



**Chabot Space and Science Center  
Executive Director and CEO  
Position Description**

***Painter Executive Search is supporting Chabot Space and Science Center (Chabot) in their search for an experienced Executive Director with the leadership to further Chabot's transformation into a vibrant and financially healthy organization which builds the public's understanding of our place among the stars and the science that governs our small, delicate planet and that drives our ability to discover new worlds.***

Nestled in the hills between two regional parks of redwood forests in Oakland, California, Chabot Space & Science Center (Chabot) is unique amongst San Francisco Bay Area science centers not only for its location, but also for the three research-level telescopes that are accessible to the public. This hidden gem seeks to be the “go-to place” for space and science in the region. Chabot, a Smithsonian affiliate, is a public institution, focusing on earth and physical sciences with an emphasis on astronomy, the history of space travel, and climate science.

A community fixture for more than 130 years, Chabot hosted 177,000 visitors last year, including 60,000 students and has served over 1.5 million visitors in the last ten years. The Chabot experience is multi-faceted. Visitors and students are introduced to the wonders of space and science through award-winning interactive exhibits, planetarium shows, day and nighttime viewing of the Sun and stars through solar, refractor and reflector telescopes, as well as a wide variety of education programming. Across all programs, Chabot encourages visitors to fall in love with our planet, the stars and their infinite majesty, embrace the thrill of discovery and understand that with knowledge and imagination they can unlock the future through scientific discovery.

**POSITION SUMMARY**

The Executive Director (ED) is the leader and face of Chabot and functions as the Chief Executive Officer directing all activities required to fulfill its mission to inspire and educate students of all ages about our Planet Earth and the Universe. Together with staff, the Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and Foundation Board members, the ED is responsible for developing and executing the strategic vision for Chabot, and for successfully stewarding its facilities and finances to maintain a strong and healthy organization.

The ED will oversee an operating budget for 2015 of \$4.7m which supports the operations of the 86,000 sq. ft. facility and programs on and off-site. Chabot currently has a staff of 36 full-time employees, with an additional 18 part-time and on call employees. Chabot also has over 300 dedicated volunteers including highly trained astronomers as well as high-school students who participate in hands-on learning demonstrations. Chabot is cultural asset beloved by many; its telescopes are maintained and staffed primarily by volunteers through their deep relationship with the Eastbay Astronomical Society.

Chabot is governed by the JPA which consists of twenty-two directors, comprised of members appointed by the agency partners: three each by the City of Oakland, Oakland Unified School District, and East Bay Regional Parks District, two appointed by the Eastbay Astronomical Society, and eleven directors from the public, including a representative of Alameda County Board of Education and a representative of the center's volunteers. The Executive Director serves as the Secretary to the JPA and manages Chabot according to the policies that body sets. The governance of Chabot is conducted in conformance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. In addition to the JPA, Chabot is supported by the Chabot Space and Science Center Foundation (Foundation), a California non-profit public benefit corporation. The Foundation was

formed to raise funds for the center, promote the goals and objectives of Chabot and cultivate public interest in the sciences. Currently the two boards work in unison and meet concurrently on a bi-monthly basis to provide oversight and support the work of the Executive Director.

## **History**

Chabot has served generations of students and public visitors as a leader in informal science and astronomy education since its founding in 1883 with the donation of a telescope by Anthony Chabot. The original Oakland Observatory was located in downtown Oakland and for decades it served as the official timekeeping station for the entire Bay Area, measuring time with its transit telescope. The Observatory was given to the Board of Education in trust for the City of Oakland, with telescope viewing to remain forever free to the public and public schools. In 1915 the Observatory moved to Mountain Boulevard due to increasing light pollution and urban congestion downtown, but in 1977, seismic safety concerns terminated public school students' access to that site. Recognizing the need to restore full access to the facility, in 1989 Chabot Observatory & Science Center was formed as a Joint Powers Authority between the City of Oakland, Oakland Unified School District, East Bay Regional Park District and Eastbay Astronomical Society. In 1992 Chabot was recognized as a nonprofit organization and the JPA reached an agreement to relocate to Roberts Regional Park and build a new facility at its current location.

