



Recruitment Pack

Director of External Affairs and Growth

July 2026



Welcome from the CEO, James de le Vingne



Thank you for your interest in becoming our Director of External Affairs and Growth.

Employee ownership in the UK is at a critical moment. The sector has more than doubled since 2020. Awareness is rising. Evidence is compelling. Businesses, communities, and policymakers are increasingly recognising that a people-powered approach can unlock fairness, resilience, and productivity.

We believe the UK can reach 10,000 employee owned businesses within the decade, transforming succession, broadening ownership, and reshaping the economic landscape. But achieving this relies on bold, strategic, values-led leadership across our community.

The eoa exists to build and connect that community: a network of more than 800 member businesses, thousands of employee owners, specialist advisors, policymakers, and partners committed to powering fairer livelihoods and stronger businesses through employee ownership.

As Director of External Affairs and Growth, you'll be the driving force behind the eoa's external influence and reach. you'll lead our advocacy and external affairs strategy, build meaningful partnerships, and deliver powerful events programmes that accelerate adoption of Great EO. You'll also shape the narrative—ensuring our insights, policy recommendations and thought leadership land with impact.

This is a high-profile, senior leadership role at a pivotal time for the EO community. It calls for someone with a track record in advocacy or external affairs, strong commercial acumen, and the ability to lead high-performing teams. It also needs a big-picture thinker—someone who can champion EO, influence change, and help us build a more inclusive, resilient economy.

If you are energised by the opportunity to help shape a fairer, more resilient UK economy, and to support a community capable of real impact, we would be delighted to hear from you.

James de le Vingne
Chief Executive, eoa

Employee Ownership

A Growing Opportunity

Employee ownership gives employees meaningful stake and meaningful voice, unlocking higher commitment, stronger performance, and a clear sense of shared purpose.

The evidence is consistently strong:

- 8–12% higher productivity
- Stronger resilience and long-term investment
- Improved innovation, retention, and culture
- Successful succession for founders and families
- Significant contributions to local, regional, and national economies

The UK now has over 2,800+ employee-owned businesses, contributing more than £30bn to GDP and spanning every sector - from manufacturing and engineering to care, digital, retail, architecture, and professional services.

Looking ahead, research shows enormous potential. More than 120,000 UK SMEs will need succession plans over the next decade. With the right conditions, employee ownership can become a mainstream choice, expanding to 10,000 EO businesses and creating a more inclusive, long-term-focused UK economy.





The eoa Who We Are

The eoa is the national voice for employee ownership. We are a not-for-profit, politically independent membership organisation established in 1979.

We work to:



Expand the EO sector: Grow awareness, accessibility, and advocacy to make EO a mainstream business model choice, anchored in the [UK Employee Ownership Growth Strategy](#) as the core framework underpinning and aligning this work.



Set the standard for Great EO: Provide tools, learning, evidence, peer support, and practical insight that help employee-owned businesses thrive.



Strengthen and connect the EO community: Bring together businesses, employee owners, advisors, policymakers, and partners through events, networks, research, and collaboration.



Invest in our organisational strength: Build robust governance, a high-performing team, digital capability, and a sustainable operating model.



The eoa

Our People & Culture

We are a modest-sized association with significant reach and influence. Our cultural framework guides how we work with each other and our community.

We are:

- **Bold:** Growth-minded, curious, confident, and unafraid to challenge conventional thinking.
- **Collaborative:** We nurture relationships, build networks, and work in partnership to achieve mutual goals.
- **Inspiring:** We evoke passion for Great EO and shine a light on the stories that show its power.
- **Caring:** We make business personal, support each other, and empower others to succeed.

As Director of External Affairs and Growth, you will model these values consistently, helping create the conditions for our team and community to thrive.

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The Role of Director of External Affairs and Growth

Role Summary

Contract: Permanent

Hours: 37.5 hours per week, working pattern to be agreed with successful candidate

Location: Manchester (hybrid). You will be expected to attend the office at least twice per month, and more often where needed.

