

**SEO/LONDON**  
SPONSORS FOR EDUCATIONAL  
OPPORTUNITY

**IMPACT** 2022/23  
**REPORT**

As we proudly launch our second Impact Report, we have been reflecting over the past year on the societal barriers faced by the young people we support.

Social mobility in the UK remains a mixed picture. It is promising that employment rates for young people have risen compared to just ten years ago, with more working in professional jobs. However, there is still a long way to go; adults in the UK with parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are three times more likely to go into traditionally working-class occupations than those with parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

These disparities become magnified within competitive industries; those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are much more likely to be found in the most influential roles in UK financial services, and just 10 out of 297 leaders in the top three roles of Chair, CEO and CFO at FTSE100 companies had ethnic minority backgrounds in 2021.

Furthermore, over the past twelve months, the cost-of-living crisis has heightened barriers to equitable workforces. Students have been hit particularly hard, with many reporting that loans fall short of covering living costs. We've heard directly from SEO London participants that there is now a more urgent aspiration to obtain competitive graduate positions and salaries amidst current cost-of-living challenges. However, as undergraduates, they are also having to divert time to budget planning and part-time employment, limiting their capacity to focus on their studies and career advancement.

“The increased cost-of-living has put added pressure on me to secure a high-paying job to ensure financial stability and cover my expenses. This heightened financial stress has made it more challenging to focus on my academic studies and professional development because I need to allocate more time and energy to job searching.”

Second Year Undergraduate

The current economic climate also has implications for the sectors and firms with whom we work. With fewer internship spaces on offer than before, competition between university students is high, making it harder than ever to break into competitive and prestigious industries. Our mission remains crucial: we aim for a society where opportunity transcends background. We believe that for workforces to be equal, access to opportunities must be too.



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# WELCOME

from our Chief Executive Officer

# NATHALIE RICHARDS



Last year we proudly commemorated the 60th anniversary of Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO) globally, and 23 years since SEO London was founded. Our pride stems from having supported thousands of young people to access transformative opportunities and witnessing this positive impact reverberate through their communities.

At the same time, we recognise there is still so much more to do given the disproportionate impact of last year's economic hardships on individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Whilst we acknowledge that employers remain committed to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), there is still significant work ahead to ensure that opportunities are available to everyone irrespective of their background.

During the academic year 2022–23, we made it our goal to work with those who needed our support the most. Our Impact and Outreach teams worked closely to identify the young people who, without our support, would be unlikely to achieve their career goals. Our data-driven strategy allows us to tailor our delivery to identify and engage our brilliant participants and help them overcome the complex barriers they may be facing.

At SEO London, we are situated between 150 of the country's top firms and a large network of talented young people from underrepresented backgrounds. This unique position enables us to create fair access to exceptional employment opportunities. The crucial role we play in transforming industries into more diverse

workforces is made possible through the invaluable support of our sponsor firms. Without them, we wouldn't be able to positively impact the career trajectory of so many young people.

In this year's report, I'm delighted to share our successes from the last academic year and to give a flavour of our future direction of travel. We're incredibly excited to extend our reach over the next year as we continue to drive our mission of providing access to careers for those with immense talent but who have limited opportunities and support.

I am also hugely proud of the SEO London team and our alumni as they continue to propel us forward into the promising future we are all striving for. Their unwavering dedication and passion are the driving forces behind our progress, enabling us to tackle the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

# OUR VISION

A SOCIETY WHERE **EVERYONE**, REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUND, **HAS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE** LONG-TERM PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL **SUCCESS**

# OUR MISSION

TO **PREPARE** TALENTED **STUDENTS** FROM UNDERREPRESENTED BACKGROUNDS **FOR CAREER SUCCESS**

# HOW DOES OUR MODEL WORK?

We deliver education and training programmes, in partnership with our top tier sponsor firms, to equip young people to stand out and succeed at each step of their career journey.



## OUR 3 DIVISIONS

**SEO**  
**/SCHOOLS**

FOR 15-18 YEAR OLDS

**SEO**  
**/CAREERS**

FOR UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES AND RECENT GRADUATES

**SEO**  
**/ALUMNI**

FOR GRADUATES AND WORKING PROFESSIONALS

## OUR MODEL

### EDUCATION

We equip participants with the skills and networks to secure internships at top firms

### TRAINING

Once participants secure internships, we train them to excel and increase their chances of receiving a returning graduate offer

Access to exclusive work opportunities

### YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT

Insights from firm and industry leaders

Dedicated employability and skills coaching

Enrichment series that boosts cultural capital

Increased networks with like-minded peers

9

### COMPETITIVE INDUSTRIES

Investment Banking, Asset Management, Alternative Investments, Consulting, Corporate Law, Real Estate, Corporates, Insurance, Technology

150

SPONSOR FIRMS supporting the delivery of our programmes

We support young people from **LOW SOCIOECONOMIC** or **ETHNIC MINORITY** backgrounds

20+

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE to inform outcomes-driven programme design

# WHAT WE OFFER

The primary route to graduate roles often involves summer internships and vacation schemes in students' penultimate year, with spring internships for first-year students increasingly becoming a gateway to summer internships.

Through a combination of in-person events with our top-tier firms, one-to-one support and online workshops, we provide students with the knowledge, skills and authentic industry-specific insights they need to successfully access these opportunities.

## EDUCATION SERIES

**I found all the sessions incredibly insightful. Most importantly it sparked my curiosity to pursue a career within the Asset Management industry. A massive thank you to the SEO London team for organising the initiative and working tirelessly to provide opportunities for students who may otherwise have never got the chance to interact with industry professionals working in buy-side.** ”

Spring Into Buyside Participant, 2023

### LUNCH & LEARN SERIES

A curated series of inspirational weekly lunchtime talks with industry professionals from a range of sectors and roles, often featuring our very own SEO Alumni.

### SPRING INTO

Designed primarily for first-year undergraduates, Spring Into programmes introduce participants to a competitive sector, generate interest and ambition in the career paths available and build foundational knowledge to create standout applications. Participants increase their chances of securing a Spring Week internship for relevant sectors and get an early start in preparing for Summer Internships.

100%

**OF SPRING INTO BUYSIDE PARTICIPANTS** agreed that they have a good understanding of Asset and Wealth Management and how it operates, after attending the programme

### EMPOWER

A programme for 16–18 year olds that supports early ambition and support students with making competitive university applications as well as raising attainment and giving them a head start with career planning.

