

Operations Manager

The operational backbone: systems, processes, governance and Plinth.

Reporting line	Chief Executive
Location	Bridgemere House, Preston Brook, Cheshire, WA7 3BD
Total Package	£40,000
Contract	Permanent, full-time
Appointment	Open external recruitment. Replaces the Office Manager role following a resignation

Purpose

Manage the systems and processes that keep the Foundation accurate and efficient, and fit for its role as one of the UK's leading family foundations.

Lead the operational infrastructure: from day-to-day systems and grant administration through to process design, AI use and the strategic management of Plinth. The Treasurer provides strategic financial oversight. This role owns the operational engine beneath that.

Key responsibilities

Systems and technology

- Lead the strategic management and continuous improvement of Plinth, SMF's grants management platform. Configure it to match the Foundation's grant-making processes, maintain data quality and build the team's confidence in using it well. Day-to-day grant records are entered by the Regional Grants Manager. The system itself is owned here.
- Drive the Foundation's use of AI and digital tools to improve efficiency, accuracy and the quality of operations. Identify, evaluate and implement tools that reduce administrative burden, keeping the Foundation at the leading edge of what a lean, ambitious team can achieve with the right technology.

Processes and operations

- Design, document and continuously improve the Foundation's core operational processes. Put clear procedures in place for grant administration, compliance, reporting and governance, and make sure the whole team follows them consistently and accurately.
- Lead day-to-day operational management: office management, IT systems, insurance, supplier contracts and facilities. Keep the Foundation running smoothly and look for opportunities to improve how things work.
- Book travel, accommodation, meeting rooms and venues for the team, and handle the logistics behind Board meetings and the Foundation's convening events.

Finance and governance administration

- Manage grant payment administration: process payments, maintain grant financial records and keep accurate reporting on the grant portfolio budget. Work closely with the Treasurer, the CEO and the Regional Grants Manager to maintain financial accuracy.
- Manage day-to-day HR administration: payroll liaison, induction and personnel records. External HR support is retained for specialist advice.
- Provide governance support: prepare Board papers, maintain statutory registers, manage Companies House and Charity Commission filings, and support minute-taking as required.

- Support the CEO and Treasurer in budget management and maintain the Foundation's annual budget model. This role manages financial administration rather than strategic financial oversight.
- Process staff expense claims and mileage: check them against policy, obtain authorisation and put them through the payment run.

Supplier and contract management

- Manage the Foundation's supplier contracts, including the retained communications agency contract. The Comms and Impact Manager holds the creative brief and the working relationship. This role holds the contract, the procurement process and the payment administration.

Representation

- Be a reliable, credible point of contact for the Foundation with suppliers, auditors and regulators.

Bringing organisations together

- SMF brings organisations together on a thematic or region-wide basis to share learning, celebrate success and speed up impact.
- Support the planning and delivery of these events, which raise the profile of the work we all do together.

Working as part of a small team

- The Office Manager leaves at the end of August 2026 and the work is being covered across the team until this role is filled. By the time you start, expect to find things that have slipped, and expect the first months to involve as much catching up as improving.
- Like everyone here, get stuck into the practical work of running a small foundation. This is a lean team where everyone carries real responsibility and helps where it is needed.

This list is not exhaustive. The role will adapt to the changing needs of the Foundation over time.

Person specification

Experience

- Experience in a small organisation where one person carries significant administrative breadth, comfortable with ambiguity and with doing whatever needs doing.
- Experience of setting up or substantially improving operational systems and processes, rather than only maintaining existing ones.

Knowledge and understanding

- A strong interest in systems, process design and operational excellence, and enthusiasm for using AI and digital tools to improve how an organisation works. Experience with grants management platforms or similar systems is an advantage. Plinth experience is not required, but a willingness to master it quickly is essential.
- No accounting qualification is required. Operational and systems capability is the hire criterion.

Skills and attributes

- Comfortable carrying significant operational breadth in a small team. This role covers systems management, grant administration, governance support and budget administration, and the right person does not think any of these are beneath them.
- Strong attention to detail and high standards of accuracy in financial reporting and governance documentation.
- Discretion, reliability and sound judgement. This role has access to sensitive financial, personnel and governance information.
- An interest in the Foundation's mission and a commitment to the values of a family foundation. This is a small, close-knit team and culture matters.

Done well, this role means

- Operations that are accurate, efficient and trusted.
- A grants platform that genuinely supports the team's work.
- Sound governance and compliance, handled on time.
- Technology that makes a small team punch above its weight.

Steve Morgan Foundation. August 2026.