



academy
center
OF THE ARTS

Head of Development
Position Description

Location: Lynchburg, VA



About the Academy Center of the Arts

Located in the heart of downtown Lynchburg, the Academy Center of the Arts is a vibrant multi-venue arts organization that serves as a cultural anchor for Central Virginia. With a history dating back 120 years, the Academy began as a 1905 vaudeville house and has grown into a dynamic, inclusive home for the arts, education, and community connection. For 60 of those years, the Historic Theatre sat silent and in disrepair. After decades of advocacy and a community investment of \$30 million to bring it back to life, the historic Academy Theatre reopened in 2018, marking a major milestone in the organization's growth and regional impact.

Today, the Academy operates four distinct venues: the beautifully restored **Historic Academy Theatre** (800 seats), the flexible **Warehouse Theatre** (340 seats), the intimate **Music Hall** (100 seats), and a **Visual Arts Studio** that houses gallery exhibitions, community art classes, a pottery studio, and camps. Each year, the Academy presents more than **250 programs** across music, theatre, dance, film, comedy, and other disciplines. These offerings feature national touring artists, local and regional talent, and community-centered productions.

The Academy is also a leader in arts education, providing year-round programs for children, youth, and adults in both visual and performing arts. From in-school residencies to summer camps, studio classes to community partnerships, the Academy fosters creative exploration and lifelong learning. Its outreach efforts focus on reducing barriers to participation through scholarships, free events, and collaborations with schools and nonprofit partners.

As both a presenter and a convener, the Academy supports a wide range of collaborators—including the **Lynchburg Symphony Orchestra, Opera on the James, Charlottesville Ballet, Jefferson Choral Society**, and many other civic and cultural organizations. Its venues serve as a creative commons for the community, strengthening local arts infrastructure and providing access to meaningful artistic experiences for audiences and artists alike.





The Opportunity

The Academy Center of the Arts seeks a strategic, relationship-driven leader to serve as its next Head of Development. This senior role is responsible for designing and leading a comprehensive fundraising program that fuels the Academy's artistic vision, educational reach, and community impact. This leader will help ensure the organization not only thrives financially, but continues to serve as a welcoming, vibrant, and essential cultural resource for Lynchburg and the surrounding region.

Reporting to the Executive Director and serving as a key member of the senior leadership team, the Head of Development will guide all philanthropic efforts, including major gifts, annual giving, grants, corporate partnerships, campaigns, membership growth, and donor engagement. This is a moment of opportunity for a confident, thoughtful fundraiser who can build momentum, deepen trust with supporters, work collaboratively across the organization, and help position the Academy for long-term sustainability.

The Successful Candidate

The ideal candidate will be a seasoned advancement professional with proven fundraising leadership, who combines strategic thinking and solid execution with genuine warmth and presence. The individual will be comfortable making bold asks, skilled at listening, proactive in advocacy and stewardship, and motivated by the power of the arts to strengthen communities.



Key Responsibilities

Strategic Fundraising Leadership

- Define and execute a comprehensive development and fundraising strategy aligned with the Academy's mission, values, and long-term goals.
- Set clear, achievable fundraising targets and lead efforts to meet or exceed annual and multi-year revenue goals.
- Prepare the organization for future growth, including major initiatives and capital and endowment campaigns.

Donor and Partner Engagement

- Cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of major donors, foundations, and corporate partners, with a focus on annual campaigns and multi-year endowment programs.
- Serve as a visible ambassador for the Academy, building authentic relationships with donors, civic leaders, business leaders, and community stakeholders.
- Oversee the creation of compelling cases for support, proposals, and impact communications that connect giving to mission and results.

Board & Volunteer Partnership

- Partner closely with the Executive Director and Board of Directors to strengthen board engagement in fundraising.
- Support and guide board members and Development Committee members in donor cultivation and solicitation, providing tools, coaching, and strategic clarity.
- Serve as staff liaison to the Board and engage on appropriate committees to deliver advancement-related reports and insights.



Team and Systems Leadership

- Lead, mentor, and support the Development team, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and shared purpose.
- Oversee Development operations, including creation and management of sound, sustainable budgets; monitoring departmental financial performance; donor systems, gift processing; reporting; and stewardship practices.
- Ensure strong internal systems, policies, and data-driven decision-making across all development activities.

Organizational Collaboration

- Collaborate with colleagues across operations, programming, education, marketing, and finance to ensure aligned messaging and integrated revenue strategies.
- Contribute to organizational planning and leadership discussions, bringing a philanthropic perspective to strategic decisions.
- Maintain open, transparent, and timely communication.

ACOA values a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture. People of color, women, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, and people from other underrepresented communities are strongly encouraged to apply for this position.





Key Qualifications

- Significant progressive experience, with a minimum of five years, in nonprofit fundraising—ideally within the arts—with demonstrated success in major gifts, relationship-based giving, campaign development, event planning and execution, and membership growth.
- A track record of building and sustaining strong donor relationships and leading comprehensive development efforts, including annual campaigns and multi-year capital and endowment programs.
- Experience working with boards and senior leaders as a trusted thought partner.
- Strong communication and storytelling skills, both written and verbal, and a confident public presence.
- A collaborative leadership style and commitment to fostering an inclusive culture of philanthropy.
- Financial acumen and data-driven decision-making.
- Passion for the arts and belief in their role as a public good.
- Preferred: Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) certification

Compensation & Benefits

Compensation for the Head of Advancement is **\$75,000 to \$90,000 annually based on experience** and includes a comprehensive package of employee benefits.

To Apply

Submit a cover letter and resume by email to cvarner@academycenter.org.