

Position Description: Chief Operating Officer

Location:

Australia-wide remote, or
Level 4/454 Queen St, Melbourne VIC 3000 with working from home

Responsible to:

Chief Executive Officer

Manages:

Operations Manager, Partnerships Manager, and the external accounting and CFO-support relationship

Employment status:

24 month fixed-term contract, 0.8 to 1.0 FTE

Classification:

Executive, Australian Progress Enterprise Agreement Level 8

Overview

Australian Progress builds the skills, relationships and confidence non-profit and civil society organisations need to advocate for reform and achieve change.

The Chief Operating Officer holds the organisation's operations, finance, governance and risk. You own budgeting and financial reporting, lead the systems and policies that let a busy team make sound decisions quickly, and manage the people and external relationships that keep operations running well. Strong operations are what let a small team do ambitious work, so this role is part of how Australian Progress has an impact, not separate from it.

About the role

The Chief Operating Officer is Australian Progress' senior operations and people leader, and the steward of its finances, governance and risk. This is an Executive-level role. The point of the role is to make Australian Progress' mission achievable. Sound finances, clear systems and good governance are what let a lean team reach more advocates and take on bigger work.

As a senior people manager, you develop staff, support other managers, and help hold team culture. You ensure we comply with the Enterprise Agreement, and step people through the conditions so staff and managers understand how to use them.

You manage the Operations Manager and the external accounting relationship so the day-to-day finance work is accurate and on time. You also manage the Partnerships Manager and lead impact and grant reporting alongside them, so reporting to funders is accurate, on time and meets contract requirements.

You own organisational budgeting, monthly reporting to the CEO, and quarterly reporting to the Board, with internal and external resources handling day-to-day finance and accounting. You make sure finance policy is followed, and bring rigour to governance and risk.

You work with the Executive and Board to ensure that our policies, procedures and cross-organisation reporting to the Board are delivered to a high standard. This role can also act as Company Secretary, if needed and with support, during the contract.

What does success look like?

- Australian Progress can plan and take on new work with confidence, because its systems, governance and finances are sound.
- The CEO and Board have the key information and options they need to make timely, strategic decisions.
- Organisational budgets, monthly management reports and quarterly Board reports are accurate, clear and on time. Any risks are surfaced early with options.
- Policies, processes and reporting templates are clear and consistently used, and systems are simpler and more reliable, so the team can focus on its core work.
- The team is well-managed and supported, with reliable systems, a safe and inclusive workplace culture, and clear guidance on HR policies and entitlements.
- Supporting the Partnerships Manager, funder and grant reporting is accurate, on time, and meets contract requirements.
- Technology, data and internal systems are reliable, secure, and improved over time.

Key responsibilities

People and culture

- Support an inclusive team where staff feel safe and heard, and model our commitment to equity and justice.
- Lead HR policy and process improvements, including guiding staff and managers through workplace conditions so they know how to request and action them.
- Coach and support managers across the organisation towards consistent, capable leadership.
- Manage the Operations Manager and Partnerships Manager, set clear expectations, and support their development.
- Ensure recruitment, induction, and HR practices consistently meet Enterprise Agreement entitlements, drawing on external advice when needed.
- Track the organisation's health beyond the financial reports, for example through team culture surveys, Board skills audits and internal feedback, and act on what they show.

Governance and risk

- Provide clear, timely governance support and well-prepared Board papers.
- Maintain the risk, contract, supplier, and conflict of interest registers and the governance calendar, escalating risks with recommended controls.

- Maintain operational, financial, WHS, and cyber-security controls, ensuring policies remain current with legislation and ACNC guidance.
- Act as Company Secretary if required.

Financial leadership and reporting

- Own organisational budgeting, and lead on cashflow management, ensuring clear targets and accountability for all internal budget managers.
- Deliver monthly management reporting to the CEO and quarterly financial reporting to the Board.
- Set finance policies and processes, driving improved reporting templates.
- Manage the external accounting and internal financial functions, including regular review and oversight.
- Coordinate the annual audit, and meet financial, regulatory and funder obligations, including ACNC, ATO, DGR and grant acquittals.
- With the Partnerships Manager, track philanthropic income and commitments to ensure compliance with all funder requirements and that funder reporting is accurate, on time and meets contract requirements.

Operations, systems and data

- Oversee internal systems and improve them over time so they stay reliable and fit for purpose.
- Lead data security and privacy practice.
- Keep shared planning tools consistent and current, including project planning templates and the organisational calendar.
- Improve internal processes and workflows so reporting and day-to-day work are simpler and more reliable.
- Manage supplier agreements and operational services, and monitor performance.

Team and organisation

- Support organisation-wide strategic planning with clear operational and financial information.
- Take part in cross-organisation working groups that deliver projects, support internal communications, and help improve our internal processes.
- Contribute to AP's major events and training across the year. This is shared work the whole team supports, including some interstate travel and busier periods around major events.
- Help build a positive, inclusive team culture, and contribute to organisation-wide priorities.
- Other duties as directed.

Key attributes

Essential skills and experience

- An experienced people manager who develops staff, supports other managers, and helps build a positive, inclusive culture.
- A track record of improving systems, processes and ways of working in a busy organisation.
- Sound financial judgement: able to own a budget, read and question financial reports, and give senior leaders and a Board clear options, working with internal staff and an external accountant on the details.
- A strong grasp of governance, risk and compliance, and confidence preparing or overseeing Board papers.
- Sound judgement, with the ability to set direction and make decisions at an organisation-wide level..

Desirable skills and experience

- Experience as a senior finance or operations leader in a non-profit organisation, and alignment with our values.
- Experience with DGR compliance and grant acquittal reporting.
- Experience acting as, or supporting, a Company Secretary.
- Lived expertise and relationships in the movements we work with, including First Nations justice, racial justice, disability justice, economic fairness, climate and LGBTQI+ rights.
- Relevant qualifications, for example CPA, CA, MBA or AICD. The Enterprise Agreement recognises postgraduate qualifications or equivalent experience at this level, so formal qualifications are welcome but not required.

Team and culture

Australian Progress is a small team doing work that matters with lean resourcing. The subject matter is high-stakes and often politically charged, from First Nations justice to climate to the rights of people who get scapegoated in the national conversation.

We try to do a lot, and our instinct is to take things on ourselves rather than build the systems that would carry them. You will often build a system at the same time as you run it, hold both the detail and the strategy, and help the team work in steadier, more consistent ways. It suits someone comfortable with ambiguity and willing to push back, who finds it satisfying to bring order to a busy organisation and to be the person who makes good work possible.. Funding is variable, which is part of why disciplined budgeting, cashflow and reporting matter, and why this role holds them.

You report to the CEO, manage the Operations Manager and the Partnerships Manager, and hold the relationships with our external accountant and auditors. You work closely with the Deputy CEO, the Director-level team and the Board.

Our equity commitment runs through the work. We centre the lived expertise of impacted communities, support First Nations justice as core to our purpose, and choose accessible, inclusive ways of working. We support flexible and remote work, and discuss individual needs,

including health and accessibility, openly. Our values are equity and justice, courage, generosity and collective power.