**I feel that actively participating in SEO London's opportunities gives students an incredible advantage in the scramble for spring weeks and summer internships that await most students a couple of years down the line.** ”

SEO Schools Participant, 2022–23

**The academy was great and I've grown a lot, I learnt how to approach people in a networking event and the relevant skills I needed to break into each buy-side and sell-side field. The workshops opened more possibilities for me; before this week I thought I knew what areas there were in Investment Banking but now I know a lot more giving me much more prospects for my future career progression. The CV and application tips were very useful and because of them I know what my next steps are and what I need to do before starting to apply for internships and how to apply for them.** ”

Finance Summer Academy Participant 2023

### ACADEMIES

An intensive programme for second and third-year undergraduates, providing opportunities to build industry connections, gain tangible workplace insights and build the skills needed to excel during the application process. Academies prepare participants to be standout applicants, increasing their chances of securing summer internships, vacation schemes and graduate roles.

### INSIGHTS & MASTERCLASSES

Spotlight sessions on an industry area or topic with industry leaders and alumni. We identify exclusive opportunities for SEO participants to get to know a firm or industry and gain confidence in their own abilities to succeed in these settings..

**Meeting with female speakers who held senior positions gave me better insight into my own career trajectory, the goals I should be setting and how I should hold myself in the workplace to attain similar success.** ”

Insights to the Independents Participant, 2023

# TRAINING SERIES

## SPRING INTERNSHIP TRAINING

Supporting primarily first year participants who have secured a Spring Week or Insight with a sponsor firm, this targeted programme increases chances of converting a spring into a summer internship. Participants learn the essential knowledge and skills to impress and benefit from first-hand advice from individuals who have previously converted spring internships.

“It was great to part take in the training – beyond brushing up on things like commercial awareness, it was great to hear about the small subtle things that make a great difference, like how to ask questions that make you stand out.”

Spring Training Participant 2023

“Overall, the training has exceeded my expectations and I’m grateful to have participated in such an informative experience which boosted my confidence level and got me feeling equipped to embark on an internship journey. Thank you to everyone at SEO London for working so hard to put together top-level training, I’m incredibly grateful!”

Summer Internship Training Participant, 2023

## SUMMER INTERNSHIP TRAINING

Upon securing a summer internship, second- and third-year participants join our programme designed to increase their chances of securing a conversion to a permanent role. Participants learn how to navigate the workplace and prepare for success in their firm. Intensive training days enable participants to build the technical and professional skills needed to thrive during their internship. They also get invaluable access to a network of peers who are beginning their professional journeys.

91% of participants felt **LESS DAUNTED** after the Summer Internship Training, 2023

# FIVE ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMES

Targeted programmes that run alongside our core programmes, each addressing a distinct skill gap or area of need; this support bolsters our core education and training offer.

## ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS PROGRAMME

An incubation chamber for having impact across all levels of the Alternatives ecosystem (more on page 16)

## BEYOND BARRIERS

A six-month programme supporting unemployed graduates into meaningful graduate roles

## SEO /CAREERS HERCAPITAL

A skills-based programme nurturing future female leaders

## TECH DEVELOPER

An intensive eight-week programme for first-year students studying computer science or software engineering to build the specific skills required to perform at internship level (pilot 2023)



A three-year mentoring and work experience programme aimed at improving access into the legal profession for individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds

# OUR ALUMNI COMPLETE THE CYCLE

Participants from SEO Careers go on to become members of the SEO Alumni network. This powerful community brings over twenty years of expertise and knowledge and is an influential group of diverse talented professionals spanning competitive industries.

Our alumni act as a support system to help recent graduates, current students, and fellow alumni maximise their potential, with expert advice from those who have travelled before them. Through mentoring, coaching and career development

programmes as well as informal networking events, our alumni have many ways to stay connected and give back to the next generation of the SEO family.

In return they benefit from a robust programme of events, continued professional development, volunteering opportunities and access to our vast network of sponsor firms. This is a powerful and active community who share in our vision and mission as a charity.

# ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS PROGRAMME

An incubation chamber for driving impact across all levels of the Alternatives ecosystem.

The Alternative Investments Programme (AIP) was launched in February 2021. It was developed by leading Private Equity and Asset Management firms to help raise awareness of industry challenges. The aim is to help diversify the workforce by providing opportunities to individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.

## SUPPORTING UNDERGRADUATES TOWARD INTERNSHIPS AND ANALYST ROLES

### EARLY CAREERS

Through our education and training model, we deliver industry insights and access to employment opportunities.



**72 STUDENTS**  
were placed in summer and off-cycle internships as well as full-time roles across our AIP sponsor firms last year



“What stood out to me the most during my internship was the incredible support and camaraderie within the team. The colleagues I worked with were not only exceptionally skilled but also genuinely welcoming and always willing to help me learn. The overall atmosphere at Blackstone was one of intelligence and hard work, inspiring me to push my boundaries. SEO London has been incredibly helpful throughout the process, from kindly spending the time to give me a mock behavioural interview, to staying in touch throughout the summer and checking in on how I was doing. I felt very supported and seen.”

Vanessa converted her Summer Internship with Blackstone to a full-time graduate offer

# SUPPORTING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS TOWARD ASSOCIATE ROLES

## ALTERNATIVES ACADEMY

450+ young professionals, primarily first and second year investment bankers and consultants, received exposure and insights to the Alternatives Industry. Sessions focus on the pathways to Alternative Investment roles, and empowering participants to see this as a viable next career step.

**“A really good intro to the industry, the panellists understood the audience and explained concepts and industry trends clearly.”**

Alternatives Academy Participant, 2023

## ASSOCIATE FELLOWSHIP

Fed directly from our Academy, the Fellowship is a rigorous training programme engaging those seeking to move from the sell-side to the buy-side, providing skills and the network building opportunities necessary to prepare for future roles in the Alternatives sector.

