

Executive Director Sitar Arts Center



Status: Full-time, exempt employee
Salary: Starting at \$175,000
Location: Washington, DC
Reports to: Board of Directors
Deadline: Apply by early May for best consideration. Early applications encouraged.

About Sitar Arts Center

Sitar Arts Center is a vibrant home for arts education and creative youth development in Washington, DC. Since 2000, Sitar has welcomed thousands of DC's young people and their families into inspiring, high-quality, accessible programs that nurture creativity, curiosity, and growth from early childhood to young adulthood. Through after-school, Saturday, and summer camp programs, youth are encouraged to discover their talents, build confidence, and develop skills that support them for a lifetime. In 2025, more than 500 youth participated in these high-quality experiences. Learn more about Sitar's impact and plans at sitarartscenter.org.

Sitar is dedicated to creating a community where every young person is supported and has a strong sense of belonging and possibility. With a focus on opportunities within reach for all, Sitar offers sliding-scale fees to ensure that 80% of enrollment is reserved for families earning 60% or less of the area median income. Sitar is a diverse and welcoming place where young people come together to learn, express themselves, and thrive. Over 80% of students represent the global majority, with dozens of different languages spoken in its halls.

Named for Patricia M. Sitar, an artist who devoted her life to providing safe spaces and opportunities for DC youth, the organization proudly celebrated its 25th anniversary last fall. Now among the region's most celebrated arts education nonprofits, Sitar's local and national recognition has included the DC Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in Arts Education, the Washington Post Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Management, and the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award.

In 2022, Bloomberg Philanthropies invited Sitar to apply to become a partnership site of the Bloomberg Arts Internship Program (BAI). Sitar is now the DC home for BAI, the largest program for paid high school internships in the U.S. cultural sector. BAI has reached more than 2,000 rising seniors and 250+ cultural institutions in seven cities across the country. By this summer, Sitar will have placed more than 150 DC BAI interns at local arts and cultural organizations, including Woolly Mammoth Theatre, GALA Hispanic Theatre, the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, The Washington Ballet, Hillwood Estate, and many more.

Sitar is a cornerstone for DC's historic and multicultural Adams Morgan neighborhood, a long-time home to artists, activists, and immigrant families whose impact has shaped a community with a strong sense of identity, diversity, and character. The 18,000-square foot state-of-the-art campus is a cultural anchor for the neighborhood. In 2026, Sitar Next Door will open following a successfully completed multi-million-dollar capital campaign and construction on a new arts learning and career training hub adjacent to its headquarters. This addition expands Sitar's footprint by 50% and adds a multimedia studio with video production space, a black box theater, and one of DC's few audio recording and production studios.

Leadership Opportunity

Sitar Arts Center's Board of Directors seeks a dynamic and strategic Executive Director (E.D.) to advance the influence, resources, and impact of a widely respected Washington, DC cultural institution. With a growing profile, expanding programs, and increasing thought leadership for pathways in creative youth development, the incoming E.D. has ample opportunity to make an indelible impact on the creative lives of DC's youth.

The E.D. will deliver an inspiring vision that elevates its visibility, raises public awareness of its impact, and attracts new philanthropic support. Working with a talented team of arts administrators and educators, the E.D. will support shaping Sitar's best-in-class programming and ensuring the operational excellence of its dedicated and impactful team.

The next leader takes the helm from current E.D. Maureen Dwyer, who has thoughtfully designed this leadership transition following 15 years in leadership and 25 years with Sitar. The next E.D. will inherit a thriving nonprofit with a clear vision, mission and values, a strong financial position, and a five-year strategy that guides the organization in four focus areas:

- Growing as a community anchor for DC youth and families
- Expanding programming and support for young adults and creative workforce development
- Deepening the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Evolving Sitar's business model, brand identity, and revenue streams

For more than 25 years, Sitar has continuously evolved and grown in service of community needs. In 2027, the E.D. will have the opportunity to engage stakeholders in strategic planning to develop new areas of ambition and innovation for this legacy cultural institution.

