

Job description

● Director of Finance & Services

Our Society

The Royal Geographical Society is the learned society for geography and professional body for geographers as well as being a registered charity with a global reach and membership of around 15,000.

The Society was founded in 1830 to advance geographical science, and this remains our core purpose. We achieve this through supporting geographical research, education, professional practice, and fieldwork and expeditions, as well as by advocating on behalf of the discipline and promoting geography to public audiences.

We support 32 specialist research and professional practice groups, 10 regional branches in the UK and two overseas, and a programme of activities that engages audiences far beyond our membership. Over 200 events are organised each year including a major four-day academic conference, a programme of lectures featuring renowned speakers, professional development sessions, and topical discussions. Our scholarly journals disseminate cutting edge research findings, while our popular magazine explores some of the biggest issues of the day in an accessible way.

The Society is based in an exceptional listed building in our own grounds in Kensington, which houses our historical Collections of maps, artefacts, photographs, and publications. We employ approximately 60 staff and benefit from the commitment and contribution of many volunteers.

Applicants are strongly recommended to familiarise themselves with the current work of the Society set out on our website: www.rgs.org.

Purpose and responsibilities of post

As the Society approaches its 200th anniversary in 2030, with ambitious associated goals, ensuring that we continue to have the best possible leadership team in place has never been more relevant. With the approaching retirement of our current Director of Finance & Services, we are looking for an exceptional, entrepreneurial senior leader with proven ability to balance strategic and operational impact. The successful candidate will drive and deliver effective and efficient financial planning, forecasting, budgeting, reporting, controls, operations, and management, whilst continuing to improve the Society's processes and systems.

Whilst an executive level financial background is a given, we are additionally seeking an individual who has led other functions and developed the professionals within them. This role leads a diverse team of 10, spanning: Finance, Facilities & Estates, IT & Database Administration, and HR. It also holds additional responsibility for: Safeguarding, Data Protection, Risk Management, Pensions, Company Secretarial, Insurance & Legal.

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This new role is a vital appointment during a critical period of opportunity for the Society. We have exciting plans for our building, at the heart of London's Exhibition Road Cultural Quarter, optimizing and developing this space as a gathering point of global significance and influence for people intent on making a positive difference to the world. Accordingly, we are particularly interested in individuals who bring with them strong programme management skills and experience of managing heritage estate projects operationally, in partnership with external consultants.

Further details, including a detailed Job Description, can be found on our website (see below).

Salary and application details

This is a permanent post. We welcome requests for flexible working arrangements, including hybrid and part time working. This is looked at on a case-by-case basis, balancing the Society's needs with the successful candidate's other commitments, to support a good work-life balance. The salary range for this post is c£100,000+ (FTE) per annum, depending on experience and qualifications. The post is based in Kensington, London.

There are a range of benefits at the Society which include the following:

- 35-hour working week with core working hours between 10.00am and 4.00pm.
- 25 days annual leave per annum plus public bank holidays.
- Society closure between Christmas and New Year, in addition to the basic annual leave allowance.
- Generous pension scheme - 3% employee, 7.5% employer.
- Group Life Assurance at four-times basic annual salary.
- Corporate eye care vouchers.
- Cycle to work scheme.
- 24-hour Employee Assistance helpline with available counselling support.

The Society aims to be an equal opportunities employer.

Please apply via the vacancies page on our website: [Current vacancies - RGS](#), where you can find further details including the full Job Description and our Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form.

... Applications should be sent by email to director@rgs.org with a copy of your CV, and a covering letter explaining your suitability for the post and how you fulfil the selection criteria, along with the monitoring form.

Applications must be received by 5.30pm, 12 June 2026.

It is anticipated that interviews will take place week commencing 29 June 2026.

Note: Due to the high volume of applications we anticipate, only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. Candidates who are successfully shortlisted should expect to hear from us within one week of the advert deadline.

Direct applicants only, no recruitment agencies please.

Job description for the post of 'Director of Finance & Services'

Post:	Director of Finance & Services
Department:	Finance & Services
Responsible to:	The CEO (also styled 'The Director' of the Society, Prof. Joe Smith)
Direct Reports:	Includes: Financial Controller, IT Manager, Facilities Manager, HR Advisor, Database Administrator.
Location:	Hybrid (Remote / South Kensington, London)
Status:	Permanent (flexible and part-time working options would be considered)
Salary:	£100K+ (FTE) depending on experience and qualifications

Key internal contacts

- Senior Management Team and members of the Office of the CEO.
- President, CEO, and relevant Trustees and sub-committees (notably the Society's Honorary Treasurer, Finance Committee, the Investment Sub-Committee, and the RGS Enterprises Board).
- All departments in support of the 'House Project'.

