

Director of External Affairs

Recruitment Pack | October 2026

About the Crop Trust

The Crop Trust was established in 2004 and is the only international organization with the specific mandate to ensure the long-term conservation and availability of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).

The Crop Trust works at the intersection of biodiversity, food security, climate adaptation and sustainable development. It provides long-term financing, strategic investment, technical expertise, partnerships and international coordination to strengthen the global system for conserving and using PGRFA.

Beyond its financing role, the Crop Trust helps connect the institutions and expertise needed to make the global conservation system work. It brings together governments, the Plant Treaty, FAO, CGIAR, national, regional and international genebanks, research institutions, development partners, civil society and the private sector to mobilize resources, strengthen capacity, share knowledge and improve access to crop diversity. In this way, the Crop Trust helps connect science, policy and finance and turn international commitments into practical action.

Together with the Government of Norway and the Nordic Genetic Resource Center (NordGen), the Crop Trust also co-manages the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. As the world's ultimate safety backup for seed collections, the Seed Vault provides secure duplicate storage for more than one million seed samples from genebanks around the world, protecting irreplaceable crop diversity against natural disasters, conflict, equipment failure and other unforeseen risks.

The Crop Trust's Strategy 2030 builds on this role, combining permanent financing with strategic investment, partnerships and international collaboration to strengthen the conservation and use of crop diversity. This approach supports both the long-term security of the global conservation system and its ability to deliver benefits for research, breeding, agricultural innovation and food security.

The conservation of crop diversity is a permanent responsibility that requires permanent financing. Genebanks must continuously conserve, regenerate, document, safety-duplicate and distribute plant genetic resources to ensure that this diversity remains secure, accessible and available for research, breeding and innovation. The Crop Trust addresses this need through its Endowment Fund, a proven mechanism that preserves donor capital while generating a sustainable source of income to finance essential conservation operations in perpetuity.

Over the past two decades, the Crop Trust has demonstrated that this model works. Governments and partners have contributed approximately USD 302 million to the Endowment Fund, which has provided more than USD 100 million for crop conservation while growing to a market value of approximately USD 430 million. Income from the Fund supports globally important collections. But to fund the entire global genebank system, the Endowment Fund target is USD 850 million and raising these funds will be the primary role of this position. In addition to building the endowment fund, the position will raise project-specific funding for time-limited activities that advance the organization's mandate.





The Role

Role:
Director of External Affairs

Term:
3 Years (with possibility of extension)

Location:
Office location: Bonn, Germany. The candidate is expected to work from the office in Bonn, however, the Crop Trust offers flexible working arrangements: unless an on-site presence is required to complete specific tasks, employees may generally work remotely for up to 100 days per year.

Salary:
EUR 134,136 (Grade G10) tax-free, with 20% non-contributory pension

Benefits:
The Crop Trust offers an attractive remuneration package including a competitive salary, pension scheme, education grant, relocation travel, medical insurance and leave provisions.

