



Role Description: Chair of the Board of Trustees

Organisation: THIRST – The International Roundtable for Sustainable Tea

Accountable to: The Board of Trustees, collectively (the Chair leads the Board but, as a trustee, is accountable to the Board as a whole, like all other trustees)

Time commitment: Approximately 2–3 days per month, including Board meetings, sub-committee engagement, and external representation (some evenings/travel required)

Term: 3 years, renewable indefinitely

Remuneration: Voluntary/unpaid, with reasonable expenses reimbursed

About THIRST

THIRST – The International Roundtable for Sustainable Tea – is an independent NGO (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation) working collaboratively to transform the tea industry. It was established in 2018.

Our vision is of a resilient tea industry in which workers and farmers are empowered and their human rights are realised.

Our mission is to bring all tea sector actors together to listen and learn from one another and to find practical, realistic solutions that will tackle the root causes of tea workers' and farmers' hardships at a systemic level.

Having built a strong reputation in the tea sector for insightful and strategic research, knowledge sharing and convening of stakeholders we are now ready to move to the next level. This will involve greater engagement with international bodies, partnering with change-makers globally, holding the tea industry to account and firmly establishing THIRST as an organisation. Although still a small organisation, we have recently expanded our communication, administration, accounting and fundraising capacity by taking on regular consultancy services, and are about to embark on a significant new fundraising strategy. This is an exciting time to join THIRST as we build on this foundation to grow our impact.

Purpose of the Role

The Chair provides strategic leadership to THIRST, ensuring the NGO achieves its mission, operates within its charitable objects, and is governed effectively and in accordance with best practice and Charity Commission requirements. The Chair leads the Board of Trustees, acts as the principal ambassador for THIRST, and works closely with the Chief Executive to ensure the organisation delivers meaningful impact for tea workers and producing communities worldwide.

Key Responsibilities

Governance and Board Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership to the Board of Trustees, ensuring THIRST has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction, and that this is effectively delivered.
- Chair Board meetings and any general meetings, ensuring they are run efficiently, decisions are properly recorded, and all trustees are able to contribute effectively.
- Ensure the Board fulfils its duties and responsibilities for the proper governance of the NGO, in line with Charity Commission guidance and the organisation's governing document.
- Lead the recruitment, induction, appraisal and, where necessary, succession planning of trustees, ensuring the Board has the right balance of skills, experience and diversity.
- Ensure the Board operates within its charitable objects, complies with legal and regulatory requirements, and manages risk appropriately.
- Support and hold the Chief Executive to account, ensuring an effective, constructive working relationship built on trust and mutual respect.
- Ensure regular reviews of Board and organisational performance, and act on findings.
- Act as a signatory and ensure appropriate financial oversight, in conjunction with the Treasurer.

Ambassadorial and External Relations

- Act as the principal ambassador and public face of THIRST, representing the NGO at industry events, conferences, and with key stakeholders including governments, NGOs, tea producers, retailers, and international bodies.
- Build and maintain relationships with partners, funders, and stakeholders across the international tea sector and human rights community.
- Support the fundraising strategy of THIRST, using personal networks and credibility to open doors, cultivate major donor and institutional relationships, and champion the organisation's cause.
- Act as a spokesperson for THIRST when required, including with media, ensuring messaging is consistent with the NGO's values and strategic priorities.

Strategic Oversight

- Work with the Board and the Chief Executive to develop and monitor THIRST's strategic plan, ensuring the NGO remains focused on delivering impact for its beneficiaries.
- Ensure the NGO's activities are aligned with its mission and that resources are used effectively to achieve this.
- Champion a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement across the organisation.

Person Specification

Essential

- Significant experience of NGO governance, ideally as a trustee or Chair of a UK-registered NGO, and a strong understanding of the legal and regulatory duties of trustees under Charity Commission requirements.
- Prior experience in, or strong understanding of, international human rights work, ideally within an NGO or comparable international organisation.
- A demonstrable track record in fundraising, with relevant networks and the credibility to open doors with major donors, institutional funders, or corporate partners.
- Excellent networks across relevant sectors (NGO, human rights, international development, and/or the tea or wider agricultural/commodities industry).
- Strong strategic thinking, with the ability to guide an organisation through growth and change.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the confidence and gravitas to represent THIRST publicly and act as its ambassador.
- Sound, independent judgement and a commitment to the highest standards of governance and integrity.

- Ability to chair meetings effectively, fostering open discussion, constructive challenge, and consensus-building among a diverse Board.
- Commitment to THIRST's mission and values, and to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion within the NGO and its work.

Desirable

- Direct experience or knowledge of the global tea industry or wider agricultural supply chains.
- Experience working with or in producing countries, or an understanding of the challenges facing smallholder farmers and estate workers.
- Existing relationships with relevant governmental, intergovernmental or civil society bodies working on labour rights, sustainability or trade.
- Experience of organisational change or growth within an NGO of comparable size and complexity.

What THIRST Offers

- The opportunity to lead an organisation working at the forefront of sustainability and human rights in a globally significant industry.
- A collaborative and committed Board of Trustees and staff team.
- Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed in line with THIRST's expenses policy.

How to Apply

Submit a CV and covering letter explaining why you feel you are the right person for this role to contact@thirst-tea.org by **31st October 2026**. Interviews will take place in the first two weeks of November (dates to be confirmed).

Please also provide contact details for two referees, one of whom should be from a current or recent trustee/board role. References will only be taken up for the successful candidate, with your consent.

THIRST is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, and welcomes applications from all backgrounds. We particularly encourage applications from individuals with lived experience or connections to tea-producing communities.

THIRST – The International Roundtable for Sustainable Tea. Charity number 1189499.