management and operations of The Acorn for the benefit of Harbor Country residents and visitors. The new Executive Director will ensure artistic and cultural programming of the highest caliber is presented (directly or in partnership with cultural and community organizations) and build revenue streams which support the current and growing artistic and operational needs. The Executive Director will partner with local and regional artists, arts organizations, residents, visitors, community leaders and the general public.

Vision, Leadership, and Management

- Collaborate with the Board to design the vision and strategic plan of The Acorn and lead, develop, motivate, supervise, and maintain a highly effective, productive, and cohesive team (board and staff) with both professional/technical expertise and operational talent to implement that vision.
- Provide collaborative leadership in maintaining a positive and productive working relationship among the Board of Directors, donors, patrons, partner organizations and volunteers. Evaluate and design initial and 3-year optimal staffing models.
- Develop and implement measurable objectives, strategies, budgets, funding strategies and timelines.
- Foster a culture of teamwork and collaboration among the Board of Directors, staff, contractors, artists and the community.
- Facilitate the organizational effort to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all staff, contractors, volunteers, performers and patrons. Lead and model The Acorn's commitment to diversity and equity. Foster an atmosphere of inclusion and support.
- Manage staff through a lens of flexibility, openness to suggestions, and the ability to resolve/mitigate conflict.
- Determine staffing and volunteer requirements for organizational management and program delivery.
- Facilitate the development and maintenance of human resources policies, procedures, and practices including the development of job descriptions for all staff.
- Oversee aspects of the schedule of programs and events, rentals, and partnerships, ensuring the adequate allocation of resources to support programs and effective operations that generate annual revenues in excess of expenses.

Philanthropy and Financial Management

- Develop a comprehensive annual operating budget with the Board and Finance Committee that accounts for operating, capital, and future needs; ensuring that the organization operates within budget guidelines. Regularly monitor budgets, cash flow statements, and prepare forecasts.
- Maintain consistent reporting on the organization's financial position and outlook and ensure fiscal responsibility and course correcting, as necessary.
- Act as primary fundraising and development professional, fulfilling all philanthropic needs of The Acorn and ensure the Board is staffed to fulfill their philanthropic duties.
- Work with the Board and Board Development Chair to identify, cultivate, and solicit individual donors. Manage own portfolio of individual major donors to increase the number of donors and size of gifts.
- Create and implement an annual philanthropic plan to meet current and increasing revenue needs (operational and capital). Develop new strategies for additional revenue streams, research funding sources and acquire the appropriate resources needed for development success.
- Manage a portfolio of Major Gift donor prospects.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the venue operations, collecting and assessing data to support operating and program decisions, ensuring that all venues, physical and virtual, are optimized and earned revenue opportunities are maximized.
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and efficient use of all organizational resources.
- Ensure that the organization complies with all mandated state and federal reporting and filings.

Board and Volunteer Relations

- Collaborate with the Board to identify and secure adequate funding for the operation of The Acorn.
- Ensure the Board and operational Committees are staffed and equipped to fulfill their duties through staff support, technology, access to resources, etc., including knowledge and expertise on all of The Acorn's activities.
- Identify, assess, and inform the Board of internal and external issues that affect The Acorn.
- Motivate and encourage the Board in its role of ambassador and fundraiser.
- Support, train, and equip the Board to excel in roles that may push the boundaries of comfort zones.
- Provide the Board with comprehensive and consistent reports on all aspects of operations, including budget, audience, performances, community awareness, etc.
- Build and guide the corps of volunteers, where needed, to best meet the needs of The Acorn, ensuring appropriate training, recognition, and utilization.
- Conduct official correspondence on behalf of the Board as appropriate and jointly with the Board when needed.

External Affairs, Events, and Community Outreach

- Act as the primary spokesperson for The Acorn, representing the organization at community activities and events to enhance the organization's community profile.
- Coordinate and develop vendor, producer, and patron relationships, including legal contractual relationships.
- Ensure that programs are mission driven and in line with strategic plan goals.
- Work with the Board, staff, volunteers, and auxiliary groups to develop and expand The Acorn's visibility and brand recognition through public and media relations, print and web-based programs, and other marketing activities.
- Provide the marketing direction for The Acorn, leading staff and contractors in the development and implementation of effective promotional strategies for programs and events.
- Communicate with donors, patrons, stakeholders, and volunteers to keep them informed of the work of The Acorn.
- Establish good working relationships and collaborative arrangements with community groups, the media, funders, and other stakeholders.
- Develop and nurture creative relationships with Harbor Country's and surrounding communities' cultural producers and its presenters, identifying opportunities to collaborate or partner in innovative programs.
- Cultivate relationships with surrounding nonprofit and for-profit arts producers, promoters, and presenters to encourage their use of The Acorn as a catalyst for the growth and development of Harbor Country's cultural sector.
- Serve on formal or informal community committees, councils, or groups with other leaders and volunteers to champion the work of The Acorn, share expertise and learn from others on emerging news that may impact or be of interest to The Acorn, its Board, staff, performers and audiences.

