



**Gatsby  
Africa**

# Chief Operating Officer

## Position Specification



# Table of Contents

<b>THE OPPORTUNITY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT GATSBY AFRICA</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PURPOSE OF THE ROLE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>KEY ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SEARCH TEAM</b>	<b>18</b>

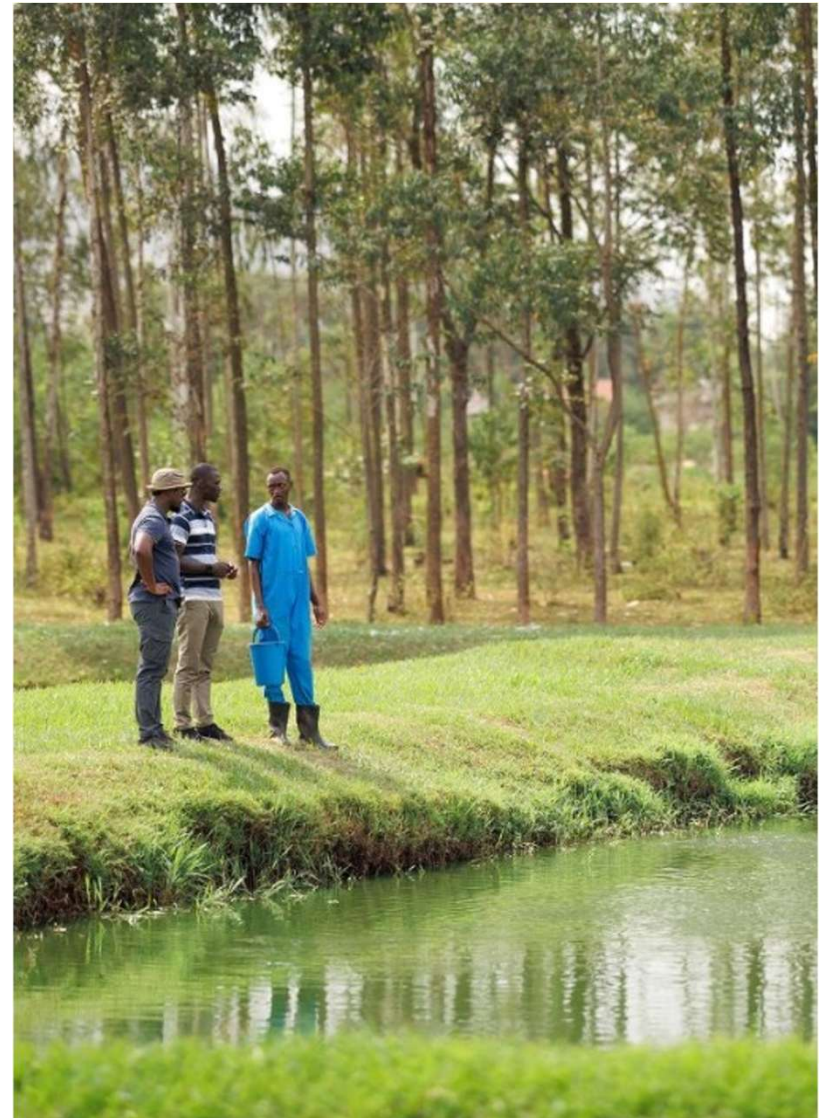
---

## The Opportunity

Gatsby Africa is seeking an accomplished Chief Operating Officer (COO) to drive organisational performance, operational integrity, financial stewardship, governance and resilience - in close partnership with the Executive Director and Senior Management Team. The COO will be responsible for ensuring organisational alignment, operational excellence, and disciplined execution across Corporate Services and Country Offices, while enabling the Executive Director to focus on external engagement, strategic partnerships, and long-term institutional direction. Reporting to the Executive Director, the COO will provide strong internal leadership, ensuring that systems, structures, and culture effectively support Gatsby Africa's mission and delivery ambitions across East Africa.

