



Chief Executive Officer

Candidate Pack | August 2026

About Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS)

The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a global non-profit multi-stakeholder membership organisation dedicated to advancing the responsible use of freshwater. Through the internationally recognised AWS Standard, the organisation seeks to drive credible, transparent, and measurable water stewardship practices across industries, agriculture, and communities. The complex challenges facing water stressed regions will not be solved without sustained multi-stakeholder driven collective action. Therefore, a cornerstone of AWS is the commitment of its membership to embrace inclusive solutions to improve sustainable water management for the benefit of people, nature and economies.

AWS's strength lies in the diverse experience of its members. It brings together business, governments and civil society organisation, working alongside investors, regulators and other standard-setting bodies, to help shape water stewardship and drive the AWS System forward. Through this collaborative approach, AWS can enable more organisations to embark on or advance their water stewardship journey and make credible claims through certification to the AWS Standard.

Incorporated in 2015, AWS is a registered¹ Scottish Charitable Organisation governed by a board of trustees. The CEO is responsible to the Board of Trustees for delivering on the mission of AWS as the leader of a global staff of 22 operating with an annual budget of more than 2.5m GBP.

¹ Scottish charity registration number SC045894.





The Role

Role:

Chief Executive Officer

Location:

The global location of the CEO is flexible (+/- 7 hours of GMT) and with willingness to travel internationally approximately 30% of the time. Regular visits to the Edinburgh, Scotland office are required.

Salary:

£120,000 or equivalent.

Benefits:

- 25 days annual leave plus UK public holidays (if based elsewhere public holidays as per their country of residence with a cap at 12 days).
- Life assurance (3x salary).
- Salary sacrifice scheme is available.
- Pension - 3% of salary employer contribution.

Job Summary

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) serves as the strategic and operational leader of AWS, responsible for advancing the organisation's mission, scaling its impact, and ensuring its financial sustainability. The CEO represents the organisation globally to diverse stakeholders and leads a team dedicated to strengthening AWS's position as the leading global standard-setter and convener in water stewardship.

The CEO will ensure AWS is a trusted partner for governments, civil society organisations and the private sector enabling it to effectively act as a convener that fosters credible waste stewardship outcomes.

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the CEO will translate strategic priorities into actionable plans, deepen partnerships across sectors, and elevate AWS's influence in global sustainability, climate resilience, and water governance.



Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Evaluate the current strategy and multi-year growth plans, including the role of certification services to refresh the strategy and advance greater adoption of the Standard and position AWS as the preferred partner for public and private market shapers seeking credible water stewardship outcomes.
- Strengthen AWS's role as the leading authority on water stewardship standards and certification.
- Identify emerging risks and opportunities related to water, climate, biodiversity, and supply chains.
- Translate emerging policy, regulatory, and market trends into clear pathways for organisations to begin, strengthen and retain their AWS certification, ensuring the Standard remains both ambitious and practicable.
- Align AWS's strategy with national and regional public-sector water and climate agendas, so that AWS certification becomes a recognised tool for delivering policy goals and corporate commitments alike.
- Ensure alignment between strategy and programmes through development of metrics and targets to measure impact and inform decision making.

External Engagement & Thought Leadership

- Serve as the primary ambassador for AWS globally.
- Build and maintain relationships with corporate leaders, governments, multilateral organizations, NGOs, and financial donors, positioning AWS as a trusted convener across sectors.
- Represent AWS in relevant global public policy and private sector forums (i.e, World Water Week, Global Water Summit, World Water Congress, etc.).

- Elevate the AWS Standard as the benchmark for informing and measuring the implementation of best practices in corporate and public sector water stewardship.
- Articulate a compelling value proposition for both public and private stakeholders, demonstrating how AWS certification supports regulatory compliance, risk management, investment decisions, and community outcomes.
- Champion public-private partnerships that use AWS as a common framework for collective action in water-stressed catchments, scaling solutions beyond individual sites or companies.

Partnerships & Growth

- Expand adoption of the AWS Standard across priority sectors and geographies, supporting organisations at each stage of their AWS journey from initial engagement to verified implementation and continuous improvement.
- Develop strategic partnerships that drive scale and impact.
- Forge partnerships with public agencies, river basin organisations, utilities and regulators that can create enabling conditions and incentives for companies to pursue AWS certification.
- Advance collaboration opportunities across the AWS Membership network.
- Strengthen engagement with key industries including agriculture, apparel, technology, food & beverage, and commodity value chains where opportunities are present.
- Collaborate with investors, lenders and supply chain leaders to embed AWS requirements and guidance into procurement, financing and ESG frameworks, driving demand for certified water stewardship.





Responsibilities

Organisational Leadership

- Lead, inspire, and develop a high-performing, global team.
- Promote a culture of inclusion, collaboration, accountability, and innovation.
- Ensure effective governance in partnership with the Board of Trustees.
- Evaluate organisational structure and evolving staffing needs, refine talent strategy and succession planning process.
- Foster the adoption of technology to drive operational efficiency and agility.

Financial Sustainability and Risk Management

- Ensure long-term financial health through diversified revenue streams.
- Evaluate present funding sources including certification services; evaluate alternative models and their potential impact on revenue.
- Expand funding efforts, including grants, partnerships, and membership growth.
- Oversee budgeting, financial planning, and resource allocation.
- Ensure legal, financial and other filings required by non-profit governance authorities are timely and accurate.
- Foster active engagement with the Board Business and Finance Committee and strong

- financial forecasting and controls including division of authority, transparency and project accountability.
- Identify and mitigates serious and consequential risks to AWS.

