

Appointment of

Chief Operating Officer

Wonderseekers

Winchester Science Centre

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A Welcome from our CEO



At Wonderseekers, we believe curiosity has the power to change lives. By helping children discover the wonder of science, we can empower them to lead happier, healthier and more sustainable lives, and play their part in improving life on Earth. It's an ambitious purpose, and one that inspires everything we do.

We're at an incredibly exciting point in our journey. Alongside the continued growth of Winchester Science Centre and our community engagement programmes, the addition of our Science Projects team in October 2026 opens up new opportunities to extend our reach, develop innovative partnerships and create even greater impact. By bringing together our expertise in science engagement, audience insight, design and manufacture, we have the opportunity to build a more resilient, dynamic and ambitious charity.

To realise this potential, we need strong leadership, a clear strategic vision and the operational excellence to turn our ambitions into reality. That's where our new Chief Operating Officer comes in.

Working closely with me, our brilliant executive team, Senior Leadership team, colleagues and trustees, you'll play a pivotal role in shaping our future, leading diverse teams, strengthening our income generation and commercial performance, and ensuring we make the most of the opportunities ahead. You'll balance commercial thinking with our charitable purpose, helping us grow sustainably while keeping our mission and the people we serve at the heart of every decision.

Just as importantly, you'll help create an environment where our talented people can thrive, where collaboration and innovation are encouraged, and where everyone feels empowered to make a difference.

We're looking for an entrepreneurial, values-driven leader who is excited by the opportunity to lead through change, bring people together and help a growing organisation reach its full potential. In return, you'll join a passionate team with a genuine belief in the difference we can make, and the ambition to make an even greater one.

Thank you for taking the time to apply for this role and for considering joining our wonderful work family. If you share our belief in the power of curiosity and are ready to help shape the next chapter of Wonderseekers, I'd love to hear from you.



Ben Ward
Chief Executive Officer
Wonderseekers

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About our Charity

Wonderseekers (the charity behind Winchester Science Centre) strives to engage all children with science so they can live happier, healthier and more sustainable lives, and contribute to improving life on Earth.

Our charity operates Winchester Science Centre, a vibrant, hands-on experience for young people and families. With curriculum-linked school trips, an exciting programme of live science experiences, a magnificent planetarium and a year-round calendar of events, the Science Centre welcomes more than 200,000 visitors every year. Alongside this, Wonderseekers delivers a free and impactful community programme for priority audiences who may not otherwise have the opportunity to engage with science, reaching over 10,000 people annually. Through its work both on-site and out in communities, the charity brings science to life in imaginative, fun and accessible ways, ensuring everyone can be included.

In October 2026, Wonderseekers entered an exciting new chapter as the Science Projects joined the charity. Building on a long-standing relationship and a shared commitment to inspiring curiosity through hands-on learning, this development significantly expands the charity's reach, expertise and impact.

The Science Projects team has an outstanding reputation for designing and manufacturing innovative interactive exhibits for science centres, museums and visitor attractions across the UK and internationally. By combining this engineering and fabrication expertise with Wonderseekers' strengths in accessibility, co-creation, audience engagement and evaluation, the charity is creating an even stronger offer for partners and clients.

Together, these complementary strengths enable Wonderseekers to offer a complete end-to-end service, from audience insight and concept development through to exhibit design, manufacture and evaluation. The partnership also creates new opportunities for innovation, sustainability and growth, extending the charity's work beyond science centres into museums, zoos, aquariums, galleries and other visitor attractions both in the UK and around the world.

Today, Wonderseekers is a growing and ambitious charity, united by a belief in the power of curiosity, discovery and accessible science engagement to create meaningful impact for children, families, educators and communities.

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Every Role Contributes to Our Mission

Whether working directly with our visitors or supporting behind the scenes, when you join Wonderseekers you're contributing to work that creates real impact. Here's what our team helped achieve in 2025/26.

101,905

public visitors to Winchester Science Centre.

Children and their families, friends, peers and community groups who visited in their leisure time.

The total includes 454 tickets to carers and community groups (59% decrease on previous year) and 4,226 carers/ personal assistants.



41,790

educational visitors to Winchester Science Centre.

Children and their accompanying adults who visited as part of a school trip, SEN school or group visit, or home education visit.

39,520

people visited Winchester Science Centre for a special event.