Key external contacts

- The Society's HR consultants, auditors, bankers, independent financial advisor, insurance/risk advisors, investment managers, legal advisors, and other professional service providers/consultants.
- Certain key suppliers, including those professional advisors and contractors appointed from time to time to deliver any major premises-related projects.

Key responsibilities and deliverables

The sections below describe the main areas of activity for the role, which combine practical skills of 'managing' and 'doing', with a strategic approach, and the need to maintain a sound understanding of the breadth of the Society's activities and its statutory responsibilities.

Finance

- Prepare the annual financial statements for the Society and RGS Enterprises Limited, for audit and for review and approval by Finance Committee and Council; submission of same to the Charity Commission and Companies House respectively, together with the completion and submission of Annual Returns to both bodies. The post-holder will act as Company Secretary to, and be appointed as one of the directors of, RGS Enterprises Limited.
- Provide oversight of statutory responsibilities, ensuring accurate and timely reporting, including quarterly VAT Returns and compliance with VAT legislation; returns and payments to HMRC, including HMRC's real-time reporting requirements; and pension contribution data to pension scheme providers.
- Provide oversight, management, and stewardship of the Society's finances and financial assets, accountable to the Director and the Finance Committee, including control of the annual budgeting and full year forecast preparation process.
- Support the Director and other senior colleagues in the financial management of their own and collectively the Society's activities, and of their department and project budgets; ensuring the timely and accurate completion and issue of monthly management accounts (by the Financial Controller).
- Prepare timely, accurate, and transparent written reports and financial analyses for the Society's Finance Committee, RGS Enterprises Board, and Council of Trustees.
- Provide oversight of maintenance and upgrade of the accounting systems (by the Financial Controller); including ensuring staff across the Society are appropriately trained.
- Manage the Society's cash flows and deposit-taker relationships.
- Oversee the monthly payroll, which is outsourced; ensuring accuracy and compliance with legislation.

- Prepare business plan projections in support of the Society's published strategy; review and update of those projections as required during any strategy development or review.
- Coordinate and oversee the application of the Society's risk management approach, across its breadth of activities, to include maintenance of the Society's risk register and business continuity plan.
- Oversee the Society's investment-related activities, including liaison with the Society's Investment-Sub Committee and professional investment managers.

Facilities & Estates

- Manage and support the Facilities Manager and their team in the day-to-day running of the Grade II* listed premises, including overseeing contracts for services with key suppliers.
- Develop a sound knowledge of the premises and its facilities, including in the context of its listed status; maintain awareness of any forthcoming fabric, facilities, or operational (including health and safety) issues; take a strategic approach to the longer-term maintenance of the premises; identify priority works for the annual capital expenditure budget for the premises.
- Act as the Society's lead on significant works to the premises. (The Society has a strategic plan for its building, commissioned from the renowned architectural practice Caruso St John).

IT and database administration

- Manage and support the IT Manager in the delivery of a reliable, robust and fully available IT and communications infrastructure. Take a strategic approach in overseeing the programme of annual capital expenditures as part of a continuous improvement programme.
- Support and oversee the IT Manager's management of the Society's Managed Service Provider of IT services.
- Manage and support the IT Manager in their role as technical lead for the development and ongoing management of the Society's contact relationship management database software (oomi), which provides contact management, membership processing, events processing, online transaction functionality, and modules supporting administration of other of the Society's activities.
- Manage and support the IT and Database function in the administration of and reporting from the Society's CRM database.
- Manage and support the Database Administrator in the administration of other Society databases such as invoicing, annual conference, expeditions, helpdesk.
- Lead the decision-making on enhancements to the software on a cost-effective basis to continue to deliver process efficiencies and enhanced online capabilities; review efficiencies of linking oomi, the Society's website, other databases and the Society's accounting system.