This is a value-led and hands-on leadership role, comfortable with leading through influence, while providing strategic oversight to senior leaders in Finance & Operations, People, Communications, and the Country Directors in Kenya and Tanzania. The role requires a leader who is comfortable operating at both strategic altitude and granular detail, someone who can pivot between shaping enterprise-wide systems and rolling up their sleeves to solve operational issues.

The successful candidate must demonstrate deep understanding of the region's political, economic, and cultural context, and the ability to lead authentically within it. As Gatsby Africa expands its use of AI and transitions toward a more co-funded model, the Chief Operating Officer must be visible, collaborative, and comfortable leading change while preserving purpose, integrity, and cohesion. This is a role for an accomplished senior executive ready to shape the organisation, strengthen culture, and support its next phase of delivery and impact in East Africa.



---

## About Gatsby Africa

Gatsby Africa (GA) is a private foundation set up by Lord David Sainsbury, with a long history of engaging in East Africa across government, business and society. We are committed to building stronger inclusive economies in East Africa, supporting the region to respond to the key trends that are shaping the future.

We do this through identifying and building industries and sectors of the future – sectors that if successful will uplift many people out of poverty. This is our purpose, the reason we exist.

We currently operate across a diverse range of sectors across Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda - Commercial Forestry, Aquaculture, Textiles & Apparel, Livestock, Global Business Services, Bio-Based Construction and Soya - and we are continuing to assess new opportunities across manufacturing and services, in addition to agriculture.

Our portfolio puts us in a strong position to deliver meaningful levels of impact for millions of people in the region and strengthens our ability to generate and share our learning with others.

As an organisation we are very rooted in East Africa. Over 90% of our staff are based and from East Africa, and our value as an organisation is largely derived from our understanding, knowledge and expertise in the region. We combine deep sector expertise with an ability to understand and navigate the political and business context in East Africa.



---

## How We Work

We adopt an ambitious, commercial and pragmatic approach to catalysing sectors. We understand that business must make sense, and the success of sectors is driven ultimately by capable firms driving growth. We also understand that sectors operate in a local context which is complex, sometimes political, and where innovating and pioneering new transformative growth means taking risks – and that moving from pioneering firms to building broader sectors takes time and deliberate focus, building sector capabilities and supporting the government to play their role effectively.

We are set up to play this role. We are pragmatists and doers, and we like to work quickly and nimbly. We have an ability to take risks ourselves, and more importantly to support pioneer firms to take risks.

Our team structures tend to be flat and dynamic. This gives us the ability to be flexible and adaptive, and we can use any tools that are appropriate, from direct investment into business to technical assistance and research. With this flexibility, we empower team members to be entrepreneurial, and to identify and drive opportunities in the sector.

We also recognise the important role governments play in enabling, and in some instances unlocking, growth. We believe it is only by working in partnership with entrepreneurs, established firms, investors and governments that lasting and meaningful change can be secured.

We are committed to learning from our own work and that of others, and to sharing these insights across GA and with governments, partners and investors to influence decisions and drive change. We are also externally focused, engaging in global and local debates on economic transformation and supporting governments and partners to adapt and apply lessons and best practices.





## The Gatsby Africa Team

The Gatsby Africa team consists of 120+ employees of 8+ nationalities. 90% of Gatsby Africa employees are based in East Africa. Most of Gatsby Africa's sector transformation staff come from the private sector, including some of the leading management consultancies and businesses in the region such as McKinsey & Company, Deloitte, PwC, Open Capital, Adam Smith International and Unilever.

---

## Purpose of the Role

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and is accountable for Gatsby Africa's (GA) organisational performance, operational integrity, financial stewardship, governance and resilience.

The COO ensures that GA's organisational design, capabilities, governance and resource allocation are aligned to its long-term strategic ambitions and impact goals. The role ensures the organisation has the structures, systems and leadership culture required to deliver effectively across Kenya, Tanzania and future geographies.

Leading Corporate Services and overseeing country operations, the COO drives enterprise performance, disciplined execution and strong business partnering across the organisation.

As a strategic partner to the Executive Director, the COO supports organisational coherence and evolution, fostering a collaborative, values-led and delivery-focused culture that enables sustainable country impact.



