

Director of Research Recruitment Pack

If you would like to arrange an informal discussion, or for any practical queries about the role, please email diana@ivar.org.uk

Contents

Welcome	3
About IVAR.....	4
Job description: Director of Research	7
Key Details	10

We value, welcome and respect all the differences that make us who we are, including: age, cultural background, disability and mental health, ethnicity and race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and social background.

To arrange an informal discussion, or for any practical queries about the role, please email: diana@ivar.org.uk

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in working at the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR). We work with charities, foundations and public agencies to strengthen UK communities through action research.

You may be thinking – what does this mean? Well, we champion the role and contribution of the voluntary sector. Through our research projects, we build an understanding of what it takes to deliver for communities and causes across the UK. We hear what helps charities, and what gets in their way. We then work with funders and public agencies to influence changes to practice, building dialogue between different people/organisations and putting charities' voices at the heart of calls for action.

We're looking for a new Director of Research, who will be responsible for leading and developing our research team, maintaining a balanced and strategic project portfolio, and ensuring our work has the greatest possible impact – supporting voluntary sector professionals across the UK both directly and through influencing their operating environment.

As Director of Research, you will be expected to work closely with the Director, who leads IVAR's work with funders and supervises a range of individual projects. Alongside that collaboration, you will be expected to take the lead on quality assurance, the development of research practice, the maintenance of ethical standards, and the continuous improvement of writing and research communications. These lead responsibilities lend themselves to someone with deep roots in qualitative research, as well as the work of the voluntary sector; with experience of collaborative styles of leadership, and a commitment to flexible ways of working.

Our project portfolio includes evaluations, primary and desk research, and facilitation. Whatever the approach, everything we do is about helping individuals and organisations achieve change. Most of our work falls into three categories: work with individual organisations; multi-stakeholder programmes, or sector-wide projects. You can read more about this on pages 4-6.

As Director of Research, you will supervise and manage our project portfolio, as well as be a team member on projects led by other staff. We are looking for someone who will thrive on this mix and is comfortable working in a small organisation with wide-ranging responsibilities.

If you are motivated by this mix of work – we would love to hear from you. Details of how to apply are on page 10.

Having a team that reflects the diversity of the communities that we serve is really important to us – so we would like to encourage people from a range of backgrounds and experiences to apply.

Thank you again, we appreciate your interest in our work, and hope to hear from you soon.



Ben Cairns
Director

About IVAR

Our vision

A powerful and independent voluntary sector, meeting social need and galvanising change.

Photo credit: SELFA



Our mission

We facilitate collaboration and learning **with charities, foundations and public agencies** to deliver useful insights **that make a difference to communities.**

Photo credit: Trussell Trust



Guiding principles

- Our starting point is understanding what those working in and with communities need to do the best possible job, as their context changes.
- We seek to balance deep work that uncovers useful insights and models that enable individual organisations/partnerships to make progress, while reaching as many people as possible.
- We build dialogue and understanding between different people, organisations and sectors.
- We connect local action into national conversations and movements, with the aim of influencing wider change.

Strategic priorities

Our focus since 2020 has been to evolve and adapt to maximise our relevance and 'be the best IVAR that we can be'. We are committed to:

- **Maintaining the health and wellbeing of the organisation** by ensuring that our people have the support, resources and systems they need to deliver high quality research and communications.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion.** We are committed to taking direct action, such as supporting new social researchers through an internship and the Jane Hatfield Award, and to continually pushing ourselves through creating opportunities for discussion and bringing in different perspectives. You can read more about our approach [here](#).
- **Increasing the use of our work by our core audiences – charities, foundations and public agencies.** Sharing learning in a way that is useful and usable. We take an experimental approach – trying new things to continuously learn and develop.
- **Leading a movement of change in UK grant-making.** In February 2021, we called for funders to sign up to eight commitments for [Open and Trusting Grant-making](#) – things like don't waste time, accept risk and enable flexibility.

How our action research portfolio connects to strategy

Our work follows a cycle. Research projects start at and move through different stages.



Wherever we start, we always apply:

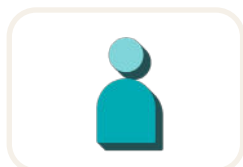
Our values



Curious



Grounded



Human

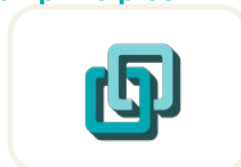


Hopeful

Our action research principles



Problem-solving



Collaborative



Practical



Useful for all

Our people

We are a small team of 10 core staff, 9 trustees and a network of freelance associates and advisors, who have worked in and around the voluntary sector as volunteers, staff, leaders, trustees and researchers. You can read more about us [here](#).

