**A close-up of a logo

AI-generated content may be incorrect.**

**Trustee Vacancy Role Description**

**Background**

The Steel Charitable Trust is an endowed registered charity (272384) that makes grants of around £1.4m a year, to UK-registered charities and charitable organisations. The Trust is committed to good governance and seeks to reflect the UK's diverse and multicultural society. Since its foundation in 1976 The Trust has given £37 million in grants to charities across the UK. More information may be found on its website.

The Steel Charitable Trust has two grant-making strands (each of them accounting for about 50% of its annual grant giving):

* **Luton Matters**: designed to bring benefits to Luton and its residents, in recognition of the Trust's roots in Luton; expressions of interest are invited for this fund, and Trustees select which organisations will be invited to make a full application.
* **UK Under-26**: supporting charities that work with young people up to the age of 25 in any part of the UK except Luton. The UK Under-26 strand is moving to a by invitation only model in 2026.

The Trust does not engage in any fundraising; its grants are currently awarded from the return on its investment portfolio.

**Overview**

The Trust is led by a Board of Trustees who are responsible for strategic leadership, overall governance, investment management and financial oversight. Every member of the board is involved with the grant-making process and makes award decisions. Day-to-day operations are managed by a Trust Manager with the support of a freelance accountant. The Trust has an office in Luton, but Trustees carry out most of their duties from home.

Trustees meet four times a year, usually in March, June, September and December. Except in exceptional circumstances, attendance is expected at all four of these meetings. These meetings are held in London or Luton. The Trust also operates through three committees: Finance & Investments, Risk & Audit and HR & Governance.

The role does not offer remuneration, but all necessary expenses are reimbursed. On average, the time commitment is approximately 20-35 hours a quarter, but some additional time may be needed initially for training and because the Trust embarked on a new grant-making strategy in 2025 and the resulting two grant-giving strands are still in a pilot stage.

The Trust has a tenure policy of 4+3+3, whereby Trustees are appointed initially for four years, of which the first year is a probationary year. The appointment may be renewed twice in the maximum ten-year term, at the end of years four and seven.

**Duties**

* Trustees are responsible for the governance of the Trust, ensuring it fulfils its purpose exclusively for the public benefit and that it operates within its governing documents and the law.
* In addition to statutory duties, each Trustee should use any of their specific skills, knowledge or experience to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions. This may involve scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives, or other issues in which the Trustee has special expertise.
* Trustees take an active role in assessing, researching and validating grant applications before recommending a selection to the board at each Trustee meeting.
* Trustees may be required to make occasional visits to beneficiaries.

**Helpful experience**

The Trust would welcome applications from people who have some knowledge of and/or experience in any of the following areas:

* supporting children or young people under the age of 26
* Luton, and the needs of its very diverse communities
* understanding of good governance, possibly within the charitable sector

No prior experience as a charity trustee is necessary. Applications are welcome from people of all backgrounds with a philanthropic mindset, together with a willingness to involve themselves in aspects of charity work that they may or may not currently know about. The Trust is committed to good governance (a short statement is provided on the Trust's website) and supports the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. The Trust would welcome applications from people with disabilities and would like to widen the ethnic diversity of its Board. The Trust will assist Trustees who may wish or need to have some training and development.

**Qualities**

Applicants should be able to demonstrate experience of leadership and high-level decision-making. Each member of the Board of Trustees should be able to demonstrate the following qualities and experience, without regard to personal interest or benefit:

* a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort
* a commitment to the organisation
* an understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
* strategic vision
* good, independent judgement and integrity
* an ability to think creatively
* the ability to read and understand management reports
* the ability to research and ask probing questions
* a willingness to speak their mind
* being comfortable in a decision-making environment where often a consensus needs to be reached from differing views
* the ability to work effectively as a member of a team
* organised and self-motivated
* general competence using IT

**IT requirements**

Trustees must provide their own computer and be confident in the use of email, standard programmes such as Word and Excel (or similar), and the internet. The Steel Charitable Trust uses Microsoft 365; the new Trustee will be given a Steel Charitable Trust email address in Outlook and will be able to save their files on OneDrive in the cloud. Training will be provided on the grants management database on which grant applications are reviewed and recommendations made. A reliable internet connection is essential as the role is primarily conducted remotely. Access to a printer is useful, though all board papers are currently provided in hard copy.