



Executive Director

The Sylvia Center

New York, NY (Hybrid)

Salary: \$200,000

The Organization

The Sylvia Center (TSC) is creating healthy communities through the power of cooking. Founded in 2007 to address the growing tide of childhood diet-related disease, TSC's mission is to educate young people and families through culinary programming that promotes health and well-being. Since its inception, TSC has helped more than 40,000 individuals learn about, explore, and access nutritious foods, and become ambassadors for healthy eating in their communities.

TSC was born at Katchkie Farm in Kinderhook, NY, where children first explored a vegetable garden and cooked lunch from what they harvested. In 2008, a New York City branch opened with cooking classes in a learning kitchen at Great Performances, one of the city's premier catering companies and a longtime partner that continues to shape the organization's identity and donor relationships. City programming expanded steadily through NYCHA community centers in Harlem, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx, and into schools throughout the five boroughs. Today, TSC partners with more than 50 schools and community organizations across all five boroughs, Columbia County, and the Capital District, reaching nearly 4,000 students annually.

TSC operates with an annual budget of approximately \$2 million, a small and committed staff team (10 full-time and 50 part-time employees), and a board that is actively engaged in the organization's next chapter. The organization is financially healthy and well-positioned for its next phase of growth.

Founded	Annual Budget	Locations
2007	~\$2M	Bronx, NY & Kinderhook, NY

The Position

The Sylvia Center is seeking an Executive Director to lead the organization into its next chapter of growth and impact. Building on a strong foundation of programmatic excellence and financial stability, the next Executive Director will help shape the organization's long-term strategy, deepen fundraising relationships, and expand its influence at the intersection of food, health, and social justice.

An Interim Executive Director is currently in place, providing the Board the runway to conduct a thoughtful and deliberate search. The incoming Executive Director will inherit a stable organization with strong programs, an engaged Board, and a healthy balance sheet, while partnering with the Board to define the organization's long-term vision, strengthen its fundraising infrastructure, and position The Sylvia Center for sustained growth and impact.

Strategic Leadership

- Partner with the Board to define and articulate a long-term organizational strategy that advances The Sylvia Center's reach, fundraising capacity, strategic partnerships, and overall impact.
- Serve as a thought leader on the role of food, nutrition, and culinary education in health equity and social justice, and position TSC at the center of those conversations.
- Work with the board to strengthen its composition, engagement, and financial capacity over time.
- Build a leadership culture that supports staff development, retention, and a healthy organizational climate.
- Foster a culture of creativity and continuous improvement, identifying innovative approaches to fundraising, communications, partnerships, and program delivery.

Fundraising and Development

- Personally cultivate and steward major donor, foundation, and corporate relationships while partnering with the Board to expand philanthropic support.
- Serve as the primary relationship holder for the organization's most significant donors and prospective funders.
- Oversee and actively support the organization's two flagship fundraising events: the annual Farm Event at Katchkie Farm (summer) and the Art of Cooking gala (spring), which together represent a substantial portion of annual revenue.
- Assess the current development structure and, in partnership with the board, hire and lead a Development Director who can build and sustain TSC's fundraising infrastructure.
- Cultivate new corporate sponsors, institutional funders, and individual donors, with an eye toward diversifying the revenue base.

Program and Operations

- Provide executive oversight of TSC's programming across New York City and Kinderhook, ensuring quality, fidelity to mission, and continued growth in reach.
- Oversee financial management, including budget planning, fiscal accountability, and reporting to the board finance committee.
- Build and maintain organizational systems, processes, and infrastructure that support a highly-performing, small-staff organization.
- Effectively balance leadership across the organization's Bronx and Kinderhook operations, empowering staff, delegating appropriately, and maintaining strong relationships across both locations.

External Presence and Partnerships

- Serve as the primary external representative of The Sylvia Center to donors, funders, community partners, the media, and the broader food and nonprofit communities.
- Deepen TSC's presence and visibility in the New York City food, culinary, and social justice ecosystem.
- Leverage the organization's unique connection to the culinary and restaurant world to expand relationships and open new doors for funding and partnership.
- Represent the organization at relevant convenings, public events, and forums.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships with schools, community-based organizations, public agencies, and institutional partners that advance The Sylvia Center's mission and extend its reach.

Board Partnership

- Work closely with the board chair and executive committee, providing regular updates and equipping the board to make informed, strategic decisions.
- Support board recruitment and development, with a focus on expanding the board's financial reach, sector connections, and governance capacity.
- Serve as a trusted thought partner to board leadership on matters of strategy, organizational health, and external positioning.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The Sylvia Center is looking for a leader who combines organizational depth with genuine passion for food, community, and the mission of the organization. The ideal candidate will bring an authentic connection to The Sylvia Center's mission and see food as a powerful tool for health, education, and community.

New York Nonprofit Fluency	Deep familiarity with New York's nonprofit and philanthropic landscape is essential. The next ED should bring meaningful experience navigating New York's nonprofit and philanthropic landscape, with established relationships that will help accelerate their success.
Genuine Food Affinity	Food is not incidental to this role. The next ED should love food, understand its connection to health, justice, and community, and be able to speak credibly and passionately in the organization's culinary and food world circles.
Fundraising Leadership	A track record of leading or substantially contributing to fundraising success in a nonprofit setting. Comfort with major donor relationships, event oversight, and foundation stewardship. Experience working at the level of individual giving at meaningful scale.
Organizational Leadership	Experience leading a small-to-mid-size nonprofit organization, with responsibility for staff, budget, and board. Someone who is as comfortable in the operational details as they are in the external-facing work.
Strategic Thinking	Ability to partner with a board to ask the right questions about organizational direction and growth and help the institution answer them. TSC is healthy and has momentum; the next leader will help shape what that momentum is building toward.
People Leadership	A warm, direct, and credible communicator who earns the trust of staff, board, donors, and community partners. Demonstrated success leading and developing multigenerational teams, including coaching, and supporting emerging professionals.
Board Partnership	Knows how to work with an engaged, high-functioning board. Keeps leadership informed, supports board decision-making, and actively contributes to building board capacity over time.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE (cont.)

Additional Qualifications

- Minimum eight to ten years of nonprofit experience, with meaningful time in a senior leadership role.
- Demonstrated success in fundraising, including major donor engagement and event-driven revenue.
- Demonstrated success leading fundraising in a small or mid-sized nonprofit environment where the Executive Director played a direct, hands-on role in cultivating donors, securing gifts, and advancing organizational revenue.
- Prior experience in the food, culinary, public health, or social justice sectors is strongly preferred.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills; comfortable speaking to diverse audiences including donors, board members, community partners, and staff
- Experience with or strong interest in organizational strategy and board development

WHO WE ARE

Work Environment

The Sylvia Center operates on a hybrid schedule, with in-office days 2-3 days per week. The Executive Director will be expected to maintain a visible presence consistent with organizational culture and the needs of the team, with flexibility to adjust during the summer months.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Sylvia Center is committed to building a team that reflects the communities it serves. We believe that diversity of experience, background, and perspective makes us stronger, and we actively work to create an inclusive environment where all staff can thrive. Candidates of all backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary

\$200,000, with a competitive benefits package.

The Sylvia Center is committed to compensating its next leader at a level that reflects the importance of this role to the organization's future.

TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

The Sylvia Center has engaged DRG to conduct this search.

To apply, please submit a resume and a brief statement of interest. All applications will receive a confirmation of receipt. Candidates selected for an initial conversation will hear from DRG by October 2026.

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[Submit an application](#)