

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

Chief Operating Officer

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EXECUTIVE
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ORGANIZATION: Studio Museum in Harlem

POSITION: Chief Operating Officer

REPORTS TO: Ford Foundation Director and Chief Curator

LOCATION: New York, NY; in-person

INFORMATION: www.studiomuseum.org

TO APPLY: Please submit an [interest form](#), uploading documents with title format “Last Name First Name – Letter (or Resume),” and complete the Voluntary Self Identification [form](#). This will assist us in improving our hiring practices and ensuring equal opportunities. Participation is voluntary and will not affect your candidacy in any way.

QUESTIONS: Please contact StudioMuseumCOO@pbrsearch.com

BACKGROUND

Founded in 1968, by a diverse coalition of artists, community activists, philanthropists, and Harlem residents, the Studio Museum in Harlem is the nexus for artists of African descent locally, nationally, and internationally and for work that has been inspired and influenced by Black culture. It is a site for the dynamic exchange of ideas about art and society. Following a highly successful, \$300M+ capital campaign and through a public-private initiative in partnership with the City of New York, the museum’s [landmark new building](#) was opened to the public in November 2025. The museum serves as a vibrant cultural anchor in Harlem, offering [exhibitions](#), [educational programs](#), and community engagement initiatives. The museum’s signature [Artist-in-Residence program](#) (widely regarded as one of the most important pipelines in contemporary art) continues to advance the work of the most influential Black artists working today. Artists such as David Hammons, Kehinde Wiley, Kerry James Marshall, Julie Mehretu, and Simone Leigh passed through the museum’s residency program during formative stages in their careers.

POSITION

Studio Museum in Harlem is seeking its next Chief Operating Officer (COO) at a pivotal moment in the museum’s growth and development. The COO will serve as the museum’s internal director and operational counterpart to Thelma Golden, the Ford Foundation Director and Chief Curator. The COO will oversee building operations, administrative systems, financial management, compliance, and institutional growth and development while maintaining alignment with the museum’s mission and values. The COO will manage a cross-functional team responsible for Building Engineering, Facilities, Finance, HR, Legal/Compliance, Security, Technology, and Visitor Experience. The COO also serves as the Senior Leadership Team liaison to the Finance/Investment and Operations committees of the Board. This is a unique opportunity for an experienced leader with a place-based background to build systems, shape culture, and steward an institution of extraordinary cultural significance.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Organizational Leadership

- Partner with the Ford Foundation Director and Chief Curator to translate her vision into executable plans and actions. Absorb and execute institutional priorities, while providing thought partnership and direct counsel on operational realities.
- Serve as a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), alongside the Chief of Staff, Chief Program Officer, and Chief Advancement and External Affairs Officer.

- Coordinate closely with the Extended Senior Leadership Team (ESLT). Establish clear communication channels and cadences, as well as accountability for outcomes, to ensure smooth inter-departmental, museum-wide collaboration and effectiveness.
- Directly supervise a team of 8 and a total staff of 72.
- Lead a refresh of the museum's strategic plan, in partnership with the Director and board. Integrate museum-wide priorities into a shared roadmap with clear goals, measures of success, and departmental and individual accountability.

Museum Operations

- Oversee building engineering, facilities, security, technology, and visitor experience. Manage cross-departmental protocols and workflow to ensure a safe, efficient, and welcoming environment for staff and visitors.
- Assess and address gaps in operational systems and resources.
- Ensure legal, regulatory, and institutional compliance across all operational areas.

Financial Stewardship

- Serve as the SLT liaison with the Finance, Investment, and Operating committees of the board. Bring strategic financial fluency and business acumen to discussions of day-to-day operations and long-term sustainability.
- Make data-informed recommendations and decisions to balance the museum's operating budget.
- Ensure accurate and timely financial reporting to the Director, board, SLT, and other internal stakeholders for regular review.

People Operations and Culture-Building

- Continue to build and maintain a safe, positive, and collaborative organizational culture.
- Strengthen internal collaboration and effective communication across the SLT and ESLT, establishing clear priorities, decision-making practices, and accountability for outcomes.
- Advance the museum's operational culture from policy creation to policy practice, ensuring written procedures, active trainings, and consistent application of policies at all levels of the organization.
- Oversee a forthcoming search for a senior HR leader, who will focus on issues such as performance management, workforce planning, and staff development.
- Navigate the museum's labor relations environment with proactive employee relations management.

QUALIFICATIONS

Experience – Required

- 15+ years of senior leadership experience, with a track record of managing operations in a place-based, mission-oriented organization
- Proven ability to manage, develop and grow a diverse and cross-functional team
- Experience with a major metropolitan area-based nonprofit, arts and culture, or educational institution
- Financial fluency and business acumen
- Experience overseeing compliance for an organization in a related field or industry

- An appreciation for the Studio Museum's mission and a genuine interest in Harlem, Black art, and the museum's role within the community

Experience – Preferred

- Prior experience with museum-specific operations and teams

Personal Attributes

- Passion for museums, arts and culture, and enthusiasm for advancing Studio Museum in Harlem's mission to champion Black artists and serve as a vital cultural institution rooted in Harlem
- Superior interpersonal skills and a high level of self-awareness, with a proven ability to successfully engage with a variety of audiences; a natural relationship-builder who can communicate and execute collaboratively with the Director and Chief Curator and galvanize board members, senior leaders, and other staff around shared goals and priorities
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- A goal-oriented, can-do attitude, with a commitment to developing and mentoring teams, building a culture of trust, collaboration, and high performance
- Strategic, analytical thinker with strong operations experience, ensuring best-in-class systems and long-term sustainability
- A creative approach to problem-solving, with the skills and experience necessary to build upon existing systems and create new ones as needed to broaden and improve operations functions
- A strong commitment to furthering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in all forms

COMPENSATION

- Anticipated salary is \$275K - \$300K, commensurate with qualifications and experience
- Comprehensive benefits package, including medical, dental and vision insurance, retirement contribution, and generous paid time off

Frequently cited statistics show that women and people from underrepresented groups apply to jobs only if they think they meet 100% of the criteria. If you meet many but not all the criteria and feel you may be a good fit for the role, Studio Museum in Harlem encourages you to apply.

Studio Museum in Harlem is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, national origin, ethnic origin, citizenship status, disability, race, religion, creed, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law in its employment policies. Studio Museum in Harlem will provide reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities.