

JRRT Grantees' Survey 2020

Detailed results



We received 53 responses to our survey earlier this year (compared to 43 for our previous survey in 2017).

Who responded?

35 respondents were non charitable campaign groups, 3 registered charities, 4 political parties and 11 "other".

The largest group (37%) have incomes between £100-25k 15% had incomes below £35k and only 4% above £1m

How did you first hear about JRRT?

Most grantees first heard about JRRT by word of mouth (53%), followed by referrals by another funder (13%), direct approaches by JRRT or the UK Democracy fund (10.5%) and search engine (8%)

What three words come to mind when you think about JRRT?

This word cloud shows the most popular four words listed by respondents:

A word cloud where the words are arranged in a vertical stack. The words are 'Democracy', 'Campaigning', 'Supportive', and 'Liberal', all in a red serif font. 'Democracy' is the largest, followed by 'Campaigning', 'Supportive', and 'Liberal'.

How well do you understand JRRT's strategy?

A growing proportion of grantees (43%) said very well or extremely well, up significantly on the 10% in 2017.

What issues do you associate with JRRT?

Top choice issues

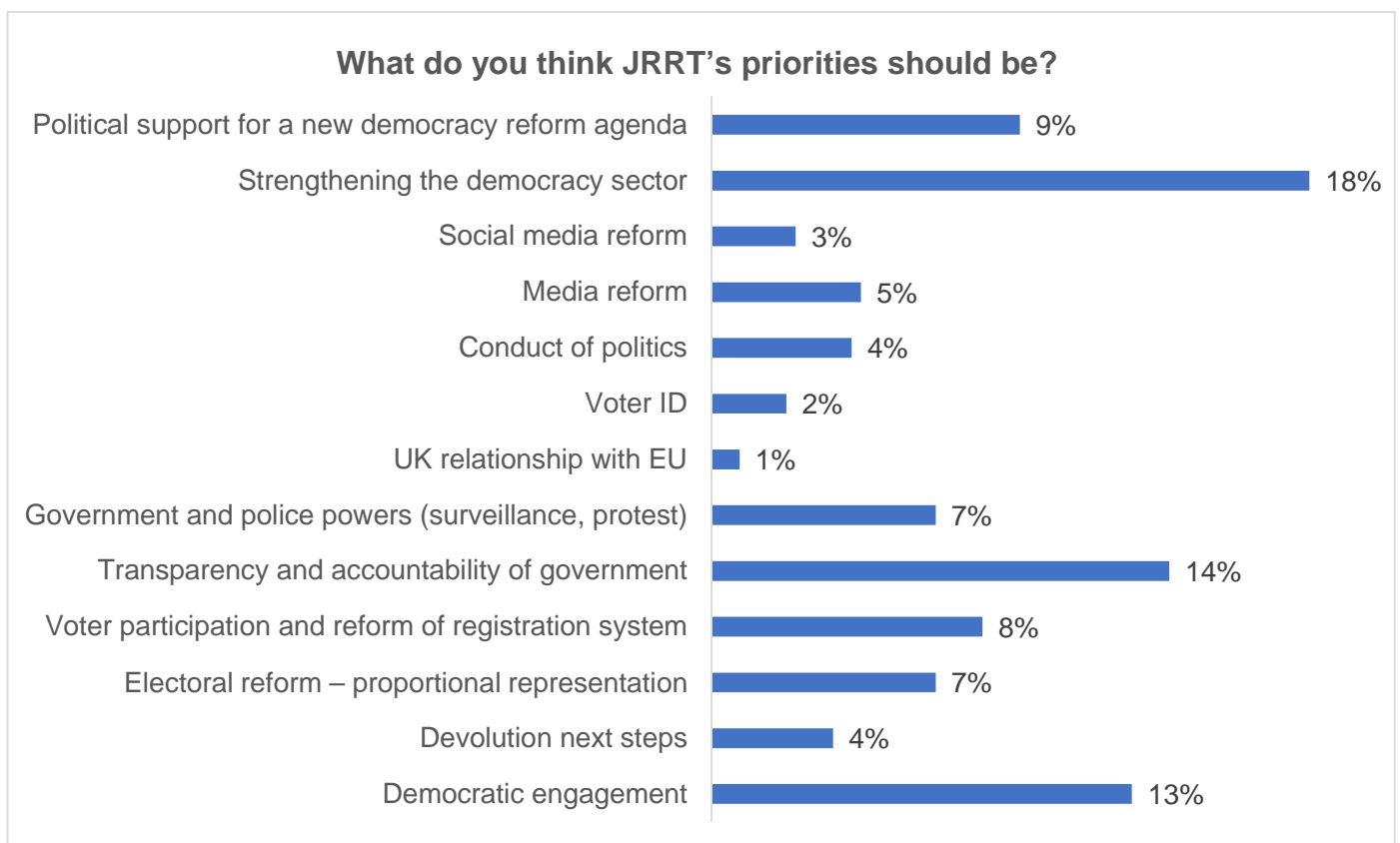
Democratic reform	59%
Strengthening the democracy sector	20%
Supporting the Liberal Democrats	17%