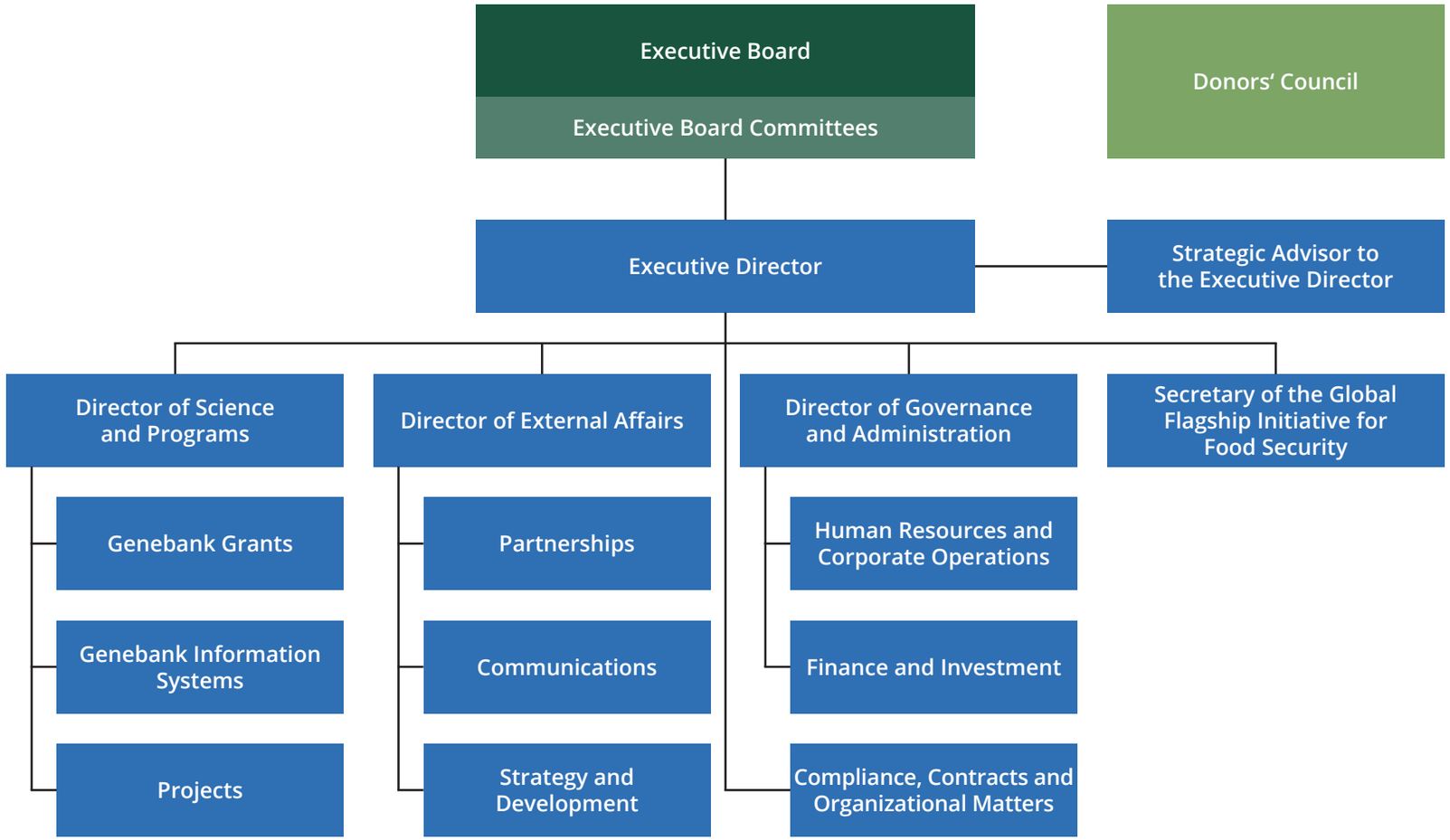
Job Summary

The Director of External Affairs leads the Crop Trust's external positioning, overseeing strategic partnerships, communications and engagement with donors and partners to secure the resources needed to fulfil its mandate.

The Director will lead the Partnerships, Communications and Strategy and Development teams. The well-established Partnerships and Communication teams are complemented by the newly created Strategy and Development team, which draws on in-house project development capacity, scientific expertise, operational experience, external opportunities and partner needs to develop fundable initiatives that strengthen the global genebank system.

In addition, the Director will work closely with all other members of the Executive Committee and teams across the organization to identify and develop opportunities that advance the Crop Trust's strategic objectives.

Crop Trust Organisational Chart





Responsibilities

Integrated External Engagement and Growth

- Ensure that the Crop Trust's external positioning, partnerships engagement, communications and innovation agendas are mutually reinforcing and directed towards the mobilization of financial resources.
- Establish an integrated external engagement model in which the Communications team builds visibility, identity and trust; Partnerships builds relationships and access to opportunities; and the Strategy and Development team transforms opportunities into compelling, fundable initiatives.
- Provide overall direction for the Partnerships, Communications and Strategy and Development teams, ensuring that their work is aligned around common institutional priorities and resource mobilization objectives.
- Maintain a strong understanding of the evolving external environment, including donor priorities, political developments, emerging global challenges, philanthropic trends and opportunities for collaboration with international organizations, governments, foundations and other partners.
- Advise the Executive Director and Executive Committee on emerging opportunities, external risks, and developments relevant to the Crop Trust's growth, influence and financial sustainability.
- Guide the development and management of strategic relationships that provide access to decision-makers, identify opportunities and support the conversion of interest into financial commitments.
- Guide the development of a balanced and sustainable resource mobilization portfolio, encompassing contributions to the Endowment Fund and programmatic funding for time-bound initiatives, working closely with the Science and Programs Department.
- Guide the Crop Trust's institutional positioning, branding and public narrative, translating its technical excellence and achievements into compelling narratives and investment cases for donors, partners and the wider public.
- Promote a culture in which the Crop Trust is recognized not only for delivering excellent programmes, but also for continuously developing new and relevant solutions to global challenges affecting crop diversity conservation and use.
- Ensure that scientific knowledge, operational experience, partner perspectives and donor interests inform the identification and development of new concepts and initiatives, and oversee the development of promising ideas into high-quality, investment-ready programme concepts.
- Strengthen the Crop Trust's competitive position with prospective donors and partners by maintaining a credible, differentiated and continuously renewed portfolio of opportunities for investment in crop diversity conservation and use.

