

Director of Fundraising & Strategic Partnerships

Location: London / Hybrid
Contract: Permanent, Full-time
Salary: £75,000 per annum (depending on experience)
Reports to: Chief Executive

Direct reports: Fundraising and business partnerships teams

About the Role

The Director of Fundraising & Strategic Partnerships is a pivotal executive leadership role responsible for transforming income generation into a partnership-led growth engine. It is accountable for converting strategic relationships into sustainable income, scalable delivery opportunities and measurable growth in the number of young people supported by ThinkForward.

The role holder will position the organisation as a trusted system partner to government, local authorities and major stakeholders, building senior relationships that unlock sustainable funding, influence and large-scale delivery opportunities.

This is not a traditional fundraising leadership role. It is a relationship-led, externally facing strategic position where the role holder will be expected to personally originate, shape and close major funding and partnership opportunities, acting as the executive relationship lead for ThinkForward's most strategically important stakeholders. These include system-level partnerships; public sector commissioning and funding; and long-term institutional relationships.

ThinkForward has a strong reputation, evidence base and track record of improving outcomes for young people. The organisation also has an established and high-performing team of fundraisers and business partnership managers who are responsible for income generation and relationship building. Our next phase of growth relies on the role holder to capitalise on these assets to lead our growth agenda.

You will be expected to:

- Increase access to public-sector funding and commissioning opportunities
- Create deeper partnerships with place-based systems and local authorities
- Build stronger diversification of income sources
- Apply greater influence in policy, commissioning and youth employment agendas
- Devise scalable routes to reach more young people nationally.

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategic Partnership Leadership

- Represent ThinkForward in national policy discussions relating to youth opportunity, employability, education and social mobility
- Build relationships with policymakers and sector leaders that increase organisational influence and unlock future funding opportunities
- Build and steward senior relationships with government departments and agencies; local authorities and commissioners and combined authorities and system partnerships
- Represent the organisation in high-level external forums
- Position the organisation as a go-to strategic VCSE partner.

2. Executive Leadership

- Act as a member of the executive leadership team
- Contribute to organisation-wide strategy, growth and sustainability
- Champion a culture of performance, collaboration and accountability
- Provide regular strategic insight to the Board regarding funding trends, commissioning opportunities and partnership risks.

3. Public Sector Funding & Commissioning

- Identify and shape opportunities for:
 - Place-based funding
 - Commissioned programmes
 - Multi-year partnership agreements
- Influence service design and commissioning priorities
- Convert relationships into sustainable funding pipelines.

4. Income Generation & Diversification

- Lead a multi-channel income team across:
 - Government and statutory funding
 - Corporate partnerships
 - Trusts and foundations
- Increase income resilience and reduce reliance on single funding streams
- Deliver significant income growth aligned with strategic targets.

5. System-Enabled Growth

- Translate partnerships into:
 - Access to schools and delivery settings
 - Increased reach to young people
 - Scalable programme expansion
- Enable coordinated local delivery through system partnerships.

6. Organisational Leadership

- Lead and evolve the fundraising and partnerships function
- Build capability in:
 - Bid development and commissioning
 - Relationship management and stewardship
 - Pipeline and CRM systems
- Release executive capacity from transactional relationship management.

7. Partnership Strategy & Ecosystem Development

Lead a structured ecosystem approach across four pillars:

- Influence & Commission: government and local authority relationships
- Enable Reach: education networks and delivery routes
- Multiply Value: corporates, volunteers and workforce pipelines
- Validate & Sustain: academic and evidence partnerships.

8. Success Measure

- Significant growth in unrestricted and restricted income
- Increased share of public-sector and commissioned income
- Multi-year strategic partnerships secured with major institutional stakeholders
- Measurable increase in the number of young people reached through partnerships
- Stronger national profile and influence within youth employment and social mobility sectors
- Diversified funding portfolio reducing reliance on any single income source.

Person Specification

Experience

- Senior leadership experience in fundraising, partnerships, or public sector engagement
- Proven experience securing and managing multi-year partnerships valued at six and seven figures
- Track record of converting executive-level relationships into long-term revenue and strategic value
- Experience operating at Board level and influencing senior stakeholders across public, private and voluntary sectors
- Experience working with government / local authority commissioners and corporate partners or major funders.

Skills & Capabilities

- Exceptional relationship-building and influencing at executive level
- Strong commercial and strategic thinking
- Ability to shape complex funding propositions and partnerships
- Confidence navigating political, policy and commissioning environments
- Leadership of high-performing teams
- Delivery-focused leader with a strong bias towards action and results
- Comfortable leading through ambiguity, complexity and organisational change
- Able to balance strategic thinking with hands-on execution.

Knowledge

- Understanding of:
 - Public sector commissioning structures
 - Place-based funding models
 - Charity funding landscape
- Awareness of policy trends affecting youth, education or employability.

Personal Attributes

- Strategic, outward-facing and entrepreneurial
- Credible and confident with senior stakeholders
- Values-driven and mission-led
- Collaborative and systems-oriented.