Pension schemes

- Oversee the management of the administrative requirements of the personal pension plan (defined contribution scheme).
- Liaise with the trustees, secretary to the trustees, and scheme services administrator of the Society's closed-to-future-service-accrual (defined benefit) scheme on the provision of staff member data and other relevant financial information as requested, including contributing to the assessment of the strength of the Society's financial covenant.
- Oversee the management of the administrative requirements of the USS pension scheme for the small number of employees for which it applies.

Insurances and legal

- Liaise with the insurance brokers/risk managers that place the Society's insurance policies, ensuring, in consultation with Finance Committee, that the range of insured risks and levels of cover are appropriate.
- Oversight of all legal matters as they affect the Society, whether relating to agreements with third parties for funding of the Society's charitable activities, commercial contracts including corporate supporter agreements in RGS Enterprises, Society governance issues, or other circumstances; providing support to senior colleagues in reviewing, amending, drafting, of contracts; liaison with legal advisors.

- Lead on all aspects of Data Protection and ensure compliance with the Society's obligations, being the point of contact for related enquiries.
- Perform due diligence reviews, including financial, where necessary on donations and other funding.

HR

- Support and manage the HR Advisor in their provision of HR support to the Society and in particular with updates to contracts, employment policies, administration of the Society's HR system, induction and training programmes.
- Support and manage the HR Advisor in their handling of all employment contractual matters and the support of senior colleagues in the application of the Society's employment policies.
- Support and manage the HR Advisor in their support of the Director and other senior managers in the management of staff for whom they are responsible, including in relation to any requests for flexible working, staff post recruitment, staff performance issues, staff development and training, disciplinary matters, and maintaining an overview of the Society's salary structure; taking advice from employment legal advisors when necessary.

Safeguarding

- As Designated Safeguarding Lead, ensure the Society's organisational safeguarding policies and practices are fit for purpose.
- Ensure the Society's approach is appropriate and reflects good practice and that policies are communicated and understood across teams.
- Act as the key point of contact for safeguarding concerns or incidents to be escalated.

Leadership

- Provide effective management and leadership to direct reports.
- Work closely with Director and senior colleagues to develop and implement the business plan.
- Represent the organisation where appropriate in a professional manner, including the support of stakeholder relationship management at Society events.
- Be proactive in providing relevant information and insight, anticipating what the Director and Board may need in order to make key financial decisions within the Society.
- Promote and lead on continuous improvement, including the development of systems and procedures to reflect changes in priorities, operational procedures and the structure and constraints of the Society;

Other tasks as may be requested from time to time by the Director, Council of Trustees, Finance Committee, or the RGS Enterprises Board.


Person specification

This role has a broad brief, and we expect it to attract candidates from varied backgrounds. You will already be a proven c-level / director level or equivalent Finance leader, likely to have gained experience within membership organisations, learned societies, uniformed services, cultural or heritage organisations, hospitality or entertainment venues, higher education institutions, or other relevant private or public sector bodies. You will preferably also have commercial business experience, coupled with prior leadership responsibility for 'back office' functions additional to Finance.

Experience

The successful applicant will show evidence or bring experience of:

- Being a highly effective strategic and expert contributor within senior leadership teams, having worked collaboratively to optimize organisations.
- Managing and delivering complex interdisciplinary change programmes.
- Identifying, implementing and optimizing the systems and processes required to effectively manage all key departmental activities.

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- Developing and monitoring workplans that are strategically informed and managing of income and expenditure budgets.
 - Developing and leading a high-performing team, creating a culture of high standards and collaboration.

Qualifications, knowledge, skills and personal attributes

The successful candidate will demonstrate the following:

- Appropriate accountancy qualification.
- High intellect, creativity, and strategic acumen.
- A talent for generating and maintaining momentum to 'get things done'.
- Gravitas, calmness, and self-awareness.
- Excellent relationship building skills.
- An eye for detail within a balanced view of the bigger picture.
- Equally at ease with finessing strategy and implementing initiatives.
- Highly effective change management skills, with sound emotional intelligence and organisational planning skills.
- Deep understanding of and familiarity with the regulatory obligations of the charity/and or commercial sector.
- Ability to work constructively as part of a team along with a desire to learn from colleagues and non-executive advisors.
- Persistence, determination and a solution/results-oriented approach.
- High standards of written and verbal communication and ICT skills.
- Commitment to the values reflected in the Society's equality, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability objectives, and an enthusiasm to champion them.
- Passion for the mission and purpose of the Society's varied work.