What we do

- **Deliver quality, rigorous action research:** We use collaborative research methods and existing literature to support the voluntary sector to develop practical responses to the challenges and opportunities they face.
- **Act as a sounding board and critical friend:** We listen, and offer encouragement and empathy. We know it's not always easy and we'll be frank about challenges – helping partners and clients to navigate their way through by drawing on research insights and our work with communities over the last 23+ years.
- **Share useful, usable insights:** No project is standalone – we share learning in a way that is easy for busy people to digest and use.
- **Build the sector:** We work with independent funders and public agencies to inform and support changes in practice that improve the day-to-day experience of voluntary organisations. We draw on what we hear directly from voluntary organisations, and create opportunities for these organisations to enter into dialogue with funders.

Examples of recent projects include:

- **Work with individual organisations:** For example, helping Trussell Trust to reflect on approaches to 'systems change', or being a learning partner for One Southwark.
- **Multi-stakeholder programmes:** For example, Connecting Health Communities, which helps tackle health inequalities in local areas, or being a learning partner to Propel, a collaborative funding initiative to tackle structural inequalities across London.
- **Sector-wide projects** that build dialogue between charities and funders, driving changes in practice: For example, Open and Trusting Grant-making, or Leading in Uncertainty.

You can read more about what we're working on at the moment by visiting:

www.ivar.org.uk/live-projects

Our audiences

Over the past few years, our mailing list has grown to over 6,000 contacts who are broadly in three communities:

- **Charities:** We regularly create opportunities for charities, social enterprises and community groups to share their experiences in a way that builds on their assets, supports their wellbeing, and influences funder practice. A community of over 1,500 charities inform our work by being on steering groups, attending peer support sessions and responding to surveys.
- **Open and Trusting Grantmakers:** We have a community of over 100 funders who are committed to making and managing more than £800m worth of grants in a way that reflects their confidence in the organisations they fund.
- **Health partnerships:** We have been supporting charities, local authorities and the NHS to involve communities in the design of local health services for over 15 years.

Director of Research

Job description

Purpose

- Lead a cohesive and productive team of research staff and freelance research associates.
- Maintain and develop a strategic and balanced research portfolio, including leadership of project design and new work development.
- Oversee the allocation of resources/assets to deliver high quality research that meets ethical standards.
- Supervise and develop/grow our team of research staff and freelance research associates.
- Deputise for the Director/Deputy Director as required.

Position in Organisation

- Reports to the Director.
- Leads research team, directly line managing research staff.
- Liaises closely with Deputy Director on people and operations.
- Member of the Senior Leadership Team, attends Board meetings.

Main areas of responsibility

As a member of the Senior Leadership Team

This role will be part of our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) along with the Director and Deputy Director. We work collaboratively to:

- Develop and maintain an internal climate and organisational culture which attracts, stimulates, supports and develops staff, associates and other key stakeholders.
- Develop and deliver a balanced and strategic research portfolio which realises IVAR's vision and mission – including through budget setting/management and the generation and development of strategies and projects.
- Develop and promote the organisation's public profile and influence, including through building productive relations with partners, funders, supporters, policy makers, nationally and locally across all sectors.
- Embed an inclusive and equitable approach – including through continuous learning and improvement in relation to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

New work

- Maintain and develop a network that supports a healthy project pipeline, including relationships with delivery partners who can complement and enhance IVAR's offer.
- Lead project design and proposals for commissioned work.
- Lead the identification, assessment and response to tender opportunities by:
 - Acting as the contact point for tender invites.
 - Undertaking the initial review of tender opportunities.
 - Facilitating collective decision-making by the SLT.
 - Developing tender responses in close consultation with the Director.
 - Reporting to the Board, including to share learning.

Research design and delivery

- Oversee and shape the portfolio to ensure quality delivery and alignment with IVAR's strategic priorities.
- Reputational leadership and oversight of IVAR's work with charities and public agencies.
- Supervise, support and guide the research team – including setting and monitoring the objectives of direct reports (two Senior Researchers and two Researchers as at May 2024).
- Supervise research projects – supporting Project Managers to manage teams that deliver high quality research, to manage client relationships, and by bringing subject matter expertise.
- Ensure IVAR meets its responsibilities in terms of research ethics and safeguarding, by upholding its Code of Practice (and reviewing/updating as needed).
- Maintain and develop IVAR's approach to project management and supervision.
- Monitor project budgets/associate use and progress against project income targets.
- Member of project delivery teams.