Leadership, Coordination and Performance

- Lead, inspire and support the Heads of Partnerships, Communications, and Strategy and Development, while respecting their respective functional responsibilities and professional expertise.
- Establish shared priorities, performance objectives and effective coordination mechanisms across the three teams.
- Ensure that information, ideas, opportunities and partner intelligence are shared effectively across all teams and the wider organization.
- Resolve competing priorities and allocate attention and resources in ways that maximize institutional impact, innovation capacity and resource mobilization potential.
- Foster a collaborative, entrepreneurial and outward-looking culture characterized by creativity, initiative, learning, disciplined follow-through and continuous improvement.
- Ensure that the work of the External Affairs team contributes to a coherent institutional pipeline extending from early ideas and emerging opportunities through concept development, partnership formation, resource mobilization and demonstrable impact.

Skills and Experience

Experience

- A Master's degree in a relevant field (i.e. international relations, development, public policy, business or fundraising is desirable, however equivalent professional experience is equally acceptable).
- At least 15 years of progressive responsibility in partnerships, fundraising, business development, resource mobilization or external engagement within international development, philanthropy or mission-driven organizations. This should be to a level at least equal in seniority to this role and able to demonstrate that the individual is established and experienced at this operating level.
- Proven people-management skills.
- Demonstrated success in cultivating and securing support from institutional donors, foundations, private philanthropists, corporate partners or other strategic funding sources.
- Strong experience designing partnership strategies, leading donor engagement and developing successful funding propositions for complex organizations or initiatives.
- Experience in strategically aligning communication products with the corporate agenda is a valuable asset.
- Experience working in a multicultural office environment.
- A sound understanding of key actors, financing mechanisms and stakeholder dynamics in the international development sector; agri-food systems-related experience is an advantage.
- Certificates in fundraising such as Certificate in Fund Raising Management (CFRM), Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) or similar is desirable.

Skills

- Fluent (spoken and written) English; knowledge of German and/or other languages relevant to key donor markets would be a distinct advantage.
- Excellent relationship-building, influencing and negotiation skills, with the ability to engage credibly at senior levels.
- Strong proposal development, strategic writing and presentation skills, with the ability to translate complex work into compelling partnership and funding cases.
- Proven ability to lead cross-functional collaboration and drive results through influence, coordination and sound judgment.
- Experience managing budgets, pipelines and performance against fundraising or partnership objectives.
- An energetic, highly organized and positive personality, with the ability to manage multiple priorities and deadlines effectively.





Candidate Profile

The Crop Trust is seeking an experienced leader to strengthen its external positioning, build strategic partnerships, drive resource mobilisation and develop new strategic initiatives. The successful candidate will have a strong track record of leading cross-functional teams and integrating Communications and Partnerships to deliver impact. They will align these functions with the organisation's fundraising objectives and mandate, foster collaboration across the department's three teams, and inspire colleagues both within the department and across the wider organisation.

The Crop Trust fosters a collaborative working environment, with an emphasis on openness, shared responsibility and effective decision-making. The successful candidate should therefore bring strong collaboration skills and experience. They should also have experience representing technical or scientific topics externally and be able to translate complex material into audience-appropriate content for a wide range of stakeholders.

The successful candidate will demonstrate a strong capacity for innovation and a proactive approach to identifying new opportunities. They will bring substantial investment case development experience, with a proven ability to translate emerging ideas into robust, well-developed proposals for consideration by the Crop Trust. Recognising the organisation's need for compelling new narratives and products, this role will be instrumental in shaping and advancing these initiatives. In doing so, it will support the Crop Trust in broadening the scope of its work and strengthening donor engagement within the parameters of its mandate.

The individual must have experience in resource mobilisation, preferably with a track record within a technical/science subject and across a breadth of fundraising areas in-line with the Crop Trust's current resource mobilisation profile.

They will be an exceptional relationship-builder, able to engage diverse audiences and represent the organisation effectively in a range of fora. Critically, the Crop Trust's size and structure require a hands-on approach. The successful candidate must be willing to work across the boundaries of job descriptions and departments to deliver results for the organisation.

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, which should be prepared before applying as they 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 post 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-Document Name-Date (mmyy)-Organisation e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-1026-TheCropTrust or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-1026-TheCropTrust.

Timeline

- Closing Date: 27th November 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 the Crop Trust’s 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 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.

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