Children and adults who attended out-of-hours events, including Van Gogh Alive and our Cosmic Christmas daytime experience.



12,268

people engaged through our Equity, Community and Outreach programmes this year.

This represents a decrease of 27% on the previous year, largely due to the end of the mobile dome offer and a reduction in team capacity from four staff members to three.



15,269

Visitors experienced Van Gogh Alive, the first of its kind at Winchester Science Centre. These are included in our special events numbers.

Fusing science and art, this nine-week digital exhibition connected children and adults to the natural world through the lens of this iconic artist.

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Our Strategy: People and Planet 2030

Everything we do is guided by our vision of a world where people and planet thrive through science. Our strategy sets out the difference we want to make and the values that guide us along the way. As you explore this application pack, we hope it helps you understand what it's like to be part of Wonderseekers and how every role contributes to our mission.

Vision

A world where, through the wonder of science, people and planet thrive.

Mission

To create a more equitable world where all children can treasure science and are equipped and empowered to improve lives and protect and heal our planet.

Values



Inclusive



For the planet



Bold



Fun



Open and honest



Collaborative

Outcomes

- Children are connected to nature
- Children use their science enquiry skills
- Children want to play their part
- Children value and see the relevance of science

Objectives

- Diversify our reach and grow impact
- Champion equality, diversity and inclusion in science
- Work long-term with children who need our support the most
- Protect and heal our planet and inspire others to do the same

Key themes

Be the change

Respect. Protect. Action.

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Job Details

Working Hours: 37.5 per week / 5 days per week. Flexibility will be considered working a minimum of 30 hours per week. Salary and pay will be adjusted accordingly.
Work Pattern: The majority of hours will be worked during normal office hours, Monday to Friday. However, as we operate 7 day a week visitor experience, there will be occasional requirements to attend meetings, events, and operational activities during evenings, early mornings, and weekends to support the wider team. Any additional hours worked outside of the normal work pattern will be compensated through time off in lieu (TOIL).
Location: This role is based across multiple sites, including Winchester Science Centre, The Point (Eastleigh), and Science Projects (Steventon, Basingstoke). There is the opportunity to work from home for up to one day per week; however, this arrangement will need to remain flexible.
Salary: £68,000-£73,000 per annum (pro rata for part-time hours)
Contract: Permanent
Line Manager: Chief Executive Officer
Responsible For: Director of Income Generation, Head of Visitor Operations, Head of Audiences.
Holiday: 27 days per annum plus bank holidays based on working 37.5 hours per week. Option to buy/sell some leave and gain additional days for continuous service after four years. The post-holder will not usually be expected to work bank holidays however when duties require, time off in lieu will be available.
Benefits: Health cover, life assurance and much more (see below)
Closing Date: 6th January 2027, 09:00
Interview Dates: See below

Shape Our Future

Are you a passionate, commercially astute and values-driven operational leader? Do you possess an entrepreneurial mindset, a strategic outlook and a track record of delivering excellence across complex organisations? Join our Executive Team and play a pivotal role in shaping the future direction, sustainability and growth of our Charity.

Our Charity continues to grow, with ambitious plans across all areas of our work, including our visitor attraction, community engagement programmes, and exhibition design and manufacture operations. This growth will strengthen our financial resilience, reduce risks to the Charity and enable us to maximise our social impact: empowering thousands of children to develop the science skills and nature agency to act on the climate and biodiversity crises.

Following the international relocation of the current postholder, this role presents a unique opportunity to play a vital part in shaping the next chapter of Wonderseekers' ambitious and exciting future.

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The Role

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a key member of the Executive Team and will play a central role in leading Wonderseekers through an exciting period of growth, integration and innovation.

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the COO will provide strategic and operational leadership across a diverse portfolio of services and activities, including:

- Visitor Operations
- Income Generation
- Marketing and Audiences
- Science Projects

Working closely with the CEO, Executive Team, Trustees and the wider leadership team, the COO will help shape the strategic direction of the Charity, translating ambitious plans into operational delivery and sustainable growth. They will ensure that Wonderseekers remains financially resilient, operationally effective and capable of maximising its impact for children, families and communities.

As a visible and influential ambassador for the Charity, the COO will build and maintain strong relationships with partners, stakeholders, funders, clients and industry peers, representing Wonderseekers both nationally and internationally.