**99%** HAVE AN IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS AND HOW THEY OPERATE

**97%** HAVE IMPROVED IDEAS ABOUT WHAT CAREERS THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO ACCESS IN ALTERNATIVES

**“While interviewing, the network of students and professionals I had built through SEO encouraged me at each step of the way. Whether it was by connecting me to an employee at the firm or hearing past interview experiences from other candidates, the SEO community truly made all the difference!”**

Associate Fellow, 2023

# SUPPORTING THE ALTERNATIVES INDUSTRY TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY

## ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS CONFERENCE (AICON)

We held our inaugural AICON in February 2023. AICON was designed to increase access and career development at every point of the investing chain for professionals from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the alternative investments space. With 300+ attendees and 30+ speakers, AICON is positioning itself as a leading event in the space.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ROUNDTABLE

In early 2023, we facilitated a roundtable discussion with 24 HR and DEI representatives from our sponsor firms to examine insights gathered from our young professionals on their experiences of recruitment, retention and belonging in the workplace. Our goal is to leverage this forum as an ongoing conversation to share best practise across the sector.

**“AICON is an important event, which showcases many talented and diverse investment professionals working in Alternatives. It is a truly unique space for senior investors to share their insights and the spirited panel discussions were a testament to the range of ideas and opinions this industry can represent. AICON is where brilliance meets inclusion and I’m excited to see how this year’s event will continue to impact the industry’s viewpoints on diversity.”**

Naveen Wadhwa, MD at TA Associates

# OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE

IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-23...

3,900+

students, undergraduates and young professionals received our support

800+

participants secured competitive internships, vacation schemes and graduate roles

1.9x

more likely for SEO Schools students to place at university than peers from similar backgrounds

(Externally validated by UCAS)

## LAUNCHED SEO CHAMPIONS

A forum that feeds participant voice into programme development

## AICON

We held our inaugural Alternative Investments Conference

## SEO /EUROPE SPONSORS FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

We launched our flagship education and training programmes in France



SEO London isn't just about imparting knowledge; it's a confidence booster, instilling the belief that success is not a distant dream but an achievable reality. ▮▮

SEO Alumnus



There were no opportunities for people from my area to go into Commercial Real Estate. Without SEO London I would never have made the connections. ▮▮

Real Estate Academy Participant, 2022

# WHAT WAS OUR REACH?

IN 2022-23

**3,900+**

participants from under-represented backgrounds received our education, training and support

**90%**

were from ethnic minority backgrounds

**53%**

were from low socioeconomic backgrounds

**45%**

were women or girls

**150**

**SPONSOR FIRMS**

supported the delivery of our programmes and opportunities, across

**9**

**INDUSTRY AREAS**

Investment Banking, Asset Management, Alternative Investments, Consulting, Corporate Law, Real Estate, Corporates, Insurance, Technology

**103**  
**UNIVERSITIES**

SEO Careers participants were spread across

# HOW DID WE FIND OUR PARTICIPANTS?

IN 2022-23

## 26 UNIVERSITY FRESHERS FAIRS

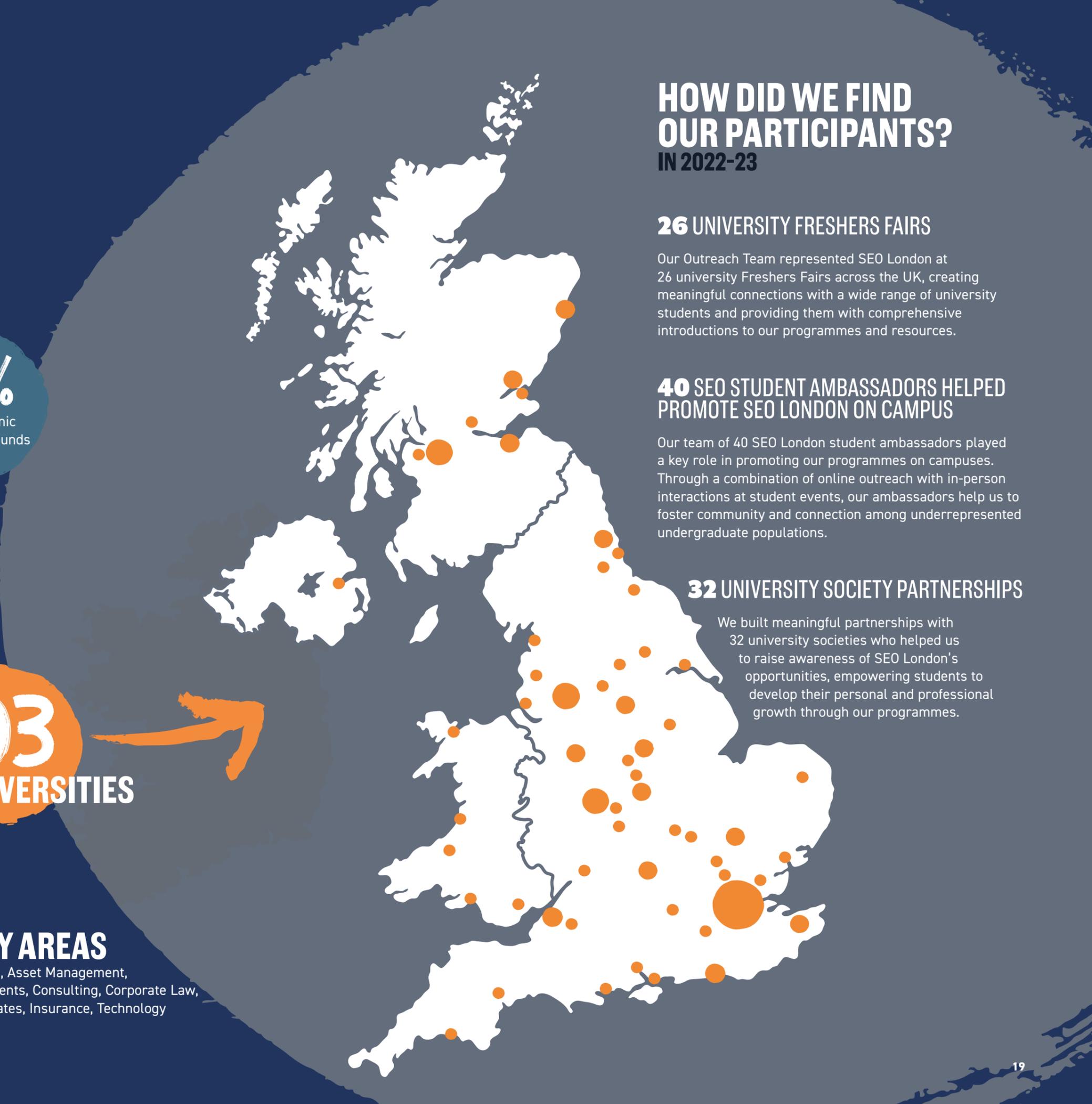
Our Outreach Team represented SEO London at 26 university Freshers Fairs across the UK, creating meaningful connections with a wide range of university students and providing them with comprehensive introductions to our programmes and resources.