Weighted top four rankings

Democratic reform	30%
Strengthening the democracy sector	20%
Civil liberties	20%
Voter participation	11%

What should JRRT's priorities be?

The highest weighted rankings were strengthening the democracy sector (18%); transparency and accountability (14%); and democratic engagement 13%



How do you rate JRRT on:

Impact on your organisation?

60% scored JRRT as having significant positive impact.

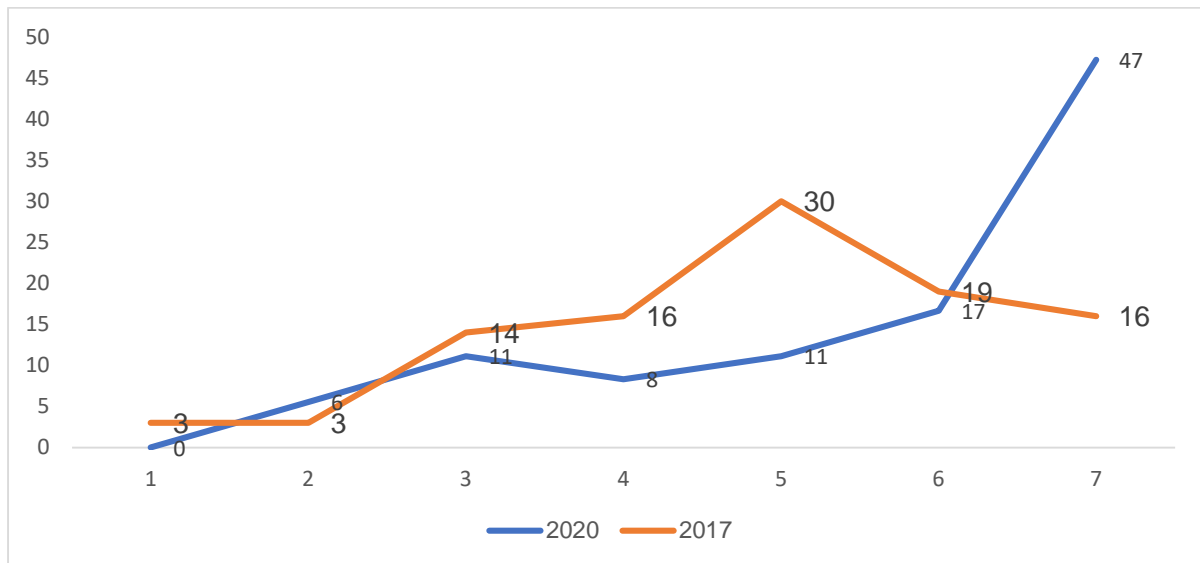
Understanding the issues on which you work?

22% regarded JRRT as expert and 80% were positive about level of understanding.

Influence in your field?

47% rated JRRT as a major influence in their field.

This is the metric that shows marked improvement since 2017, with 47% rating JRRT at the highest end of the scale – major influence – compared to 16% in 2017.



1 = No influence, 7 = Major influence

The application process

How useful was the Trust’s website when making your application?

Given the investment in a new website in 2019, it was encouraging to see the significant increase in number rating the website as extremely useful (39%) but with nearly half towards the middle of the range, this suggests room for improvement.

How involved was the Trust in the development of your grant proposal?

80% of grantees saw the Trust as involved (25% substantially) in the development of their grant proposal, although this was a drop compared with 2017.

How much pressure did you feel to modify your priorities in order to secure funding for your application?

There has been a marked reduction in pressure to modify applications with 75% reporting no or little pressure and only 3% at 6 on the 7-point scale (with 7 being significant pressure).

How do you rate the speed of JRRT’s application process?

85% of applicants are positive about the speed of the application process with 46% rating it as excellent.

How do you rate the ease of JRRT's application process?

78% were positive about the ease of the application process (nearly a third at the top of the scale).

Feedback when an application is turned down by the Trust

One third of respondents had had an application turned down. A fifth found the feedback extremely useful. Only 11% were negative about how useful the feedback received was, and 32% did not receive feedback. We are aware that not all applicants request feedback, but we are keen to work with applicants to make this process as helpful as possible.

Substantive discussions about grant reports

We asked if grantees had had a substantive discussion with the Trust about the contents of their grant reports. 43% said yes, 28% no and 29% had not yet submitted a report. This is a further area where we want to work with our grantees so that we are both learning from – and sharing perspectives on – the experience of implementing the grant.

How comfortable do you feel approaching the Trust if a problem arises?

An encouraging two in three grantees said they felt very comfortable approaching us if a problem arises. Only 3% were not comfortable and 6% did not take a view.

How much, if at all, has a JRRT grant improved your ability to sustain the work it funded in the future.

65% of grantees say that JRRT grant has contributed to building their financial sustainability. Nearly a third say we have substantially improved their ability to sustain their work.

Strengthening the sector and capacity building grantees

The Trust is considering what other support it could give to grantees beyond making grants. We asked respondents what support they would like JRRT to consider providing:

The highest weighted rankings were grants for capacity building (20%); followed by opportunities to network or collaborate, and opportunities to take part in events and seminars (both 14%); access to London office space (13%); and introductions to parliamentarians in their field (12%).

