Thank you for your interest in joining the Board of Trustees of Practical Action as our new Chair.

2023 marks the 50th anniversary of our founder, EF Schumacher’s ground-breaking book, *Small is Beautiful*, and provides an opportunity to reflect on the relevance of his philosophy and approaches to today’s challenges.

*Small is Beautiful* challenged dominant development and economic paradigms and acted as an inspirational call to action. Schumacher’s approach of solutions tailored to context, powering people with skills and knowledge, and ‘economics as if people mattered’ is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

**In a time when it is easy to be despondent, Practical Action is making positive change happen every day.**

Action that means we can remain hopeful. With six decades of innovating with communities to deliver practical solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges, and linking with diverse partners to drive improvement for millions more people, we can see pathways out of the interconnected poverty-climate-environment-conflict crises that are challenging our world.

In the last two years as an organisation we have made significant and successful efforts to diversify our income and focus on securing longer term larger grants programmes. We are well positioned for growth in the coming years at the same time as we embark on setting our strategy to 2030.

So it is an ideal time to join us and bring your skills, experience and appetite to help shape and deliver our future strategy. Do speak to the team at Oxford HR for any further information you would like and for their advice on making your application (details below under ‘How to Apply’).

We look forward to hearing from you.

**Martin Tyler**
Interim Chair
The Role

The Chair of Trustees provides leadership and direction to the Board, enabling the Board to fulfil its responsibilities for the overall governance and direction of the organisation and ensuring the aims of Practical Action are achieved. This includes setting and reviewing strategy, working with the CEO, Board members and senior staff. It includes managing the work of the CEO, with an appropriate balance of support and challenge, and maintaining excellent relationships with other senior staff. The Chair also has a key role as an ambassador and a visible champion of Practical Action, in partnership with the Executive Director.

Title: Chair of the Board of Trustees

Location: The majority of Board meetings are held virtually but in person Board meetings are held at key strategic times and to ensure effective governance, roughly every 12-18 months.

Time Commitment: At least 3 days per month.

We encourage active participation, and many Trustees give more time than the minimum requirement. In addition to chairing the quarterly Board meetings and annual strategy meeting, the Chair may also choose to attend sub-committee meetings. The Chair will meet regularly with the CEO and also carry out external engagements.

Term: Our Chair (and other Trustees) serve a three-year term, which may be renewed for one additional term.

Remuneration: None. This is a volunteer role (in line with UK charity legislation). However, reasonable expenses to undertake the role will be covered.
About Practical Action

Practical Action is an international development group, building sustainable lives and livelihoods with people on the frontlines of poverty and climate change. We put ingenious ideas to work so people in poverty can change their world. We have over 50 years of experience working across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Practical Action works...

...For people: we improve lives and futures. Our work remains grounded in the realities of people living in poverty. Our starting point will always be focused and 'small' – building a deep understanding of what already works at a local level, and what could be improved. We work with local communities, especially women and marginalised people, empowering them to unlock their potential and improve their lives, livelihoods and futures.

...For the planet: we respect nature’s boundaries. Our development approaches are designed to work with and for the environment. The natural resources that many communities rely on are increasingly under threat. Our solutions are planet friendly, deploy renewable resources, and reuse resources in innovative ways. Because we know that it’s possible to design solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

...For big change: We collaborate to change systems. We might start small, but we always think 'big', analysing the factors that can change the underlying systems and identifying where we are best placed to effect change. We then convene and collaborate more widely – with governments, international organisations, and increasingly the private sector – to help take proven solutions to the next level of scale and sustainability.
About Practical Action

We were founded in 1969 by radical economist EF Schumacher who challenged the development thinking of the time. He believed in solutions suited to context, equipping people with the skills and knowledge to change their situation, economic systems that work for all and living within the planet’s means. This ethos continues to fuel all our work.

We currently work across four thematic areas.