## 40 SEO STUDENT AMBASSADORS HELPED PROMOTE SEO LONDON ON CAMPUS

Our team of 40 SEO London student ambassadors played a key role in promoting our programmes on campuses. Through a combination of online outreach with in-person interactions at student events, our ambassadors help us to foster community and connection among underrepresented undergraduate populations.

## 32 UNIVERSITY SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

We built meaningful partnerships with 32 university societies who helped us to raise awareness of SEO London's opportunities, empowering students to develop their personal and professional growth through our programmes.



# WHAT DID WE DELIVER?

ACROSS ALL OUR DIVISIONS DURING 2022-23

**930+**  
**HOURS**  
of education programmes

**535**  
**HOURS**  
of academic tuition for SEO Schools students

**150**  
**HOURS**  
of training programmes

**35**  
**HOURS**  
of wellbeing focus sessions

**3** **DAYS**  
of outdoor learning

Outward Bound for SEO Schools students, building leadership, teamwork, communication and resilience, funded by our Alternative Investments Programme.

**320**  
**PARTICIPANTS**  
took part in our Enrichment Series

Curated events that broadened participants' knowledge of the arts and cultural offerings in London, positively impacting their academic and professional experience.

**2** **FLAGSHIP**  
**CONFERENCES**

The Annual SEO London **ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS CONFERENCE (AICON)** is designed to increase access and career development at every point of the investing chain for professionals from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the alternative investments space.

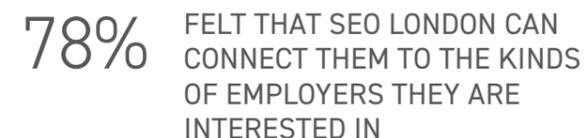
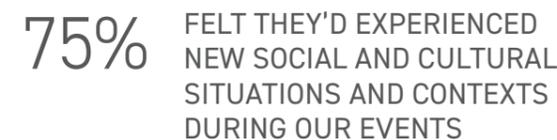
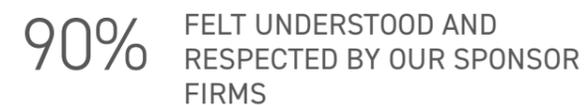
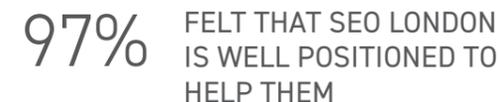
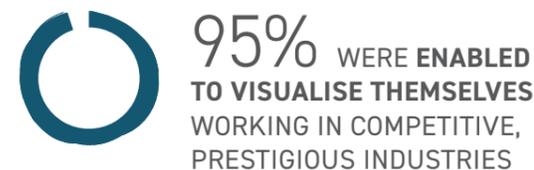
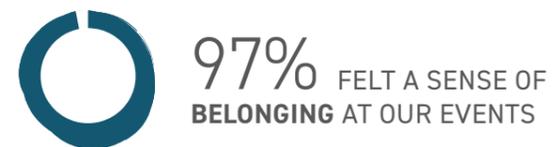
The **BLACK HERITAGE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT** connects black leaders by fostering networks and exchanging experiences. This year's speakers emphasised bridging generations, empowering youth, and creating an environment for potential to thrive.

**1** **NEW**  
**COUNTRY**

We launched **SEO EUROPE** laying the groundwork to bring our flagship programmes, in the first instance, to France ready for a September 2023 kick off. We look forward to sharing our first Year-in-Review report later this year.

## HOW DID PARTICIPANTS FEEL ABOUT OUR PROGRAMMES?

We gather feedback from every event that we run to assess programme quality and participant experience. The results drive programme development and improvements.



STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE | DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE

# WHAT IMPACT DID WE HAVE?

## HOW EFFECTIVE WERE WE AT DRIVING OUTCOMES?

Our programmes aim to translate our Theory of Change into tangible outcomes, providing participants with the assets and capabilities essential for successful career advancement.

For more detail on our Theory of Change, see the Impact page of our website.

Last year, after completing our programmes:



STRONGLY AGREE AGREE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

## SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS

### Practical and Skills-based

- Understand, plan and take actions toward their career goals
- Have better career networks, especially within competitive industries
- Have enhanced 'hard' and 'soft' skills needed for competitive industries
- Are confident about navigating application processes
- Stay proactive and engaged in pursuing early career goals

### Attitudes and Understanding

- Awareness of the career possibilities
- Ambition about their future
- Confidence in own abilities
- Confidence that careers in competitive industries are 'within reach'
- Self-belief / self-efficacy
- Confidence in a broader range of 'corporate' settings
- Better understanding of the landscape of employer firms

“The impact goes beyond mere awareness; it extends to fostering a profound sense of confidence and optimism about my future career. SEO London isn't just about imparting knowledge; it's a confidence booster, instilling the belief that success is not a distant dream but an achievable reality.”

SEO Alumnus

## WHAT WERE OUR PARTICIPANTS' EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES?

**800+**

participants last year secured competitive summer internships, vacation schemes and graduate roles...

...at over

**100**

of our sponsor firms and beyond

## OVER 70% OF PARTICIPANTS WOULD RECOMMEND SEO LONDON PROGRAMMES

Promoters (10/10 or 9/10)

8/10 or 7/10

After each programme we ask participants to use a ten-point scale to score whether they "Would recommend our programme to future SEO students". Using the Net Promoter Score methodology, we classified participants with scores of 10-9 as "Promoters", 8-7 as "Neutral" and 6-0 as "Detractors".

“Over this summer I had an amazing experience interning at Goldman Sachs in their Private Equity division. This internship presented a great opportunity to learn and be challenged, and I enjoyed being surrounded by like-minded team members who strived to be the best at their work. Having received and accepted a full-time offer after the internship, I will be rejoining next year. I'm looking forward to developing my network within Goldman and building a strong understanding of investing into private markets.”