## Scope of Accountability

The COO holds executive accountability for:

- The evolution and organisational design of Gatsby Africa
- Overall operational performance, delivery and organisational effectiveness.
- The coordination and strategic alignment of all Corporate Services functions
- Financial stewardship, operational/financial risk management and governance processes
- Organisational development and enterprise-wide change management
- Country operational oversight through line management of Country Directors

The COO line manages the Finance & Operations Director, People Director, Communications Director, Kenya Country Director and Tanzania Country Director.

While functional leadership rests with respective Directors, the COO is accountable for overall performance, prioritisation, integration, alignment and effective business partnering of Corporate Services.

The role is a critical support to the Executive Director and entails key interfaces with the Portfolio Director and Insights Director to ensure alignment between Corporate Services and portfolio strategy and delivery.





---

## Job Description

**Reports to:** Executive Director

**Direct reports:** Finance & Operations Director, People Director, Communications Director, Kenya Country Director and Tanzania Country Director

**Location:** Nairobi, Kenya with regular travel to East Africa and the UK as needed

## Key Role Responsibilities

### 1. Organisational Performance and Delivery

Accountable for strengthening enterprise-wide performance, execution discipline and organisational effectiveness across Gatsby Africa.

- Drive clarity of organisational priorities and ensure alignment between strategy, plans and delivery.
- Establish and embed effective performance management rhythms (planning, reporting, review and accountability cycles) – within Corporate Services and GA.
- Identify systemic delivery risks and performance gaps and lead corrective action.
- Provide the Executive Director, SMT and Executive Board with clear visibility of organisational performance and key risks.
- Strengthen cross-functional coordination and execution discipline.



---

## 2. Senior Management Team and Governance

As a core member of the SMT, the COO strengthens collective leadership, governance and organisation decision-making.

- Contribute to enterprise-wide strategy development and major organisational decisions for GA.
- Lead operational decision-making, enabling the SMT to focus on strategic priorities.
- Ensure high-quality effective governance processes, including SMT, Board, and Leadership Group coordination, agenda-setting, decision quality and reporting.
- Role-model Gatsby Africa's values and inclusive leadership behaviours.

## 3. Organisational Development and Change Management

Accountable for ensuring Gatsby Africa's organisational design, operating model and governance framework remain aligned to strategy and fit for purpose.

- Understand operating environment and evolve strategies to enable GA to meet its strategic objectives.
- Ensure organisational design, operating model and governance structures remain aligned to strategy and fit for purpose.
- Lead development, oversight and reporting of organisation-wide Organisational Development (OD) priorities.
- Ensure resources and organisational capacity are aligned to strategic priorities.
- Sponsor and oversee significant organisational change initiatives.



---

#### 4. Culture and Organisational Capability

Accountable for building the leadership, culture and talent required to deliver Gatsby Africa's ambitions.

- Drive a collaborative, inclusive and high-performance culture aligned to Gatsby Africa's values – within Corporate Services, and between Corporate Services and the rest of the organisation.
- Ensure Corporate Services models strong business partnering and organisational stewardship.
- Ensure Corporate Services is resourced and equipped to deliver against strategic objectives.
- Support the People Director in developing leadership capability and succession planning.
- Partner with the Executive Director and SMT to embed effective change leadership and model desired behaviours.



---

## 5. Corporate Services Leadership and Strategic Oversight

Accountable for the overall performance, effectiveness and integration of Corporate Services.

- Ensure Corporate Services strategies and priorities are aligned with GA organisational strategy.
- Drive coherence and collaboration across functions, ensuring Corporate Services operates as one integrated team.
- Provide strategic oversight and advice to functional leaders and hold them accountable for delivery, quality, performance and effective business partnering.
- Ensure functions are appropriately structured, resourced and capable of meeting current and future organisational needs.
- Enable prioritisation and coordination of Corporate Services initiatives within the broader organisational context.
- Ensure effective sponsorship of Corporate Services within the broader organisation.
- Support resolution of complex, cross-functional or escalated issues.
- Foster a culture of accountability, continuous improvement and service excellence.
- Ensure corporate communications capability supports Gatsby Africa's positioning, influence and stakeholder relationships.



