



Candidate brief for the position of

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Somerset House

February 2025



Berwick Partners
an Odgers Berndtson company

**SOMERSET
HOUSE**

Welcome Letter

Somerset House has reached an important milestone 25 years after we first opened to the public. Our 25th birthday is a time for celebration, but as importantly to look ahead and ensure the foundations are in place for continued growth and achievement. For nearly half of our 25 years civil servants were still in occupation, and we only fully reclaimed the entire site in late 2019. Although we look like a venerable old institution, we're still very young with big ambitions!

We've built an original new model of a cultural centre, creatively distinct as the home of cultural innovators. We are proud that this animates an extraordinary part of our national heritage and that we are able to do this through a sustainable self-funding business model without regular public funding.

We're looking for a COO who combines a strong commercial track record with a passion for what we do and an understanding of how these can work together in synergy. We want someone who is a strong leader in a fast-moving charity that is striving to be more inclusive, where ambition often exceeds the means. Someone who can think strategically whilst also ensuring the effective day-to-day operations, and occasionally a crisis such as the fire last summer which we continue to recover from.

Our COO sits at the heart of our organisation and will bring diversity of thought, experience and innovation towards making Somerset House even more successful and sustainable for the next 25 years.

Best wishes
Jonathan

Jonathan Reekie
Director, Somerset House Trust



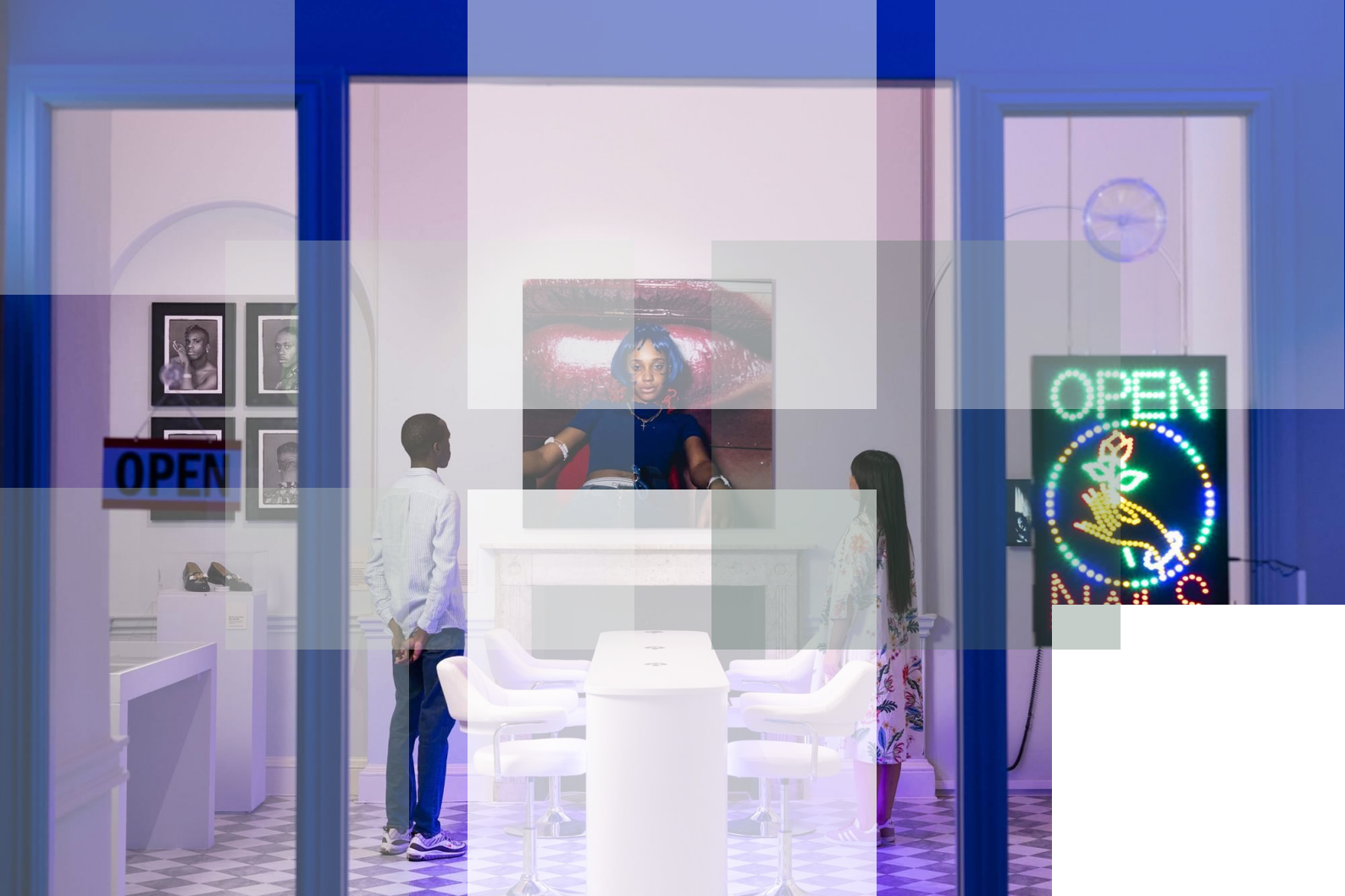
About Somerset House

At Somerset House we've reimagined an historic building for the future, with a powerful juxtaposition of inspirational architecture and a contemporary arts destination. We have developed an original approach to addressing key contemporary issues and trends with eclectic and thought-provoking programming that challenges conventions and offers alternative perspectives. This is all amplified by our signature courtyard events and regular cultural partnerships, all of this contributing to our sustainable business model without regular public funding and making us a destination for all - one of London's most popular public spaces attracting a young, diverse audience, welcoming over 3m visitors annually.

Driving this is our position as the home of cultural innovators. We have convened an unrivalled creative community of over 2000 artists, makers, start-ups, social entrepreneurs, working across the arts and creative industries. sitting at the meeting point of artistic and social innovation.

It is this unique mix that informs and powers our programme and our organisational culture, making us a singular, compelling and inclusive place to visit and work. Somerset House pursues a spirit of 'Step Inside, Think Outside' for everyone, regardless of age, stage or background.