The new center opened in 2000, featuring exhibition space, two hands-on science laboratories, a Challenger Learning Center, 241-seat full-dome planetarium, giant-screen Megadome theater, and an Observatory Deck housing Chabot's three publicly-accessible, research-level telescopes—the only ones in the Western United States that are regularly available to the public for viewing.

The historical commitment to serve the public, in particular the citizens of Oakland and its public school students is part of Chabot's ongoing legacy. While Chabot seeks to strengthen its place among the finest Science Centers, it will continue to seek to serve the local, often underserved, community of Oakland.

## ***Key Program Highlights***

To fulfill its educational mission, Chabot offers a wide range of exhibits, public programs, and a pipeline of science education offerings which includes school field trips, afterschool youth programs, summer science camps, teacher training and community outreach. Chabot's education programs serve more than 60,000 school group visitors and outreach participants annually. Each year, approximately 1/3 of students who participate in formal education programs come from low-income neighborhoods in Oakland, Berkeley, and West Contra Costa County. Annually more than 13,000 students from these neighborhoods participate through on-site programs, and more than 10,000 through outreach programs.

Chabot's educational offerings include the Tyke Explorers Workshop which reaches students at an early point in their learning development, ages 3-5, and serves as a starting point for their science-learning journeys. The K-12 school field trip/outreach program, offers 25 different hands-on science classes, including Surviving in Space and Anatomy of a Lifeform. These classes have been mapped to the new Next Generation Science Standards and a number of them have been adapted to be delivered off-site through outreach programs. Chabot's Galaxy Explorers program provides structured training, mentorship and meaningful work opportunities focusing on academic, leadership, and life skills for approximately 200 high school teens per year. The Champions of Science middle school program, reserved for youth attending Oakland public middle schools, is designed to function as a direct lead-in to the high school Galaxy Explorers program. Champions engage in relevant, stimulating STEM learning and

activities at Chabot through educational games, experimentation and hands-on projects that develop their critical thinking skills and facility with science and engineering practices.

Chabot also houses a Challenger Learning Center, part of a nationwide program designed to simulate the high-tech working conditions of a ground control center and a space probe. The foundation of a Challenger mission is the idea of simulation—students do not pretend to be scientists or astronauts; instead, they are placed in situations that require them to problem solve and communicate as if they were scientists and astronauts.

Chabot also offers teacher training opportunities throughout the year for K-12 teachers to focus on the latest content, methods, and pedagogy in science education. Programs include field trips, guest speakers, and access to their online and library education resources.

Among Chabot’s public programming is the frequently sold-out Future Fridays series. At these lectures, the public is exposed to the current and provocative topics in science, technology and the environment, from experts and authors that have included Michio Kaku, Bill McKibben, Mary Roach, Bill Nye, Alex Filippenko, Ray Jayawardhana and others.

Permanent exhibitions at Chabot include Beyond Blastoff, Destination Universe, One Giant Leap; A Moon Odyssey and Touch the Sun—all of which have a space related theme. In addition, Chabot has a unique exhibition, Bill Nye’s Climate Lab, an interactive experience housed at the center and online which encourages students to seek solutions to climate problems. Chabot’s planetarium shows provide a range of offerings including Tales of the Maya Skies, a Chabot produced show, which explores a cultural perspective on space observation. This show is also reinforced with a companion exhibit. In other exhibitions, the history of Chabot and the telescopes are presented.

On Friday and Saturday nights, Chabot’s telescopes are open free to visitors to observe the cosmos while commentary is provided by Chabot’s partners, the Eastbay Astronomical Society.

### **Opportunities and Challenges**

Chabot is nearing the end of its most recently developed Strategic Plan with some notable successes and some ongoing challenges. Chabot has successfully established itself with the media as the “go-to place for Earth and Space” in the Bay Area and is widely called upon for their expertise on matters of astronomy. Earned media has been slowly developing name recognition. While Chabot has a long history in the region, its location, necessary for the effective use of the telescopes, is not easily accessible. A recent change in the regional bus service now provides access to those who would not have otherwise been able to reach the facility. Chabot is located less than 10 miles from downtown Oakland, so the perception that the facility is remote needs to be repositioned. Seen from the air, Chabot is surrounded by East Bay Regional Park lands and provides a tremendous opportunity for destination marketing.

