

BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC

Job Description

Job Title:	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Organisation:	Black Lives in Music (BLiM)
Reporting to:	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Direct Reports:	Head of Partnerships and Programmes, Finance, Admin and HR.
Location:	London (Hybrid)
Contract Type:	4 Days or 5 Days, Permanent
Salary:	£55,000 – £62,500 FTE per annum (dependent on experience)

About Black Lives in Music

Black Lives in Music (BLiM) is a not-for-profit dedicated to advancing racial equity across the UK music industry. We amplify the voices of Black artists, music professionals and communities; drive systemic change; and hold the industry accountable for meaningful progress. Through research, advocacy, programming and strategic partnerships, BLiM creates the conditions for Black talent to thrive.

BLiM has published ground-breaking research including the Being Black in the UK Music Industry report, produced the UK's first Black classical music festival in Classically Black, influenced government policy on live music licensing, and built a network of over 100 partner organisations across the four nations. BLiM is now entering a new phase of its development, with a strengthened leadership team, a Target Operating Model designed to carry the organisation beyond its founding era, and an ambition to become the UK's most influential voice for racial equity in music.

Role Purpose

The COO is the operational heartbeat of BLiM. Joining at a pivotal moment in the organisation's development, the COO will take accountability for translating BLiM's mission and strategy into well-run, properly resourced, day-to-day delivery. You will free the CEO to focus on strategic leadership and external influence by owning operations, people management, financial oversight and internal systems.

The COO will be a senior leader who shapes organisational culture, makes difficult operational decisions, manages complex stakeholder relationships and drives the performance of a passionate, high-commitment team. You will be the person the organisation looks to when it needs clarity, stability and momentum.

The COO joins at a moment of leadership transition following the departure of BLiM's co-founder and Director of Operations.

Key Responsibilities

Operational Leadership and Organisational Management

- Own and oversee BLiM's day-to-day operations, ensuring the organisation runs efficiently, compliantly and in alignment with its mission and values.
- Lead the implementation of BLiM's Target Operating Model, embedding new processes, decision frameworks and ways of working across the team.
- Establish and maintain robust internal systems including a CRM, shared project and partner management along with organisational management, ensuring information is accessible and institutional knowledge is accessible to stakeholders.
- Act as the organisation's primary operational decision-maker, escalating to the CEO only where strategic or governance-level authority is required.
- Ensure BLiM meets all statutory, regulatory and compliance obligations including charity law, employment law, data protection and health and safety.
- Lead on business continuity planning, risk management and organisational resilience, maintaining a live risk register and ensuring the organisation can absorb change seamlessly.

People and Culture

- Lead BLiM's people and culture agenda
- Oversee the development and implementation of HR policies and procedures, ensuring they are proportionate, legally sound and aligned with BLiM's values.
- Champion inclusive leadership and staff wellbeing across the organisation, creating the conditions for every team member to do their best work.
- Lead all recruitment processes, working with partners to ensure inclusive hiring practices are embedded from job description to appointment.
- Manage onboarding and induction of new staff ensuring early alignment with BLiM's strategy, values and ways of working.
- Conduct and oversee regular performance development reviews, identifying learning and development needs and ensuring progression opportunities are equitable across the team.

Financial Oversight and Income Sustainability

- Work closely with the Finance Manager and the CEO to manage BLiM's financial operations, including all project and programme budgeting, forecasting, expenditure approval and cash flow management.
- Ensure grant compliance and Funder reporting across all active grant programmes, ensuring BLiM meets its contractual obligations on time and to a high standard.
- Lead the cost-to-outcome reviews, establishing a financial baseline and ensuring every project and programme is delivering value to all stakeholders.
- Prepare financial reporting for the board

Programme and Delivery Oversight

- Oversee the delivery of BLiM's ongoing programme portfolio, working with the Head of Partnerships and Programmes and individual leads to ensure all programmes are properly scoped, resourced and managed.
- Establish a programme governance framework that defines programme ownership, reporting lines, funder requirements, delivery timelines and evaluation processes for every active programme.
- Manage the intake and evaluation process for all incoming partnership and programme requests, applying BLiM's strategic prioritisation framework
- When required support the Head of Partnerships and Programmes in managing the full programme lifecycle, from design and partner agreement through to delivery, evaluation and impact reporting.