SEO Careers Participant, 2023

## WHAT IMPACT DID WE HAVE ON GRADUATE OUTCOMES?

We surveyed students graduating from university in the summer of 2023, who had taken part in SEO London programmes from 2021-23. We wanted to know how many had already secured full time employment, whether they felt that taking part in SEO had contributed to them securing their roles, and if these roles aligned with their career plans.

## WITHIN 3 MONTHS OF GRADUATING...

**92%**

of respondents with graduate roles felt their role aligned with their career plan

**69%**

of respondents had secured a graduate position

**88%**

of respondents with graduate roles thought that taking part in SEO London had helped secure them

**55%**

of respondents with graduate roles were earning a salary of £50k or over

**8%**

were earning more than £75k

## SEO SCHOOLS STUDENTS WERE...

1.9x

**MORE LIKELY**

to secure a place at university in 2021 and 2022 students than a matched control group, according to UCAS

2.7x

**MORE LIKELY**

to apply to one of the highest performing and most competitive institutions, relative to their peers from similar backgrounds

120+

secured work experience opportunities across 13 of our sponsor firms

## HOW DID WE IMPACT SEO SCHOOLS STUDENTS' NEXT STEPS?

This year for the first time, we worked with UCAS Outreach Evaluator to assess how well SEO Schools students progressed to university compared to similar students who were not on our programmes.

UCAS found that in 2021 and 2022 students who completed the SEO Schools programme were nearly twice as likely to secure a place at university than a matched control group. They were also 2.7 times more likely to apply to one of the highest performing and most competitive institutions, relative to peers from similar backgrounds.

SEO London introduced me to like-minded individuals within my cohort, as well as allowing me to meet industry professionals that gave me a real insight into what working in industry entails. It has exposed me to worlds that I would otherwise never have been able to make contact with and taught me how to conduct myself in professional environments, making me a more confident individual. ▮▮

SEO Schools Participant, 2022-23

Coming from a low socioeconomic background, the SEO Schools programme [Empower] ensured I was not another statistic. They provided me with the foundations to enter the corporate world, which I later combined to secure a summer internship at only 18, with a top insurance firm. ▮▮

SEO Schools Participant, 2022-23

## WHAT OUR SPONSOR FIRMS HAD TO SAY

Working with SEO London is always a really great experience. SEO London have supported Lloyd's by offering volunteering opportunities for our staff by developing a core insurance programme to promote and attract the most diverse talent to what, we think, is a very dynamic and fascinating place to work. SEO London also provide us with very impressive interns who learn with us through the summer. In June 2020 Lloyd's set an ambition that one in three of the new hires across the Lloyd's market would come from a minority ethnicity background; SEO London have been critical to ensuring our success in this goal. ▀▀

Sarah Iddison-Chamberlain  
Global Community Engagement Manager  
Lloyd's

We've built really strong relationships with SEO London over the past two years, and we've appreciated the team taking the time to understand our business and what we're trying to achieve. We've successfully placed individuals into Intern and Graduate roles, in Finance and Generalist functions – SEO have supported us to access untapped talent. ▀▀

Rachel Wilson  
Early Careers Talent Acquisition Manager  
Marks & Spencer

## HOW MANY OF OUR BEYOND BARRIERS COHORTS DID WE SUPPORT INTO MEANINGFUL GRADUATE ROLES?

50%

of last year's participants, to date, have secured roles aligned to their career plans



Beyond Barriers has given me the opportunity to really connect with other graduates who have been in a similar position in terms of seeking employment after graduation. Having had workshops ranging from interview skills and navigating LinkedIn as well as networking with employees from Barclays has been amazing; I was able to gain an insight that I couldn't have obtained elsewhere. Being able to break down the application process and hear from people in the industry I was interested in helped boost my confidence and improved the quality of my applications. I really enjoyed the mentoring scheme, I was able to seek support and ask questions from an industry expert. I will be starting a public sector audit role at Grant Thornton in January. SEO London definitely played a role in terms of helping me build my resilience and confidence and showing me how to effectively communicate this during assessment centres and final interviews. Being on Beyond Barriers pushed me and helped me to secure that role. ▀▀

Abiga  
Beyond Barriers Participant, 2023

# PARTICIPANT STORIES

## GABRIEL

SEO Schools, 2021-23. Business Degree Apprenticeship, Lloyd's (Insurance)

Last year, we worked with Lloyd's to promote their Business Degree Apprenticeship to SEO Schools students, and to prepare our prospective candidates to stand out at each application and assessment stage. Gabriel's exceptional application secured him a place, which he started in September 2023.



“ If it wasn't for SEO London I would not be working for Lloyd's. As someone who had no connections in or knowledge about the Financial Services Industry, SEO London showed me that it is a career that was right for me through their insight sessions and the Empower programme. From introducing me to Lloyd's at their insight week to the application process, their help has been invaluable.

After the assessment stage I had to complete an interview and assessment centre which SEO London helped me prepare for, giving me useful advice on technique and insight to what Lloyd's were looking for in their candidates. Their help calmed my nerves and improved my answers, encouraging me to include aspects about myself that I previously did not think were relevant.