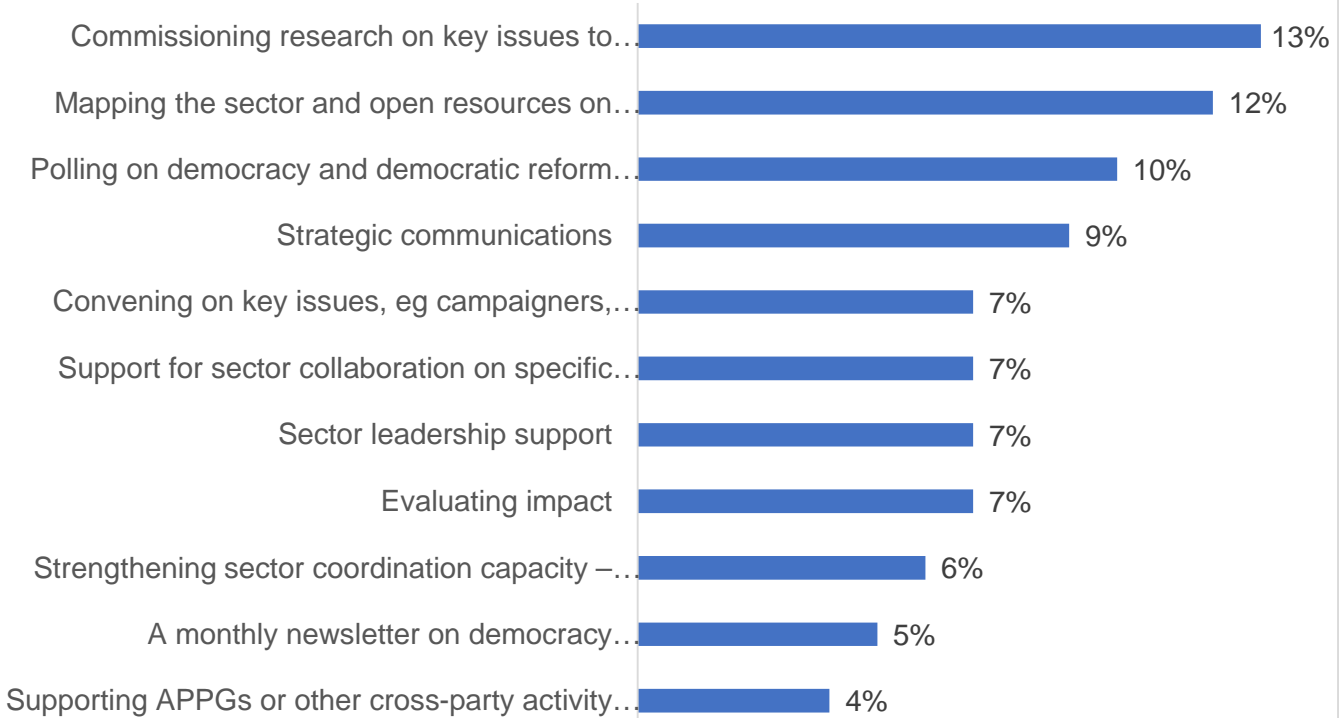
JRRT support beyond grant making



JRRT is committed to strengthening the democracy sector as a whole, both through our own project work and through grants. We asked respondents about ways we could contribute to a stronger democracy sector.

The highest weighted rankings were for commissioning research to support campaigning (13%); mapping the sector and open resources on who's who, academics, funders, parliamentarians (12%); polling (10%); and strategic communications (9%).

Strengthening the democracy sector



The spread between issues is not large – and if choices beyond the top four asked for are included then the gap between most of the options reduces significantly, with most being seen as priorities for the sector.

Open comments

Respondents were provided with the opportunity to include open comments on a number of the areas covered by the survey. These are included in full below:

Comments on our priorities, and what our respondents felt these should be:

- Supporting grassroots Liberalism, such as the Association for Liberal Democrat Councillors
- Prison Reform when dealing with conceited [sic] terrorists
- Supporting small but genuinely sustainable organisations which will be helped by grants but won't be dependent on them in long term.
- Be strategic, long term, fund an eco-system for a new politics, go big, invest for the future, split and nature [sic] new leadership talent
- Grassroots community-based campaigns and social movements. There is so little funding for genuine campaigns, that big charities and political parties have the resources to be a dominating voice.
- We believe that it is vital to prioritise the participation of under-represented groups throughout all of this work.
- Equity of expression in the UK
- I think JRRT should continue to use its resources to help build a better democracy that is inclusive and accessible to all members of society.
- Whatever you choose, provide the evidence base (research) that identifies the priority activities that are needed to address the issue.
- Freedom of expression – this has become a vacuum in UK. NGOs are now replaced by more right-wing groups/untethered to human rights. This relates to social media reform (though reform here often refers to extrajudicial censorship/change of free speech norms). Defending/restoring rights and civil liberties post-Covid (repealing emergency powers, surveillance extensions, etc)
- An ecosystem perspective is key. Everything is connected. You have the luxury of a long-time horizon and a wide perspective, so invest foremost in fundamental infrastructure and sector-wide assets.
- So much of the public sector is now corporate led, that holding government power to account must include corporate power, as part of the accountability agenda. Social justice in all forms is a key strand of the underpinning core of JRRT challenging political power, upholding democracy and enabling participation. Racism, poverty and inequality are fundamental to the political disempowerment of certain communities and all need addressed through support of tackling systemic long term issues rather than tinkering with outcomes at the end of the process or fads, such as 'social media reform'.

- I don't know what the priorities should be.
- We sometimes struggle to understand the relationship between JRRT, JRCT and the UK Democracy Fund, it would be great to get some clarity about that relationship.
- Political Literacy in schools, we cannot have democracy reform or meaningful voter participation without it.
- Would love to see some work done on greater inclusion of 'left-behind' voters, especially those with severe disabilities & vision impairments. Even if it's not support for online voting, they are a highly underserved group currently in our democracy and would benefit from positive action. I'm a strong believer that no democracy is a truly democratic unless everyone has the ability to actively participate. Also, would love to see continued support for racial justice initiatives.

