



**Ambition
Institute**

COO CANDIDATE INFORMATION

**DECEMBER
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CONTACT

Human Resources at COO.enquiries@ambition.org.uk

Dear candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Operating Officer at Ambition Institute. I hope that you will find this document a helpful way to find out more about the role and our organisation.

Ambition Institute was launched in March 2019 following the merger of Ambition School Leadership and Institute for Teaching, two leading organisations in the education sector.

As one organisation, we want to build an education system where every child can thrive, no matter what their background. Our mission is to help educators serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds to keep getting better.

Ambition Institute is a graduate school of education. Our approach combines the mission-focus of a charity, the academic rigour of a traditional university and the essential classroom connection of a teaching school. Our programmes are designed for educators at every stage, from classroom teachers to CEOs steering multiple schools, and all the crucial roles in between. We want to ensure there are expert teachers in every classroom being led by exceptional school leaders at all levels.

Our predecessor organisations have supported over 14,000 educators across 2,800 schools and trusts. In the next three years Ambition Institute will expand its reach to a further 15,000 educators, helping them to give more children the best education.

The Board and the executive leadership team are proud of the profile Ambition Institute has established for itself since launch, excited by the possibilities generated by the merger, and driven by the potential to achieve even more in the future.

The COO will of course be pivotal to delivering this next stage. We are looking for someone who can help us make the best use of every penny of our funding in pursuit of our goals and help us maximise the potential of technology to reach even more educators and have even greater impact. We have an entrepreneurial culture and we are looking to increase our commercial-style thinking so that we can best achieve our mission.

You could have relevant experience from a range of settings: we welcome applications from different sectors and professional backgrounds.

The role of Ambition Institute's COO will be a challenging but rewarding one. If, having read the brief, you feel this is the job for you, I very much look forward to hearing from you.



Hilary Spencer
Chief Executive Officer
Ambition Institute



WHY WE EXIST

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds don't do as well as their peers at school. We know that improving teaching and school leadership is the best way to address this gap. No other aspects of the school system have as much influence on pupil achievement, particularly the achievement of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ambition Institute has one purpose: to help educators serving children from disadvantaged backgrounds to keep getting better.

HOW WE'RE DIFFERENT

With our new scale, and more than ten years of collective experience working with educators at all levels, we believe that exciting opportunities lie ahead.

WE ARE A GRADUATE SCHOOL

Teachers and school leaders deserve the best professional development. At Ambition Institute we prioritise learning from experience and we continually adapt our programmes so that they have the biggest impact.

As a graduate school for educators we apply academic rigour to our learning design, drawing on frontline insights from schools into what works in practice.

Our programmes leverage the latest evidence from international experts, the experience of our faculty and the work of great teachers and school leaders. This means we think carefully about what is taught, how, and in what sequence. We apply this expertise to support schools, trusts and alliances to improve pupil outcomes and retain their educators.

We work collaboratively to enable school improvement for the benefit of pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

OUR DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Ambition Institute offers flexible development pathways that meet the needs of schools.

Rather than streaming educators into one pathway early in their career, our curriculum offers the chance to build a sustainable, high-impact career that is right for each individual as they develop.

You can find out more about our [current programmes](#) on our website.

HAVING VITAL CONVERSATIONS

We want to challenge thinking about educator development and be challenged in return. Everyone benefits when we share and debate ideas. As a centre of learning we want to spark conversations that lead to new innovations and breakthroughs in educator development, for the benefit of the schools we serve.

We will always talk about the crucial role of teachers, school leaders and system leaders in closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their wealthier peers. Only by working in dialogue with schools, government and sector partners to embed teaching and leadership expertise in our education system, will we end the inequality that still faces young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.



THE ROLE

This is an exciting time to join Ambition Institute as COO. We need a clear strategic thinker who can implement to an exceptional standard and embody our value of *keep getting better*. This role requires the ability to respond to changing market needs, along with a laser focus on financial sustainability. Our goal continues to be increasing our impact and ensuring that we are a sustainable organisation getting the best return from every penny spent in service of our mission.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

The role could be based in any of our three offices (London, Manchester or Birmingham), but travel to other locations will be required.

Ambition Institute receives funding from the Department for Education, earns income from selling our programmes and attracts corporate and philanthropic sponsorship. In common with many other charities, we are seeking to develop a balanced funding model that allows us to be sustainable and to grow in the future.

We need to make sure that we are using every penny to best effect, to help us deliver our overall mission. A key part of this role will be to develop our financial capacity and our commercial skills as an organisation. You will be responsible for building our overall financial strategy, in partnership with the CEO and the wider executive team. You will need to be a confident and engaging leader of the finance function, driving a culture of collaborative working across the organisation and helping to balance the needs of different teams so that we can deliver our ambitious objectives.

The other key part of the role will be helping us make the most of technology. As an organisation, we need to make efficient use of technology to help us work together effectively – in different locations, across different teams and for different audiences.

We already use high quality technology to support our programme participants but we want to take this further. Teachers and school leaders are busy people with hugely important jobs. We know that many of them are keen to build their own professional development, but they need to be able to access it reliably, swiftly and when it suits them. Clever technology means we can help participants embed their learning and engage with thought-provoking content that will change and improve their practice. We need you to be excited about the potential of technology and to ensure that our technology programmes are highly effective and good value for money.

The successful candidate will have credible experience of both financial and technology leadership.

You will also be responsible for a small number of other corporate functions, including legal advice, and there is potential for the COO to also be the Company Secretary.

