

# Chief Operations Officer

## *BlackStar Projects*

### ABOUT US

BlackStar Projects is building a liberatory world in which a vast spectrum of Black, Brown, and Indigenous experiences is irresistibly celebrated in arts and culture. We are a filmmaker centric and Black-led organization that brings an intersectional analysis of race, gender, and power into the work while providing high-quality opportunities and curated experiences for artists, critics, and audiences. Founded to focus on the work of Black filmmakers (of the African diaspora), we are now dedicated to solidarity across artists and communities of color, including Black, Asian, Latinx, Arab, Native, and Indigenous communities, while still centering anti-Black racism as core to our racial justice analysis.

BlackStar is focused on the following issues:

- POC Authorship and not individual representation
- Aesthetic quality over celebrity
- Supporting a POC artists community, not just producing an event
- Curating a high quality and accessible program

BlackStar's core programs include:

- BlackStar Film Festival
- Exhibitions
- *Many Lumens* podcast
- Philadelphia Filmmaker Lab
- *Seen*, journal of film and visual culture
- William and Louise Greaves Filmmaker Seminar
- Year-round programs, including screenings, conversations, and other events in our space in Philadelphia as well as in collaboration with partners around the globe at festivals, museums, and university campuses

### THE SEARCH

BlackStar Projects has experienced exponential growth over the past three years: our staff has expanded from 5 to 20 full-time employees, our annual income has more than tripled, and we've systemized operational processes internally and externally. We recently closed *Terence Nance: Swarm*, a major exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania and are preparing for our largest annual film festival to date this August.

BlackStar Projects is seeking a Chief Operations Officer (COO) to provide strategic and operational leadership to the organization as a whole, with a focus on fundraising efforts, financial management, and internal operations in support of continuing growth, organizational sustainability, and current and emergent programming.

The COO role calls for excellent strategic and implementation abilities, sharp political instincts, analytic and critical thinking skills, and the capacity to provide leadership within a cross-functional team in a hybrid work setting. It also requires strong communication, budgeting, project and people management skills, experience in grant writing and management, experience soliciting individual and corporate giving, and a gift for building and sustaining connections with diverse individuals and organizations. The individual filling this role must have a deep respect for the values and creative approaches that BlackStar pursues.

Working closely with BlackStar's relatively small, highly engaged staff, board, and consultants, the COO will be expected to help guide and manage the organization as it continues to hone its strategies, evaluate its effectiveness, and deepen its impact. While not a programmatic position, the COO is expected to be familiar with all programs and keep themselves abreast of developments within the organization and the fields of film and media arts.

Experience in media arts is preferred, as is knowledge of the non-profit arts field. Candidates should have interests in BlackStar's three key areas – filmmaking, visual arts, and media arts – as well as a demonstrated commitment to intersectional feminism and social justice.

## JOB DESCRIPTION

The Chief Operations Officer (COO) is one-third of BlackStar's Leadership Team and reports directly to the Chief Executive & Artistic Officer (CEAO). The COO is the leader of the operations team, currently composed of six direct reports.

The COO will serve as a thought partner in the strategic design and growth of the organization, in implementing its strategies, and especially in tracking progress against them. The COO will oversee the day-to-day work of the organization's operations team and serve as the go-to person for key decisions regarding operational, financial, and fundraising management.

The primary responsibilities of the Chief Operations Officer consist of the following:

### Leadership and Management

- Serves as de facto 'second' in command and as one-third of BlackStar's leadership team, guiding the organization's strategy and vision as well as day-to-day practices and procedures
- Leads the operations team including biweekly team and individual meetings, promotes cross-team collaboration and team building
- Represents BlackStar while advocating for its work, vision, and values
- In partnership with the ED, helps manage the board of directors to maximize their engagement and effectiveness; oversees finance and development committees, generates relevant board reports

### Finances and Budgeting

- Ensures responsible fiscal management of BlackStar's resources
- Leads annual organizational budgeting process
- Manages investments in collaboration with Business Director and Financial Advisor
- Maintains and updates organization's finance policy
- Oversees and implements account coding categorizations in collaboration with Business Director
- Reviews and approves accounting and bank statements, weekly accounts payable, staff credit card reports, and quarterly account coding
- Updates income and expense projections monthly for cash flow projections for 12 months rolling
- Collaborates with the Business Director and Accounting Services Firm on the annual audit

### Fundraising

- Leads BlackStar's overall fundraising strategy in collaboration with the CEO and consultants
- Leads production of fundraising and outreach collateral for all BlackStar's programs in collaboration with the Communications Team
- Leads corporate and nonprofit sponsorships of the Festival and other programs together with the CEO
- Manages relationships with foundations including personalized quarterly updates, special invitations for program officers, and other relationship-building activities
- Oversees grant seeking, including research, proposal writing, and reporting, deadline, and other grantor requirements in collaboration with Development Consultant and Development Manager
- Maintains foundation grant funding projections
- Together with Development Manager, plans and implements BlackStar's membership program for fundraising from individuals
- Ensures proper attribution of members and partners on website and other public facing communications materials
- Ensures BlackStar's compliance with state and federal agencies related to fundraising including annual charitable license registration

