

The RTPI Trust

Guidelines for Assessing Financial Assistance Applications

1.0 Introduction

1.1 These guidelines are for the assessment of applications for financial hardship grants to the RTPI Trust. The Trust's resources are limited, and these guidelines have the objective of ensuring:

- The purposes for which grants can be given are properly defined
- The charity's funds are being effectively and sustainably deployed in ways that achieve the benefits intended
- There is consistency of treatment, thinking and especially continuity for when there is a change of Trustees
- The charity complies with statutory requirements and regulation

1.2 Whilst these guidelines set out a framework for decision-making it is acknowledged that there will be occasions where applications fall outside of the criteria contained within them. In these cases, Trustees still retain the right to approve grants, recording the reasons for any exceptions. The decisions of Trustees are final and not subject to appeal.

1.3 The Trustees will review the criteria annually to ensure they include changes that may have occurred that are relevant to decision making.

2.0 Purposes Under the Trust Deed

2.1 The RTPI Trust is a Charitable Trust established by a Trust Deed which sets out the purposes of the charity and gives the Trustees the powers to make decisions and manage the Trust. The Trust Deed sets out four purposes:

- **Purpose One** - The provision of support and financial assistance to members of the settlor who are in financial hardship.
- **Purpose Two** - The provision of support and financial assistance to students of town planning who are in financial hardship.
- **Purpose Three** - To undertake research for the public benefit into town planning and its social, economic, and financial effects on the community and into other such relevant fields of study connected with town planning as the Trustees think fit and to publish the useful results of any such research.
- **Purpose Four** - The provision and support of any charitable cause associated with town planning.

2.2 These guidelines relate to the first two purposes where financial grants to individuals suffering financial hardship are made.

3.0 Grant Beneficiaries

3.1 Purpose One – as the ‘settlor’ of the RTPI Trust is the Royal Town Planning Institute so the beneficiaries under this purpose shall be members of the Royal Town Planning Institute from all classes set out in the Institute’s Byelaws.

3.2 Purpose Two – the definition of ‘students of town planning’ shall mean any undergraduate or graduate studying for a town planning qualification at an RTPI accredited institution.

3.3 In both cases applications will be accepted from:

- Any current member of the Royal Town Planning Institute who has been in membership for more than 12 weeks
- The spouse, partner or dependent of a current member
- The spouse, partner or dependent of a deceased member who was in membership at the date of their death

3.4 Dependent definitions

A dependency relationship exists where it can be shown that the member or in the case of a deceased member, was making a regular financial contribution necessary for the support of the individual or providing significant and necessary physical care for that individual.

4.0 Definition of Hardship

The RTPI Trust’s funds are limited and for this reason it seeks to only make one-off grants to alleviate real hardship not met from other sources.

The Trustees have wide discretion to treat applications sympathetically and provide some financial assistance taking account of the personal circumstances of applicants.

4.1 The definition of financial hardship for the consideration of applicants shall be: *‘someone suffering a temporary period of difficulty with essential financial commitments due to an unforeseen or sudden change in their circumstances or personal situation’*. Essential financial commitments are, for example, those relating to the costs of food, shelter, health, care of dependents, and work-related expenditure including travel-to-work.

4.2 A change in circumstances could include:

- Unplanned loss of an income such as through ill health, the ill health or death of a spouse, partner or dependent, unemployment or a change in employment circumstances that reduces income; or,
- Unplanned increase in expenditure such as through the unforeseen need for an essential item or service which the applicant cannot afford easily or reasonably be expected to budget for.

5.0 Exclusions

5.1 Applications for any of the following will not normally be accepted:

- General living expenses
- Legal proceedings, fines and costs associated with criminal convictions
- Discretionary, leisure and non-essential costs
- Non household debt, county court judgements
- Student loan payments
- Recovery of losses resulting from criminal activity
- Items or services that can be funded by statutory authorities or from other sources
- RTPI membership fees. The Institute should be contacted directly by those wishing to apply for reduced subscription fees.

