

Candidate Information



Chair of Trustees

September 2023



About Us

The Social Research Association (SRA), founded in 1978, is an educational charity, whose purpose is to uphold high standards in the conduct, development, and application of social research for the benefit of the public interest, and to advance knowledge and professional practice in the social research field.

Social research aims to provide the public, the government, and a wide range of public and charitable bodies with reliable information about key aspects of life in the UK, under a range of topic headings: education, health and wellbeing, employment, housing, transport, and many more.

To support over 1,600 members, and the wider social research community in meeting these aims, the SRA undertakes three main activities:

Providing training courses on a wide range of research-related topics, so that researchers and research users are equipped to apply high standards in their professional work. These short courses are popular across the sector, benefiting researchers in government and other public bodies, research agencies, charities, academia, and consultancies. Prior to Covid-19 courses were run in-person, but were then quickly converted to online delivery, which extended their reach, and remains the preferred option.

Providing guidance on, for example, the ethical standards to apply in the conduct of research, such as ensuring that when members of the public participate in research projects, their rights are upheld, and their data is protected.

Providing publications and events, so that researchers and research users can share good practice and learn about new developments in the field. The [SRA annual conference](#) is a highlight of the social research calendar and this year's sold out in-person conference received positive feedback from the 300+ delegates.

The SRA has sound finances, with a strongly positive balance sheet year-on-year, based on training fees, membership subscriptions and advertising vacancies in the sector. There is a staff team of 6, including the CEO and Operations manager, with other staff co-ordinating training, membership, events, finance, and social media. All staff are home-based.



Role Description

This is a chance to be part of a supportive and active group of trustees who are ensuring the SRA makes a positive impact on the sector.

Purpose

The key goal for a new Chair will be to build on recent work by the trustees in developing a forward strategy and ensuring the SRA continues to deliver on its charitable objectives, making a positive impact for the social research profession.

The Chair will:

- Ensure the Board remains focused on the development of the forward strategy and adheres to the values of SRA.
- Develop and maintain a productive working relationship with the Chief Executive.
- Lead the Board in ensuring that it fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of the organisation.
- Ensure timely and well-founded decision making that advances the aims and objectives of the organisation.
- Create an environment for a high performing Board.
- Ensure effective trustee recruitment and development.
- Lead the Board in identifying key strategic decisions to be made and delivered.
- Ensure a transparent and supportive approach to Board discussions.
- Develop productive relationships with and between individual trustees.
- Continue to build on the positive relationships between the board and SRA's staff and members.

Specific responsibilities

- Planning and chairing the board meetings and the AGM, with others as appropriate.
- Building an effective Board team, supporting individuals, facilitating good relationships, promoting co-operative working.
- Ensuring that the Board understands SRA's environment and the trends and stakeholders that influence it.
- Ensuring the Board has sufficient understanding of the organisation to make effective decisions.
- Line manage the Chief Executive, with regular check-ins as mutually agreed, and the setting of performance objectives.
- Reviewing Board composition and performance and taking any required actions.
- Working with staff and trustees, ensure the organisation has in place appropriate policies, systems and procedures to operate legally and effectively.



In addition to the above, the Chair will have the same further responsibilities as all trustees to:

- Ensure that SRA complies with its governing documents, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Ensure that SRA pursues its purposes as defined in its Articles of Association.
- Ensure that SRA uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its purposes.
- Guide SRA in its strategic direction, reviewing and approving company policies, organisational strategies, and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard the good name and values of SRA, ensuring appropriate internal and external accountability.
- Ensure the financial stability of SRA and the responsible management of its resources.
- Protect and manage the assets of the organisation and ensure the proper investment of the organisation's funds.
- Act with reasonable care and skill in all of the above.
- Act solely in the best interests of SRA in all of the above.

What we are looking for

Essential

- Experience of working in the UK research sector
- Experience of being a trustee
- A keen sense of strategic purpose.
- An inclusive leadership style: able to inspire and support everyone to participate.
- The ability to listen and engage effectively. You are comfortable with challenge and debate and are able to encourage that in others whilst fostering a collaborative board environment.
- A strong personal commitment to the work of SRA.



SRA Governance

The Association is governed by a Board of up to 15 Trustees elected by the membership. Trustees are made up of people from across the UK research sector, who work in government and other public bodies, research agencies, charities, academia, and independent consultancies. Trustees also contribute through Board sub-committees, for example providing strategic input on the development of the training offer, or the planning of the annual conference.

Terms of appointment

Trustees are appointed for a 2-year term of office, with eligibility for reappointment for further terms to a maximum of 6 consecutive years in office.

This is a voluntary position, but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

Time commitment

- 6 annual meetings for a 2-hour duration - these are held remotely
- One annual away day per annum, usually in London

In addition to the above, some additional time will be required for the relationship with and line management of the Chief Executive.



EVALUATION

How to Apply

To be considered for the role of Chair, please submit the following:

- An up-to-date CV, with the details of two referees (we will not contact them without your prior consent)
- A supporting statement, outlining how you meet the criteria, and your motivations for applying

All applications should be sent to applications@trustees-unlimited.co.uk with your full name and 'SRA' in the subject line.

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact Melissa Baxter at Trustees Unlimited & Russam on 07789 985229 or melissa.baxter@russam.co.uk.

Closing date for applications: Monday 23rd October 2023

Interviews with SRA: Wednesday 1st November 2023

The SRA has for many years held a strong commitment to EDI in the social research profession, as demonstrated by the publication of an extensive report on the experiences of around 1,000 researchers ('Far to Go', 2021, The Young Foundation), and a recent EDI audit and action plan for the Association. A subgroup of trustees leads and oversees this activity, working closely with staff and external experts.

We welcome applications for the Chair role from suitable candidates of all backgrounds.