Programme Innovation & Impact Delivery

- Ensure the credibility, integrity, simplicity and continuous advancement of the AWS Standard.
- Strategically oversee the Water Stewardship Assessment Services (WSAS) subsidiary as the certification body that provides assurance services related to the implementation of the AWS Standard.
- Oversee program delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.
- Strengthen data collection and establish metrics that provide a concise, self-explanatory executive dashboard to inform and guide decision-making for both AWS governance and external partners, highlighting the impact of certification and water stewardship interventions.
- Drive innovation in water stewardship tools, guidance, and partnerships.
- Co-create innovative tools and guidance with public authorities and private sector partners that lower barriers to entry, clarify expectations and make progression along the AWS certification pathway more accessible.



Candidate Profile

The AWS Board of Trustees is seeking a CEO to lead its next phase of growth and impact. The successful candidate will build and formalise partnerships and understand how a rigorous standard can provide credibility and direction while remaining practical and inclusive enough to encourage adoption and continuous improvement.

The successful candidate will be an experienced leader comfortable operating in a global organisation focused on coalitions and partnerships. They will know how to grow the organisation, its operations and its staff team together. They will understand how to get the best out of staff and build their capacity to take on more responsibility as the organisation grows. They will be able to demonstrate the approach of compassionate leadership and help drive ambition and inspiration through the organisation and the water community.

AWS draws income from certification, training and membership. The CEO will quickly understand the business model, develop a Board-supported growth strategy and diversify the organisation's funding base. Experience in organisational change or turnaround would be advantageous.

The right individual will be adept at partnering with the private sector around risk and return on investment and by communicating a clear value proposition for partnership. At the same time, they will be able to bring the public sector into the room to help scale solutions. Key to this existence at the nexus of sectors is a high degree of competence as a networker who can generate leads and deliver results. They will see AWS certification not just as a technical process, but as a shared commitment mechanism that aligns public, private and civil society actors around credible water stewardship outcomes.

As a public speaker and organisational leader, the CEO will communicate a compelling strategic vision and mobilise others to deliver it. They will navigate difficult water-related issues with diplomacy and candour, build bridges across competing interests, and operate effectively across cultures and global forums.

Candidate Profile

Experience

- 10+ years of senior leadership experience, ideally in sustainability, water, ESG, or international development.
- Experience either reporting to or frequently engaging with a Board-led governance structure.
- Demonstrated experience leading complex, multi-stakeholder organisations or initiatives.
- Proven track record engaging with corporate executives, government policy makers, and civil society representatives.
- Experience with the development and implementation of environmental-related standards, certification systems, or multi-stakeholder governance models.
- Strong background in fundraising, partnerships, and revenue development.
- Experience working with or within market-shaping institutions such as regulators, development finance institutions, standard-setting bodies or major buyers whose decisions influence corporate behaviour.
- Familiarity with ESG frameworks, supply chain operations practices and present trends in the corporate responsibility.
- Understanding of global policy and regulatory trends related to water and climate.
- Experience working across geographies and cultures.
- University conferred degree in environmental science, sustainability, business, public policy, or a related field or significant professional experience as an alternative.

Essential Leadership Strengths

- Integrity and commitment to mission-driven work with focus on impact.
- Visionary and strategic thinker with execution discipline.
- Service oriented demeanor that attracts, develops and retains top talent.
- Strong external presence and credibility as a global thought leader.
- Collaborative and diplomatic engagement style with the ability to align with diverse stakeholders.
- Self-aware of one's own strengths and areas where complimentary skills create a high impact team.

Knowledge & Expertise

- Passion and understanding of global water challenges, water stewardship, and/or natural resource management.



How to Apply

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the “Apply” button on the job advert page, complete the online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter as two different documents, both of which will be considered in the application process.

The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this position and how your skills and experience make you a good fit.

The document should be saved in PDF in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Documents Name-Date (mmyy)-Organisation e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-0826-AWS or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-0826-AWS.

Please note that all our clients recruiting in the UK are legally obliged to confirm that the appointee is eligible to work in the UK. As of 1 January 2021, government’s new regulations will apply. For further information visit the Home Office website at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas>.

Timeline

- Closing Date: 25th September 2026
- First Stage Interviews: TBC
- Final Interviews: TBC

Selection Process

All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the Oxford HR Consultant email address (see below) to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.

Equality Statement

Equality and diversity are at the core of AWS’ values. Staff are expected to work collectively and individually to promote a constructive and sensitive approach to others from a variety of backgrounds, where the work of others is valued and respected.

Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please email James Sawyer at jsawyer@oxfordhr.com in the first instance.





About Oxford HR

Oxford HR is a B Corp certified leadership consultancy. Having worked within a diverse range of institutions, from not-for-profits and charities to governments and corporate environments, we've seen the powerful impact that the perfect team can have. Finding innovative leaders can be a challenge; and yet their transition into leadership is vital to an organisation's mission and success.

We work across the globe to search for and support remarkable leaders and teams, improve their board effectiveness and support on a range of leadership functions.

Learn more at: oxfordhr.com



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