The successful candidate will be a commercially astute and values-driven executive leader with a proven track record of leading complex operations, delivering organisational growth and successfully managing change. They will bring strategic insight, sound judgement and an entrepreneurial mindset, combining commercial awareness with a commitment to delivering meaningful social impact.

The COO will create a high-performing and collaborative culture, empowering leaders and teams to succeed while ensuring the Charity continues to innovate, improve and deliver excellence across all areas of its work.

As a member of the Executive Team, the postholder will contribute to organisation-wide leadership, supporting business planning, risk management, governance, financial sustainability and long-term strategic development. They will also deputise for the CEO when required and regularly engage with the Board of Trustees and its committees.

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Key Accountabilities

- **Strategic Leadership** – As a member of the Executive Team, contribute to the development and delivery of the Charity's vision, strategy and long-term ambitions, ensuring operational activity supports organisational objectives.
- **Operational Excellence** – Lead and continuously improve operational performance across Wonderseekers, ensuring services, systems and processes are effective, efficient, scalable and aligned to organisational priorities.
- **Income Generation and Commercial Growth** – Provide strategic leadership of the Charity's income generation activity, bringing together earned and contributed income, fundraising, partnerships and commercial opportunities within a coordinated approach that drives sustainable growth, financial resilience and charitable impact.
- **Leadership and Culture –** Foster a high-performing, inclusive and values-led culture, empowering leaders and teams to excel whilst ensuring accountability, collaboration and continuous development.
- **Transformation and Change –** Lead organisational change initiatives, integration projects and continuous improvement activity, ensuring Wonderseekers remains innovative, adaptable and future-focused.
- **Governance and Risk Management –** Work alongside the Executive Team and Board of Trustees to ensure robust governance, effective risk management and compliance across the Charity.
- **External Relations and Representation –** Act as a senior ambassador for the Charity, developing strategic relationships with funders, donors, corporate partners and other stakeholders, and representing Wonderseekers regionally, nationally and internationally.

Main Responsibilities

- Lead and develop a large and diverse portfolio of teams, providing effective, empowering and values-led leadership.
- Provide strategic leadership across Audiences & Marketing, Income Generation and Visitor Operations, ensuring an integrated approach to developing and delivering a compelling visitor offer at Winchester Science Centre that is market-ready, commercially sustainable and impact-driven.
- Provide strategic oversight and leadership of the Science Projects business, driving commercial performance, business development, market positioning and its continued growth as part of the wider Charity.
- Lead the development and delivery of operational and commercial strategies, translating organisational objectives into actionable plans and measurable outcomes.
- Provide strategic leadership of the Charity's income generation portfolio, bringing together fundraising, partnerships, commercial activity and new income opportunities within an integrated strategy that drives sustainable growth, income diversification and long-term financial resilience.
- Provide strategic oversight of fundraising and contributed income, ensuring the development of compelling funding propositions, strong funder relationships and a diversified income pipeline, with clear targets and accountability for performance.

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- Drive continuous improvement across all operational functions, enhancing performance, quality, customer experience and organisational effectiveness.
- Work alongside the Executive Team to identify, monitor and manage organisational risk, ensuring appropriate controls and reporting mechanisms are in place.
- Lead and deliver transformational change programmes that support organisational growth, innovation and long-term sustainability.
- Drive audience development and commercial performance across Winchester Science Centre, maximising opportunities for income generation, visitor engagement and charitable impact.
- Oversee significant operational budgets and financial performance, ensuring strong financial stewardship and value for money.
- Provide strategic and operational oversight of major capital investment and development projects, ensuring effective planning, financial control, delivery and long-term operational sustainability.
- Build and maintain effective relationships with partners, clients, stakeholders, funders and industry networks.
- Represent Wonderseekers at meetings, conferences and events nationally and internationally, including public speaking engagements.
- Contribute to organisational leadership through participation in Executive Team activities, strategic planning, business development and decision making.
- Attend Board and Committee meetings as required, providing reports, analysis and strategic insight.
- Champion the Charity's values, sustainability commitments and strategic objectives across all areas of responsibility.

