



Ithaca Children's Garden

Executive Director, Ithaca Children's Garden

Ithaca Children's Garden is seeking its next Executive Director. The ideal candidate is an experienced, compassionate leader with exceptional interpersonal skills, who believes in and will work toward our vision that every child has the basic human right to play, learn, and grow outdoors, and develop a life-long relationship with the living world.

This is a full time, benefits-eligible exempt position with an annual salary of approximately \$66,000 commensurate with qualifications. Applications will be accepted until October 15 or until the position is filled. To apply, or for questions, email your resume and cover letter to richard@ithacachildrengarden.org.

About Ithaca Children's Garden

Located in upstate New York, Ithaca Children's Garden (ICG) is an award-winning, 3-acre public children's garden designed for kids, enjoyed by all, and driven by a mission to connect children to nature to create a more beautiful, resilient and just world. ICG has been honoring the whole child and fostering environmental stewardship since 1999, embracing the belief that the best way to do that is to get more children outside, with hands-on sensory experiences, while having fun in the natural world. Innovative, research-based education for sustainability is vibrantly woven through all ICG programs including summer camps, school break camps, after-school, preschool, seasonal workshops, family programs, and seasonal festivals. Permaculture, [playwork](#), and child-directed learning are cornerstones of ICG's approach, along with a commitment to an anti-racist, [inclusive environment](#) that values and respects diversity of culture and identity. Ithaca Children's Garden welcomes all members of our community to participate in all programs and activities offered regardless of ability. We encourage all visitors, participants, supporters, and volunteers of Ithaca Children's Garden to support an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone.

The Opportunity

The Executive Director will be committed to advancing the mission and vision of Ithaca Children's Garden. To this end, they will work with the Board of Directors, professional staff, volunteers, and community members to carry out ICG's strategic goals of

- *People Care* — developing ICG’s programs that honor the whole child by offering unique, innovative, research-based, hands-on education programming and visitor experiences;
- *Earth Care* — stewarding ICG’s place - a rich, whimsical, and inspiring child-centric garden learning environment; and
- *Fair Share* — stewarding ICG’s organizational health by prioritizing mission-aligned actions that yield a sustained benefit over time and adhering to a triple bottom line of people-planet-profit and seventh generation sustainability in all decision-making.

Ithaca Children’s Garden seeks an outstanding leader and innovator with the vision and commitment to lead and build a public garden whose focus is to connect children to nature to create a more beautiful, resilient and just world. The Executive Director will have the skills and knowledge to lead a non-profit public garden that relies on environmental education, playwork, principles of equity and inclusion, and nature-based learning to foster nature connection among children, families, and visitors. They will embrace the power of place — a 3-acre child-centered garden — to foster that connection. They will uplift ICG’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion by welcoming all people and integrating equity, access, and inclusion in all we do. The Executive Director will devise strategies to strengthen ICG’s financial health through philanthropy and earned income opportunities, bringing capital campaign experience to enable ICG to achieve its long-range goal of building a net-zero urban environmental education center to improve visitor services, year-round facilities, and access for all. They will bolster the garden’s reputation as a premier, innovative and model children’s garden that shares its expertise in and beyond our local community. The Executive Director will affirm that ICG is a desirable, inclusive place of employment in Ithaca and Tompkins County including appropriate pay and benefits for staff while continuously improving upon a positive work culture. They will work to enhance organizational capacity through staff and volunteer development and policy, systems and process improvements. Through their experience and vision they will advocate for local, county, and state public policy that promotes increased and equitable access to nature and nature-based play and will lead ICG to provide children with access to nature to develop a life-long relationship with the natural world.

The Executive Director’s essential duties are to lead the development of the gardens, programs, services, staff and capital improvements of ICG and to uphold its mission of connecting children to nature to create a more beautiful, resilient, and just world. Reporting to the Board of Directors, and working with staff, volunteers, and community

members, the Executive Director is responsible for leading and overseeing the business of Ithaca Children's Garden. Their vision and fundraising acumen will chart an exciting course for the future of Ithaca Children's Garden.