Additional open comments about the impact of the Trust in respondents' field or organisation:

- JRRT's work and support in the field of democratic reform is invaluable, crucial and very much appreciated
- Very well-regarded partner and friend to our organisation
- We work in technology and politics – and used our JRRT grant to make technology the public can use. I'm not aware of other JRRT grantees which do this, but think the JRRT should be supporting more PoliTech organisations like us.
- The Trust is uniquely valuable – but spreads itself too thinly. There needs to be a big strategy on a new politics and democracy
- Electoral Integrity is still in a state of limited understanding in the UK. Funding has helped us make it more publicly known. Less and less do we get asked why we are doing it.
- A small grant for one year for our compensation campaign 2018-19, made a huge difference to our capacity to put time in and our thus our achievements. No other funding was available. Glad JRRT is bold enough to support 'unpopular causes'.
- Could be more visible
- The funding which we have received has enabled our organisation to go from strength to strength and reach out to women from a whole range of diverse backgrounds and political persuasions, empowering them to get more involved in politics and consider standing for election. But there is still much more work that needs to be done to build a democracy that is truly inclusive and accessible to women. JRRT's support in this has been transformative! Thank you!
- I think the Trust is seen as having partisan views through its close association with the Lib Dems, which is potentially damaging. While the Trust has provided us with almost the only opportunity to get projects funded, it has been very hard and time-consuming to get what are small amounts of money. Project-based funding prevents us from being able to deliver longer term results, but it has

been useful (invaluable!) at getting projects off the ground to show their potential. If larger grants were available that would transform the sector and the level of impact being made.

- The Trust had a huge impact on our organisation, and I know has had a very real impact in the field of decent and democratic politics more broadly.
- JRRT is the most respected funder and big-player champion in the democracy activism space.
- There are few funders who will fund the kind of work we do. Many of the organisations in our field have been funded by you.
- The Trust is vital to our work
- I don't know about wider influence but I had a few frustrating and time consuming experiences trying to get funding from JRRT and it wasn't terribly helpful – though grateful for the funding we have had.
- There is so little funding in the democracy sector that JRRT provides an invaluable lifeline for a lot of organisations. It is important to have access to funding from an organisation with such a good reputation as funding on projects around elections especially are under a lot of scrutiny.
- I genuinely believe our democracy would be significantly weaker without the Trust's involvement. Access to funding is key. Without it, most campaigns would be entirely unsustainable and have minimal longevity and impact. As one of the very funders in this space, I think the Trust has a hugely positive impact.

Open comments on what respondents find both helpful and frustrating about our grant management processes:

- Lots of support has been given to us to help us make sure our applications are successful
- Our JRRT grants – while relatively small at £7,500 – meant a great deal to us and helped us undertake development work which would not have been possible otherwise, as well as gaining us and JRRT profile, and helped developed our relationships with lots of important stakeholders. Thank you!
- Process is lightweight, rapid turnaround. Great to be able to submit a draft application and get a steer. Very approachable.
- The staff are very good – they need a clearer political strategy to operate in
- Wasn't sure what to expect at interview – but that's about my only comment for improvement. JRRT is light-years better than many other processes we have been through
- Our experience was that staff were very much available to discuss and feedback on the application, which was very helpful.
- The support from Ben Williams has been very useful. Nothing is frustrating although sometimes we have felt more information about timescales on a decision would be useful.
- Jessica Kennedy was incredible in checking in with us; challenging us to make our application stronger; and being there to troubleshoot during the pandemic.

