

Interim Director of Communications

This is a fixed-term contract interim position for 4-6 months, depending on the timing of the start date of a permanent appointment.

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 12 active Elders from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The group has been chaired since 2018 by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Previous chairs were Desmond Tutu and Kofi Annan.

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 launched a new strategy for 2023-27 in January. The 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.

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 is an interim position for 4-6 months covering the Director of Communications role while we recruit a permanent incumbent. Our Director of Communications leads and manages a team of four that is responsible for media relations and analysis, brand development, content production and reputation management. There will be a particular focus in this period on a major communications project on existential threats and the leadership the world needs to address them. This role reports to our CEO and is a member of our Senior Management Team of four.

Main Duties and Responsibilities:

External Responsibilities

- Drive the development and implementation of The Elders' communications strategy to ensure our public advocacy delivers on Elders' programme and organisational objectives.
- Provide counsel to Elders and other stakeholders on their communications outputs, identifying opportunities to boost influence and mitigate potential risks.
- Support, protect, and promote The Elders' public profile for moral and ethical leadership among society's leading figures, whether in civil society, the donor community, future political leaders or current decision-makers.
- Maintain an agile, responsive, and proactive approach to Elders' requests and external events.
- Build and maintain effective working relationships with senior media figures across the world, ensuring that The Elders' communications reflect their global footprint and vision.
- Plan and execute the delivery of a high-profile ongoing multi-platform communication project, highlighting the existential threats facing the world and the leadership the world needs to address them. This will include ongoing traditional and digital media activity, delivery of a global polling report on public views on existential threats and leadership, and a high-profile public event at the Summit of the Future in New York in September.

Internal Responsibilities

- Act as a member of The Elders' Senior Management Team, including playing a role in developing and executing our strategy, and promoting teamwork, collaboration, respect and efficiency across all three Secretariat teams.
- Develop and lead a communications team that has global reach, ensuring that The Elders' communications function is fit for purpose, dynamic, and influential, and that the team's development is supported.
- Lead the development of communications as a strategic function for The Elders across a variety of channels, from print to digital media, ensuring that we are agile, responsive and proactive.
- Ensure that communications is integrated across The Elders, working effectively with our Programmes, Operations and Development teams.
- Oversee communications and engagement partnerships with our Advisory Council and other stakeholders / consultants / partners.

Person Specification

We would value the following experience, attributes, and characteristics. Not all points are individually essential, though you'll need at least the majority to succeed:

- Demonstrable experience of delivering integrated communications strategies.
- Demonstrable experience of delivering high-impact international communications advocacy campaigns.
- A keen appreciation of the nuances, opportunities, and tension points of working with high-profile political figures.
- Experience at international level with a network of communications (e.g. press) contacts, and a variety of international media outlets around the world.

- Experience of crisis communications and reputational risk management, and advising on politically sensitive issues at senior levels.
- Demonstrable communications skills across online and offline media.
- Experience in at least one of the Elders' programme areas or with a demonstrable approach reflecting our cross-cutting commitments would be advantageous.
- Excellent written and spoken English, with experience of quality controlling and coaching editing and proof-reading to a house style, to produce communications products of the highest standards.
- Experience in digital advocacy, including paid and earned strategies and using data to inform activity.
- Flexibility and an ability to work at pace under pressure, managing multiple –often conflicting – priorities.
- Experience working in a campaign-driven environment.
- A clearly inclusive, emotionally intelligent, supportive approach to team and corporate leadership alike.
- Previous experience of interim roles, including the ability to learn and deliver quickly on arrival, and know what to leave to permanent staff (including your successor).
- 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 require some international travel. You may be required to attend staff or Elders events in the UK.

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
- 28 days pro rata 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

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.