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What You'll Bring

Essential

Experience

- Significant senior leadership experience, operating at Executive Team, Director or equivalent level.
- Experience within a charity, not-for-profit, cultural, educational, visitor attraction, museum or science engagement environment.
- Proven track record of leading complex operational functions and delivering growth.
- Experience of developing and implementing strategic plans and translating them into operational delivery.
- Experience of leading large, multidisciplinary teams through change, growth and improvement.
- Experience of managing substantial budgets, financial performance and income targets, demonstrating strong financial stewardship and commercial accountability.
- Experience of providing strategic leadership or oversight of income generation, including the development of new opportunities, partnerships and sustainable income streams.
- Experience of building effective relationships with Boards, Trustees, senior stakeholders, partners and external organisations.
- Experience of leading organisational change, transformation or integration programmes.

Knowledge and Skills

- Strong commercial acumen with an ability to balance financial sustainability with purpose.
- Excellent strategic thinking and decision-making skills.
- Strong financial literacy and confidence interpreting financial information and performance data.
- Understanding of fundraising and contributed income, including the development of funding propositions, relationship management and the importance of aligning income generation with charitable purpose.
- Ability to identify, assess and manage organisational risk.
- Outstanding communication, influencing and relationship-building skills.
- Ability to inspire, motivate and develop high-performing teams and leaders.
- Strong understanding of governance, accountability and organisational performance.

Personal Attributes

- Values-driven leader with a collaborative and inclusive approach.
- Entrepreneurial mindset with the ability to identify opportunities for growth and innovation.
- Resilient, adaptable and comfortable leading through ambiguity and change.
- Passion for the mission, values and impact of Wonderseekers.
- Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

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Desirable

Experience

- Experience of overseeing visitor-facing, commercial or customer-focused operations.
- Experience of leading or overseeing fundraising functions, including trusts and foundations, corporate partnerships or individual giving.
- Experience of managing geographically dispersed teams or multi-site operations.

Knowledge and Qualifications

- Relevant professional qualification in leadership, management, business or a related discipline.
- Knowledge of the museum, science centre, cultural or visitor attraction sectors.
- Understanding of sustainability principles and their application within organisational operations.

Appointment will be subject to an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Why Join Wonderseekers?

At Wonderseekers, we're committed to creating a workplace where people can thrive. As a values-led and people-focused employer, we place a strong emphasis on wellbeing, flexibility, inclusion and supporting colleagues through all stages of life. We offer a comprehensive range of benefits designed to promote work-life balance, personal wellbeing and financial security, making Wonderseekers an incredibly rewarding place to be.

As Chief Operating Officer, you will have access to a range of benefits including private health cover, life assurance, an electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme, flexible holiday schemes which increase with service, generous family-friendly leave, a wellbeing and mental health support, a cycle to work scheme, pension contributions, annual inflationary pay reviews, discounts, free tickets and much more.

Our Selection Process

For this role, we anticipate a two-stage interview process. To help you feel confident and fully prepared, interview questions will be shared in advance.

Provisional interview dates are 14th and 15th January 2027 (stage one – Winchester) and 1st February 2027 (stage two - Eastleigh).

The panel will include key stakeholders, members of the Executive Team and Trustees. Candidates can also expect a pre-interview task or presentation, a tour, and the opportunity to meet members of the wider Leadership Team informally.

Apply Now!

To learn more about working with us and explore our current opportunities visit our careers page.

Ready to apply? Submit your application using our recruitment portal.

To apply through our recruitment portal, you will need to provide your contact details, upload both a CV and cover letter (maximum of 2 pages), and answer a small number of application questions. Applications submitted without a CV and cover letter will not be considered. Use your answers to tell us about your experience, achievements and motivation for the role, keeping your responses concise, relevant and impactful. Our screening questions for this role are:

1. Why Wonderseekers? Why you, why us, why now? Help us to understand why you would be the perfect candidate for our next Chief Operating Officer. Why does your application stand out from the others?
2. Tell us about your leadership experience and skills and how you would use these to contribute to the strategy growth, operational excellence and long-term sustainability of Wonderseekers. How can you lead our already successful and thriving organisation to further success?

We'd Love to Hear From You

If you'd like to arrange an informal conversation about the role, explore whether it's the right opportunity for you, or ask any questions before applying, please get in touch at **hr@wonderseekers.charity**.

Need information in a different format or would prefer to apply in an alternative way? No problem. Contact our People and Culture team at **hr@wonderseekers.charity**, **01962 863791** or **07483 371391** and we'll be happy to help.

We're always pleased to talk about the role, our culture and the meaningful impact our teams make every day.

No recruitment agencies, thank you.

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We look forward to hearing from you!



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