- It is not easy to find information about the UK Democracy Fund on the JRRT website
- I think the process is very clear and accessible. The changed process (about 12 months ago?) makes it much clearer the format which the application is based on.
- It's a learning curve to see your own work in terms of goals and impact!
- Staff and trustees are very helpful. The application process gave us enough space to explain the project but is less bureaucratic and less detailed than many funders. Management process not onerous.
- The lack of bureaucracy is refreshing in comparison with other funders.
- I think that it is extremely useful to be able to have some guidance about how to complete the grant application.
- The final decision-making process (with the directors) seems unnecessarily opaque. I think a lot of time is wasted applying for grants that appear on paper to meet the funding priorities, but there are clearly views among directors with different nuances, and that favour certain types of projects over others. At the very least these views need to be made clearer sooner in the process. Ideally they should only be evidence-based, in which case publish the research.
- The deadlines and the time it can take to move from initial conversation can seem slow when in the midst of fast moving politics, but equally I understand that the board are voluntary and that you need to steward your available funding carefully. The ability to speak to your grants manager about applications is incredibly helpful and is a real strength of the organisation.
- The direct support in improving the application by advising one-on-one about JRRT's priorities was invaluable. The paperwork has all been clear and the process straightforward.
- JRRT staff have been a fantastic, ongoing support. Applications can be very time consuming which is difficult for small/overworked groups but also appreciate this is difficult to mitigate.
- The application and grant processes were positive and trouble-free
- I appreciate the hands-on support and frank dialogue. The grant management processes are light. A few years ago, we were turned down for an application, without much feedback; but our more recent experiences have been positive.
- Compared to most grant-makers, it's a great process. It would be nice to understand more how our grant fits within a larger strategy, and for there to be more community development for grantees. JRRT could perhaps be a more proactive investor in the sector, approaching organisations that it sees fulfilling important roles, rather than waiting for applications to come in.
- Helpful: the availability of a staff member who understood the issues;
Frustrating: the application form was rather bureaucratic
- It could be helpful to plan with a longer term funding approach, but we appreciate why this is not possible.
- The staff are always very friendly and responsive. However, I've been given lots of very particular feedback (I think from the trust/board members) and there seems to be a heavy bias towards legislative campaigning. Hopes were high

but I've stopped applying now because it feels like it'll take too much effort to prove we are effective. I think we are a high impact organisation so this is a shame.

- The speed is incredible and very much welcome. I feel like a valued partner and that I can express my views to JRRT and they will listen about what our needs are and adapt based on grantee feedback which is both rare and incredibly refreshing.
- The application process was very easy, grant manager was incredibly friendly. When an issue arose, we spoke about it with JRRT without any issue and managed to resolve it with their support.
- I find having people within the Trust to speak with for advice to be most useful. The advice on the website is great, too, and I appreciate the method of submitting an outline before submitting a full application.
- Personal contact

Open comments on additional support:

- Introduction to high net worth contacts with interest in electoral reform
- In-kind support through accountants or solicitors
- We would welcome introductions to users who might use the tools we built as well as other funders or potential collaborators.
- There could be a lot of support around shared book room functions – databases, publications etc
- I appreciate that JRRT/Democracy Fund is already engaging in a wider pool for larger work through the Democracy Fund but I wonder if there are also private philanthropists etc that might also be possible.
- Help in finding additional funders, pointing in the right direction, introductions and networking
- Not sure what to suggest. JRRT has done some of the above already – eg we have participated in JRRT events where we networked with other grantees, and JRRT staff.
- Yes – it would be great to be able to have "capacity" funding and office space. Being able to participate in Party Conferences alongside JRRT would be completely amazing. Although some of our campaigners always attend Party Conferences we have never had sufficient funding to actually have a stall or stand. Collaborating on this would be great.
- Publishing research into the causes / key issues for any particular project area. Most organisations can't afford to do this, and it only needs to be done once. This would make the application process more transparent too, as the research would show what work is high priority, and what isn't. duplicating the work.
- I think it's essential that the Trust provides some delivery expertise. This does not mean project managing grantees, but offering a framework of tools and activities to enable organisations working towards the same goal to collaborate, learn from each other, and understand their role in the bigger picture of the social issue they are addressing. And be led over-arching metrics that some

real impact – not metrics devised by each grantee. Offering a delivery framework may seem a stretch, but it's how every organisation works to keep multiple teams all aligned and focussed on the same goal. It would be a game changer for funders.

