

Ahead Partnership

Programme Manager Job Description

About us

Ahead Partnership creates flagship careers and skills programmes with employers that help young people to find a successful future in key sectors of the economy.

Since 2004, we have been partnering with leading employers across the UK to help them maximise their social impact and be a force for good within their communities.

We are passionate about the role that employers can play in enabling young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of background. Our work focuses on improving social mobility, removing barriers and supporting greater diversity and inclusivity within the future workplace.

We lead the way in developing professional, tailored programmes of careers and skills engagement with employers that open up opportunities to young people across key sectors. Our programmes not only support young people by developing their understanding of careers and building confidence and skills, they also help employers to tackle skills shortages by strengthening the talent pipeline - a win/win outcome for everyone involved.

We take a design-led approach to all our work and develop tailored programmes and solutions that really work both for our employer partners and the young people that take part. We are a purpose and values led business, without shareholders, and we reinvest our surpluses in social impact.

About our team

We are a team in every sense and many people comment, when joining, that they've never worked in such a supportive environment. We pull together, helping and coaching each other because we moved away from formal hierarchy and traditional line management some time ago. Within our flat structure everybody's voice matters and each member of our committed team is individually empowered to be an agent of positive change.

The nature of our work is always changing, and we all thrive on this. There's never a dull day at Ahead Partnership and every member of our team is responsive and flexible, eager to develop new skills, experience and ideas.

Ahead Partnership values and culture

We have built a team of committed and passionate individuals who live our values and culture:

- **Change:** We inspire change and embrace challenges in the way we develop and deliver our ideas. We learn from experience and foster an environment where new ideas are celebrated and encouraged
- **Passion:** We are passionate and positive about all our work. We take pride in what we do, responsibility for what we achieve and are always proactive in our approach
- **Individuality:** We recognise individual strengths and support everyone we work with. We celebrate differences and show kindness in all situations.
- **Partnership:** We succeed as one team. We are collaborative and respectful to create a culture of trust, where sharing and learning is easy and people can thrive.

About the job role

As a Programme Manager you will lead the conception, sales, development and delivery of major client programmes nationally, that are significant in size, complexity and volume of stakeholders involved. As part of this, the role will ensure the programmes are optimally structured, converted and successfully and profitably delivered, whilst maintaining our high quality standards. The programmes may be multi-year programmes across multiple geographies and will require a long-term strategic approach to their development and delivery.

You will also play a key role in driving and contributing to the continuous improvement of our business through key responsibilities as outlined below.

The key responsibilities of the role will include

Programme Management

- Lead and oversee the planning and delivery of a wide range of programmes of work (creating project plans, bringing together delivery teams, allocating appropriate resources, overseeing implementation and being accountable for delivering successful, strategically aligned, profitable and timely programmes and fantastic results and outcomes for all those that are involved)
- Assume responsibility for reporting on programme KPIs both internally and externally
- Support all members of the programme or project team as may be required – whether through coaching or mentoring - to ensure they deliver their best input into the project and to help them develop skills and knowledge through the project (eg project leadership; event planning; design thinking)
- Ultimately be accountable for ensuring the effective and appropriate recruitment and management of volunteer resources, effective and timely recruitment and participation of appropriate partners (eg schools) and the management of any external partner and stakeholder input that is required on the programmes for which you are responsible
- Play a key role and contribute to the discussion to help ensure optimal work allocation and delivery across the team, ensuring an effective balance of quality of service delivery, maximisation of capacity, staff well-being and profitability of work
- Ability to lead on the delivery of events, including facilitation and running of the events and presenting to large audiences
- Lead on internal strategic projects, ensuring progress is made and contributions are made from across the team in a fair and balanced manner, whilst playing to strengths

Strategic Insight and Business Development – opportunity spotting, building our network with the right people and organisations

- Play an active part within our Growth team in spotting, developing and winning new work, including pricing, pitching and leading the conversion of opportunities where appropriate
- Develop and deliver your own Growth plan, agreeing and delivering KPIs around new income as well as margin
- Selectively target and build networks that facilitate and enable strategic opportunities to develop and form
- Think strategically i.e. spotting opportunities that fit within our Growth plans - with individual clients as well as across broader networks, sectors and regions

- Build strong and productive relationships with prospects, partners and stakeholders, ensuring their objectives are sought, considered and responded to by taking a needs-centred approach to our service delivery, whilst ensuring strategic alignment to our social purpose
- Work collaboratively with the rest of the growth team around business development and with client leads to ensure they are kept informed and involved in all client programmes as appropriate
- Effectively scale programmes on a yearly basis – For example - this could involve spotting opportunities to cross sell new services or to cross sell existing services into new areas of the business or new geographies.