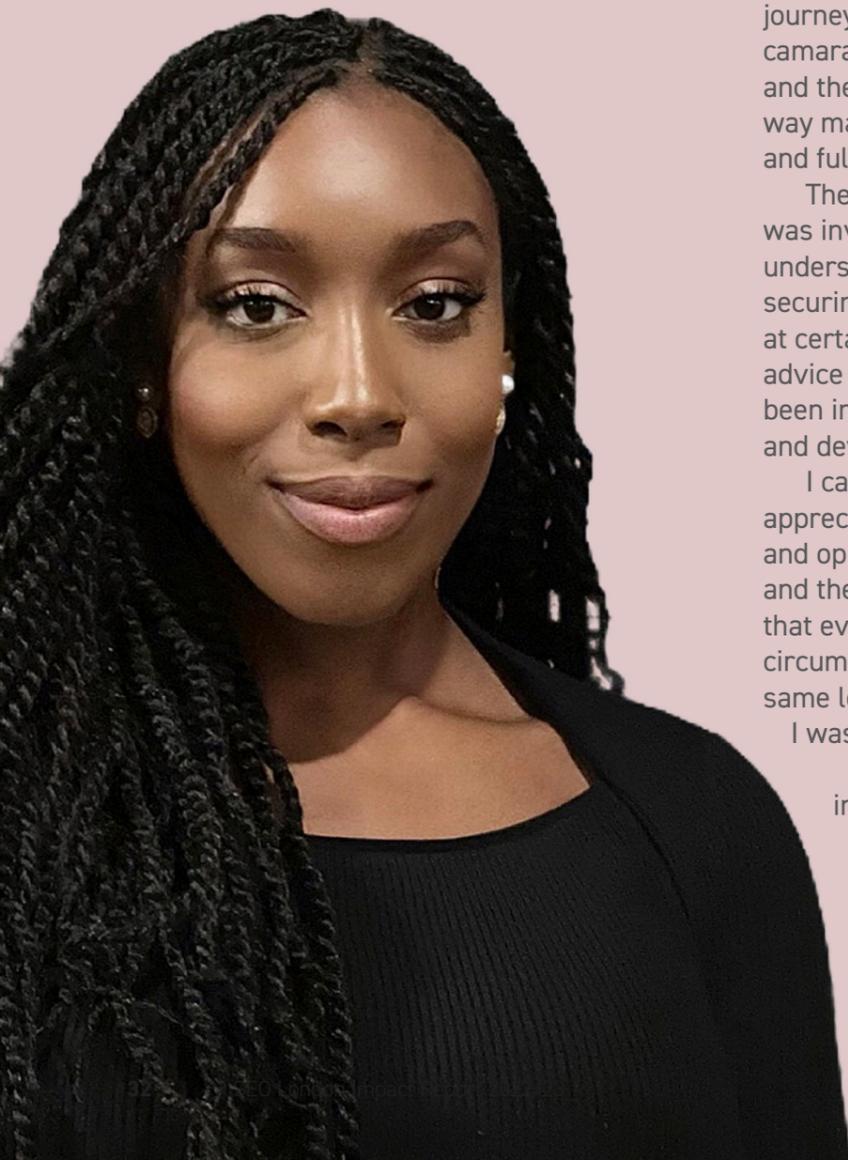
Through the Insurance Mentoring Programme I have made an invaluable connection for the rest of my insurance career. My mentor has introduced me to senior professionals in many different Insurance careers and has made my transition from school to an apprenticeship much more manageable.

SEO London have undoubtedly had a huge positive impact on both my personal and career development. I have felt more comfortable approaching and networking with professionals as well as being more confident in myself. If I hadn't become an SEO London student, I would be on a vastly different career path and I am forever grateful. ”

# ESTHER

SEO Careers Participant (Finance)

Esther is a second year undergraduate and has secured an internship with Moelis in investment banking and restructuring which will begin this summer



For SEO London I have only heartfelt gratitude for the transformative experience I've had through the organisation. Being personally invited to various sponsor firm events was an incredible privilege that opened doors to unparalleled opportunities. The journey from attending panel events and Lunch and Learns, to engaging in person at these exclusive gatherings, was nothing short of inspiring.

Through SEO London, I had the honour of meeting a diverse array of professionals, from junior to senior bankers, forming meaningful connections that have significantly shaped my career path. These interactions weren't just about networking; they were about building relationships with individuals who shared insights, guidance, and unwavering support.

What set SEO London apart was the inclusivity and support felt at every turn. The SEO team went above and beyond to ensure that every participant, myself included, felt empowered and supported throughout the journey of exploring various opportunities. The camaraderie established with fellow attendees and the professionals encountered along the way made the entire experience more enriching and fulfilling.

The exposure gained through these events was invaluable. It allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the industry even before securing my first offers for work experience at certain firms. The insights shared, the advice given, and the connections made have been instrumental in my professional growth and development.

I cannot emphasise enough how deeply appreciative I am for the exposure, guidance, and opportunities provided by SEO London and the sponsor firms involved. My hope is that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance, has the chance to experience the same level of support and encouragement that I was fortunate enough to receive.

Thank you, SEO London, for being an invaluable catalyst in my journey towards a successful and fulfilling career. I am forever grateful for the doors you've opened and the connections you've facilitated. ▀▀



# SAFIYAH

Spring into Finance Participant, 2023



SEO London has made a significant impact on my career trajectory and confidence, without their guidance and support I do not know where I would be today.

As someone with a lack of connections to people in the finance sector, I have always had certain misconceptions and beliefs about the sector. SEO has done a brilliant job at demystifying these beliefs by connecting students with professionals, allowing for a deeper understanding of the sector. As a student who always believed I was dreaming 'too' big when thinking of a career in finance this has been monumental as it has allowed for me to regain hope that this is possible.

Another way that SEO has impacted me is by cultivating a safe environment to learn. Outside the confines of SEO it is often extremely difficult to ask questions or network because of a myriad of factors. However, SEO provides an environment to ask questions, learn and network (amongst other things) without any judgement. This allows for accelerated growth in all aspects as we are able to target issues that we would otherwise neglect in fear of judgement. ▀▀



I have always credited SEO as being one of the biggest factors in my getting a training contract and in changing my life for the better. Through training, exposure and importantly believing in me even in the face of rejections, SEO London really brought out the best in me.

Joining City Solicitors Horizons (CSH) in my first year of university, I had the classic issue of having the academics and extra-curriculars but lacking 'polish'. This is one of the hardest and most frustrating things to nail down in a young person applying for professional roles but in many cases it comes down to confidence and this was certainly true for me.

Similarly, there are certain things not taught at university that SEO helped me with. For example, writing applications, interview technique and performing well in assessment centres were all things I learned with SEO, thanks to their training. I also made friends at SEO London, a community of people who are similar in age and background is a very powerful thing and has continued to help me even after I finished CSH.

Now, I am an IP/Tech Associate at Norton Rose Fulbright. SEO London is one of the main reasons I have this job. ”



## ALI

**City Solicitors Horizons  
Alumnus, 2015-18.  
IP and Tech Associate,  
Norton Rose Fulbright**



## CHUN

**SEO Alumnus Class of 2017.  
Corporate Finance Manager,  
UK Government Investments**



SEO London stands as the bedrock of my career ascent. The organisation's commitment to my success was evident through comprehensive CV and interview workshops, enlightening information seminars, and exclusive access that elevated my standing beyond my peers. These invaluable resources, coupled with the nurturing environment, transformed my trajectory.

