

Position Title: Managing Director, Live Experiences

Hours: Full-time (35-hour workweek); Onsite presence required daily

Role Classification: Regular with Benefits

Exemption: Exempt

Reports to: Chief Experience Officer

Compensation: \$120,000 - \$125,000

ABOUT THE GARDENS OF GOLDEN GATE PARK

The Gardens of Golden Gate Park unite three historic gardens—the landmark Conservatory of Flowers (1879), the Japanese Tea Garden (1894), and the 55-acre San Francisco Botanical Garden (1940)—featuring more than 10,000 different kinds of plants from around the world, from rare orchids and cloud forest species to California native plants and serene Japanese landscapes.

Our pioneering public-private partnership between the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department and San Francisco Botanical Garden Society combines the city's expertise in horticulture and facilities with the nonprofit's strengths in visitor experience, education, philanthropy, membership, marketing, curatorial services, interpretation, and community engagement. Together, we connect people to plants, the planet, and each other, cultivating an internationally renowned destination where conservation, natural beauty, and community flourish.

Learn about our [Mission](#). Get oriented with our [Strategic Plan](#).

POSITION SUMMARY

The Managing Director, Live Experiences is a senior leader responsible for translating the gardens' institutional identity into elevated, memorable, and emotionally resonant experiences that strengthen the brand and drive business results. This is a general management role in the fullest sense: to lead the design, planning and execution of marquee experiences on a civic scale, reflecting the living heritage, operational agility, and "everybody's gardens" ethic across 60+ programs and 120+ events delivered annually across three gardens.

What started as a bold idea in the botanical garden nearly 11 years ago has become a world-renowned festival with Flower Piano. Building on our foundations of the gardens as star of the show, the launch of Lightscape last winter delivered one of the biggest light trails in North America and is our most significant program to date. The standard rises and our impact grows.



CONSERVATORY
OF FLOWERS



JAPANESE
TEA GARDEN
日本庭園



SAN FRANCISCO
BOTANICAL
GARDEN

Today, the programs and events portfolio generates over \$7M in annual revenue. From birding walks to cherry blossoms, to major institutional collaborations, our objective is clear: to position the Gardens of Golden Gate Park as San Francisco's premier urban oasis serving over 1.4 million people a year.

The Managing Director, Live Experiences is a critical leadership role within the Experience department, reporting to the Chief Experience Officer (CXO), who retains executive responsibility for strategic innovation and long-range creative and financial vision for the portfolio. Your role is to own the delivery of that vision—at scale, at quality, and on margin.

As a key leader for the Gardens, the Managing Director, Live Experiences is expected to be present when it matters most, including frequent evenings, weekends, and holidays as required by events. Schedules are set in consultation with the CXO and adjusted to meet the needs of the operation.

The Managing Director supervises the Associate Director of Events and the Senior Program Manager and oversees a distributed team across three gardens, including contracted partners and operating personnel for mega ticketed events. Operations at this scale demand strategic leadership, financial discipline and profitability focus, decisive and timely execution, team alignment, operational excellence, and an unwavering commitment to visitor experience.

This role calls for someone who leads with ethics, transparency, and genuine commitment to our mission, and understands that live experience is both a service imperative and a revenue driver.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership for Program & Events Execution

- Develop and execute a comprehensive programs and events experience strategy aligned with the organization's brand and business objectives, partnering closely with the CXO to ensure cohesive storytelling and program alignment across all three gardens.
- Own full-cycle delivery of 60+ programs and 120+ events annually, from pre-arrival communications through "return-to-life" post-visit activities, including marquee, civic scale experiences such as Flower Piano, Lightscape, and future tentpole activations.
- Lead a team responsible for experience pipeline cultivation, experience design, modeling, placemaking, vendor management, and on-site execution, with direct accountability for quality and timeline.

Partnerships & Experience

- Steward partnership with the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Department for the delivery of strategic programs including Lightscape, and collaborate with the Advancement team to identify, cultivate, and manage corporate sponsors and major institutional collaborations that expand the reach and relevance of the gardens through private rentals and events.

- Design and deliver experiences with a solutions ethic, from large-scale events serving broad, diverse populations to bespoke, high-touch experiences for VIP audiences, grounded in a deep understanding of visitor expectations, local trends, and consumer behaviors.
- Activate the Conservatory of Flowers, Japanese Tea Garden, and San Francisco Botanical Garden through dedicated programming and after-house experiences that attract new audiences, drive membership, and improve capacity utilization.

Brand & Creative Standards

- Set and uphold visual and experiential quality standards for all programs and events across three garden sites.
- Promote plant-focused programming that deepens connections between people, plants, and the planet.

Budget, Vendor & Performance Management

- Own program and events budgets with direct accountability for margin and profitability across the \$7M+ portfolio, negotiating and managing relationships with vendors, agencies, contracted partners, and operating personnel for mega ticketed events.
- Define and uphold KPIs for programs and events and evaluate success through qualitative and quantitative metrics, including revenue, attendance, and visitor satisfaction, leveraging insights to continuously refine and improve future programming.
- Report performance against strategic and financial objectives as needed to the Executive Team, Board, strategic partners and key stakeholders including San Francisco Rec & Park.

EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS

- 5+ years of progressive leadership in live events, live entertainment, theme parks, immersive experiences, and/or large-scale civic programming.
- Demonstrated track record delivering high-impact live experiences with direct accountability for operational quality and financial performance.
- Strong leadership and project management skills—organized and analytical, with the ability to manage multiple direct and third-party relationships simultaneously, and skilled at building collaborative teams through training and communication.
- Exceptional creative vision with strong attention to detail and a hospitality and customer service ethic.
- Experience building or stewarding major civic, entertainment, or institutional partnerships.
- Sound judgment and initiative under pressure. Identifies the path forward without waiting to be asked, thinks in solutions rather than problems, and exercises discretion with sensitive information.
- Demonstrates a passion for advancing organizational Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) objectives and influencing others to approach work with an equity lens.

- High level of professionalism and a collaborative work style, with a genuine and unwavering commitment to great visitor experience and to the Gardens' mission.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

This is a physically active, indoor-outdoor, public-facing role. The Managing Director works across all three garden sites in varying weather conditions outdoors year-round and inside a tropical conservatory, as well as in shared office spaces.

- Must be able to engage in a range of physical motions including standing or sitting at a desk or computer, walking on uneven surfaces, crouching, bending, squatting, kneeling, digging, climbing stairs and a ladder, working with arms outstretched or overhead.
- Lift and/or move up to 10 pounds regularly and occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds.
- Ability to use and maintain necessary tools and equipment safely and effectively.
- Ability to manage risk, adhering to the Gardens' safety and emergency protocols.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Please submit a resume and a cover letter describing a live experience, program, or event you are most proud of. Tell us what made it exceptional, what operational and financial challenges you navigated, what you would do differently, and why the Gardens is the right next chapter for you.

Applications without a cover letter will not be considered.

Application deadline: August 31, 2026

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND TO APPLY: Complete application with attached cover letter at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/recruiting/jobs/Details/4354583>

Gardens of Golden Gate Park is an equal opportunity employer and encourages candidates with diverse backgrounds and experiences to apply.

We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, or any other category protected by law.