

The Oxford Trust

Appointment of Trustees

October 2024

Our vision

We believe that Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) hold the solution to some of the world's greatest challenges – from climate change, disease mitigation and environmental degradation to space exploration and social cohesion. The Oxford Trust helps create an environment where STEM-based entrepreneurs can deliver ground-breaking products and services, where success is celebrated and where young people, supported by teachers and families, can have stimulating STEM experiences that develop their understanding, skills, and aspirations.

Our mission

Encouraging the pursuit of science

We follow the mission set down by our founders, the late Sir Martin and Audrey (Lady) Wood, in 1985, adapting to changing environments by staying true to the core principles on how this mission is delivered – being adaptable has served us well.

Our values

Ambitious, Confident, Collaborative, Agile, Sustainable.

What do we do?

We own the large science and technology-focused Wood Centre for Innovation in Oxford, part of the Headington Science Cluster, with facilities ranging from co-working and offices to tech workshops and bioscience/materials science R&D labs. This centre helps young science and tech companies to get started and develop in supportive environments, enabling founders to focus on success and growth. Planning permission for the Aspen Building has recently been filed to add significant additional capacity to the Wood Centre for Innovation, with practical completion currently scheduled for late 2025 to early 2026.

The Trust recently divested its ownership of 'Macclesfield House' in the city centre, where its Oxford Centre for Innovation is currently based, and is investigating alternative locations to maintain that presence in the city centre for smaller science and tech companies.

The surplus created from these centres is directed to our *Science Oxford* programmes – STEM education and family/community engagement – including the Science Oxford Centre, adjoining the Wood Centre for Innovation in Headington, the UK's first hands-on indoor-outdoor STEM education centre for primary schools and families with primary school-aged children. Together with a growing

STEM careers programme for secondary school students, our aim is to help enable future scientists and entrepreneurs start or continue their pursuit of science.

Where do we operate?

Our innovation activities are largely focused on Oxford city and Oxfordshire whilst our education and public engagement programmes stretch across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

Who are our current partners?

We collaborate with a vast array of stakeholders, whether it's for programme development, ecosystem support, local growth initiatives, funding and much more.

- Locally these include organisations such as the Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), both our leading universities, The Hill, Advanced Oxford, Oxfordshire and Oxford council initiatives, school leaders and subject networks and our volunteer and patron communities.
- National partners include Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), British Interactive Science Group (BIG), Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSST), Evolution Education Trust (EET) and many organisations, companies, and individuals.

Who and where are our current clients?

Our innovation centres are currently home to over 40 different companies. More than 50% of these are spinouts from Oxford University – in total they employ over 600 people on the current two sites.

Over 50,000 children and young people participate in our *Science Oxford* education and engagement programmes each year. These programmes have a growing focus on reaching pupils from every school in our region which serves a low-income community (>30% free school meals).

Why do we do it?

The Oxford Trust has always been able to act where gaps in competencies and capacities exist that help further our founders' ideals. This means being agile to help facilitate change, enable collaboration and invest where the impact is greatest – together we believe this will help Oxford, Oxfordshire and the region create a better place to work in science, understand science and live sustainably in a knowledge-based economy.

Background of The Oxford Trust

Beginnings

The Oxford Trust is an independent charitable trust that was established in 1985 by entrepreneurs the late Sir Martin Wood and Lady Audrey Wood, founders of Oxford Instruments – one of the UK's first university spinout companies.

From a group of portacabins (affectionately called Science Slum) in Osney Mead, it created the UK's first independent innovation centre which grew over the years, spinning out its own subsidiaries, and developing a nationally-recognised programme for primary science informal learning and STEM careers.

Present

In 2018–19, the Trust completed a major £13 million investment to create the Wood Centre for Innovation and adjacent Science Oxford Centre, set in 18 acres of woodland in Headington, Oxford.

As noted, the Wood Centre for Innovation is fully occupied by nine science and tech companies and plans to add additional capacity with the new Aspen Building are at an advanced stage. This gives us the chance to reflect on our future place in a rapidly changing local, regional, national and global landscape as we help to build and shape the *Headington Science Cluster* with partners. Our city centre Oxford Centre for Innovation (currently located in Macclesfield House), housing 40 science and tech start-ups, has been sold and will be vacated by the end of April 2025. An alternative location in the city is under review.

Demand for our education programmes continues to be strong across both primary and secondary levels. A full review of strategies is taking place in the current year.