Chabot has also created some award-winning exhibitions and produces quality education programs, but growing visitors and membership has been challenging. Marketing efforts are hindered by lack of resources, but a deeper question of sustaining the interest of visitors and encouraging repeat visitation needs to be explored. There is a general sense among the board members and staff that the institution needs to focus its attention on developing engaging content, both in exhibit and programming in order to drive repeat visitation, retention of members and build a greater audience.

Over the last several years Chabot has developed a plan for the Redwoods Environmental Center to expand their ability connect youth to the natural world and the magic of the night sky by direct experiences in the surrounding redwood forests during overnight camping experiences. With partial

funding in place, Chabot is working to bring the project to fruition. This effort and others that were called out in the most recent Strategic Plan will be reviewed as part of the new Strategic Planning process.

Chabot was deeply impacted during the recession and the budget has been trimmed to align with current revenues. Resources are tight and staff levels have been cut to conform to the current financial realities.

Additionally, Chabot has been working closely with the Oakland Unified School District to manage a long-term debt associated with building the facility. While in terms of hard numbers, these overall challenges are modest and manageable, there is not a trend toward a long term solution. Chabot is in need of a vision that will increase membership and build financial support from a broader audience. Revenue, both earned and unearned is a key focus for the institution.

## **Executive Director**

### **ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### Leadership and Strategy

- Articulate a vision for Chabot that fulfills its mission and provides clear institutional goals; speak with passion and work pragmatically to ensure a growing enthusiasm from visitors of Chabot;
- Together with the staff and boards develop a new Strategic Plan designed to build attendance and membership, and grow the financial support and community impact of Chabot;
- Be a visible leader at the local, regional and national level; representing Chabot and building support for the institution and science education;
- Work closely with the JPA board to ensure strong governance, establish clear lines of communication and organizational transparency in accordance with the Brown Act;
- Work with both boards to provide well-defined opportunities for committee and staff engagement; and assist the Board in the recruitment, selection and evaluation of board members;
- Actively inform and engage the boards in issues of importance to the operations and strategy of Chabot and deepen the commitment of the boards in communicating the value and broadening support for the institution;
- Build a robust and valuable set of strategic partners to help deepen and tie programs at Chabot to regional efforts in order to increase its impact and develop a wider range visitors and supporters;
- Ensure the overall well-being of Chabot, rather than of any individual constituency, and meld the strengths of each partner into a strong and unifying vision and plan for Chabot.

#### Fundraising and Advocacy

- Be the chief fundraiser and external face of Chabot; effectively represent the organization in order to increase its visibility and grow support for its programs and operations;
- Actively lead fundraising efforts including growing individual support through major donors; developing and maintaining key foundation relationships and critical contacts in local, regional, state and federal government and agencies; expanding donor cultivation events and efforts; and preparing for a successful capital campaign;
- Together with the staff and boards, actively pursue a fundraising strategy that builds engagement with new donors while continuing to cultivate existing relationships;
- Support board members in their fundraising efforts, allocate appropriate staff time to facilitate and train the boards in fundraising and advocacy on behalf of the organization;

- Marshall the resources of the whole organization to raise the funds required to maintain sound operations and facilitate the new strategic plan while building long term sustainability for the organization;
- Actively reach out to deepen and build engagement across a broader set of constituents, pay particular attention to the needs of underserved communities while developing the potential for cutting-edge STEM education and engagement of the Bay Area's high-tech and creative "maker" communities;
- Participate in and support fundraising activities including the annual Gala and donor cultivation events.

#### Internal Leadership

- With staff support, implement the new Strategic Plan including an effective communications and fundraising strategy to grow and build awareness and support of Chabot's work;
- Oversee Chabot's operations and programs ensuring progress toward overarching strategic goals; draw upon staff strengths to deepen the decision-making framework for assessing programmatic and exhibition development to ensure all work is deeply aligned with all Chabot's mission and brand and that the work is sustainable and additive;
- Develop a master plan for exhibitions and public programming that is designed for building greater audience and aligned with the needs of those visitors;
- Recruit, nurture and challenge a highly-qualified and motivated professional staff; delegate specific responsibilities with appropriate authority and establish accountability; foster open communications;
- Lead ongoing development and improvement of organizational policies and practices—including assessment of the use of technology in order to effectively plan and manage programs and facilitate tailored communication with various audiences and supporters;
- Foster innovation; create an atmosphere of learning and assessment which utilizes data and clear-eyed evaluation to drive better visitor experiences and overall operational performance;
- Work closely with staff to ensure an effective annual budget process, and a culture of operational excellence is maintained throughout the organization and that new procedures and technologies increase the effectiveness of the organization;
- Work closely with the visitor experience and educational staff to design, implement, and administer innovative educational programs that reflect and deepen science standards and serve the educational needs and funding opportunities of local school districts;
- Develop robust and visitor-centric programming that builds Chabot's brand and invites deeper engagement in all aspects of space science.