But the magic doesn't dwindle post-graduation; it amplifies. SEO London extends a lifeline with a plethora of post-graduate events and workshops, providing an exclusive gateway to industry-leading companies. The chance to rub shoulders with fellow alumni, sans the elusive "old boys" network, is a game-changer.

What truly sets SEO London apart is its ability to create an ecosystem where success is not just encouraged but inevitable. The journey isn't just about career opportunities; it's a holistic experience that transcends conventional mentorship. In the intricate dance of career development, SEO London orchestrates the moves that transform aspirations into reality.

I now work for UKGI, which is huge. I didn't think I could get here before SEO kick-started my career. ”

# GIVING BACK – IT'S IN THE SEO LONDON DNA

From the outset, SEO London participants are prepared to pave the way for the next generations. Our alumni serve as powerful inspirations, showcasing that individuals from similar backgrounds have successfully followed a similar path. We strive to create a ripple effect that transcends our programming; we empower all our participants to think about what they can do for those that come next.

Here are just a few examples from last year.

## YOUTH CHAMPIONS NETWORK

We launched our first Youth Champions Network, a forum for our current participants to share their perspectives on our programmes, as well as the effects of social issues on career progression for young people today. Our SEO Champions help us to drive inclusion, experience and programme improvements for future participants.

## ALUMNI PAVING THE WAY FOR THE FUTURE

Our alumni network act as our advocates in industry, helping to open doors and create new opportunities for sponsorship and job creation. They are a pivotal element of the SEO ecosystem, helping each other flourish and creating opportunities for the SEO legacy to thrive.

Our valued relationships with the likes of Balyasny Capital, Capco, CVC, Deloitte, P&G, and Pharmanovia, just to name a few, have all been kick started by SEO Alumni who have gone on to work for these fantastic firms.

## VOLUNTEERING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Our inspirational alumni feed into the delivery of our programmes, supporting as mentors, coaches and speaking at our events, as well as hosting insight sessions at their offices to give current participants an authentic glimpse into the day-to-day running of firms.

## STEPHEN

**SEO London Alumnus. Senior Vice President, Institutional Credit Management, Citi**

Stephen has dedicated a generous amount of time over the past 12 months to supporting the next generation of SEO London participants. As well as mentoring students within last year's Finance and Beyond Barriers Programmes, Stephen also helped set-up SEO London's Pride Network.

Volunteering with SEO's Alumni Network has been a valuable opportunity to expand my network further whilst creating an inclusive environment for myself and others. I find it rewarding to work with younger generations and pass on knowledge and insights that I have gained over the years – as that's what people did for me back when I was at university!



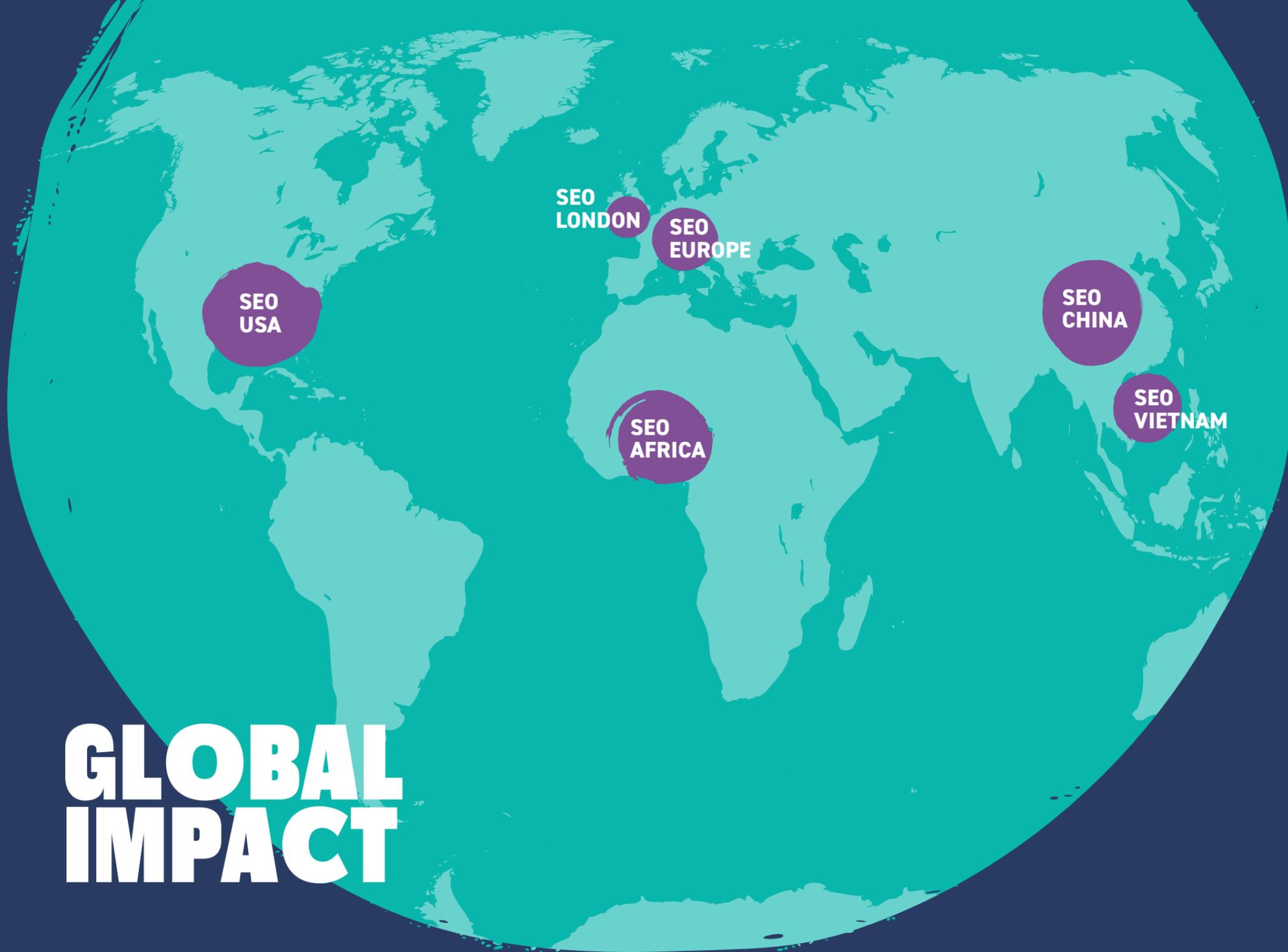
## KANISHK

**Alumnus, Class of 2004. Founder & Principal Adviser, Compound Wealth Planning**

After more than 10 years as a rising equity derivatives trader, Kanishk went on to found Compound Wealth Planning, a boutique financial planning firm working with business owners and working professionals. As well as volunteering as a mentor for our current participants, Kanishk has previously participated in our Academies providing industry insights and training to support the next generation of students trying to break into industry.