---

## 6. Strategic Finance and Risk

In partnership with the Finance & Operations Director and SMT, the COO ensures strong financial stewardship around long-term sustainability and management of risk in GA.

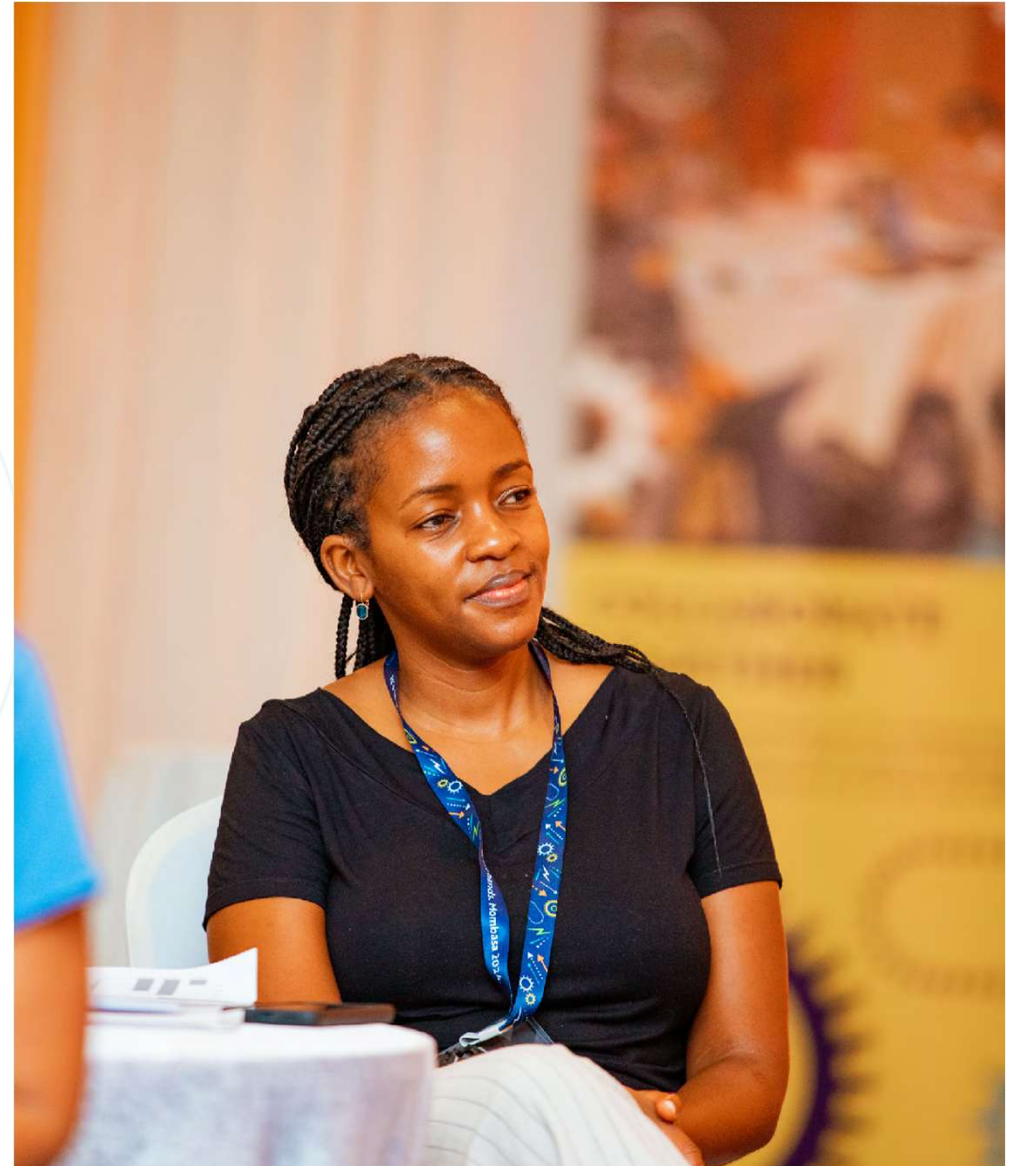
- Support development and oversight of long-term financial planning aligned to strategy.
- Ensure effective strategic planning around co-finance and robust management of donor funding.
- Support strategic consideration of a broader range of financial instruments, including repayable finance or investment approaches where relevant.
- Ensure overall value-for-money across the organisation.
- Ensure effective management of operational risks in GA, ensuring the right risk appetite and management of risk is implemented and reported effectively.