The Role

- Role:** Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Reports to:** Director, Somerset House Trust
- Reporting functions:** Finance, Estates & IT, People, Legal, Residents & Retail, Governance
- Working hours:** This role is full time, with an average of 37.5 hours per week. Due to the nature of the role, occasional work during events, weekends and public holidays may be required. We are committed to supporting flexible working arrangements where possible and encourage applicants to discuss their needs with us.
- Purpose:** This strategic leadership role works closely with the Director of Somerset House Trust, helping to shape and drive organisational success through:
- Strategy development and delivery.
 - Continuous improvement of the operating model and organisational capability.
 - Ensuring robust and effective governance and risk management processes.
 - Exemplifying Trust leadership, culture and values.



Summary and aims:

The COO leads a core part of the organisation and its business model. The COO is responsible for leading the promotion and delivery of strong financial, governance, operational, commercial and people management, as well as a key role in Board assurance. Responsible for managing the Trust's Finance, Estates and IT (including Security and Health & Safety), People, Legal, Residents & Retail functions.

The role oversees the delivery of the Trust strategy, day-to-day performance of the organisation, directs the formulation of the Trust's business plan and budget and is actively involved in all material business decisions, ensuring that the immediate and longer-term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered and managed appropriately. Support the rest of the Executive team - Deputy Director, Directors of Marketing and Comms, Exhibitions, Studios, Commercial.

Role and responsibilities:

Strategy development and execution

- Lead on the delivery and regular review of the strategy and accompanying longer term financial plans.
- Lead on setting delivery targets (currently use Objectives and Key Results framework) and budgets aligned to strategy, leading the executive team in collective accountability for results.
- Liaise with the Trustees and keep them appropriately informed including regularly reporting on the operation of the Trust's businesses and achievement of budget and agreed strategy.
- Leading by example with the exec team, and Trustees, champion the use of measures and insights in driving decisions and performance.

Continuous improvement of the operating model and organisational capability

- Review the operating model and set out roadmap to streamline sitewide operations, backed by optimising resources, including our rent income from residents.
- Sponsor the internal digital transformation programme, ensuring it meets objectives.
- Support delivery of the People Plan, including developing and empowering teams to enhance capability, succession planning, and future-proof the Trust's talent pipeline.

