

Job description: Head of Network Development

Duration: Permanent; Full-time; 37.5 hours per week

Salary: £52,779

Location: London; regular travel to the London office expected twice a week; some UK travel

Reporting to: Director of Network Delivery

Department: Network Delivery

Direct reports: Network Manager, Grants Manager

Key working relationships: **External:** UKY Network, cross-nation, national and regional infrastructure and sector partners; funders. **Internal:** UKY Leadership Team; Network Delivery Department, Impact, Fundraising, Finance, and People and Ops teams.

Purpose of the job

The Head of Network Development will lead the operationalisation of UK Youth's new **We Back Youth Work Leaders** strategic pillar. The role will turn our ambition to equip youth-work leaders with the skills, networks and confidence to deliver exceptional support into a coherent network development offer—leading our Grants+ approach of multi-year funding alongside tailored organisational development, and strengthening youth-sector infrastructure locally, regionally and across the UK nations.

Central to the role will be embedding UK Youth's increasingly relational approach to its network: building trusted, mutually beneficial relationships with youth work leaders; listening to and understanding their needs; involving them in shaping our support; and connecting organisations to the right opportunities, expertise and infrastructure. Reporting to the Director of Network Delivery, the postholder will be responsible for translating this strategic ambition into high-quality, well-governed delivery, while ensuring that learning and insight from the network continually improve our work and contribute to securing sustainable investment in youth work and outdoor learning.

Why work at UK Youth?

UK Youth exists to widen the reach and deepen the impact of youth work and outdoor learning, so that every young person has someone who believes in them. Our vision is a society that backs every young person - through each spark, struggle and success.

As the UK's national infrastructure body for youth work, we strengthen and champion a diverse network of youth organisations, unlock investment, shape policy and build the evidence base for what works. At a time of growing need and inequality of access, our work has never been more important.

We are entering an exciting new phase of our strategy - focused on long-term resilience, income diversification and a transformational Capital Appeal to develop Avon Tyrrell as a national centre of excellence for outdoor learning. Joining UK Youth means being part of an ambitious, impact-driven organisation committed to strengthening youth work for generations to come.

Key responsibilities

Portfolio leadership and delivery

- Lead the strategic and operational delivery of UK Youth's network development portfolio, translating organisational strategy and funded commitments into clear plans, outcomes, budgets, milestones and accountabilities.
- Ensure programmes and services are delivered to a high standard, on time and within budget, with effective governance, performance management, risk control and escalation to the Director of Network Delivery.
- Mobilise new initiatives and partnerships, establishing proportionate delivery models, systems, teams and governance arrangements.
- Lead continuous improvement across the portfolio, responding effectively to evidence, partner feedback, changing needs and the external environment.
- Be a champion of UK Youth's network across all of UK Youth's work.

Grant making and organisational development

- Lead the delivery of UK Youth's significant, multi-year grant-making portfolio, including the £13 million UK Youth Fund, ensuring responsible stewardship of charitable and restricted funds.
- Ensure effective management of the full grant lifecycle, including programme design, application and assessment, due diligence, decision-making, contracting, payments, monitoring, reporting, complaints and closure.
- Maintain robust and proportionate grant governance, financial controls, safeguarding assurance, risk management, data quality and compliance with funder and regulatory requirements.
- Lead an integrated organisational development offer alongside grant funding, enabling smaller youth and outdoor learning organisations to strengthen their financial sustainability, leadership, governance, workforce and resilience.
- Embed open, trusting, accessible and equitable grant-making practice, reducing unnecessary barriers while maintaining appropriate accountability.

Network and sector infrastructure support

- Develop and deliver UK Youth's approach to engaging, connecting and supporting our national network, informed by the needs and experiences of youth work leaders and organisations.
- Create opportunities for peer learning, collaboration, knowledge exchange and access to relevant support across the network.
- Lead major initiatives that strengthen youth sector infrastructure locally, regionally and nationally, working with partners to improve the consistency, coordination and accessibility of support.
- Support regional and national partners to understand need, develop shared plans and approaches, and deliver locally relevant infrastructure and organisational support.
- Work with the Communications Team and relevant colleagues to ensure network communications are timely, accessible, coordinated and purposeful.

Other area of responsibilities

Partnerships and external leadership

- Build and lead trusted, effective partnerships with funders, national and regional infrastructure partners, network members, and other stakeholders.
- Establish clear partnership governance, shared outcomes, roles and accountabilities, and actively manage performance, relationships and risk across organisational boundaries.
- Represent UK Youth credibly at external meetings, events and forums.
- Work with Fundraising and the Director of Network Delivery to shape new opportunities, support income generation and maintain strong funder relationships and reporting.