You will need to work as part of a strong executive leadership team and to demonstrate that you are a team player. Our role as the executive team is to help the organisation succeed in its mission, so we need to have strong, open, candid relationships, where we are all working for the good of the organisation. You will need to be an excellent leader of people, both within your own functions and across the wider staff team.

We welcome expressions of interest from people from a range of professional backgrounds and sectors. Deep prior experience in education or professional development is not essential, but you will need the commitment and enthusiasm to build knowledge quickly.

Our successful candidate will need resilience to navigate a tough market, a recent re-structure and a recently re-shaped strategy. But the opportunity is huge: we believe that, for the right candidate, this is an irresistible role with enormous scope to drive things forward and to deliver at a significant level.

If you have the range of skills to succeed in this demanding role, and the drive to play a leading role in a nationally-recognised charity that makes a sustainable impact on education, we look forward to hearing from you.

AMBITION INSTITUTE STRUCTURE

Our Board of Trustees is chaired by Rebecca Boomer-Clark. You can find more information about the [Board](#) on our website.

The COO reports to the Chief Executive Officer, and is part of the [Executive Committee](#). The Executive Committee, led by the CEO, oversees all aspects of strategic and operational management through a team of talented executive directors, deans and directors.

Our overall headcount is c. 240, with staff based in the west London central office, as well as in Birmingham and Manchester.



MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

This is an exciting time to join Ambition Institute as COO. We need a clear strategic thinker who can implement to an exceptional standard and embody our value of keep getting better. This role requires the ability to flex focus depending on need, along with a relentless focus on financial and commercial sustainability. Our priorities continue to be increasing our impact and ensuring that we are a sustainable organisation getting the best return from every penny spent in service of our mission.

Indicatively, the COO will:

- > Provide clear and confident leadership to support and help develop the organisational strategy, and ensure a financially sustainable business model.
- > Build strong finance and technology teams (approximately 25 people) and contribute to a high-performing organisation with the right culture, systems and processes.
- > Work across the organisation to understand our cost base and delivery models and identify areas where we could do things differently or more efficiently.
- > Support the finance team in managing an annual budget of approximately £17million and increasing financial capability and understanding across the organisation.
- > Support the technology team in managing a wide portfolio of digital projects (with a direct budget of £2–3million) and developing our understanding of technology's potential application to the work we do.
- > Lead work with our Finance Committee and work effectively and constructively with the Board of Trustees.

KEY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Our successful candidate will, of course, demonstrate their commitment to the mission to improve the education and outcomes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

They will also have a demonstrable track record of leadership success and, in particular, be able to evidence:

- > Grasp of effective financial strategy which delivers revenue growth and financial sustainability, and how this works in a not for profit.
- > Enthusiasm for leading transformational organisational change.
- > Experience of leading high quality, autonomous executive teams, building team motivation, fostering trusting relationships that empower colleagues to do their best work, and nurturing a brand based on excellence, collective responsibilities and individual strengths.
- > Effective relationship management at multiple levels including team, Board of Trustees, and senior colleagues.
- > Track record of successful working with the Board of Trustees.
- > Excellent oral and written presentational skills, appropriate to a range of audiences.



OUR OFFER

A competitive salary appropriate for a role of this seniority and impact (c.100k, depending on experience), will be offered. We are very supportive of flexible working and would be happy to consider a range of working patterns.

Other benefits are:

- > 25 days' annual leave, plus bank holidays
- > A generous employer pension contribution of 11% (10% pension plus 1% national insurance rebate)
- > Life assurance
- > Interest free season ticket and bike loans
- > A progressive approach to learning to support career development
- > An Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which gives staff confidential support and personalised information and resources as required

We also promote agile working, with a dynamic and flexible internal culture which encourages all staff to take control over how they work and promotes their wellbeing.

APPOINTMENT PROCESS, TERMS AND HOW TO APPLY

Applications should be submitted by forwarding a full CV and two-page covering statement to Human Resources at COO.enquiries@ambition.org.uk.

Candidates are asked to provide suitable daytime and evening contact numbers and email addresses.

The closing date for applications is **9.00am (GMT) on Monday 20 January 2020**. Interviews are planned for the last week of January and first week of February. These dates will be confirmed as soon as possible.

It is not necessary to be a UK citizen for this role, although a candidate who does not currently have the right to work in the UK will need to secure an appropriate visa.

The appointment will be made subject to receipt of satisfactory references and other pre-employment checks including an enhanced DBS check.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Should you wish to have a confidential discussion regarding this post, please contact Human Resources:

✉ COO.enquiries@ambition.org.uk

INFORMAL INFORMATION DIAL-IN SESSIONS

If you would like to find out more about the role and Ambition Institute, to help you consider whether you would like to apply, we are holding a number of dial-in sessions where the Chief Executive will talk through the work of Ambition Institute and set out her vision for the organisation and the COO role.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions and to clarify any points about the role.

These are not part of the application process, but are intended to give you a flavour of the organisation, so if you would like to join one of these, the dates and times available are:

Thursday 9 January, 12.00pm

Friday 10 January, 2.00pm

Monday 13 January, 2.00pm

Thursday 16 January, 12.00pm

Please contact COO.enquiries@ambition.org.uk to register your interest, and we will send you the dial-in details.

KEEP UP TO DATE

🌐 ambition.org.uk

🐦 [@Ambition_Inst](https://twitter.com/Ambition_Inst)

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✉ COO.enquiries@ambition.org.uk



Ambition Institute
is a registered charity,
number 1146924.