Creative / Design led thinking

- Play a lead role in the creative development and design of programmes that will meet our clients' needs whilst keeping us at the forefront of innovative service development and delivery
- Ensure programmes are supported by robust and effective evaluation frameworks that are fully aligned both to the clients' objectives and to our mission
- Proactively seek out, identify and embrace new technologies and approaches that will improve our programmes
- People
- Play a lead role in developing and embedding a culture which champions and demonstrates our values across our entire team (permanent staff as well as freelancers)
- Take a leading role in developing, driving and sharing learning across the team – via induction, training, identifying best practice, including the development of training resources, best practice templates and case studies
- Where we have concerns with the performance of any individual or project team, to proactively address these in accordance with our values i.e. in a supportive, collaborative manner, from a place of kindness and compassion and not from a place of criticism and judgement. This will include challenging and managing performance as appropriate

Financial Literacy

- Ensure all programmes under your management are financially sustainable and generate their targeted surplus
- Proactively and regularly assess the profitability of work within your portfolio and address any issues in a timely way
- Ensure that all contracting and invoicing is delivered in a timely manner
- Accountable for ensuring that timely payment is made of invoices for all programmes under your management.

Profile / Reputation

- Through effective delivery, client service and the planning and delivery of supporting marketing campaigns, contribute towards building a best-in-class reputation
- Playing an active role in building the profile of the business the programmes, through proactively devising and ensuring the delivery of effective marketing campaigns alongside the marketing function
- Support marketing initiatives by providing impactful, data evidenced content and case studies and by promoting centrally driven marketing campaigns
- Get agreement from clients to contribute to, be featured in our marketing and BD efforts e.g.
- agreement to be profiled in a case study, provide a quote, act as a reference when bidding for work or making award submissions

Client service Excellence

- Ensure that exemplary client service is delivered by all members of the client team, ensuring that there are clear lines of communication across all members of the client team as well as clearly understood areas of responsibility and accountability.
- Put the client's objectives at the heart of our delivery, responding to their needs in the creative design and delivery of solutions to support client requirements whilst remaining focused on practicalities and instilling a client service excellence approach across the project team
- Respond to the needs of clients and prospects with an innovative and considered approach
- Take a lead on resolving delivery-related challenges with clients
Communicating effectively with client leads, to maximise results

Impact and Evaluation

- Ensure robust evaluation frameworks are in place and effectively implemented for clients that you are responsible for
- Lead on the production of data-driven reporting that clearly demonstrates the impact of our programmes, both internally and externally, effectively managing any input required from others
- Drive the development of longitudinal, outcomes focused impact and evaluation including –
 - o Not accepting input or output driven impact and evaluation.
 - o Identifying clients for whom we have long-term relationships and implement and embed long-term, outcomes driven impact and evaluation
- Undertaking other duties as requested to support the business and other team members

Vision and Values focused

- Ensuring projects have a strong social value and best support our communities to achieve change and stronger futures together
- Embed our culture by living our values and challenging behaviour which does not align to our values.

Housekeeping

- Working hours – a standard full-time week is 37.5 hours, with flexible start and finish times.
- The role is based in **Leeds or Birmingham**, however, there will be travel and client delivery across the UK. This could include overnight stays as required (with reasonable notice provided).
- Flexible working and other arrangements happily considered.
- Flexibility on your part will be expected and unsociable hours may be required.
- It is necessary to have access to a car and a full clean driving licence.
- All staff are required to undertake a Criminal Record Bureau/DBS check upon joining.

About you

You will be passionate about getting involved in new and exciting opportunities and using creative thinking to best meet client needs. The following experience and skills are required:

Experience and skills

The successful candidates will have demonstrable experience, capability, skills and knowledge in all the areas outlined in the key responsibilities for the role, including -

Ability to think strategically

- Have the ability to think strategically and see the big picture and play a lead role in the implementation of strategy

Growth

- An aptitude for business development and demonstrable experience of growing clients and converting prospects
- A commercial approach and the ability to deliver programmes profitably

Flexibility and responsiveness

- Ability to be flexible and responsive to business needs, which often can be urgent
- Have a can-do attitude and be solutions focused - always look for how to make things work / happen. Be comfortable coaching and mentoring others in developing a similar attitude
- Be prepared to take on additional duties, travel and work unsociable hours
- Be committed and willing to go above and beyond, always striving to exceed internal and external expectations

Highly Organised

- Have an organised, consistent and methodical approach to developing and managing large scale, complex programmes of activity and multiple stakeholder projects, teams and individuals, commanding authority, without line management responsibility.
- Have strong time management skills, effectively prioritise your workload and the workload of team members, whether in-house or freelance
- Ability to effectively multi-task and manage multiple projects simultaneously

Creative Problem Solver

- Be able to think outside the box to develop ideas around new projects and approaches and solve problems in creative ways
- Enjoy leading on improvements and be comfortable dealing with ambiguity
- Have a positive attitude to flexibility and embracing change

Team Player

- Be a positive role model and team player who builds team spirit and maintains morale, particularly when the teams are under pressure
- Coach and mentor colleagues and help instil a coaching culture, so that we all learn from each other

Self-driven and resilient

- Be a self-driven starter-finisher, working independently and delivering excellent results with minimal supervision
- Work under pressure without losing your cool and always be patient with others
- Take responsibility for your own professional development and the professional development of more junior or less experienced colleagues

Confident and effective Communicator

- Be a strong communicator and able to adapt communications to work with a variety of audiences including stakeholders, corporate clients, schools, volunteers, and young people.
- Be a confident facilitator
- Have a careful and professional approach to all kinds of written or verbal communication