

HARRIS RAND LUSK

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PEN America Chief Operating Officer Job Description

Background:

PEN America is a highly regarded nonprofit organization which stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect open expression in the United States and worldwide. It champions the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. PEN America's programs defend writers, artists, and journalists and protect free expression worldwide. This work includes research and reports on topical issues; advocacy on free expression challenges; campaigns on policy issues and on behalf of individual writers and journalists under threat; year-round festivals and events; literary awards; fellowships; and more.

Founded in 1922, PEN America is the largest of the more than 100 centers worldwide that make up the PEN International network. PEN America works to ensure that people everywhere have the freedom to create literature, to convey information and ideas, to express their views, and to access the views, ideas, and literatures of others. PEN America's strength is in its Membership—a nationwide community of more than 7,500 novelists, journalists, nonfiction writers, editors, poets, essayists, playwrights, publishers, translators, agents, and other writing professionals, as well as devoted readers and supporters who join with them to carry out PEN America's mission.

PEN America is headquartered in New York City with offices in Los Angeles, CA and Washington DC, and an additional location in Miami, FL expected shortly. A staff of about 85 is led by Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Nossel, an internationally recognized authority on free expression. The financial outlook for PEN America is strong, with a 2023 annual operating budget of approximately \$20 million and an ongoing growth trajectory. Primary sources of revenue are private philanthropy, institutional giving, and benefit events including an annual Literary Gala.

The Position:

PEN America is seeking a smart, hardworking leader and experienced operations, technology, financial, and administrative professional to become its Chief Operating Officer (COO). Reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer, the COO will be responsible for implementing and managing all systems at PEN America related to administration, human resources, finance, information technology, and operations. The COO will also be a key communicator within PEN America, ensuring that policies and procedures are understood and consistently applied, and that PEN America's organizational values are reflected in all its systems.

The COO will bring significant experience in each of these areas, gained in the nonprofit sector and/or in an organization whose work is related to PEN America's work. A proven track record of designing and implementing systems and processes that support a complex organization as it grows is essential. The COO should not only be able to solve challenges as they arise, but also to draw on their management experience to anticipate future challenges especially in operational systems, financial management, facilities, talent management, and accountability.

The COO will be a dynamic and enthusiastic individual who will join PEN America's senior leadership team. Candidates should be adept in fast-paced environments, and have the personal presence and maturity required to effectively lead and manage a passionate and driven staff. The COO's experience in change management will help PEN America to build a cohesive leadership team and a broader culture that inspires employees to produce their best work and reinforces PEN America's commitment to equity. As a key "right hand" to the CEO, the COO must act decisively and manage the organization's daily operations to allow the CEO to fulfill her external responsibilities effectively.

It is critical that the COO be capable of integrating smoothly into the senior management, fitting into the organization's culture. They will provide counsel and support to the CEO, work closely with the department chiefs represented on the leadership team, and engage with managers, teams and individual staff across the organization. The COO will report to the Board of Trustees on administrative, financial and operational matters as well as work on various strategic initiatives. They will have strong interpersonal skills, excellent written and oral communication skills, a hands-on management style, as well as the ability to address and solve problems or issues as they arise. In addition, it is expected that they will be diplomatic, will operate with the highest integrity, and will possess sound judgment - as well as a sense of humor.

Specific Responsibilities include:

- Advise the CEO on advancing the operational needs of PEN America, developing organizational structures, strategies and processes, and implementing systems that support the expansion and effective operation of the organization.
- Work with the CFO to ensure (a) that PEN America has the financial systems and reporting capacities the expanding organization requires and (b) the integrity of the financial information for internal management and external reporting. Key internal users of relevant financial data include PEN America's Board of Directors, C-Suite, and senior management team and key program staff. External stakeholders include private and nonprofit institutional grantors, individual donors, government regulators, grantees and programmatic partners.
- Ensure that PEN America's financial systems and controls are prepared for growth in organizational scale and complexity. Ensure seamless integration of fundraising/revenue generation and financial management and reporting systems.
- Analyze PEN America's current technology infrastructure and security and scope the next level of information technology that supports growth of specific programs and the organization overall.

- Design and implement systems for information flow, including project and time management, workplan accountability, and internal communications. Support staff's development of enhanced project and time management skills.
- Foster an employee development culture. Ensure processes and policies for recruitment, onboarding, professional development, and retention of the organization's employees.
- Cultivate and promote the values of PEN America within the organization. Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion throughout the organization with support from consultants and team.
- Lead and administer the performance management process that measures and evaluates progress against goals for the organization.
- Provide a strong and supportive day-to-day in-person leadership presence for managers and staff
- Oversee the Human Resources, Database Administration, Finance division as well as other administrative support services as assigned
- Supervise direct reports and teams in accordance with the expanding senior leadership structure;
- Ensure facilities and services meet organizational needs, enhance a vibrant in-office work culture, and are fiscally prudent.
- Play a lead role in planning for and monitoring progress against PEN America's multi-year growth plan. Translate the organization's annual priorities and multi-year vision into an institution-wide operating plan with specific focus on systems, policies, and talent management.

Qualifications

- At least 15-20 years of professional experience and 5-10 years in senior leadership roles.
- Demonstrated experience managing growing organizations.
- Exceptional communication skills and excellent project management skills with an understanding of organizational development and change management.
- Focused on outcomes and results, understanding what resources are needed to reach quarterly/annual targets, and create plans to overcome challenges and setbacks.
- Ability to multi-task in a fast-paced and dynamic workplace.
- Track record of establishing and maintaining relationships with senior management levels at other nonprofit organizations.
- Direct and successful experience in multiple operational arenas including nonprofit finance, facilities management, human resources, information technology and databases.
- Bachelor's and Master's degree preferred, but exceptional candidates without a degree will be considered.
- Knowledge of and experience with nonprofit financial management, in either a staff or board capacity.
- Commitment to PEN America's mission.

PEN America is an Equal Opportunity Employer. PEN America does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, color, sex, age, gender identification, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability. All qualified applications will be given equal opportunity and selection decisions are based solely on job-related factors.

This is an outstanding opportunity for a highly motivated professional to assume a pivotal role in the evolution of a fast-growing, highly respected organization. PEN America is seeking an individual of outstanding quality with a respected track record. The projected compensation is in the \$220,000-\$250,000 range, plus benefits. The position will be based at the New York City headquarters. PEN America has a strong commitment to an in-person work culture and anticipates the COO will be an in-office presence throughout the week.

For more information about PEN America, please visit their website at www.pen.org

To Apply:

PEN America has retained the services of Harris Rand Lusk to conduct this search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed in confidence to:

Anne McCarthy, COO Harris Rand Lusk
260 Madison Avenue, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10016
amccarthy@harrisrand.com

Please put "PEN America COO" in the subject line of your e-mailed application.