Board Support and Governance

- Support the CEO in preparing board papers, board reports and governance documentation, ensuring the board receives accurate, timely and well-presented management information.
- Attend board meetings and sub-committee meetings as required, providing operational updates and responding to trustee questions on delivery, risk and compliance.
- Implement board decisions at the operational level, translating governance-level commitments into clear actions with named owners and completion dates.
- Support the board in operational coordination for the recruitment and onboarding of new trustees.
- Develop and maintain the organisational risk register and present it to the board at each meeting, flagging new or escalating risks with proposed mitigations.

Person Specification

Essential

- Significant experience in a senior operational leadership role, ideally as a COO, Head of Operations or Director of Operations in a charity, social enterprise or purpose-driven organisation.
- Demonstrable track record of building and improving operational infrastructure: systems, processes, policies and ways of working that make organisations more effective and resilient.
- Proven people management experience, including line management of senior staff, performance development, recruitment and team culture-building.
- Strong financial literacy, including experience of budget management, grant compliance, financial reporting and working with a board finance function.
- Experience of leading or supporting governance processes, including board reporting, risk management and compliance.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to translate complex operational information into clear, accessible reports and presentations for senior stakeholders.
- A genuine, demonstrable commitment to racial equity and an understanding of the specific systemic barriers faced by Black professionals, artists and communities.
- The emotional intelligence and interpersonal skill to lead with care, build trust quickly and navigate complex relationships under pressure.
- The resilience and adaptability to thrive in a small, fast-paced, mission-driven organisation where the work is varied, the stakes are high and no day is the same.

Desirable

- Experience of working in or with the music industry, creative industries or arts and culture sector.
- Familiarity with Arts Council England funding frameworks, charity law and the regulatory environment for non-profit organisations.
- Experience of implementing or managing a CRM system, project management platform or other operational technology.
- Knowledge of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) frameworks and how to embed inclusive practice into operational systems and culture.
- Experience of leading an organisation through a period of significant change, transition or growth.
- An existing network within the UK music sector, creative industries or racial equity and social justice space.

Core Competencies

Competency	What we expect to see
Operational Excellence	Builds and maintains systems, processes and infrastructure that make the organisation more effective. Brings rigour and precision to operational management without sacrificing agility or human warmth.
People Leadership	Leads with clarity, care and high expectations. Develops the capability of direct reports, builds a positive team culture and creates the conditions for others to do their best work. Models inclusive leadership consistently.
Financial Stewardship	Manages money with discipline and transparency. Understands the link between financial decisions and organisational sustainability. Communicates financial information clearly to non-finance audiences.
Strategic Thinking	Connects operational decisions to the bigger picture. Understands BLiM's strategic direction and ensures every operational choice is aligned to it. Comfortable holding both the detail and the direction simultaneously.
Governance and Accountability	Takes accountability seriously. Ensures decisions are properly made, documented and implemented. Supports the board to govern effectively and keeps the organisation on the right side of its legal and regulatory obligations.
Adaptive Communication	Listens well and speaks plainly. Adjusts communication style to the audience without losing substance or honesty. Builds trust through consistency between what is said and what is done.
Mission Alignment	Brings genuine passion for racial equity in music and the broader mission of Black Lives in Music. Understands why this work matters and allows that understanding to shape their leadership every day.
Resilience and Composure	Stays steady under pressure. Maintains clarity and good judgement in ambiguous or fast-moving situations. Models the calmness and confidence the team needs to do their best work.

What We Offer

- A genuinely mission-driven working environment where your work creates measurable, visible change for Black musicians and music professionals across the UK.
- The opportunity to shape and lead a growing organisation at a pivotal moment in its development, with real authority and real accountability.
- A collaborative, diverse and high-commitment team united by a shared belief in the importance of the mission.
- Hybrid and flexible working arrangements, with a London base.
- 25 days annual leave plus bank holidays.
- Access to industry events.

- The chance to build something that lasts: a resilient, institutionally strong BLiM that can carry its mission forward for the next decade and beyond.

Black Lives in Music is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion in all its recruitment processes. We actively encourage applications from Black and Global Majority candidates, disabled people and those from underrepresented communities.