

RECRUITMENT PACK

Director of Operations and Commercial

12 Dec 2025
HEDOOAC

This new role, as part of Hackney Empire's senior leadership team, will lead on and be responsible for all operational areas, including visitor experience, bars, catering relationships, stage door, cleaning, IT and Technical.



THE ROLE

Role:	Director of Operations and Commercial
Line manager:	Chief Executive
Line management:	Theatre Manager, Theatre Bars Manager, Technical Manager
Contractor Management:	IT Associate, external café/bar operator, others as required
Working closely with:	Capital Projects & Facilities Associate, Buildings & Maintenance Associate, Finance and supporting all departments and activities
Salary:	£60,000-£62,500, dependent on experience
Contract:	Full-time, permanent position, subject to the successful completion of a six-month probationary period

Job description & purpose of role

This new role, as part of Hackney Empire's senior leadership team, will lead on and be responsible for all operational areas, including visitor experience, bars, catering relationships, stage door, cleaning, IT and Technical. The role involves being people focused and commercially astute, maximising revenues whilst delivering exceptional service to all visitors and ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

The role will lead and empower a team of skilled managers to ensure smooth, high-quality operations, visitor and visiting company experiences; maximise income and improve service standards; ensure technical infrastructure is appropriate to our ambitions and industry expectations; maintain a secure and effective IT infrastructure, suitable for the needs of our business; ensuring the building is welcoming, safe and compliant.

They will work with the Chief Executive, and colleagues across the organisation, to champion the Hackney Empire brand, building our profile and reputation locally, and nationally, as we become ever more central to the UK theatre ecology and narrative.

LETTER FROM HACKNEY EMPIRE:

Welcome to Hackney Empire. We're delighted you've taken this step to find out more about applying for the role of Director of Operations and Commercial at Hackney Empire.

For almost 125 years, Hackney Empire has been a home for the people of Hackney, East London and beyond to come and share experiences together in our theatre.

Every year we welcome up to 200,000 people through our doors to enjoy everything art & culture has to offer: from theatre to comedy, dance to live music, opera to our legendary pantomime and so much more.

From starting life as a music hall in 1901 with Charlie Chaplin, Houdini, Julie Andrews and Louis Armstrong on the books, through years as a TV Studio and a Bingo Hall, to our now iconic Grade II* listed theatre that has played host to the likes of The Rolling Stones, Florence & the Machine, the Royal Shakespeare Company, Ralph Fiennes, Dave Chappelle, the British Soap Awards and thousands more!

For decades Hackney Empire has been a vital and exceptional platform for lesser represented creatives and has a proud legacy of supporting global majority artists and marginalised voices. This continues to be core to the organisation's values that great stories come from anywhere and anyone.

Each year, we also offer 4,000 local 14 – 25-year-olds the chance to get involved via our Creative Futures programme, providing free projects that build their skills, confidence and careers, helping them make new, positive connections.

More information about us can be found at hackneyempire.co.uk.

Please take the time to read this document and find out more about the role and the organisation, and we look forward to receiving your application.

VISION, MISSION & VALUES

Vision

We're here to ignite change, champion community and empower young people.

Mission

We will run a transformative creative programme for young people, from primary school to job placement.

We will lead the way in variety entertainment, offering high quality shows and events that are popular and relevant to our communities.

We will be a theatre where everyone feels welcome and leaves knowing that there is something for them at Hackney Empire.

Values

BRAVERY: We believe that great stories come from anywhere and anyone, and we will always be brave and give a platform to variety.

OPPORTUNITY: Young people from our communities deserve opportunity and we will always make space for them to find theirs.

RESPECT: We respect that everyone who walks through our doors is on their own journey and we're grateful to be a part of that.

REPRESENTATION, ACCESS & INCLUSION

Hackney Empire is a cultural beacon and an influential safe space, which annually welcomes up to 200,000 audience members – an audience that fully reflects the incredible diversity and depth of London’s communities. For decades Hackney Empire has been regarded as a vital and exceptional platform for Black, Asian and ethnically diverse creatives, artists, audiences and participants; and has a proud legacy of supporting marginalised and isolated voices. This legacy continues to this day as a core principle within the organisation’s mission.

Hackney Empire is committed to promoting equality, inclusion and representation in all areas of our work, we are opposed to all forms of discrimination, direct or indirect.

Hackney Empire’s aim is to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all of our employees, participants, audiences, artists, patrons, clients and all other people with whom we engage to produce and present our programme; deliver our services; and to ensure legal diligence and internal best practice.

Hackney Empire encourages applications from anyone from the global majority and those with disabilities, including but not limited to deafness and sight, especially where we consider we are under-represented at this level in our organisation, as we are for the level of this role. If you identify in any of these ways and can demonstrate you have the essential experience, knowledge, skills and abilities for the role in line with the person specification, we offer a guaranteed first-round interview.

