WHAT DO TRUSTEES DO?

A note from the Chair of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in the Branch Trustee role. Included in this document is an outline of 'What Trustees Do' taken from the NCVO website (National Council for Voluntary Organisations), which I hope you will find useful.

In being a Branch Trustee, we don't expect you to know a great deal about AFF in your area, but rather to know about current Army life there, to believe in what AFF does and stands for and to be generous with your time and support. We look to recruit onto the Board a range of people who can bring specific skills and/or an awareness of issues affecting Army families.

The most important thing to realise is that the Trustees are the bosses; their responsibility is to ensure that the charity is acting in accordance with its objectives and mission, that the financial situation is secure and well-managed and that employees are properly managed and meeting their targets. Being a Trustee is 'eyes on and hands off'; in other words you have oversight of the organisation but no involvement in the management or day-to-day running.

Being a Trustee is a voluntary role; it's unpaid but all expenses (e.g. flights and accommodation) are met by the charity. Trustees are required to attend 3-4 meetings a year (most often at AFF Central Office or London) with (very) occasional reading and telephone calls in-between times.

The Trustee role carries considerable responsibilities and liability. The responsibility is offset through appropriate and timely reporting and information, ensuring that we are professional and clear about our mission and objectives. The liability sounds scary but we are confident that AFF's policies and practices are sufficient to mitigate any risk and I can assure you that we are (and are considered to be by others) a well-run, professional charity.

The advantages of being a Trustee are firstly supporting a charity that you believe in; it's a role that comes not only with responsibility but also with respect and status. Being a Trustee is also good on your CV as it demonstrates high-level involvement in and commitment to an organisation.

I will speak with shortlisted candidates to discuss the specific requirements of the Branch Trustee post and to conduct an informal interview to determine your suitability for the role. In the meantime, if you have any further questions please don't hesitate to contact the Chief Executive on 0044 (0)1264 382318.

Sincerely,

Rich Stephens
Chair of Trustees

Taken from NCVO website - www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

What do Trustees do?

At its simplest, the role of a charity Trustee is to:

- Receive assets from donors
- Safeguard them
- Apply them for a charitable purpose according to the wishes of the donor

A serious responsibility
In practice, trusteeship is a serious responsibility requiring you to take an active role in the governance of the organisation.

Trustees:

- Take the big decisions about the future
- Ensure everything is legal and safe
- Support the head of staff
- Ensure the work of the charity is carried out
- Ensure the Trustee Board is up-to-date and skilled

Fulfilling the role
Trustees are obliged to:

- Act in the best interests of the charity's beneficiaries
- Act together as a group rather than as individuals
- Set aside their personal interests
- Take legal responsibility for the organisation
- Exercise the duty of care that a prudent person of business would in looking after the affairs of someone for whom they had responsibility

The AFF Trustee job description will help to further clarify the role, and successful applicants will be given a full induction once accepted onto the Board.

Keeping up-to-date
You will also need to keep up-to-date with regulation, charity law and, where appropriate, company law and best practice recommendations.

The Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) for accounting by charities is a requirement.

Don't worry, though! The Board is not expected to be expert on everything. If it's unsure about what to do, it should take appropriate professional advice. The organisation should also have a programme of training and Board development.

What is governance?

Governance is about leadership and ensuring that an organisation is effectively and properly run. It is distinct from day-to-day management and operations delegated to staff and volunteers.

Governance includes:

- Creating a clear, shared vision
- Formulating plans and policies to bring about the organisation's objectives
- Maintaining a sense of urgency about the vision
- Recruiting and supervising the Chief Executive
- Ensuring compliance with policy and the law
- Keeping within budget

Governance and delegation
Governance is not necessarily about *doing*; it is about *ensuring things are done*.

In a small organisation, it is almost inevitable that Board members will be involved not only in making decisions and monitoring work, but in doing some or all of that work. But as an organisation grows, the Board becomes less involved in its day-to-day activities, delegating to staff responsibility for most tasks. Decision-making may also be delegated to staff, on condition that all decisions are within policy frameworks agreed by the Board.

In many organisations, this process of delegation can cause confusion. Where are the boundaries between the responsibilities of Board members and those of the Chief Executive and senior managers? Whose job is it to draw up the strategic plan and budgets, decide what to say to the media when someone makes public allegations against the organisation, and decide whether to dismiss an employee?

In fact, because each organisation is different, each organisation must decide for itself.

Trustee liability: overview

This section takes you through risks and liabilities attached to being a Trustee. It details the main legal and regulatory responsibilities. It also provides advice on how to control and reduce risks from liabilities.

- Very few Trustees who have acted honestly suffer financial loss as a result
- The personal liabilities of a Trustee depend on the structure of the charity:
  - There are some liabilities incurred by all charity Trustees
  - There are some liabilities for Trustees in unincorporated associations or trusts
  - There are some liabilities for Trustees in companies limited by guarantee
- You should always seek advice before giving personal guarantees
- You can take practical steps to reduce the risks of Trustee liability
- Trustee personal liability insurance is available
- The personal liability of Trustees does not start and finish with their term of office

- If you are worried about your liability for a particular decision, you can take steps to lessen, but not completely remove, your liability

12 essential Trustee Board roles

This is a list of the twelve key Trustee Board roles and responsibilities.

1. Set and maintain vision, mission and values
2. Develop strategy
3. Establish and monitor policies
4. Set up employment procedures
5. Ensure compliance with governing document
6. Ensure accountability
7. Ensure compliance with the law
8. Maintain proper fiscal oversight
9. Select and support the Chief Executive
10. Respect the role of staff
11. Maintain effective Board performance
12. Promote the organisation