I owe my career 100% to SEO. Back in 2004, I was struggling to land an internship in my second year of university. Whilst I had an excellent academic record, I probably lacked the know-how and softer skills to ace the extremely demanding selection process. SEO gave me a chance, helped me to improve, and supported me before, during and after my internship to land a full-time role at a large investment bank. I cannot be more grateful to the SEO team for their faith in me.

I have found volunteering for SEO London and mentoring the younger generation to be very satisfying. I value the support I received, and even a little bit of our time and effort can make a huge difference to the careers of younger professionals. 'Giving back' to the SEO community is a core philosophy at SEO and I believe in it 100%.



# GLOBAL IMPACT

SEO is an international family. Originating in the USA, the SEO umbrella now covers the UK, Africa, China and Vietnam.

2023 was a truly historic year for SEO globally. Marking 60 years since, at the height of the civil rights movement, a 26-year-old Michael Osheowitz founded SEO in New York and 10 years since SEO Africa was launched to create opportunities for young people from

low income communities on the continent. It also marked one year since we launched our inaugural SEO Europe programme, opening up opportunities to a generation of French students, hungry for inspiration and opportunity.

'Paying-it-forward' is at the heart of our collective ethos; our alumni's dedication to giving-back to the next generation has enabled our growing global reach.



## BLESSING OMOREGIE

From SEO London Alumnus to JP Morgan to Chief Executive Officer of SEO Africa

Blessing joined SEO London's programming in 2013 where she received support to eventually begin her career post-graduation at JPMorgan. The next few years saw her take a different path, joining SEO Africa as their Business Development Manager before rising to Chief Executive Officer in January 2021.

SEO London represented a crucial turning point for me as a first-year law student who knew nothing about Banking. Despite having no prior experience or networks in the industry, I was able to secure three spring weeks and two summer programmes thanks to SEO support.

The SEO London Network has continued to play a major role in my later career successes. I was introduced to SEO Africa by the team at the London organisation. Leading SEO Africa as CEO for the past three years has been an honour; it means a lot to me to be able to pay-forward the opportunities that I was given access to as an undergraduate student.

My network of friends has been heavily influenced by people I met during SEO London events; we have gone on to support each other professionally in tremendous ways. ▀▀

# DEVESH SHAH

From SEO USA Alumnus to SEO London Board Co-chair and International Board Liaison

Those who give might sometimes not know the full impact of their gifts. The giver might forget; the recipient can recount the details from decades ago as if it was yesterday.

In 1994, I left India for Indiana University, aiming for a Wall Street career. I knew no one, had no network and no connections to New York or on Wall Street. I had one semester's worth of tuition fees in my pocket and had bet it all on Red, Blue, and White. One evening in the Fall of '94, as I parked my bicycle by a lamp post, I chanced upon an SEO flier. Learning that SEO partnered with top firms offering internships to diversify their workforce, I applied.

Despite being in only my first college year, SEO called me for an interview in Chicago,

leading to a summer internship at Salomon Brothers. This set the stage for subsequent internships, and upon graduating, I joined Merrill Lynch in its Global Sales and Trading Program. Three years later, I transitioned to Goldman Sachs in New York.

At Goldman, I had great mentors and opportunities, being promoted to running equity derivatives trading desks. In 2003, I co-invented a method to recreate the VIX Volatility Index, launching a successful VIX trading business. This innovation proved highly profitable for Goldman and revolutionized options and derivatives trading on Wall Street.

In 2010 I became an SEO USA board member, retaining the position for six years, and since 2019 I've been the International Liaison for SEO globally, advising leaders in the UK, Africa, Vietnam, and Beijing. I work with local leaders to establish governance, stabilise finances, and expand to new locations and partners.

In 2022, I became Co-Chair of the SEO UK Board of Trustees alongside Andrew Fairbairn, the distinguished founder of SEO London. Our tight-knit and committed Board bring their collective industry knowledge as well as, for some, the shared heritage of being SEO Alumni, to contribute to our collective vision.

We're proud to support determined students without connections, as each Board member has experienced this journey personally. Despite their professional success, the Board finds fulfilment in using their diverse talents to create a lasting and selfless institution.

To quote SEO's founder, Michael Osheowitz, "The opportunity to serve and be a part of SEO is not about you. It is about those who came before you and those who will come after you."



# ANDREW FAIRBAIRN

From SEO USA Alumnus to SEO London Founder and now Co-chair

A summer internship with SEO USA in 1995 changed my life. It gave me access to Wall Street, a world that I was previously unaware of, and a community of changemakers that I count on to this day. SEO's theory of change provided a repeatable model for creating opportunities for young people, a cause I deeply care about.

My SEO USA summer experience propelled me into a career in investment banking and entrepreneurship, which eventually took me from New York to London in 1999, where I was able to witness firsthand the remarkable lack of diversity in the City at the time. Within a few months, we'd brought together our first cohort of students, sponsor firms, volunteers, and universities to launch. SEO London was born the following summer of 2000.

In 2000, the concept of diversity in the UK workplace was novel. It has been an enduring pleasure to witness the city embrace this once fringe idea and to see it now enmeshed in national conversations around race, class, and 'difference' at large. Those conversations have themselves morphed and an entire industry and profession has developed around diversity, equity, and inclusion-driven initiatives. SEO London remains at the centre of it all.

Core to SEO London's model is its insistence that beneficiaries commit to supporting the next generation of young people behind them. Giving back is considered a life-long matter; I am delighted to note that SEO London alumni are now founders, leaders, senior officers and/or honourees of many of the UK-based organisations focused on creating opportunity for young people. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve SEO London as CEO for a time, and now as co-chair, whilst also supporting SEO in the USA in an executive role. ”



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