The E.D. reports to an engaged Board of Directors that includes civic and business leaders, philanthropists, and arts advocates. The E.D. leads a values-driven staff of 25, and more than 120 dedicated volunteer teaching artists and paid seasonal faculty and assistants. Sitar's FY26 budget is \$4.6M and is supported by a mix of corporate, foundation, and individual support. The organization has a strong cash position and ample reserves bolstered by successful campaigns for the capital project and 25th anniversary, and a board-designated endowment.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Vision

- Partner with the Board, staff, and constituents to envision opportunities where youth are supported on their path to discover their creativity and achieve their full potential
- Serve as the primary spokesperson and ambassador for Sitar Arts Center
- Champion a student-centered organizational culture that celebrates community diversity
- Support the Board's maintenance of key governance practices and recruitment of new board members who represent Sitar's diverse constituencies

Resource Development & External Relations

- Provide leadership for a comprehensive fundraising strategy that stewards existing donors and cultivates new relationships with major donors, foundations, and partners
- Collaborate with Board and development team to grow and diversify philanthropic support
- Explore and test new ideas that diversify revenue streams and earned income models
- Work together with staff and Board to raise awareness about Sitar's impact and brand
- Advocate for arts education and creative workforce in local, regional, and national venues

Financial & Organizational Leadership

- Oversee Sitar's financial performance, investments, and multi-year forecasts
- Responsibly monitor and steward Sitar's buildings and capital assets
- Foster a supportive, inclusive, and collaborative workplace
- Lead and motivate a dedicated team with integrity, compassion, and creativity
- Ensure strong internal systems, policies, and operational infrastructure

Programming & Community Engagement

- Ensure arts programming is innovative, high quality, and meets diverse community needs
- Expand and steward partnerships with schools, arts organizations, and community groups
- Support evaluation, reporting, and continuous improvement of program outcomes

Experience, Skills and Qualities

Sitar Arts Center seeks a mission-oriented leader who combines strategic vision with operational excellence. While we understand that no single candidate can possess every qualification listed below, the following are priority areas:

- Passion for Sitar's mission and a belief in the power of arts education and creative youth development to expand opportunity and foster belonging.
- 15+ years of increasing leadership experience in nonprofit, public sector, or social enterprise settings, including roles managing teams and organizational operations.
- Strong nonprofit business acumen, including an understanding of financial management, contract negotiations, human resources, and organizational systems.
- Successful record raising funds, including cultivating major gifts, securing foundation and institutional support, and partnering with boards and staff to achieve fundraising goals.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to serve as a compelling spokesperson and inspire a wide range of audiences.
- Experience setting inspiring vision for complex programs, including balancing creativity with day-to-day operational needs.
- Record of embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging principles in organizational culture, programs, and leadership practice.
- Accomplished people manager with a gift for fostering a values-driven culture of collaboration, belonging, high performance, and effective internal communication.
- Experience cultivating and stewarding partnerships with community organizations, funders, civic leaders, and cultural and/or educational institutions.
- Strong interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and a collaborative leadership style that builds trust across diverse stakeholders, including Sitar's family and faculty communities.
- Demonstrated experience working effectively with a board of directors, including engaging board members in strategy, governance, and fundraising.
- A personal arts practice (currently or in the past) and/or conversational Spanish, is also considered a plus.

Compensation

A starting salary of \$175,000 with a comprehensive benefits package that includes bonus opportunities, health insurance to fully cover employees and partially cover dependents, matched retirement savings, generous paid time off, and a sabbatical after five years of service.

Location and Travel

Sitar is headquartered in Washington, DC's vibrant Adams Morgan neighborhood. The role requires regular on-site presence and active in-person engagement across the region.

Application Process

The Board of Directors has retained the services of Good Insight, a national executive search firm serving the nonprofit sector. Interested applicants should submit a resume and a cover letter that describes their interest in and qualifications for this role, emphasizing related leadership experience. Visit good-insight.org/careers to upload application materials. Direct confidential inquiries to Carlyn Madden and Ana Chapa at sitar@good-insight.org.

For best consideration, please apply by early May. Qualified applicants will be contacted on a rolling basis. Early applications are encouraged due to the pace of the search.

Equal Opportunity Employer

Sitar Arts Center is firmly committed to a policy against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, veteran status, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, socioeconomic background, or any other classification protected by applicable law. Sitar recognizes and honors diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, age, abilities, gender, sexual orientation, and places where people live. We seek to reflect this diversity in all aspects of our work, including the composition of our board, staff, and volunteers. Further, Sitar seeks to be a multicultural and culturally competent organization that works for equity among all people. We strongly encourage applications from people of color, immigrants, refugees, women, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and other underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.