

Job Description

Job title:	Chief Operating Officer
Reporting to:	Chief Executive
Location:	Flexible/Hybrid with occasional work from our London office)
Budget responsibility:	Department budget
Management responsibility:	Head of Finance, Head of Data and Digital
Hours:	35 per week
Contract:	Fixed term for 6 months
Salary	up to £90,000 per annum pro rata

Living Streets is the UK charity for everyday walking, we know safe, attractive streets lead to healthy people, places and the environment. For over 95 years we have worked to create a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday local journeys. Our flagship Walk to School campaign supports around 1,500 primary schools and encourages children and their families to walk to school through national schemes including Walk to School Week, and WOW – the walk to school challenge – making it one of the UK's leading behaviour change campaigns for children; to date we have seen 56m new walking journeys and 15.7m fewer car journeys at peak times. In 2025/26 our Active Travel England grant is increasing from £3m to £5m to grow the impact of this programme, within that grant is the short-term contract for a COO to deliver the step change this programme needs.

MAIN PURPOSE OF JOB:

This is a new pivotal role for a transformative COO – a strategic and hands-on operator who isn't afraid to roll up their sleeves, dive into details, and deliver a tangible impact across the charity. The COO will need to deliver a step change in our operations from new business models for a sustainable future to a capacity tracker for successful programming and delivery. Entering a period of significant growth for our Walk to School programme, expedites the remit for the COO to create models for growth in delivery and commercial income.

The role requires a dynamic and effective leader to complement and support the Senior Management Team in leading the charity through a period of significant change and transformation.

Key relationships will be with the Director of Development and Delivery, and Head of Major Projects as we develop the processes, procedures and systems to deliver a growth programme for Active Travel England in 2025/26.

The COO will be responsible for overseeing and improving Living Streets internal operations, ensuring effective delivery across Finance, Governance, Data and Digital, including the Impact and Evaluation department.

As a CCAB Qualified Accountant you will work with the Head of Finance to develop and implement financial strategies, financial modelling, improved financial management and reporting as well as ensuring strong financial control processes across the team.

Experience with and passion for streamlining operations, systems, and processes will be essential, whilst fostering a positive culture in a purpose-driven charity.

This role requires a doer—pace will be essential to get into the detail and confidently lead a team through change.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Operational Leadership:

- Develop business models for change; to deliver a sustainable financial model for programme delivery and income diversification whilst ensuring the efficient use of resources.
- Streamline processes and workflows to improve operational performance.
- Develop and implement operational policies, procedures, and best practices to enhance productivity and ensure compliance.

Strategic Planning and Execution:

- Collaborate with the Senior Management Team to support the Senior Leadership Team to shape and execute the charity's annual business plans.
- Translate objectives into actionable initiatives, ensuring effective implementation and tracking progress.
- Identify opportunities for growth, cost optimisation, and improved service delivery.

Financial Management:

- Working closely with the Senior Leadership Group and the Head of Finance.
- Lead on developing the finance strategy and financial management including finance modelling, budgeting, forecasting and financial reporting.
- Support the Head of Finance with year-end audit processes.
- Oversee the implementation of the finance system.
- Drive cost-efficiency initiatives while maintaining a focus on quality and service outcomes.

People Management and Development:

- Line manage and develop the Head of Finance and Head of Data & Digital.
- Lead, mentor, and develop a high-performing team, fostering a culture of accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement.
- Establish performance goals and metrics for staff, offering regular feedback and development support.
- Promote an inclusive, diverse work environment that values employee engagement and professional growth.
- Oversee recruitment, onboarding, performance management in the department.

Risk Management and Compliance:

- Develop and implement strategies to identify, assess, and mitigate operational risks.
- Ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and industry standards, maintaining the highest ethical standards.
- Implement internal controls and governance practices to safeguard the charity's reputation and assets.

Board of Trustees Liaison:

- Work with the Treasurer to improve financial reporting to the Board and Audit and Risk Committee.
- Lead on production of transformation change papers for ARC.
- Provide regular reports to the Board of Trustees on operational performance, strategic initiatives, and financial matters.
- Work closely with the CEO to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with the Board's expectations.
- Attend Living Streets Board of Trustees and Living Streets Service's Board meetings to provide insights and updates on operational solutions, opportunities, and key achievements.

Person Specification

Applicants must be able to demonstrate:

Essential Criteria	From application (✓)	At interview (✓)
Experience		
Demonstrable experience of operating in a financial management role	✓	✓
Experience of overseeing and improving internal operations, ensuring effective delivery across Finance, Governance, Data and Digital	✓	✓
Experience of developing models and systems to deliver a growth programme	✓	✓
Experience of leading a finance function for an organisation	✓	
Experience of line management	✓	
Professional accountancy qualification	✓	
Knowledge and skills		
Ability to be administratively self-supporting and work remotely with other team members	✓	✓
Ability to solve problems and deal with a range of complex issues simultaneously	✓	✓
Excellent financial management skills	✓	✓
Strong written and verbal communication skills	✓	✓
Solve problems at pace	✓	✓
Coaching and leading teams, bringing colleagues on the journey	✓	✓
Sound knowledge of charity accounting, charity law and regulations	✓	✓
Strong IT skills and experience of computerised finance systems and spread sheets	✓	✓
Personal		
Reliable person, with keen attention to detail	✓	✓
Self-motivated and 'can do' approach to tasks and challenges	✓	✓
High level of confidentiality, integrity and ethical approach	✓	✓
Commitment to equal opportunities and the ability to implement the Living Streets' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy	✓	✓
Understanding of, and commitment to, the agenda of Living Streets	✓	✓

Willingness to take responsibility for and implement corporate decisions	✓	✓
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It would be preferable for applicants to also demonstrate:

Desirable Criteria	From application (✓)	At interview (✓)
Experience		
Experience working within the not-for-profit sector	✓	✓
Knowledge and skills		
Experience in strategic planning	✓	✓
Experience in supporting committees	✓	✓