5.2 The Trustees will only consider more than two applications from any single applicant in exceptional circumstances.

6.0 Process for Considering Applications

6.1 Applications will only be accepted on an *RTPI Trust Application for Financial Assistance Form* which can be downloaded from the relevant section of the RTPI website or provided by a member of the RTPI Governance Team on request.

The process for considering applications has a number of steps as follows:

6.2 Step One – Receipt of Application

Applicants to the RTPI Trust are subject to the Trust's Privacy Policy and can only be shared with Trustees and Officers of the Institute charged with supporting the work of the Trust. Applications are received by Officers who will check to ensure the applicant qualifies under the criteria set out in sections 2 and 3 and forward the application form to all Trustees. Officers will confirm receipt of the application and notify the applicant that it will be considered by the Trustees in line with the procedure set out in sections 6.3 - 6.5 of these guidelines. This activity will be completed immediately upon receipt of an application, usually within 3 days but at times of office closures or holidays this may be longer.

6.3 Step Two – Initial Trustee Feedback

Trustees will aim to share some immediate feedback between themselves by email or at meetings within five working days of receipt of an application from the Governance Team. At the conclusion of this feedback the Chair will make an assessment and recommendation either that:

- 6.3.1 The applicant does not meet the criteria for a grant and the Trustees therefore unanimously supports the rejection of the application. In this case Officers will inform the applicant of the decision giving them the reasons for the Trustee decision; or

- 6.3.2 The applicant is relatively straight forward and the Trustee unanimously support the payment of a grant. In this case the Chair will request the payment be made in line with the procedure in section 6.6; or,
- 6.3.3 The application is complex and requires further consideration and discussion. In this case the Chair will ask Officers to convene a meeting to discuss the application. Trustees will aim to meet no more than 15 working days following receipt of the application. If further information is required from the applicant, the process in 6.4 will be followed. If the decision is for a grant to be rejected an officer will contact the applicant giving them the reasons for the Trustee decision. If the application is subsequently supported, the payment of a grant will be made in line with section 6.6.

In any exchange of information or views on the application, the applicants name will be substituted with initials in order to preserve privacy.

If an application for financial assistance, or further information subsequently provided by the applicant, gives the Trustees reasonable cause for concern regarding an applicant's safety or risk of harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead Trustee will report their concerns to an appropriate statutory agency.

6.4 Step Three – Request Further Information from an Applicant

In the case of 6.3.2 above further information may be needed for Trustees to make a decision. This can be done either through an officer or a nominated Trustee contacting the applicant to clarify information. In all cases information received is covered by the Trust's Privacy Policy and remains confidential. Contact will be made within five working days of the Trustee decision to request further information and feedback provided to other Trustees immediately following contact.

6.5 Step Four – Making a Decision

Once Trustees are happy that they have all the necessary information to make a decision they will either approve or reject the application. Trustees will use criteria listed in sections 2 – 5 of these guidelines, the information available on the application and their own discretion in making decisions on applications. They will also consider their responsibilities under the Trust Deed, and the long-term sustainability of the Charity. Decisions will be decided on a majority vote of all Trustees present with the Chair having a casting vote if appropriate, in line with 6.3.1 and 4.3.5 of the RTPI Trust *Governing Regulations*. The decisions of Trustees will be final and not open to appeal.

Step 6.6 Step Five – Making Payments

Trustees alone can authorise payments of grants to applicants. All decisions will be recorded in the minutes of the current or next Trustees meeting and in the case of a grant being paid, in the *Register of Grants*. The RTPI Finance Team process payments on behalf of the Trust. In doing so they follow the RTPI protocols which include verification of the Trustee decision. Emails or

meeting minutes will be shared with the Finance Team in connection with this and retained in connection with audit requirements.

Upon receipt of a decision to make a payment an officer will contact the applicant and request details to allow the payment to be made. These details will be passed to the Finance Team. Payments will usually be made the week following the receipt of the payment details, although this may be longer at holiday time or when year-end accounts activity takes place. Officers will confirm the payment to the Trustees and convey any subsequent feedback from the applicant back to them.

7.0 Review of the Guidelines

7.1 These guidelines will be reviewed by the Trustees in the light of experience annually on the anniversary of their approval.

Approved by the Trustees of the RTPI Trust on 5 May 2026