CREATIVE FUTURES

Learning and Participation runs through everything we do at Hackney Empire. Our engagement programmes are specifically designed with our local communities in mind, and developed in collaboration with our stakeholders through a range of consultation, partnership working and co-creation. Young People's voices are integrated into programme design and delivery through our Young Producers Programme, Young Board R&D group, Associate Artists and Trainee programmes. Being deeply connected to our local community, and creating space for participants to tell us what they need from Hackney Empire is central to how we work. Inclusivity and access, collaboration, care and integrity are guiding principles for us.

Our ambitious programme of work has multiple entry points, and we pride ourselves on being able to journey with participants from initial light touch engagement projects in school, right through to professional performance opportunities and leadership roles. We work with primary, secondary, FE and HE settings through our Outreach strand of work; young people aged 14 to 19 and early career artists through Creative Futures; and older community members through the Hackney Empire Community Choir. We are locally focussed with connections across London and nationwide, ensuring that we are both Hackney specific, and nationally recognised.

800
hours
of activity
across 45 weeks
of the year

over
4,000
young people
engaged

34,000
school
children
attended a
performance

a minimum of
75
paid roles
for young creatives

All activity is provided free of charge to reduce financial barriers to access.

Our progression model works in stages. Participants can move through all four steps or enter and engage at whatever level meets their needs and wishes.

ENGAGEMENT

LEARNING

ACTION

LEADERSHIP



From top to bottom: Mac DeMarco (2023), Artist Development Programme (2025), Mother Goose (2022). Photography by Mark Senior and Fabrice Bourgelle

MAIN

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Leadership:

- Be an active member of the Senior Leadership team, contributing to strategic direction, attending meetings, including with our Board of Trustees
- Provide leadership and direction on operational, visitor experience, bars, catering, technical, Health & Safety, IT and infrastructure matters for the continued improvement, growth and success of the organisation
- Work with the Head of Marketing & Communications, Head of Development and Chief Executive to regularly review and develop our customer journey, identifying commercial opportunities
- Prepare annual budgets and targets for all operational areas of the business, monitoring progress throughout the year and responding appropriately to ensure success
- Prepare analytical, written and verbal reports for the Board, Chief Executive, funders and stakeholders
- Be alert to developments and innovations in operational, commercial and technical areas of the industry and beyond, spotting opportunity and ensuring our offer is the best it can be, within available or secured resources
- Work with the Chief Executive, Board, Capital Projects & Facilities Associate, external consultants and stakeholders to develop capital ambitions
- Work with the Capital Projects & Facilities Associate, IT Associate, Technical Manager to ensure long term planned maintenance schedules are developed and updated for the improvement of building, technical and IT services
- On completion of probation, become the Licence Holder for Hackney Empire, acting as Designated Premises Supervisor, ensuring conditions of the premises licence are upheld at all times
- Be an ambassador and advocate for Hackney Empire, and a visible champion for our company values and behaviours, particularly in relation to opportunity, inclusivity, ambition, safeguarding, Health & Safety, young people's progression and commitment to environmental sustainability
- Create strong connections within the cultural sector of London and the UK, representing Hackney Empire in networks and developing new ones; as well as at conferences and sector events, raising the profile of our work nationally
- Deputise for the Chief Executive, where directed and required

Income Generation and Financial Management:

- Maximise gross and net income generation within visitor experience and bars functions, through regular review, development and innovation
- Work with the Chief Executive and leadership colleagues to develop and deliver an income generation strategy, in line with our values, for Empire 2, additional spaces, digital screens and external advertising spaces

- Ensure operational teams support fundraising initiatives and relationships
- Oversee procurement and negotiation of supplier and service contracts, ensuring best value for the organisation is achieved, while upholding our values and sustainability commitments
- Prepare and effectively oversee and deliver budgets related to operational, compliance and commercial areas of the business, establishing and reporting against targets, providing forecasts and results, in conjunction with Finance team
- Ensure that all managers exercise effective financial control and procedures, maintaining up-to-date records of departmental, financial, stock and personnel information
- Work closely with Finance team to prepare weekly and monthly payroll for sign off
- Engage actively within the annual audit process, working with auditors, Finance team, Chief Executive and other colleagues

Operational and Commercial Management:

- Work with the Theatre Manager to ensure that our visitor experience is always exceptional, inclusive and welcoming
- Work with the Theatre Manager and Theatre Bars Manager to increase profitability, develop commercial thinking, drive sales, explore additional income opportunities
- Enhance the food and beverage offering to reflect and cater to the diverse demographics and preferences of visitors
- Build and maintain a positive relationship with the external café/bar operator, exploring collaboration, ensuring compliance and overseeing licensing matters
- Work with the IT Associate to ensure effective, secure and compliant IT systems are in place and meet existing and future business needs
- Work with the Technical Manager to ensure the highest quality of technical services, visiting company experience, infrastructure within available resources and delivery throughout the venue and its programmes
- Work with the Capital Projects & Facilities Associate and their team to ensure that all areas of the venue are maintained and cleaned to a high quality, regularly and consistently
- Lead Operations Meetings and ensure effective communication between the teams you manage and others across the organisation
- Be the senior point of contact for customer feedback, overseeing effective management and resolution of customer compliments and complaints