We continue to embrace the full purpose of the Charity and galvanise together behind a coherent mission and vision, and agree a rolling three-year strategic plan. However, there is much more to do as we look further forward and we are refreshing the strategy to reflect changing dynamics and needs.

The Oxford Trust is a registered charity, and a company limited by guarantee subject to both charity and company law. Its activities are overseen by a voluntary Board of Directors, also known as trustees, elected by the members of the company. The day-to-day running of the organisation is delegated to the CEO and supported by the Senior Leadership Team and a Directors Group.

The full Board meets four times a year, and for an additional half day for strategic planning. The Chair, Vice-Chair and sub-committees also have regular meetings with the CEO. The board members represent the charity at various events and meetings with key stakeholders as appropriate.

In 2023/24, the Trust had a turnover of £3.4 million with 25 FTE employees and many part-time and volunteer contributors. Whilst the Charity is mainly self-funding, it does receive grants and donations that enhance its education and engagement activities.

The role of a trustee

New trustees will join The Oxford Trust (TOT) board of directors at a time of exciting growth and development as we update our strategic plans ahead of the Trust's 40th anniversary in 2025.

We are currently looking to appoint a new trustee with the following areas of lived experience and expertise.

Finance – preferably in the SME, charity and technology sectors – to chair the Finance and Investment Sub-Committee (FISC)

Our ambition is for The Oxford Trust Board to represent and reflect the diversity of our communities and stakeholders, so we are keen to hear from people from under-represented groups, in particular people with lived experienced of disability and a younger demographic.

Trustees will be expected to fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity. Trustees will also support, and where appropriate, challenge the CEO and help ensure that the Board functions as a unit and works closely with the entire senior team of the charity to achieve agreed objectives. They will be a politically-aware, strategic thinker, familiar with the local economic

and political landscape. Most importantly, they will have demonstrable interest in the sciences, education and entrepreneurship, and a clear commitment to diversity.

They will act as an outstanding advocate for the organisation and be the public face of the Charity in partnership with the CEO and Senior Leadership Team. The trustees will have the knowledge and understanding to maintain an oversight of the Charity's positioning within the area of their expertise, provide both a local and national perspective and contribute well informed views and a commitment to best practice within the scientific and educational arenas.

We are looking for trustees who can give advice to the Board on the integrity, strategic direction and quality of the Charity's work, providing access to useful and diverse contacts for the Senior Leadership Team. A trustee's ability to contribute in this way will often, but not always, draw on professional and/or practitioner experience at a senior level.

Principle responsibilities of a trustee

Trustees are collectively responsible for the Charity and using their individual best judgement to ensure that the charitable purpose of The Oxford Trust is upheld, its broad purposes are achieved and that it always complies with the law and meets its contractual obligations. The four areas below provide the balance between conformance and performance.

Policy formulation and foresight: Positioning the Charity in its broad political environment and ensuring the overall direction and control.

Strategic thinking: Maintaining a strategic overview of the work of The Oxford Trust, giving direction to the development of the Charity's work and ensuring everything the Charity does is consistent with the purposes of the organisation as set out in the Articles of Association.

Monitoring management performance: Ensuring that appropriate management and financial objectives are set, and performance is monitored, whilst not micro-managing the executives from the boardroom.

Accountability: Accepting legal responsibility for the work of the Charity and ensuring that the Charity complies with the Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, and any other relevant legislation and regulations. While their creative focus should be on issues of strategic organisational and financial development, trustees should also familiarise themselves with the frontline activities of the Charity in order to be supportive and critical friends to the operational plans developed and implemented by staff and volunteers.

Term of role

Term:

Trustees: this post is voluntary and for an initial term of three years with the potential to hold office for up to two further terms.

There are (typically) four two-hour in-person board meetings per year plus one strategic planning half-day.

Participation in committees and/or project groups may require additional commitments, although most are held in a remote (Teams) environment.

How to apply

Please provide an application letter that sets out your skills, experience and why you want to join our charity board. A CV or LinkedIn profile is optional. This should be sent to CEO@theoxfordtrust.co.uk

If you would like to have an informal and confidential discussion before applying, please contact: ceo@theoxfordtrust.co.uk

Timelines:

Applications must be received by **30th November 2024** and will be reviewed by the Board within the following week.

A successful applicant/s will meet with the Chair of Trustees, Chair of FISC and CEO in person, where possible, with a view to potential nomination at the December board meeting (18th December). The term of office will begin as of January 1st 2025 or as mutually agreed.

Please also see separate document with more information on the role profile for the Chair of the Finance & Investment Sub Committee (FISC).