#### Operational Management

- Work closely with key staff members to ensure that operations, marketing, fundraising, public and community relations, education and public program are aligned in support of the mission of the organization;
- Work with administrators and staff, to develop equitable compensation plans, work to ensure retention of quality employees through professional development, acknowledgment and fair evaluation programs;
- Ensure that the strategic plan is executed with a well-developed operational plan; with staff support create department and organizational goals that are monitored for progress and assessed to ensure the organization is learning and adapting it's efforts in achieving overarching goals;

- Work with the Facilities Director to ensure that the physical plant is well-maintained and that long-range repairs and development are considered as part of the overall budgeting and financial management;
- Actively work with staff to ensure the health and safety of all visitors and employees while they are at Chabot, consistent with state and federal regulations;
- Together with senior staff, present financial plans and annual budgets to the JPA board for approval; regularly monitor and report financial status to the boards and engage their collective knowledge and resources in achieving financial sustainability;
- Ensure strong systems and operational controls are maintained so that resources are stewarded effectively, important data collected, efficiency is developed, and a balanced budget is maintained.

## **POSITION REQUIREMENTS**

### Experience

A successful Executive Director candidate will likely have:

- A deep passion for Space, Science and/or STEM education, including the capacity to speak authoritatively about matters that align with Chabot's mission;
- Experience effectively leading an organization of similar size and complexity; ideally a nonprofit organization governed by multiple constituencies; museum or science center experience is highly desired;
- Evidence of developing and implementing effective strategy- a visionary with the ability to plan and execute in ways that encourage cooperation;
- Experience in change management and building commitment internally and externally for key initiatives;
- Past success in diversifying income and growing support particularly with high net worth individual donors;
- Demonstrated leadership and management skills, experience in team building with the knowledge, ability and appetite to mentor staff and foster open communications, combined with the discipline to delegate and honor team contributions;
- Experience and knowledge of audience development, visitor experience and/or brand development would be valuable;
- A history of strong collaboration; someone who actively seeks strategic partnerships and develops effective relationships;
- Experience as the face of an organization; well-developed interpersonal skills; superb oral and written communication skills; ability to present ideas clearly and persuasively;
- Experience as an advocate, able to translate complex ideas for diverse audiences;
- Strong financial and organizational management skills; a track record of managing on time and on budget.

### Attributes

- A visionary leader with success aligning operations to mission and deepening engagement across the organization and its constituents;
- A team builder with strong management skills; one who can motivate and direct diverse partners while establishing accountability and shared success;
- Someone who highlights and supports the successes of others, can easily share the spotlight and builds effective and lasting relationships;

- Ability to engage a large and enthusiastic volunteer community in ways that honor their commitment and increases Chabot's ability to respond to its mission;
- Ability to work well under pressure and adapt easily to changing situations and priorities; exercises good judgment; able to hear and value alternate opinions and make informed decisions;
- Strength of character; able to keep mission centered while managing day to day realities;
- Open to a wide range of voices and able to adeptly foster relationships with public sector leaders, recognizing and appreciating the need for effective, visible service to the region;
- Emotionally mature with a good sense of humor, someone who truly enjoys working with people;
- Solutions-oriented with attention to detail; pragmatic with an eye to the future;
- A good listener and strategist; comfortable receiving input and able to analyze disparate information to create thoughtful plans and then make and execute upon those decisions;
- A hard worker; someone who leads by example and approaches work with energy and optimism;
- Resourceful—able to set priorities, build efficiencies and create opportunity;
- Exercises high ethical standards.

For additional details or to submit your experience for review, please contact;

Nancy Painter

[Nancy@painterexecutivesearch.com](mailto:Nancy@painterexecutivesearch.com)

(415) 202- 6240