Team Management:

- Effectively line manage Theatre Manager, Theatre Bars Manager, Technical Manager, undertaking progress reviews, setting objectives and supporting their development; empowering and challenging them to do the same for their teams
- Effectively manage contractor relationships to ensure high performance and cost-effective delivery, including with the IT Associate, external café/bar operator and any other contractor relationships, as required
- Ensure sufficient staffing levels are maintained for all operational and commercial departments, adhering to Working Time Regulations, recruiting and training appropriately skilled team members as required to deliver success
- Establish and maintain excellent working relationships and communication with colleagues across the organisation

Health, Safety and Compliance:

- Cultivate a culture of positivity and awareness around health, safety, and environmental health practices in all operational departments
- Work with the Capital & Facilities Associate to develop effective Health and Safety strategies, security procedures, safety action plans, building, fire, terror and other risk assessment schedules
- Ensure appropriate policies, procedures, regular checks and audits are in place to provide statutory and regulatory compliance, including building operations
- Ensure staff are fully trained and comply with all relevant legislation, regulations around licensing, policies and procedures
- Develop strong links with local authority, emergency services, agencies and neighbours to support safe and secure operations
- Ensure that all relevant insurances are correctly upheld and that staff with responsibilities in operational areas are trained and supported appropriately
- Work with the Chief Executive to regularly update the organisational risk register, and the IT Associate to develop an IT Risk Register, monitoring and investigating major risks and reporting to Board and Chief Executive, as appropriate

Sustainability:

- Be a champion for environmental sustainability across the organisation, encouraging all departments to develop and participate in sustainability initiatives, reducing the organisation's environmental impact
- Support the Executive Assistant with collating environmental sustainability reports, in line with Theatre Green Book and Julie's Bicycle

General:

- Undergo relevant training and development, as required by the Chief Executive
- Comply with all legal requirements relating to General Data Protection Regulations
- Carry out any other duties required by the Chief Executive, commensurate with the general level of responsibility of the post

PERSON

SPECIFICATION:

Essential Experience

- Managing or overseeing visitor experience teams
- Managing or overseeing bar functions
- Income generation, setting targets and exceeding them
- Managing teams successfully and developmentally
- Planning, managing and monitoring multiple budgets
- Financial processes, timesheets and payroll processes
- Procurement processes and contract negotiation with suppliers
- Developing and implementing new systems and processes
- Writing reports, strategic documents, policies or procedures
- Planning strategically, translating this to operational practice
- Prioritising and managing a complex workload
- Analysing data, identifying trends, and forecasting based on that analysis

Knowledge, Skills and Qualities

- Strong interpersonal, communication and stakeholder management skills
- Strong organisational, project management and administrative skills
- Knowledge of Health and Safety legislation, management and practice
- Knowledge of IT, GDPR, cyber risks and approaches to mitigate against them
- Commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion
- Passion for the performing arts
- Commitment to developing opportunities and pathways for young people, the future arts workforce
- Enthusiasm for and understanding of Hackney Empire's mission, vision and values
- Personal Licence holder (or willing to obtain one during probation period)

Desirable

- Operational management in an arts venue / organisation
- Knowledge of technical theatre and producing processes
- Experience working with business systems, such as Artifax & CRM software
- Experience overseeing maintenance teams
- Experience overseeing external contractors
- Experience managing projects to reduce environmental impact
- Experience developing business continuity and building compliance plans
- Experience working within a heritage or listed building
- Experience liaising with local authorities, stakeholders and neighbours
- Knowledge or experience of relevant union agreements

TERMS &

CONDITIONS OF THE ROLE:

- Notice Period: 1 month during probationary period (on either side), thereafter 3 months
- Place of work: Hackney Empire, 291 Mare Street, London E8 1EJ, with some ability to work from home, where responsibilities, events and workload allow. There is step free access throughout the building
- Hours: Equivalent to an average of 40 hours per week excluding lunch breaks. Some evening and weekend work will be required as part of this role
- Holiday: 22 days per annum rising to 27 days based on an incremental system, plus bank holidays and other public holidays
- Stakeholder pension contribution



Photography by Mark Senior

HOW TO APPLY

Reference: HEDOOAC

Apply by: Mon 12 Jan 2026, 10am

Interview(s): W/C 19 Jan First-round interviews, W/C 26 Jan Second-round interviews

Candidates should apply for this role by providing a:

- Cover letter, of no more than two pages, setting out your interest in the role and examples of how you meet the person specification
- CV
- Completed Equal Opportunities Form

Applications should be sent to recruitment@hackneyempire.co.uk including in the subject line reference **HEDOOAC**, by 10am on Mon 12 Jan 2026.

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