

Head of Research & Grants

Role summary

Start date: ASAP

Salary: £60,000 -£65,000

Hours: 40 hours per week

Contract: Permanent

Location: Central London - hybrid (minimum of three days in the office in London)

Reports to: Director of Impact

Direct reports: Grants Manager; Research & Impact Manager

Application deadline: 24th July 2026

We are looking for a highly motivated proven team player to join our ambitious and fast-growing international charity with a mission to build a better world for babies where governments prioritise the 1,001 critical days as the foundation for a healthy society. The 1,001 critical days – from pregnancy to age two – is the time when the building blocks for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing are laid down. We deliver our mission by funding what works, acting on evidence, and driving change through advocacy.

Role purpose

This is an exciting time to join us. As we grow our international efforts and sharpen our strategic focus, we are creating a new Head of Research & Grants role to lead our combined research and grant-making function. Reporting to the Director of Impact, you will be our senior operational and strategic leader for how we identify, fund and learn from the work that gives babies the best start in life.

The grants and research effort of the Foundation is focussed on the ‘So What?’. You will make sure every piece of ground breaking research and every charity grant adds to our global advocacy for babies, informing and educating policy makers across the world about the 1001 Critical Days and how they can help parents and carers give their babies the best start in life.

You will line manage our Grants Manager and our Research & Impact Manager, joining up our open-call grant-making, strategic partnerships, commissioned research and evaluation into one coherent programme. You will translate our strategy into delivery: setting priorities, shaping our

international approach, ensuring evidence drives every funding decision, and growing the credibility and reach of the Foundation with charities, researchers, policymakers and funders worldwide. Crucially, you will maintain a sharp focus on delivering impact from every project.

Key responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- Support the Director of Impact to develop and deliver a clear, joined-up research and grants strategy that builds the case for investing in the 1001 critical days.
- Translate the Foundation's strategy into annual plans, priorities and KPIs across both grant-making and research.
- Lead the design and roll-out of our international grant-making and research approach, ensuring it is rigorous, ethical and locally relevant.
- Contribute to organisational strategy as a member of the wider leadership team, representing the research and grants function internally and externally.

Grant-making

- Support our Grants Manager to oversee the end-to-end grant-making cycle, including our open-call application process, strategic charity partnerships, due diligence, award decisions and portfolio management.
- Quality-assure funding recommendations to the leadership team and Board of Trustees, ensuring decisions are fair, transparent and evidence-led.
- Work with our Grants Manager to continuously improve grant-making processes, policies and protocols, including those needed to operate confidently across international markets.
- Steward relationships with grantees, supporting them through delivery and ensuring impact is captured and learned from.

Research, evaluation and impact

- Support our Research and Impact Manager to set the direction for our commissioned research and evaluation portfolio, ensuring it is world-class, methodologically sound and aligned to strategic priorities.
- Work with our Research and Impact Manager to oversee the commissioning and management of research partners, universities and suppliers, including our independent evaluator.
- Ensure findings are translated into action – shaping grants, informing advocacy, and improving outcomes for babies and their families.
- Lead on impact measurement, including the Foundation's annual impact report and contributions to Board and donor reporting.

People and partnerships

- Line manage, develop and support the Grants Manager and Research & Impact Manager, setting clear objectives and creating a high-performing, collaborative team.
- Build and maintain trusted relationships with charities, academics, policymakers, practitioners and peer funders in the UK and internationally.
- Represent the Foundation at sector events, conferences and convenings, acting as a credible voice for the 1,001 critical days agenda.

Governance, risk and compliance

- Ensure all research and grant-making activity meets the highest standards of governance, research ethics, safeguarding, GDPR and financial control.
- Identify and mitigate risks across the research and grants portfolio, escalating to the Director of Impact, as appropriate.
- Contribute to reports, papers and presentations for the Board of Trustees and committees.

Person specification

Essential

- Significant experience in a senior research, grants, or programmes role within the charity or not-for-profit sector.
- Demonstrable track record in grant-making, including designing and running funding programmes, leading due diligence and managing grantee portfolios.
- Strong experience commissioning and overseeing research and evaluation, with a good understanding of mixed-method and theory-based approaches.
- Proven line management experience, with a track record of developing high-performing teams.
- Strategic thinker, able to translate vision into deliverable plans, priorities and measurable outcomes.
- Excellent judgement on funding decisions, including the ability to interpret financial, programmatic and safeguarding information.
- Outstanding written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to influence senior stakeholders, trustees and external partners.
- Highly organised and detail-oriented, with the ability to manage concurrent priorities across grants and research.
- Passion for, and knowledge about, early childhood development and the importance of the 1,001 critical days.
- Commitment to translating evidence into impact for babies and families.

- Familiarity with research ethics, GDPR, safeguarding and accreditation standards in a funding or research context.
- Knowledge of programme evaluation frameworks, outcomes measurement and theories of change.

Desirable

- Experience of international grant-making and/or commissioning international research projects.
- Post-graduate qualification in a relevant field, or equivalent experience in research methodology.
- Existing networks across early years, public health, philanthropy or academia.
- Experience working with grants management or project management software (e.g. Monday.com, Plinth, Salesforce).

Salary and benefits

Salary: £60,000 - £65,000 per annum

Location: London Victoria (office-based three days per week)

Annual leave: 25 days plus bank holidays

Pension: Employer contribution matched up to 5%

Benefits:

- A flexible and supportive working culture, with opportunities to learn and grow.
- Opportunities for international travel as we expand our global efforts.
- The chance to shape a new strategic role at a pivotal moment in the Foundation's growth.