THE QUALIFIED CANDIDATE

The Acorn seeks an experienced and influential accomplished leader as its next Executive Director. The successful candidate will have a demonstrated business acumen and a passion for the arts and embody that passion when sharing the story of The Acorn with key stakeholders. Forward-looking and innovative, this individual will bring a fresh perspective to attract new audiences with diverse offerings. With strong interpersonal and communication skills, this executive will be comfortable engaging with a variety of people. The Executive Director will leverage The Acorn's networks and establish new partnerships to obtain support and achieve results for this regional gem in Harbor Country.

Specific Requirements Include:

- Proven ability to build strong external relationships with a variety of volunteers, public leadership, partner organizations and other stakeholders.
- Knowledge of new trends and ideas in the performing arts, or the ability to identify trends, analyze impacts and apply to current situations; demonstrated experience collaborating with resident companies, agents and promoters.
- Strong analytic and strategic-thinking skills, with demonstrated ability to create, implement and monitor complex plans, and translate those plans into goals and concrete strategies.
- Excellent speaking, writing and public presentation skills.
- Expertise in creating multi-disciplinary seasons for diverse audiences.
- Track record in financial management, stewardship, and developing strategies to successfully increase earned and contributed revenue.
- Proven success in building strong and productive work teams with a focus on mentoring and nurturing staff development.
- Career track record that shows stability with an organization and capacity to develop and nurture relationships culminating in overall success.
- A minimum of seven years of progressive experience in leadership and management, preferably in the nonprofit sector, with documented ability to manage staff and lead teams.

This position offers a competitive market-based salary commensurate with experience. Benefits and relocation are negotiable. It is desired that the Executive Director live within driving distance of The Acorn.

The Acorn is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other occupationally irrelevant criteria.

HOW TO APPLY

APPLY NOW!

To assure confidential tracking of all applicants, no applications will be accepted via email. **ALL INQUIRIES WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.**

This search is being managed by Heather Eddy, President and CEO, and Kiana Martin, Project Coordinator of KEES. Questions may be addressed to kmartin@kees2success.com.

KEES is a nonprofit executive search firm that builds transformative teams and leaders. A woman-owned and operated firm, KEES offers a full array of nonprofit consulting services including executive search, leadership development, interim staffing, and HR support. For more information, please visit www.kees2success.com.

MORE ABOUT THREE OAKS AND HARBOR COUNTRY

The village of Three Oaks is located in southwest Michigan, just minutes from the shores of Lake Michigan. An easy commute from both the Chicago and South Bend areas, it welcomes a robust population of seasonal tourists, second homeowners, and year-round residents.

The performing arts heritage lives throughout Berrien County with playhouses, a fine arts music hall and a symphony orchestra. For decades, writers, artists and performers have gravitated to the area to share their work, collaborate, and be enriched by the energy of the community. In Three Oaks, there's Drier's Meat Market, a fourth generation shop that Carl Sandburg once patronized. The Vickers Theatre, a renovated art-house film theater that features independent, documentary, foreign

and popular movies. As a quote from a New York Times article on Three Oaks stated, "I don't know many other small, getaway towns that are this progressive."

Also located in the historic Featherbone Factory is The Journeyman Distillery. In addition to a large dining room and three event spaces, The Journeyman produces a line of spirits consistently recognized as the best in the country. Across the street from The Acorn, Froehlich's Bakery recently expanded to add a large event space, a restaurant, and retail shop featuring house-made specialties made from locally-sourced ingredients. The village of 1600 residents is buzzing with activity and nightlife.

In 2020, Southwest Michigan was named on Condé Nast Traveler's "20 Best Places to Go in 2020" list.

Citing the area's "ocean-like coastlines and a laid-back vibe," Condé Nast highlights the area's burgeoning agritourism industry, including the numerous breweries, cider mills, and winemakers and the vibrant foodie scene.

[Warren Woods State Park](#) and [Chikaming Township Park](#) and Preserve are among the local outdoor attractions with walking and cross-country ski trails, rich forests, fishing piers, bird-watching sites, picnic areas, a community garden, a mountain bike trail and beautiful scenery.

