

Director of Communications Recruitment Pack

*For an informal discussion, please email
Diana@ivar.org.uk*

*For any practical queries, please email
Stephanierough@dittonhr.co.uk*

Contents

Welcome	Error! Bookmark not defined.
About IVAR.....	4
Job description	6
Person specification.....	8
Key Details	9

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, please email Diana@ivar.org.uk, or for any practical queries, please email Stephanierough@dittonhr.co.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.

More specifically, we are committed to influencing and shaping charities' funding experience and the funding system, within our charitable object of '*strengthening the voluntary sector*'. This is achieved through our flagship programme, Open & Trusting Grant-making, as well as other direct and indirect work with, for and about funders and funding. It is directly informed by, and gains its legitimacy (and IVAR its credibility), through the full breadth of IVAR's portfolio of other projects that generate evidence and learning about the value, distinctive features, role and contribution of the voluntary sector. For IVAR, 'strategic communications' means bringing this priority to life.

Our new Director of Communications will be responsible for leading and developing our approach to strategic communications. Working closely with the Director of Research and the research team, you will lead the articulation, presentation and dissemination of learning, insights and messages from our diverse portfolio of projects, supporting the continuous improvement of writing and research communications, and ensuring our work has the greatest possible impact.

As Director of Communications, you will also be expected to work closely with the Director – who leads IVAR's work with funders and supervises a range of individual projects – to help IVAR achieve its potential to influence and shape the operating environment for small charities. Alongside that, you will take the lead, with the Director of Research, on a range of organisational management tasks, to ensure that IVAR has the culture, systems and support in place for staff to flourish and deliver work of the highest quality. These lead responsibilities lend themselves to someone with extensive experience in using communications to both inform and influence; confidence in facing both internally and externally; deep understanding of the work of the voluntary sector and funders; a commitment to a collaborative style of leadership; and a willingness to 'muck in' as part of a small organisation.

If you are motivated by this mix of work – we would love to hear from you. Details of how to apply are on page 9.

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.

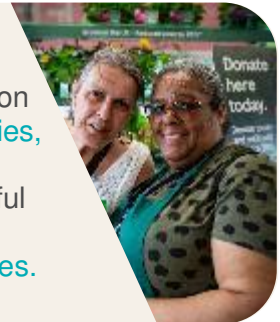
Photo credit: SELFA



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



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](#).

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.

Wherever we start, we always apply:

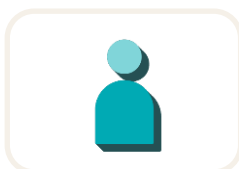
Our values



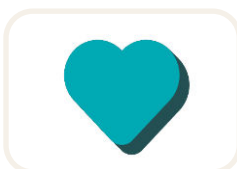
Curious



Grounded



Human



Hopeful

Our action research principles



Problem-solving



Collaborative



Practical



Useful for all

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.

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](#).

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.

Job description

Main Purpose of Job

This role balances external and internal to: ensure full integration of research and communications; communicate and engage with our audiences through multiple media; and extend our reach and influence at the interface between the voluntary sector and funding systems.

- Design and oversee a communications and influencing strategy.
- Approve and quality assure communications outputs.
- Work closely with the Director of Research to draw out learning and insights across the full breadth of IVAR's work to promote and enhance the value of small charities.
- Work closely with the Director to lead IVAR's influencing work in pursuit of and our ambition to transform funding systems and charities' funding experiences.
- Lead on specific elements of organisational management, working closely with the Director of Research to ensure an integrated approach.

Position in Organisation

- Reports to the Director.
- Line manages the Events Coordinator, Office Manager (who leads on our CRM and is actively involved in communications activities), and supervises a pool of freelancers. N.B. In their first few months in post, the Director of Communications will need to assess whether IVAR should continue to outsource its day-to-day communications activities or create a new communications post.
- Works closely with the Director of Research.
- Member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and attends Board meetings.

Main responsibilities

Communications

- Design, approve and oversee IVAR's communications and influencing strategy.
- Support and guide research staff to develop outputs and insights from within and across the project portfolio.
- Supervise outside agencies to deliver key aspect of IVAR's communications and influencing strategy, ensuring a range of high-quality, engaging outputs, extending our reach and enhancing our reputation with charities, foundations and public agencies.
- Quality assure and oversee sign-off of communications outputs – ensuring consistency of tone, voice and messaging across all external outputs and activities, reflecting organisational mission, values and strategy.
- Line manage the Events Coordinator (who is responsible for supporting the delivery of high-quality events – online, hybrid and in-person – both externally and for IVAR's team, and the Office Manager (who leads on our CRM and is actively involved in communications activities).