- **Harnessing energy that transforms** for the one billion people without electricity, and the three billion people without clean cooking solutions. We’re supporting rural communities, displaced people, energy providers and decision makers to put clean energy to work. By 2025, our work with partners will have led to affordable, low-carbon energy access and cleaner cooking for two million people in ‘last mile’ communities and 18 million people through wider systems change.

- **Building resilience that protects** for vulnerable people whose lives and livelihoods are threatened by climate change. We’re working to reduce vulnerability and impacts and support people to adapt so that they can continue to thrive in the future. By 2025, our work with partners will have enhanced adaptive approaches so that four million people are better protected against current and future hazards.

- **Making cities fit for people** for the millions of people living in urban slums and settlements without proper sanitation, clean water and waste services. Our work with communities is making cities in poorer countries cleaner, healthier, fairer places for people to live and work, with clean water for drinking and sewage safely contained, collected and processed. By 2025, our work with partners will have led to improved water, sanitation and waste management services for one million people living in slum communities and a further 2.4 million people through wider systems change.

- **Cultivating farming that works** for smallholder farmers struggling to make a sufficient income and adapt to the negative effects of climate change. We’re teaming up with smallholder farmers, many of whom are women, so they can adapt to climate change and achieve a good standard of living. By 2025, our work with partners will have improved food security and incomes for two million people in rural communities and a further one million people through wider systems change.
Practical Action is a global change-making group. The group consists of a UK registered charity with community projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America, an independent development publishing company and a technical consulting service. We combine these specialisms to multiply our impact and help shape a world that works better for everyone.

As a charitable company registered in the UK, Practical Action has Articles of Association which set out the rules for running the organisation. Trustees of the charity are simultaneously Directors of the (private limited) company.

Working in partnership with the CEO and Executive Team, the Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for effective governance and delivering the objectives of the charity. Under UK law, the Board of Trustees (Directors) shares collective responsibility for their decisions. The Board appoints a Chair to lead them and has also established 2 subcommittees: Governance and People (GAP) and Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR). Most Trustees also serve on a subcommittee and may also join occasional working groups (which may include staff) depending on their availability and specialist expertise.

Practical Action’s Trustees are drawn from all over the world, with regular meetings taking place virtually. A thorough training and induction programme, tailored to the individual, is offered to all new Trustees to ensure they feel comfortable with their responsibilities, and understand the work and the ethos of Practical Action.

Our current strategy runs to 2025 and we are beginning work on what comes next. We hope our new Chair and two additional new Trustees will be in place by mid-2024, in order to help shape the new strategy.
Key behaviours for all our Board members include:
• A commitment to the mission, values and work of Practical Action
• Strategic vision
• Analysis & critical thinking, with good, independent judgement
• Curiosity & constructive challenge, with the ability to think creatively
• Valuing diversity, welcoming diverse views
• Learning, encouraging change & innovation
• Team players, with humility and ability to get on well with others
• Committing time, not just for attending meetings but also the important work in between
• Understanding - or willingness to learn swiftly - and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of Trusteeship of a UK charity

In addition, for this Chair position, we are seeking:
• An inspiring leader who understands the huge global changes taking place in the world and how Practical Action can navigate these; able to provide strategic guidance on issues including the changing role of international NGOs, localisation and shifting power to the Global South, working in increasing volatile environments and adapting financial models
• Someone with significant senior management and leadership experience, ideally to include a previous Chair role in the NGO sector
• An appreciation of the INGO role, and the interface between INGOs, the private sector, governments, and other international organisations
• A credible and compelling ambassador, able to represent the organisation and the issues we deal with, open doors and influence a diverse range of stakeholders including at a high level
• Ability and willingness to leverage own networks in support of Practical Action and be active in developing additional external relationships
• Someone who can harness and mobilise the Board’s impressive diversity, able to convene and collaborate rather than pursuing a personal agenda
• Someone with experience of the local contexts and/or partners for Practical Action’s work, ideally from the Global South / East
• A person committed to developing a positive relationship with the CEO and support their growth
Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership
• Provide leadership to the charity and its Board, ensuring that the charity has maximum impact
• Ensure that the Board operates within its charitable objectives, and provides a clear strategic direction for the Charity
• Ensure that the Board is able to regularly review major risks and associated opportunities, and satisfy itself that systems are in place to take advantage of opportunities, and manage and mitigate the risks
• Ensure that the Board fulfils its duties to ensure sound financial health of the charity, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability

Governance
• Ensure that the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for the Charity and encourage positive change where appropriate.
• Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board of Trustees
• Appraise the performance of the Trustees and the Board on an annual basis
• Ensure that the Board of Trustees is regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern and lead the charity effectively, and which also reflects the communities in which Practical Action works
• Work within any agreed policies adopted by the charity

External Relations
• Act as an ambassador for the cause and the charity
• Maintain close relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders and influencers
• Act as a spokesperson for the organisation when appropriate
• Represent the charity at external functions, meetings and events
Key Responsibilities

Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to decision-making processes
- Ensure that Trustees are fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of the Charity and that the Board takes collective ownership
- Foster, maintain and ensure that constructive relationships exist with and between the Trustees; address and resolve any conflicts within the Board, and between the Board and the Executive.
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to give direction to Board policy-making and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of trustees
- Monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.

Relationship with the Chief Executive and the wider management team
- Establish and build a strong, effective and a constructive working relationship with the Chief Executive, and ensure they are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives
- Liaise with the Chief Executive to maintain an overview of the Charity’s affairs, providing support as necessary whilst respecting the boundaries which exist between the two roles
- Ensure regular contact with the Chief Executive and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns, worries and challenges
- Conduct an annual appraisal and remuneration review for the Chief Executive in consultation with other Trustees
- Ensure that the Chief Executive has the opportunity for professional development and has appropriate external professional support
IMPORTANT
We are also recruiting for two new Trustees. If you would also like to be considered for a Trustee role, if unsuccessful with the Chair position, please indicate this in your application. If you are not sure, you are warmly encouraged to contact the team for an informal discussion before submitting your application.

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the “Apply” button on the job advert page, complete our online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter as two different documents, which should be prepared before applying as they will be considered in the application process. The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this post and how your skills and experience make you a good fit.

The document should be saved in PDF in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Document Name-Date (mmyy) e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-112023-PracticalAction or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-112023-PracticalAction.

Timeline
Closing Date: 18th January 2024
Preliminary Interviews (with Oxford HR): Early February 2024
Interviews with Practical Action: March 2024

Selection process
All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the role email to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Practical Action is committed to cultivating an inclusive and diverse working environment. We believe that people from different backgrounds and cultures give us different perspectives, and the more perspectives we have, the more successful we will be. By building a culture where everyone feels heard, respected, and valued we give everyone working and volunteering with us the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Based on an audit of current Board members, we particularly welcome applications from the Global South, especially from Asia and Latin America. We also especially encourage women and non-binary people to apply.

If you need any reasonable adjustments or have any additional needs with your application, please get in touch, either through email practical-action-chair@oxfordhr.com or by phoning the OxfordHR team on +44 (0) 1865 403 298.

Practical Action is committed to safeguarding and protecting children and vulnerable adults and as such preferred candidates will be subject to pre-appointment checks including criminal records and terrorist financing.

Queries
If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please email practical-action-chair@oxfordhr.com in the first instance.

How to Apply
Exceptional leaders can inspire change and propel purpose-led organisations towards reaching their world-changing goals. Finding such leaders can be a challenge; and yet their transition into leadership is vital to an organisations mission and success.

Oxford HR is a global leadership consultancy dedicated to searching for and supporting remarkable leaders and teams in purpose-led organisations.

We understand the nuances of purpose-led leadership because we’ve worked in organisations across the breadth of the sector ourselves. We’ve also worked with such organisations since 1995; so we appreciate just what benefits impactful people can bring.