The Executive Director should demonstrate competence in the following areas:

- Mission-driven: Understand, communicate, and steward all work and efforts to align with advancement of ICG's mission
- Adaptability: Demonstrate a willingness to be flexible, versatile and/or tolerant in a changing work environment while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency.
- Ethical behavior: Understand ethical behavior and business practices, and ensure that their own behavior and the behavior of others is consistent with these standards and aligns with the values of ICG.
- Relationship building: Establish and maintain positive working relationships with others, both internally and externally, to achieve the goals of ICG.
- Effective Communication: Speak, listen and write in a clear, thorough and timely manner using appropriate and effective communication tools and techniques.
- Creativity/Innovation: Develop new and unique ways to improve operations of ICG and to create new opportunities.
- Focus on Audience Needs: Anticipate, understand, and respond to the needs of internal and external audiences to meet or exceed their expectations within ICG's parameters.
- Fostering Teamwork: Work cooperatively and effectively with others to set goals, resolve problems, and make decisions that enhance organizational effectiveness.
- Leadership: Positively influence others to achieve results that are in the best interest of ICG.
- Decision making: Assess situations to determine the importance, urgency and risks, and make clear decisions which are timely and in the best interests of ICG.
- Organizational skills: Set priorities, develop a work schedule, monitor progress towards goals, and track details, data, information and activities
- Planning: In conjunction with ICG's Board, determine strategies to move ICG forward, set goals, create and implement action plans, and evaluate the process and results.
- Problem solving and innovation: Assess problem situations to identify causes, gather and process relevant information, generate possible solutions, and make recommendations and/or resolve the problem.

- Strategic Thinking: Assess options and actions based on trends and conditions in the environment, and the vision and values of ICG.
- Desire to further develop the reputation and brand of Ithaca Children's Garden as a premier, innovative, and inclusive children's garden.

Desired Qualifications

- Prior experience of 5 or more years of progressive management and leadership at a similarly sized non-profit institution, such as a botanical garden, museum, environmental education organization, nature center or similar destination
- Proven commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace that reflects ICG's equity, diversity and inclusion, and access goals
- Expertise in at least one of ICG's main program areas (public garden leadership; early childhood education; playwork; garden-based learning; diversity, equity, and inclusion); interest in cultivating knowledge of all areas
- Experienced fundraiser with the ability to inspire support from current and new audiences; experience with capital campaigns desired.
- Knowledge of and experience in developing strong partnerships with schools and community organizations
- Knowledge of and experience working with municipal government systems
- Experience in creating and implementing strategies for organizational growth
- University degree in a related field or commensurate and relevant experience

Primary Duties and Responsibilities

Leadership

- Lead a diverse, resourceful, and dedicated team of approximately 10 permanent staff and 15 seasonal staff members; 100+ volunteers; and 11 board members
- Along with the Board of Directors, provide vision and lead strategic planning to guide Ithaca Children's Garden's initiatives
- Identify, assess, and inform the Board of Directors of internal and external challenges and opportunities that affect ICG
- Act as a professional advisor to the Board of Director on all aspects of ICG's activities
- Foster effective teamwork between the Board and the Executive Director and between the Executive Director and staff

- Act as a spokesperson for ICG
- Along with the Board of Directors, identify and court potential Board Members who reflect ICG's values, leverage networks, resources, and support for the benefit of ICG, and who reflect ICG's values of bringing unique and diverse voices to the Board.
- Conduct official correspondence on behalf of the Board as appropriate and jointly with the Board when appropriate
- Represent ICG at community activities to enhance ICG's community profile
- Foster staff leadership, professional development, decision-making, and teamwork amongst staff and with volunteer committees and partnering organizations.
- Collaborate with community organizations in Ithaca to advance ICG's mission

Operational planning and management

- Develop a yearly operational plan which incorporates goals and objectives that work towards the mission and strategic plan of ICG
- Ensure that the operation of ICG meets the expectations of its audience, Board and Funders
- Oversee the effective and efficient day-to-day operation of ICG
- Draft policies for the approval of the Board and prepare procedures to implement ICG policies; review existing policies on a regular basis and recommend changes to the Board as appropriate
- Provide support to the Board by working with the Executive Committee of the Board to prepare meeting agenda and supporting materials