---

## Person Specification

### Essential Experience & Capabilities

- Senior executive leadership experience within complex, multi-country organisations.
- Enterprise-level strategic and operational leadership, with a demonstrable track record of translating strategy into disciplined execution across functions and geographies.
- Direct organisational-level accountability for multiple corporate functions, including Finance and Operations and at least one of the following: People, Communications, Governance, or Legal/Risk.
- Proven success in strengthening organisational performance, capability, and execution discipline concurrently.
- Strong governance expertise, including substantive experience engaging with Boards and Board Committees.
- Demonstrated ability to hold senior leaders to account while fostering collaborative, high-trust relationships.
- Experience building, developing, and leading high-performing, inclusive, and cross-cultural teams.
- Strong stakeholder management and communication capability, with credibility and presence at Executive and Board level.
- Substantial experience operating in African contexts, ideally within East Africa.



---

## Person Specification

### Leadership Behaviours

- Deep alignment with Gatsby Africa's mission and a strong commitment to African development.
- A values-led, human-centric leader who thrives in highly collaborative, non-hierarchical environments.
- Leads through influence, coaching, and empowerment rather than positional authority.
- Comfortable being constructively challenged and committed to developing others.
- Focused on driving a strong delivery culture through organisational trust, clarity, and accountability.
- High emotional intelligence and sound judgement in complex and evolving environments.
- Sets and maintains high standards of performance, integrity, and accountability.
- Demonstrates cultural awareness and inclusivity across multi-country contexts.
- Builds trust, credibility, and cohesion across teams and geographies.
- Strategic thinker with the ability to translate strategy into strong operational delivery.

### Desirable

- Experience in economic development, market systems, sector transformation or philanthropic organisations.
- Exposure to co-financing, blended finance or investment mechanisms.
- Familiarity with AI deployment or digital transformation in organisational settings.



---

## Our Values

Our set of core values that serve as the foundation for the culture we strive to foster.

### Dream

**Ambitious** - We are deliberately ambitious – seeking transformational change and creating sectors of the future.

**Innovative** - We are innovative- prepared to take calculated risks and pioneer innovations with our partners to achieve our aims.

### Discover

**Empathy** - We work with empathy and humility, knowing that we can only be successful if others own the solutions.

**Learning** - We always seek to learn - always curious to understand why things do or do not work.

### Deliver

**Collaborative** - We are a collaborative organisation – knowing we can only achieve our aims when we work with others, and we build local ownership.

**Delivery** - We maintain a delivery focus - holding ourselves to the highest standards and knowing that everything we do must be focused on bringing meaningful change that lasts and doing so in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.



---

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to Gatsby Africa. We are committed to treating all employees and job applicants fairly, equally, and no less favourably than anyone else. We recognise, respect and value diversity and the benefits that difference can bring to our organisation.

## Safeguarding

We are committed to protecting children and vulnerable adults from any harm when engaging with Gatsby Africa or its partners, and we expect all our staff to abide by our safeguarding policy.



## How to Apply

To apply for this opportunity, please share your CV to [GatsbyCOO@careerconnections.com](mailto:GatsbyCOO@careerconnections.com) by Friday 10 April 2026.



**Zia Manji**  
Managing Director



**Wanjiru Mugenda**  
Research Associate

**Career Connections | Bringing people to life at work**

P.O. Box 25118-00603, Nairobi Kenya  
Office Mobile: +254 733 994 469 / +254 722 516 043  
Tel: +254 20 375 2400  
[www.careerconnections.com](http://www.careerconnections.com)

