

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

at the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA)



UK (remote-based)

OVERVIEW

Post Title: Chief Operating Officer

Salary Range: Competitive

Hours: 35 hours per week (*flexible working considered*)

Contract Length: Permanent (*following a 3-month trial period*)

Responsible To: Chief Executive Officer

Location: UK (*remote-based*)

Date Issued: 9th April 2026

Applications Due By: 26th April 2026

Start Date: ASAP

JOB CONTEXT

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) is a non-profit international organisation working with the extended cashmere supply chain, from herders to retailers, to promote a global sustainability standard for cashmere. Our vision is a responsible & inclusive global natural fibres sector that safeguards the health and well-being of people, animals and the environment. Founded in 2015, we are a standards-holding and capacity-building organisation with offices in the UK, Mongolia and China. Our SFA Animal Fibre Standard offers a holistic, evidence-based sustainability standard for cashmere and other animal-based fibres that is both global in focus and locally adaptable. The SFA is entering a pivotal stage of its development, and the COO role will focus on strengthening and developing organisational structures and processes whilst keeping the SFA's impact and roots at the centre of its work.

ABOUT THE ROLE

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a pivotal organisation-wide leadership role that ensures the SFA is well governed, effectively run and resilient. It oversees financial stewardship, human resources and the core organisational infrastructure required to enable SFA to be a high-performing organisation.

The COO will be able to take a strategic view of the 'bigger picture' whilst understanding and implementing detailed processes and structures that drive efficient and collaborative cross-organisational working.

They will be responsible for translating SFA strategy into execution, with long-term planning and decision-making to underpin this; they will ensure that SFA-wide budgets and resources are raised and utilised effectively, and develop organisational policy to support this.

They will directly manage the UK office and oversee global operations.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The COO will report to and be supported by the SFA Chief Executive Officer.

They will be part of the remote-based UK team, and direct reports include Head of Standards Systems, Head of Research, Impact & Policy, and Head of Finance. They will work in a matrix style with the leaders of the Mongolia and China offices. They will also be responsible for the management of contract workers.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The duties of the COO include:

Strategy execution and planning

- Co-ordinate departmental work plans, budgets and internal reporting to ensure that the SFA remains focused and efficient in implementing its annual objectives, 2030 strategy and 2040 vision.
- Ensure the SFA's organisational model, its people and its supporting systems are aligned with its strategic objectives.
- Oversee, establish and deliver organisational processes, policies and legal guidelines, with particular focus on financial management, human resources and IT infrastructure.
- Develop and track systems and metrics for measuring KPIs to ensure progress against the strategic plan, high levels of performance and continuous improvement.
- Provide senior operational oversight of organisational and grant-funded projects, ensuring delivery against objectives, budgets and reporting requirements.
- Deputise for the CEO as needed; represent SFA in external partnerships, collaborations, and industry forums as required.

People leadership

- Ensure a positive work environment, further developing and enhancing organisational culture.
- Foster collaboration and communication across departments to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities and alignment with organisational goals.
- Promote a culture of trust, collaboration, compassion and high performance, encouraging open dialogue and constructive challenge.
- Lead all aspects of human resources, including recruitment and retention, performance management, and wider people policies.
- Ensure compliance with relevant labour laws and regulations.
- Oversee the effective use of contractors and other external advisors.

Governance, systems and risk management

- Support the SFA Board, the CEO to ensure the SFA discharges its charitable responsibilities, and that it is effectively governed, including timely, high-quality reporting and assurance.
- Ensure that the organisation has proper operational controls, processes and systems in place to effectively grow the organisation.
- Work with the Head of Standards to develop and maintain internal governance processes to ensure the organisation's standards system is robust, credible and defensible; support the Head of Standards to take the organisation to ISEAL compliance.
- Own and maintain the organisational risk register, ensuring risks are actively managed and mitigated.
- Ensure SFA operates in line with relevant national laws and regulations, including Charity Commission guidance.
- Work with the Head of Finance in ensuring the SFA's financial processes, planning and operations support the organisational objectives, including across its country operations; also in ensuring appropriate business insurance arrangements are in place.
- Lead the development and oversight of scalable, efficient operational and data systems, policies and procedures that support growth and collaboration.
- Oversee SFA data protection & data governance requirements.

SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

Required:

- Significant experience of executing operations, systems, and process improvement at an organisational level, likely with at least ten years operating at a senior level.
- Extensive people management and senior team leadership experience.
- Ability to lead through change; a strong 'people first' approach and experience of developing collaborative working cultures, ideally in a global setting.
- Demonstrable record of delivering and/or overseeing large budgets and financial management, data systems, risk management and human resource management.
- Experience in organisational fundraising (grant-based, partnership-based, or commercial) and proposal development.
- Excellent project and programme management skills, and an appreciation of the requirements of managing grant-funded work.
- Strong understanding of, and genuine passion for, good governance in charities and other non-profit organisations.
- Excellent written and verbal communication, with an ability to communicate to a wide range of audiences.
- Confident in representing the organisation at external events and building strong relationships with partners and stakeholders.
- A solid understanding of sustainability standards systems.
- Experience of working in multi-cultural contexts, ideally including middle or lower-income countries.
- Fluency in English.

Desirable:

- Experience of senior leadership at an executive level.
- Experience and technical knowledge of supply chain management, standards systems, and responsible sourcing.
- Understanding of certification, assurance and traceability processes.
- Knowledge of sustainability challenges related to livestock production and the fashion industry.
- Experience and/or language skills related to working in Mongolia and/or China.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

We are seeking candidates who are organised, efficient, values-led and tenacious. You will excel at strategic thinking, business management and driving continual organisational improvement. You'll enjoy working in a small, fast-paced team environment, where the nature of the work requires dynamic and flexible working. You'll be comfortable facilitating robust discussion and making clear decisions.

This role will suit candidates who can think on their feet and have the confidence to communicate our work to our members and stakeholders. Being a small NGO with limited resources, we're looking for someone with excellent people and programme management skills who can remain calm under pressure and maintain sight of the big picture, all while fostering an inclusive, collaborative and high-performing culture.

You'll be passionate about processes, ensuring smooth operations, and delivering real impact on the ground for cashmere producers, their animals, and the rangelands that support them.

TO APPLY

To apply for this role, please send an email marked 'Vacancy: COO', including your CV and a cover letter, to jobs@sustainablefibre.org by 26th April 2026.



Please note that applications will be considered on a rolling basis.

First round interviews are provisionally scheduled for w/c 11th May and will be conducted remotely using Teams.

We thank all applicants for their interest; however, please note that we cannot provide feedback to candidates who are not shortlisted for interview.

HIRING STATEMENT

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance is committed to building a diverse and inclusive team. We are committed to attracting, developing and retaining exceptional people, and to creating a work environment that is dynamic, rewarding and enables each of us to realise our potential. Our work environment is safe and open to all employees and partners, respecting the full spectrum of race, colour, religious creed, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, political affiliation, ancestry, age, disability, genetic information, and other classifications. Please be informed that by applying for this position, you automatically accept our Data Protection Information on processing your personal data.