Program planning and management

- Serve as a main liaison to city, county, and state government agencies and representatives for funding, site development, and capital improvements.
- Oversee the planning, implementation (monitoring the day-to-day delivery) and evaluation to maintain or improve quality of ICG's programs
- Oversee the planning, implementation, execution and evaluation of special projects

Human resources planning and management

- Determine staffing requirements needed for successful delivery of all ICG programs

- Oversee the implementation of human resources policies, procedures and practices, including the development or review of job descriptions for all staff
- Establish a positive, healthy and safe work environment in accordance with all appropriate legislation and regulations
- Recruit, interview and select staff that have the right technical and cultural competencies to help further ICG's mission
- Ensure that all staff receive an orientation to ICG and that appropriate training is provided
- Implement a performance management process for all staff which includes monitoring the performance of staff on an on-going basis and conducting annual performance reviews
- Coach and mentor staff to improve performance, encourage decision-making, and carry out their job responsibilities, and facilitate professional development in alignment with organizational and professional goals
- Release staff when necessary using appropriate and legally defensible procedures

Financial planning and management

- Work with the Board and Director of Development to develop and secure adequate pipelines of funding (from foundations, businesses, granting agencies and individual donors) for the operation and future growth of ICG
- Provide guidance and support to the director of development to research funding sources, oversee the development of fundraising plans and write funding proposals to increase the funds of ICG
- Participate in fundraising activities as appropriate including donor discovery, relationship building and solicitation
- Work with staff and the Board and the Finance Committee to prepare, monitor, and manage ICG's approximately \$500,000 annual budget
- Approve expenditures within the authority delegated by the Board
- Ensure that sound bookkeeping and accounting procedures are followed
- Oversee annual CPA review of ICG's financial statements
- Ensure all necessary tax and other regulatory filings are completed appropriately and filed timely
- Administer the funds of ICG according to the approved budget and monitor the monthly cash flow of ICG
- Provide the Board with comprehensive, regular reports on the financial activities (revenues and expenditures) and position of ICG

- Ensure that ICG complies with all legislation covering taxation and withholding payments

Community relations/advocacy

- Communicate with stakeholders to keep them informed of the work of ICG and to identify changes in the community served by ICG
- Establish good working relationships and collaborative arrangements with community groups, funders, politicians, and other organizations to help achieve the goals of ICG
- Ability to make compelling presentations to establish and strengthen the case for ICG's services to new and existing stakeholders

Risk management

- Identify and evaluate the risks to ICG's people (audience, staff, management, Board, volunteers), property, finances, and brand and implement measures to control risks
- Ensure that the Board of Directors and ICG carries appropriate and adequate insurance coverage
- Ensure that the Board and staff understand the terms, conditions and limitations of the insurance coverage

Technical proficiencies

- Working knowledge of or ability to learn with or ability to learn web-based applications for team communication and project management such as Google Drive, Asana, Excel, Slack, Google meets, Zoom, and other communication platforms.
- Understanding of Google drive and/or other office suite platforms that include presentation programs.
- Understanding of and ability to support organizational customer relationship management (CRM) use to collect and track data to advance ICG's mission

Working conditions

- The Executive Director will work a standard work week, plus evenings, weekends, and overtime hours as needed to accommodate activities such as Board meetings and representing ICG at public events.

- Personal transportation is required to be able to travel locally and periodically-regionally or nationally to meet with collaborators and donors.
- The Executive Director will be able to participate in ICG activities in person and also be able to conduct and facilitate work remotely to accommodate remote personnel.

Application instructions

For consideration, please submit your resume and cover letter to Richard Lansdowne, richard@ithacachildrengarden.org by October 15, 2021.

ICG seeks individuals committed to equity and anti-racism, people, and the planet. Successful candidate will have enthusiasm for innovation, environmental education, youth development, nonprofit excellence, public garden leadership, and community wellness. ICG is an Equal Opportunity Employer.