### Operations

- Oversees the general facilities management of BlackStar's office space in collaboration with the CEO and Operations Associate
- Oversees inventory tracking and storage in collaboration with the Business Director and Operations Associate
- Assesses and ensures operational processes organization-wide and identifies software, tools and practices that enable staff to complete their work with more ease
- Identifies and implements staff policies related to operational processes such as travel, car usage, etc., in collaboration with the Business Director and People & Culture Director
- Maintains extensive internal documentation so that all teams are aware of program processes, procedures, and timelines

- Identifies and creates IT and database strategy, policies, and procedures in collaboration with the Operations Associate
- Leads BlackStar's transition to Salesforce, including researching and identifying developers and the roadmap for the migration
- Maintains necessary insurance and liability coverage for BlackStar including annual assessment of property items in collaboration with the Insurance Broker

#### Human Resources

- Ensures BlackStar is in compliance with all local, state and federal requirements including the Department of Revenue and the Department of Labor, in collaboration with the Business Director and People & Culture Director
- Manages implementation of conventional Human Resources policies and procedures in collaboration with the People & Culture Director
- Together with the Leadership Team, identifies and plans for staffing needs at BlackStar
- Researches and identifies benefits for staff in collaboration with the People & Culture Director

#### QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

For this important role, BlackStar seeks an experienced leader who is deeply committed to our mission and vision. The ideal candidate would have a background in arts and/or cultural administration, internal operations, fiscal management, and fundraising. This position requires wearing multiple hats simultaneously. Therefore, the COO must be strong at prioritizing, following through, communicating effectively, and being agile amid competing demands, while working collaboratively, demonstrating leadership, and co-creating a work culture characterized by excellence, inclusivity, and care.

BlackStar has a tradition of being comfortable with ambiguity; it experiments and innovates and then follows up with reflection. We have undergone a period of rapid growth and are looking for a COO who is astute enough to ask the right questions to keep BlackStar adapting and on the learning edge. The position also calls for collaborative management and team leadership skills, as well as an eye for detail and an interest and patience with internal operations and administration.

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following professional qualifications and personal attributes:

- Informed passion for BlackStar's mission, vision, and values
- A demonstrated commitment to working for social, racial, economic, and environmental justice
- Excellent strategic and intellectual abilities and analytic skill coupled with pragmatism and a roll-up-one's-sleeves attitude; sound judgment; a willingness to innovate and learn from mistakes made along the way
- Established track record of raising money for a growing, mid-sized non-profit organization
- Has experience with six-figure multi-year gifts from foundations and corporate sponsorships

- Deep experience and strengths in evaluation and technical assistance
- Outstanding written and oral communication skills
- Impeccable integrity, honesty, and a reputation for a balanced, non-ideological approach
- A willingness to challenge conventional thinking coupled with the ability to collaborate effectively, listen well, and bridge philosophies
- Substantial experience in designing, delivering, or supporting initiatives and programs to enhance community; breadth of program experience is preferred over specialization
- An understanding of filmmaking and/or non-profit arts administration and of the history of Black, Brown, and Indigenous participation in the field
- Entrepreneurial spirit and drive; an eye for creative, strategic opportunities tied to a commitment to accountability and results
- Experience working comfortably and effectively with well-known and highly visible individuals across a broad spectrum of industries
- Solid skills and experience in staff leadership, administration, financial management, budgeting, and planning
- Comfort with technology; familiarity with Basecamp, MS Suite, FileMaker Pro, Salesforce, Formstack, Dropbox, and Shopify preferred
- An outgoing, open, and optimistic personality; outstanding interpersonal skills; tenacity, pragmatism, high energy, patience, and good humor
- An advanced degree in a relevant field would be an asset
- Uses and continually develops leadership skills. Attends conferences and training as required to maintain proficiency and to grow in capacity

## COMPENSATION

The salary for this position is between \$150,000 to \$165,000. BlackStar's benefits package includes but is not limited to: 100% medical, dental, and vision coverage (for employee and dependents), retirement matching, paid time off and public holidays, annual wellness fund, professional development fund, and reimbursements for home office utilities. The position is headquartered at BlackStar's offices in Philadelphia. We are currently operating with a hybrid model of remote work and office work with some in-person activities, done safely and above CDC and state level guidelines.

## TIMEFRAME

We seek to have a Chief Operations Officer in place no later than January 2024.

Applicants should be legally able to work in the United States, and if not based in the Greater Philadelphia area, be willing to relocate. We currently require that employees work in the office at least two days a week and employ a hybrid work model which allows employees to work at home or in the office as needed.

## HOW TO APPLY

Applications should be submitted via this [application form](#) on or before August 31, 2023.

Please also include an addendum with answers to one (1) of the following prompts from each list below—for a total of two (2) responses. Your answer should be a single paragraph of no more than 250 words for each.

### List 1

- What is one of your favorite films that has screened at BlackStar Film Festival and why?
- If your family or good friends were to choose three words to describe you, what would they be and why?
- What has had a strong influence on your political perspective and why?

### List 2

- What are the top three things you think are critical to building partnerships with external stakeholders and why?
- How do you strike a balance between creating operational efficiencies and maintaining an organizational culture of care?
- Please share a professional success you've experienced that correlates to a success you can imagine creating at BlackStar.

Applications that fail to include the addendum or follow instructions will not be considered.

*BlackStar Projects is committed to the principles of equal opportunity employment at every level without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital or familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity characteristics or expression, age, non-job-related disability, or political affiliation.*