Salary: £65,000 p/a

Pension: Up to 7% employer pension match (from year 1 anniversary)

Annual Leave: 30 days leave + bank holidays

Reports to: CEO

Management of: Policy & Insights Manager, Strategic Comms and Public Affairs Manager, Events Manager



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The Role of Director of External Affairs and Growth

Purpose of the Role

The Director of External Affairs and Growth is an SLT role responsible for leveraging the voice and power of the eoa's network to influence and accelerate the growth of the employee owned sector.

The role leads the eoa's external affairs, policy and insights, mar-comms and events, shaping the external environment for employee ownership and securing the funding and commercial income needed to support sustainable sector growth.



The Role of Director of External Affairs and Growth

Key Responsibilities

- Lead external affairs strategy, building the relationships and influence needed to shape policy, remove barriers and expand EO.
- Build strategic relationships and secure grant funding and commercial partnerships, generating income to support advocacy, events and sector growth initiatives, including the UK EO Growth Strategy.
- Oversee our policy and insights work, engaging key stakeholders to co-produce content that influences EO practice and policy and strengthens the eoa's voice in public affairs.
- Oversee the delivery of a mar-comms strategy that delivers commercial objectives and positions the eoa as the leading authority on EO.
- Oversee our events programmes, ensuring they drive knowledge-sharing, sector development and commercial sustainability.
- Represent the eoa at industry forums, policy roundtables and public affairs events, championing the employee ownership model.
- Collaborate with the Director of Membership and Operations to align advocacy and external engagement with member needs and priorities.
- Lead and develop high-performing teams, fostering innovation and delivering measurable impact across income generation, advocacy, policy, events and mar-comms activities

Knowledge, Experience, and Attributes

- Proven expertise in external affairs, advocacy, or policy leadership, ideally within a business, trade body, or membership association.
- Strong stakeholder engagement skills, with experience influencing government, media, and corporate partners.
- Demonstrated ability to drive sectoral or policy change, leading successful advocacy initiatives.
- Strong commercial acumen, with experience in sponsorship acquisition, revenue generation, grant funding and developing financially sustainable initiatives.
- Exceptional strategic communication and storytelling skills, able to engage and mobilise diverse audiences.
- Experience in event programming, ensuring high engagement and sector impact.
- Passion for employee ownership and economic models that promote shared prosperity.
- Innovative, creative, and proactive in problem-solving and strategy execution.
- A confident and transparent leader who fosters collaboration and inclusivity.
- Self-aware with emotional intelligence, resilience, and integrity.



The Role of Director of External Affairs and Growth

What Constitutes Success in This Role?

Success in this role means having a positive impact on the growth of the employee-owned sector, strengthening the eoa’s influence and increasing the adoption of “great EO”. Stronger stakeholder relationships, greater advocacy impact and improved commercial sustainability through a diverse mix of grant funding, sponsorships and strategic partnerships will also be key indicators of success.

Key outcomes for the role	Measures
Growth of the employee ownership sector	Increased number of EO businesses, heightened sector awareness
Strengthened corporate engagement	Growth in strategic partnerships, corporate and government engagement
Strong Commercial Sustainability	Increased sponsorship revenue, secured long-term commercial partnerships
Increased policy influence	Policy recommendations adopted, increased government engagement
Enhanced sector insight and intelligence	Utilisation of high quality data and insights for regular sector related content outputs
Development and adoption of best practice	Creation, adoption and promotion of best practice across the EO network.
Successful events programmes	Increased participation, sponsorship growth, positive feedback.



How to Apply

To apply, please submit:

- A two-page CV
- And one of either:
 - **Cover letter** setting out your motivation, approach, and what you will bring to the role
 - **Video** (maximum 10 minutes) setting out your motivation, approach, and what you will bring to the role

Please send your enquiries or applications to jobs@employeeownership.co.uk.

Applications should be submitted **before 9:00am 17 August 2026**. We will close this vacancy early if we receive sufficient applications for the role. If you are interested, please submit your application as early as possible.

Interviews will be in two stages. The first stage will be a virtual interview via teams on 26 August. For those who successfully move to stage 2 there will be an in-person discussion w.c. 31 August.

The **eo**a welcomes applications from people of all backgrounds, particularly those who are under-represented. We recruit based on values, skills, and contribution to our purpose.

(people powered business)