Research practice

Responsible for ensuring the highest standard of practice in project work and for working with others to coordinate the continuous professional development of research staff, including:

- Lead set-up and delivery of IVAR practice development meetings and monthly research team meetings (staff).
- Ensure that time is set aside in all projects for critical thinking and learning, including for cross-portfolio analysis where appropriate.
- Ensure our research practice is equitable and inclusive, and that we regularly reflect and learn about how to deliver research in a way that respects IVAR's commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Develop the research team to ensure we maintain the skills and experience needed to deliver high quality research.

Communications and people

- Work with the Director and Deputy Director to ensure quality of all written outputs.
- Support research staff and associates to contribute to the development and production of communication outputs across the whole portfolio.
- Ensure an integrated approach to research and communications, working closely with the Deputy Director to:
 - Jointly plan and deliver team days.
 - Review and oversee project communications.
 - Develop and manage the organisation's approach to, and schedule of, internal meetings for sharing, learning and planning.
 - Feed in on 'people' matters (recruitment, line management, professional development, organisational development, team wellbeing, etc.).

Other

- Participate in IVAR meetings and events, including contributing to Board reports and presentations to quarterly Board meetings.
- Contribute to organisational systems/processes including use of Beacon (our CRM).
- Actively engage in opportunities for personal development, e.g. leadership coaching/mentoring/training, and other external support required to carry out the role.
- Attend and contribute to regular supervision.
- Be administratively self-servicing.
- Undertake any other duties in support of IVAR's work as may reasonably be required.
- Operate all procedures and practices agreed by the Board.
- Adhere to, and actively promote, IVAR's code of practice and equal opportunities policy.
- Be responsible for own health and safety and that of colleagues, in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and relevant EC directives.

Person specification

Interest

- A commitment to IVAR's approach and ways of working – including a commitment to continuous learning.
- An interest in IVAR's research and how it can be used to inform/influence changes to practice.
- An interest in developing a team and evolving research practice in response to changing context/needs.

Experience, skills and attributes

- A strong understanding and direct experience of using qualitative research methodology, ideally including experience of action research, facilitation and evaluation design alongside an understanding of quantitative methods.
- Experience of leading, managing and contributing to all stages of the research process (for example, bid writing; research design; development of new research methods; data analysis and dissemination - writing in an accessible and engaging manner for different audiences).
- Confident to lead a portfolio of varied projects (including: client management; budget and capacity management; forward planning).
- Experience of line management and leading a research team with a collaborative, developmental approach to leadership – able to spot, nurture and direct strengths within a team to achieve organisational aims.
- A confident and inclusive facilitator with experience of presenting research findings to large groups.
- Good networking skills with the ability to proactively build relationships with new clients, funders and partners.
- Experience of working in a senior leadership team.
- Ability to move between strategic and operational priorities, including strong attention to detail.

If you feel that we are describing you in most of the above, then we'd love to hear from you.

Key Details

Location:	Hybrid – we currently work in the office at least one day/week (Tuesday) at The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR <i>Please note staff pay for their own travel to the office</i>
Salary:	£55,000 - £65,000 (dependent upon experience)
Contract:	Permanent
Hours:	Full time (35 hours per week)
Leave:	30 days
Pension:	Workplace Pension scheme operated by the Pensions Trust; employee contribution matched by employer up to 5%

Application process

Thank you for your interest in joining IVAR. If you would like to arrange an informal conversation, or if you have any practical queries, please email diana@ivar.org.uk

Recruitment timetable

12:00 on Friday 7th June	Closing date
Tuesday 11th June	We aim to notify candidates if they have been successful for an interview by this date, and to share the details of a 10-minute presentation which we will ask you to deliver at the start of the interview.
Tuesday 18th June	In-person interview and opportunity to meet the team (at our office – The Foundry, Oval Way)

If you cannot make the proposed interview date, please let us know when you apply.

To apply for the role, please email diana@ivar.org.uk with the subject “Director of Research Application”. You should include your CV and a covering letter (maximum of two A4 sides) explaining why you are interested in IVAR, how you meet the person specification, and what, in particular, you would bring to the role. The covering letter should be addressed to Ben Cairns, IVAR’s Director. Please also complete the Equal Opportunities Form [downloaded from our website](#).

We don’t acknowledge individual applications, but we will email all candidates to inform you about the outcome of your application.

We value, welcome and respect all the differences that make us who we are, including: age, cultural background, disability and mental health, ethnicity and race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and social background.

Data Protection Note

Any personal data you provide (e.g. addresses, telephone numbers, employment history) will be used for recruitment purposes only, and only shared with individuals involved in the recruitment.

Data will be stored securely in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#). If you have any questions about the processing of your data, then please contact IVAR’s Data Protection Lead diana@ivar.org.uk