

Senior Director of Philanthropy

Introduction

Houston Grand Opera (HGO) is entering an exciting new chapter of philanthropic growth, and the Senior Director of Philanthropy will play a pivotal role in shaping what comes next. Reporting to Chief Philanthropy Officer (CPO), <https://www.houstongrandopera.org/backstage-pass/houston-grand-opera-appoints-darcy-douglas-as-chief-philanthropy-officer>, the Senior Director will serve as a key member of the philanthropy leadership team and deputy to the CPO, leading a talented team of frontline fundraisers while helping to build a stronger, more strategic major gifts program. The opportunity now is to build on that success by deepening donor relationships, strengthening the major gifts pipeline, and creating the systems, strategies, and culture needed to achieve HGO's most ambitious fundraising goals and expand transformational giving.

This is an especially compelling opportunity for a builder and team leader—someone who loves bringing structure and strategy to a talented team, setting clear and engaging goals, coaching people to reach their potential, and creating a culture where accountability and collaboration go hand in hand. The Senior Director will have meaningful latitude to shape the team and its approach, including helping to define individual goals and performance metrics, strengthen portfolios, develop talent, and make the case for additional resources as the major gifts program grows.

At its heart, this is an opportunity to help HGO evolve from a successful fundraising operation into a sophisticated, relationship-driven major gifts program—one grounded in creativity, authentic donor engagement, data-informed decision-making, and long-term philanthropic partnerships. The Senior Director will help shift the conversation from transactions and annual benefits to meaningful investments in HGO's future, while inspiring a team to pursue ambitious goals with energy, discipline, and imagination. For a fundraising leader who is energized by the opportunity to build something important, lead an inspiring team, and make a measurable impact, HGO offers an extraordinary platform: a beloved and ambitious arts institution, strong philanthropic momentum, and the opportunity to help chart a new path for the future of opera and the performing arts in one of the nation's most dynamic cities.

The Opportunity

The Senior Director of Philanthropy plays a crucial role in advancing Houston Grand Opera's mission to enrich our diverse community through the art of opera by developing, overseeing, and executing a robust fundraising program for HGO. Reporting to the Chief Philanthropy Officer, this position supervises a team of frontline fundraisers spanning mid-level to major gifts. The role is responsible for setting a high standard of performance across the philanthropy department, driving portfolio growth, strengthening donor relationships, and elevating the team's collective capacity to cultivate, solicit, and steward donors at every level. As HGO embarks on its next chapter of philanthropic growth, the Senior Director will play a pivotal role in ensuring the success of campaign initiatives by aligning team efforts with organizational priorities, building a culture of accountability and ambition, and positioning the department to meet and exceed its most ambitious fundraising goals.

Key Position Functions

Management and Leadership

- Provide strategic and day-to-day leadership for a team of frontline fundraisers focused on major and mid-level donors and prospects, including hiring, training, mentoring, and performance evaluation to build a high-performing, entrepreneurial team.
- Develop and implement a robust, long-term major gifts strategy that drives philanthropic support for HGO's top priorities and fosters a collaborative culture across the philanthropy office.
- Build and oversee a comprehensive pipeline program that identifies prospects early in the engagement process, guides them through a purposeful and seamless donor experience at every stage, and ensures a steady flow of well-cultivated major gift prospects aligned with HGO's fundraising priorities and campaign goals.
- Partner with individual team members to build and strengthen their donor portfolios, providing guidance on prospect identification, qualification, and moves management.
- Collaborate with colleagues in philanthropy operations to design and use data tools that provide actionable insight into portfolio performance, track progress against fundraising goals, and inform strategy.
- Track and report on team progress toward fundraising goals, maintaining accountability to benchmarks established by the Chief Philanthropy Officer.

Fundraising

- Serve as a compelling advocate for HGO, using institutional priorities, points of pride, and strategic vision to inspire philanthropic investment.
- Meet or exceed annual fundraising goals established by the Chief Philanthropy Officer through active management of a personal major gifts portfolio distinct from those managed by the team.
- Develop and execute cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship strategies that leverage relationships with donors, prospects, and HGO leadership—artistic, administrative, and volunteer.
- Travel locally and nationally to meet with current and prospective donors, promoting HGO's strategic priorities and funding opportunities.
- Participate in key HGO events to support donor cultivation, relationship development, and stewardship, staffing as needed.
- Ensure that donor records are accurate and up-to-date with all interactions, proposals, and gift activity in Tessitura, ensuring data integrity and supporting accurate pipeline management, revenue tracking, and financial forecasting.

Qualifications

Required Qualifications

Bachelor's degree required, with advanced degree or certification preferred. A minimum of 10 years of frontline fundraising experience, with experience in major gifts fundraising, is required. A minimum of three years of experience managing fundraising professionals, with a demonstrated commitment to coaching, mentoring, and developing team members, is required. Proven track record of identifying, cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding six- and seven-figure gifts. Strong knowledge and understanding of current philanthropy trends, with a clear desire to constantly learn and improve skills. Exceptional interpersonal skills that support meaningful relationships with organizational leadership, staff, and high-level volunteers. Experience in, and commitment to, data-driven decision-making. Proven ability to work with a high level of independence, maintain confidentiality, prioritize assignments, and manage time effectively. Proficiency in donor management software and CRM systems (e.g., Tessitura, Raiser's Edge, Salesforce) for donor tracking, reporting, and analysis.

Special Job Characteristics

We seek a resourceful, proactive, self-starter who can independently solve problems and prioritize key tasks in a fast-paced environment. Successful candidates will be natural motivators, who encourage and empower others to meet ambitious goals. Must be highly organized with strong attention to detail. High level of personal and professional ethics. Ability to work flexible hours (including evenings and weekends) and willingness to travel to attend donor events, performances, and meetings as needed. Knowledge of opera is a plus, and a passion for the performing arts is essential.

Compensation

Houston Grand Opera is pleased to offer a competitive compensation and benefits package for this position. The target salary is \$150,000–\$170,000, commensurate with experience.

Application Process

Benefactor Group is pleased to be assisting Houston Grand Opera with this executive search. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. All applications are considered highly confidential. To be considered for this position, please submit an application at this link: <https://bit.ly/HGO-SrDirectorPhilApp>

To learn more about Houston Grand Opera, please visit:
<https://www.houstongrandopera.org>

Please do not contact Houston Grand Opera staff or board with questions or interest in the role. All inquiries about the position should be directed to Benefactor Group.

Benefactor Group Recruitment Team

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