Ensuring robust governance and risk management processes are in operation

- Act as Company Secretary for both the Trust and the trading company.
- Provide advice and recommendations to Trustees on governance matters.
- Define and lead on the risk management framework covering all activity of the Trust.
- Own the organisational risk register, ensuring regular review and required actions by the Executive Team and regular reports and assurance to Trustees.
- Ensure effective compliance frameworks and reporting are in place.



- Maintain strong relationships with DCMS and other key stakeholders.

Exemplifying leadership, culture and values

- Provide inclusive leadership across Finance, Legal, People, Property, Retail and Estates & IT (including H&S and Security) functions, making sure these functions align with the Trust's mission and values.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, inclusion, and continuous improvement, empowering teams to achieve high standards of excellence.
- Define appropriate strategies and priorities for each function and oversee their implementation and delivery.
- Represent the Trust externally, building strong relationships with stakeholders, industry forums, and professional bodies and in support of fund-raising activities, to promote the public image of the Trust as a best-in-class arts and cultural organisation.





The Candidate

Skills, Experience and Knowledge

- Qualified Chartered Accountant (or equivalent experience) with significant senior-level commercial expertise in business, finance, or related fields.
- Demonstrate strategic and operational planning skills.
- Proven ability to shape a dynamic business model and proactively identify opportunities.
- Good working legal knowledge including contractual and commercial agreements and understanding of charity law.
- Sound knowledge and judgement in respect of regulatory matters, policies, procedures and risk management.
- Strong IT and digital literacy, with an awareness of emerging technologies and their impact on operations efficiency.
- Experience of juggling a wide range of activity across several functions.



Personal Attributes

- Strong executive presence, with the ability to communicate effectively with the Board, executive team, and external stakeholders.
- Excellent analytical and commercial skills with an initiative-taking commercial approach.
- Dynamic with the ability to lead teams across a range of functions, make decisions and be agile.
- Ability to present financial and operational information in a clear, concise and accessible way for diverse audiences.
- Strong relationship-building skills, with the ability to build trust, rapport and collaboration across internal and external networks.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Interest in and commitment to the arts, culture and the Trust's mission.

Diversity & Inclusion Statement

At Somerset House, we are committed to fostering a diverse, inclusive and equitable workplace. We recognise that different perspectives strengthen our organisation and enrich our work. We welcome applications from candidates of all backgrounds and experiences, particularly those from underrepresented communities.

If you're excited by this role but don't meet every single requirement, we still encourage you to apply. We value diverse skills and perspectives, and we'd love to hear how your skills can contribute to our mission.

Flexible Working and Wellbeing

We understand the work-life balance is important, and we actively support flexible working arrangements. Whether you have caring responsibilities, access needs, or other commitments, we encourage open discussions about how we can support you in this role.



How to Apply

To apply, please submit a CV along with a covering letter setting out your interest in the role and briefly summarising how you meet the key requirements of the role.

The preferred method of application is online at www.berwickpartners.co.uk/93299

If you are unable to apply online, please email your application to:
response.manager@berwickpartners.co.uk

All applications will receive an automated response.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process.

For **detailed information** on how we process your personal data, please review our privacy policy on our website <https://berwickpartners.co.uk/privacy-and-cookie-policy/>

In line with GDPR, we ask that you **do NOT send us** any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and/or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.

If you have any queries or would like more information in regard to this document, please contact:

Clare Bromley
Principal Researcher
Berwick Partners

 +44 121 654 5915 / +44 7736 920 727

 clare.bromley@berwickpartners.co.uk

Recruitment Schedule

Closing Date for Applications	Tuesday 11 th March 2025
Preliminary Interviews with Berwick Partners	Wednesday 19 th , Thursday 20 th & Friday 21 st March 2025
1 st Client Interviews	w/c 31 st March 2025
Final Client Interviews	w/c 7 th April 2025





Berwick Partners
an Odgers Berndtson company

Our UK Offices

London

20 Cannon Street
London
EC4M 6XD

Birmingham

6th Floor
Cornerblock
2 Cornwall Street
Birmingham
B3 2DX

Leeds

10 South Parade
Leeds
LS1 5QS

Manchester

8th Floor
1 Marsden Street
Manchester
M2 1HW

www.berwickpartners.co.uk

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