Influence

- Act as a thought leader on what and who IVAR is trying to influence, and how; develop organisational positions/calls to action consistent with our mission and our role as an independent research institute.
- Support the Director and Director of Research to set direction and strategy for the Open and Trusting Grant-making initiative, ensuring effective coordination across different disciplines, including audience engagement, research, influencing, and dialogue building between charities and funders.
- Work with the Director to design and deliver advocacy and influencing activities of the Open and Trusting initiative – presenting research, growing the community, developing evidence-based calls to action.
- Work with the Director of Research to identify – and communicate externally for public benefit – key themes and messages from IVAR’s work that improve conditions for the voluntary sector and promote the value of small charities.
- Build relationships that improve organisational reach and influence.

As a member of the Senior Leadership Team

Working within the framework of IVAR’s SLT Responsibility Matrix (which sets out decision-making more precisely):

- Review, develop and monitor organisational direction/strategy, working together to maintain a strategic portfolio of work which both realises IVAR’s vision and mission and meets income targets. This includes contributing to budget setting and management of individual budget lines, as well as supporting the Director to maintain core funding and generate income for flagship projects with funders (Open and Trusting Grant-making, Evaluation Roundtable).
- Embed an inclusive and equitable approach – including through continuous learning and improvement in relation to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Deputise for and represent the Director during periods of absence and at other times, as required.
- Attend Board meetings and contribute to reports for trustees.

Working closely with the Director of Research:

- Develop and maintain an internal climate and organisational culture which attracts, stimulates, supports and develops staff, associates and other key stakeholders, including:
 - Planning and delivering team days.
 - Developing and managing the organisation’s approach to, and schedule of, internal meetings for sharing, learning and planning.
 - Ensuring HR policies are up-to-date.
 - Coordinating annual appraisals and objective-setting.
 - Running an annual Staff Experience Survey.
- Periodically review the organisation’s tech, systems and office/meeting facilities; supervise projects to introduce or evolve these as appropriate.

Person specification

You will be a strategic thinker with strong communication and influencing skills, a passion for IVAR's mission and an affinity with our values. We are looking for someone who has led evidence-based policy/influencing programmes, and been part of a Senior Leadership Team, while also being comfortable with 'mucking in' as part of a small organisation. You may have worked for a funder, a campaigning organisation, or for a think tank. You will be comfortable operationalising and then communicating big ideas, representing the organisation externally and jointly leading on internal management, as part of a Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This will be underpinned by a strong understanding of and interest in the voluntary and funding sectors.

Essential experience, skills and attributes

- Senior communications experience, ideally in relation to advocacy and influencing work.
- Excellent editor and writer, with high attention to detail, who enjoys crafting evidence-based positions/messages/calls to action.
- Deep knowledge and understanding of the voluntary sector and funding practice.
- Proven experience of leadership at a senior level, including strategic planning and implementation, managing budgets and resources.
- Experience of line management, team leadership and organisational development.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal and presentation skills that can be adapted for different audiences.
- Outstanding organisational skills and the ability to manage competing demands and supporting others to do the same.
- High level of IT competence, especially Microsoft Office programmes.
- The legal right to work in the UK.

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

Key Details

Responsible to:	Ben Cairns (Director)
Works closely with:	All staff
Location:	Hybrid – we currently work in the office at least one day a week (Thursdays) at The Foundry, 17 Oval Way, London, SE11 5RR
Salary:	£60,000 - £70,000, dependent on experience
Contract:	Permanent
Hours:	Full time (35 hours per week)
Leave:	30 days + Bank Holidays
Pension:	Workplace Pension scheme operated by the Pensions Trust; employee contribution matched by employer up to 5%
Other benefits:	We are committed to supporting your personal and professional development. This includes providing both internal training and learning sessions and supporting you to attend external training and conferences.

Application process

If you would like an informal conversation about the role, please email Diana@ivar.org.uk, or for any application queries please email Stephanie Rough, our recruitment partner at Ditton HR: stephanierough@dittonhr.co.uk

Closing date	5pm on Wednesday 8th January
In-person interviews (including a task at the start of the interview)	Thursday 23rd January (shortlisted candidates will be informed by Friday 17 th January)

Start date: We are hoping the successful candidate would be able to start by 1st April.

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

To apply, please complete an [online application](#) which will be sent direct to our HR recruitment partners, Ditton HR, by the closing date.

Please submit your CV, a cover letter (maximum of two A4 sides) and links to a couple of examples of reports/papers that you have authored. Your cover letter should include:

- Why you are applying
- How you meet the person specification
- Your availability to start
- What in particular you would bring to IVAR.

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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