Financial and resource management

- Manage significant programme, grant and team budgets, ensuring accurate forecasting, monitoring, reconciliation, financial reporting and value for money.
- Lead Network Development annual business planning and budgeting process.
- Work closely with the Director of Network Delivery and Finance to meet organisational and funder requirements and resolve financial or operational issues promptly.
- Plan and deploy people and resources effectively across the portfolio, identifying capacity requirements, dependencies and opportunities for efficiency.
- Provide clear assurance and reporting on delivery, finance, risk and impact to the Director, senior leaders, and trustees as required.

Team Leadership and Management

- Provide clear, inclusive and accountable leadership to the Network Development team and Network Delivery department, setting clear direction and fostering a high-performance culture.
- Line manage, performance manage and develop direct reports, ensuring they have the support, resources, and opportunities for professional growth.
- Support professional development within the team, ensuring staff have the necessary skills and knowledge.
- Promote a collaborative and inclusive working environment, both within the organisation and with external partners.
- Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are upheld across all network development activities, creating a safe and inclusive environment.

Head of Department behaviours and expectations

All staff at UK Youth will demonstrate their commitment to our mission to ensure all young people are equipped to thrive and empowered to contribute at every stage of their lives. They will also be able to fulfil the below expectations and behaviours:

- Be committed to safeguarding principles, and be willing to put the welfare of children and young people at the forefront of your work.

- An understanding and belief in the inclusion of all staff, partners and young people irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, ability, identity, and experience.
- Actively promotes and embeds understanding of equity, diversity and an inclusive culture.
- Able to take personal accountability for key work areas and understand individual accountabilities within work areas back to inform planning and decision making.
- Able to identify cause and effect relationships and take a solution focussed approach.
- Able to be solution focussed in their thinking and approach.
- Undertake any other duties and reasonable requests that are in keeping with the nature of this post.

Person specification: Head of Network Development

Experience

- Substantial leadership experience within the youth sector, grounded in an in-depth understanding of youth work practice, youth work leadership and the realities facing youth organisations and their leaders.
- Experience of leading a complex, multi-year network development or comparable portfolio, translating strategy and funded commitments into successful delivery and managing significant budgets and risks.
- Experience of leading substantial grant making or onward funding activity, including governance, due diligence, financial oversight, risk and accountability.
- Substantial organisational development and capacity building experience, including diagnosing organisational needs and designing practical support that strengthens leadership, governance, financial sustainability, workforce and resilience.
- Experience of developing networks, partnerships or infrastructure across multiple organisations, regions or systems, with demonstrable credibility among youth organisation leaders.

Knowledge, skills and understanding

- Deep knowledge of the youth sector and the roles played by local, regional and national youth sector infrastructure bodies, funders and other partners.
- Ability to engage credibly with youth work leaders, understand their operating context and build relationships based on trust, respect and practical insight.
- Ability to translate strategy and complex funded commitments into coherent, deliverable plans and mobilise new initiatives effectively.
- Strong understanding of equitable, open and proportionate grant making and effective grant governance and assurance.
- Strong financial judgement, with the ability to oversee significant budgets, contracts, restricted funding, risk and value for money.
- Ability to establish effective partnership governance and manage delivery and accountability across organisational boundaries.
- Strong people management and leadership skills, with the ability to set direction, support performance and enable colleagues to contribute effectively.
- Ability to use data, evidence, learning and stakeholder feedback to improve delivery and inform decisions.

- Excellent written and verbal communication, with the ability to represent UK Youth with senior funders, partners and stakeholders.
- Strong understanding of safeguarding, youth participation, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in funding and sector support activity.

Personal qualities

- Collaborative and credible, with the humility to listen and the confidence to provide clear direction.
- Accountable and delivery focused, able to exercise sound judgement and remain effective through ambiguity and change.
- Committed to the value of youth work and to strengthening the organisations and leaders that make it possible.
- Thoughtful and inclusive, with the ability to build trust across people and organisations with different perspectives and priorities.

Organisational Responsibilities and Expectations

- Champion safeguarding, equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging, ensuring these principles are embedded in your practice.
- Support in fostering a culture of continuous learning and development across the organisation.
- Uphold the standards of conduct set out in our Code of Behaviour.
- Attend and contribute to 121s and team meetings, training, and other events as required.
- Be committed to delivering good performance and a high level of customer service.
- Work collaboratively with the Network Development Team and your wider working colleagues.

This job description does not form part of your contract of employment. You may be required by UK Youth to undertake any duties within your skills and experience which we reasonably consider necessary to meet business needs.

This post is subject to receipt of two satisfactory references, an enhanced DBS check and Right to work in the UK. Please note, this job description is subject to change. With any significant change, we will ensure this is discussed with you before any final approvals and or commitments. This job description does not form part of your contract of employment. You may be required by the organisation to undertake any duties within your skills and capabilities, which the organisation reasonably considers necessary to meet business needs.

As part of the recruitment process UK Youth will be gathering and uses certain information about you. For further information regarding this please review our [Data Protection Privacy Notice](#) which explains what data of yours we process and how we use it.