

Head of Strategy and Planning

Full-time, permanent role
London, UK

About The Elders

The Elders was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007 as an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights and a sustainable planet. There are 11 active Elders from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The group has been chaired since 2024 by Juan Manuel Santos, former President of Colombia and a Nobel Peace Laureate. Previous chairs were Desmond Tutu, Kofi Annan and Mary Robinson.

The Elders operate through private diplomacy and public advocacy; they use their experience, influence and access to heads of state and government to engage politically, and their connections to civil society to stand in solidarity with the most vulnerable people and communities.

The Elders current strategy focuses our work on existential threats to humanity that require a collective response - the climate crisis, pandemics, and nuclear weapons. We also work on conflict, a threat in itself and a risk factor for other threats. Drawing on our values and our mandate from Nelson Mandela, we incorporate four cross-cutting commitments across these four programme areas - multilateralism, human rights, gender equality and women in leadership, and intergenerational dialogue. Recognising the significance of artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on all programme areas within their 2023-2027 strategy, Elders are considering a programme of work on AI, in particular on the international governance.

Supporting the Elders' work is a Secretariat of around 25 staff. The team is based in London, although is now diversifying to gradually hire staff in other countries, to better reflect the Elders' global membership and mandate. The work calls for a combination of initiative and humility, the ability to accept and implement Elders' decisions to high standards, and significant flexibility and teamwork. We have specialists in all our programme areas, alongside communications professionals and those who operationalise our work and the Foundation as a whole.

More information about The Elders, our strategy and work can be found at www.theelders.org

Role Overview

This role coordinates the Secretariat's support to Elders for implementation of the current strategy and supports the Director of Programmes (who as Deputy CEO has a mandate to lead on promoting efficient cross-team working across all three Secretariat teams).

The post-holder will work closely with the Senior Management Team (CEO and three Directors) to coordinate support for implementation of the current strategy, including through leading on operational planning, and aspects of the strategy that do not fall obviously to one of the three

Secretariat teams. Developing a new strategy from 2028 is likely to be a major workstream from 2027.

The post-holder will report directly to the Director of Programmes, with a dotted line to the CEO on some functions.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

Strategy

- Coordinating the tracking of implementation of the 2023-2027 strategy
- Coordinating the tracking of implementation of decisions made at Elders' Board Meetings
- Assessing major new external developments that may require changes in the strategy, and the implications of that for reprioritising existing work
- Identifying the major external and internal risks to successful implementation of the strategy, and working with the governance lead to ensure each risk has a risk owner and is regularly assessed
- In collaboration with the Director of Programmes and other Directors, leading on impact assessment, including how to synthesise the main impact messages for stakeholder and public audiences
- Overseeing implementation of the mid-term review of the strategy (concluded in 2025) during the remainder of the 2023-27 strategy period
- Supporting the SMT in the design and execution of the next strategy review (likely to be in 2027)

Planning

- Leading the preparation of an annual Operational Plan to prioritise Secretariat support to Elders for implementation of the strategy
- Managing the operational planning process in-year, including maintaining an annual of cross-organisational activities and calendar
- Coordinating the processing of incoming invitations to Elders in collaboration with the Operations Team
- Managing the content of Elders' Board Meeting agendas, and coordinating recommendations to Elders to ensure the necessary decisions are taken to support implementation of the strategy and that the Secretariat is equipped to deliver them
- Leading on lesson-learning across the Secretariat (including ensuring major initiatives are properly reviewed, and lessons are identified, consolidated and applied in future)
- Leading other Secretariat-wide initiatives that do not fall to other teams
- Researching candidates to become new Elders, supporting the CEO to give Elders advice on this, and working with the CEO and Corporate Services team to induct new Elders
- Tracking the engagement of individual Elders in delivering the strategy, and advising the team on how best to engage each Elder given their preferences and expertise

Programme support

- Supporting the Director of Programmes on planning and activities for a team of 11, particularly impact reporting and lesson learning, and on ad hoc projects

External relations

- Maintaining an oversight of external stakeholder management
- Coordinating implementation of the strategy's commitments on partnerships
- Supporting the CEO and Directors in the development of new priority relationships that don't fall obviously to other staff

Person Specification

- 8-12 years' background in fields relevant to The Elders' work (e.g. diplomacy, international development, civil society advocacy etc), ideally including at least one of the Elders' programmes or cross-cutting commitments
- Experience working in (or at least on) more than one country (including ideally in the global South)
- Experience contributing to (and ideally coordinating) corporate strategy and operational/business planning in a complex international organisation
- Strong analytical skills, including working with data
- Excellent written English, including experience editing multi-author documents
- A strong personal commitment to the mission and values of The Elders
- A flexible style and willingness to work in a small, collaborative team
- This role may involve limited international travel. You may be required to attend staff or Elders events in the UK from time to time

Working at The Elders

We operate a hybrid working policy, with a high degree of flexibility for staff. We ask staff to attend the office based on need, not a quota of days. We believe there are certain activities that are best conducted in person and also hold monthly "in days" when the whole team comes together. Additionally, some roles involve international travel, the timing of which is usually decided by Elders' commitments. Aside from these obligations, staff are free to choose the balance between working remotely and working in the office that suits them best. We are based close to Green Park station in London, in a newly refurbished office.

In addition to a competitive salary we offer the following benefits:

- Private pension scheme with 10% employer contributions
- Optional private medical and dental insurance
- Group life assurance equivalent to 5 x annual salary
- 28 days of paid annual leave (with 3 of these days on stipulated dates between the Christmas/New Year holidays) plus all UK bank holidays and public holidays

- Enhanced parental leave

The Application Process

The Elders is committed to creating an inclusive working environment that values diversity and equal opportunities. We welcome and encourage applicants of any ethnicity, religion, age, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. Given the Elders' global outlook, we particularly welcome applicants originally from countries in the Global South. As we are not able to sponsor visas, all applicants must have the right to work in the country where the role they are applying for is based. We will assess purely on your abilities and fit for a role. We are happy to discuss any adjustments you need to ensure a fair recruitment process and to enable you to be successful in your role if selected.