- Ability to meet and network with other grantees would be very welcome. The opportunity to access shared office space in London would obviously facilitate that well on an ad hoc basis.
- Help to bring more sources of funding into the sector. Create an evaluation team that grantees can draw upon for support – it's wasteful for grantees to develop their own evaluation capacity.
- All of these would be useful. We currently 'borrow' working space from other orgs and academics when not in cafes and other makeshift spaces between meetings in London – the loan of working space for hosting meetings would be useful, ie to hold small events and working groups. We always have to beg borrow and steal meeting space when costs are excessive for short (half day) events for example, but it would be a luxury.
- The M and E support we have had from NPC has been extremely useful.
- I'd personally love to connect with other 'founders'. I've met very few people who have founded a think tank, for example. And those which I have met, I've found it very useful to share insights and experience. Given the small-scale and non-profit nature of these kinds of organisations, I'd find it useful to connect with other funders and learn more about how they manage things like motivation, mental health, sustainability, working with volunteers, and more.

Open comments on any assistance which respondents would like to see JRRT offer to individual grantees or across the sector:

- JRRT has convening capacity. Perhaps bringing together online groups who have similar activities might make sense, especially as many are not necessarily aware of the plans others have.
- A sort-of "open office hours" with JRRT team members with monthly slots to seek advice on who we should be talking to, who knows who, etc. would be brilliant.
- Maintaining a sector jobs board / newsletter would be a useful and cost effective thing to do. Most grant money is spent on paying people – help make sure that it's spent on the best people! It would also be something that could be used for research (job descriptions, salaries, team compositions, etc), evaluation, and to attract more diverse talent into the sector.
- Access to discounted and confidential counselling services. Burnout is a problem across the campaigning sector.
- The democracy sector faces some specific challenges around scrutiny and appearing non-partisan, both to the public but also to funders. Could JRRT develop a "review" or a process that organisations could use to demonstrate they are non-partisan to others? It is a question we are asked a lot and we worry it may put off some funders.

Overall feedback about how the Trust is perceived – positive or negative – and suggestions as to how the Trust can be more effective:

- We find the Trust incredibly supportive and effective – thank you!
- The Trust is very positively viewed by members of our organisation. We are slightly concerned that there is a shift away from direct funding of political parties – as Liberal Democrats, winning elections, especially local elections, are still one of the best ways we can drive social change and put pressure on Westminster to promote democratic reform.
- We remain extremely grateful to JRRT for our £7,500 grant which allowed us to undertake work which would otherwise not have been possible. I think these short applications and funding amounts for specific tasks and projects are a good idea, and often better than larger grants which may have less specificity around goals making them harder to evaluate. And while I support the JRRT funding longer term campaigns, I would encourage JRRT to consider funding more small organisations like ours which build practical tools which people can use to understand and engage in democracy, and base future funding on efficacy of these tools and how many people adopt them. On the surface, many of the organisations funded also seem to be relatively traditional in nature, often with an emphasis on people meeting up in some way, and I'd encourage JRRT to focus more funding those applications with more digital outputs and goals.
- We are losing. That is a collective fault and we all need to re-evaluate our goals and methods. I worry that the Trust is fixated on mending a democracy already out of date – and not building the culture and institutions of a new 21st Century democracy – which means engaging with the old to open it up to change but also investing in the zeitgeist of new democratic practices, norms and organisations
- I think JRRT could big themselves up a bit more – talk more about the successes from projects you've funded
- In our view, the JRRT is perceived very positively. In particular, there is no other body which supports democratic reform consistently. This along with cross-party working to achieve that is more important than ever.
- We have a very positive perception of JRRT. It has allowed us to expand our work and maintain it over the past three years. It has been especially positive during Covid-19.
- Greatly admire your support in getting the application together, easy to be reached and to communicate with. Very open. Thanks!
- The Trust has a good record as one of few funders that can support community organisations to build grassroots campaigns and movements for change. We have had a good relationship with JRRT over many years. We have found some funders too influenced by the government of the day (whatever their stripe). We really appreciate that JRRT aims to support people like us who are committed to speaking truth to power, to remaining independent of governments, to demanding our rights, and to being accountable to our grassroots network.

Community organisations are overworked and underfunded, and dwindling funders impose constant pressure. I think the Trust could perhaps help us identify other suitable funders and introduce us to them with a recommendation.

- Overall, the Trust has an excellent reputation among campaigners and is known for supporting socially important issues. The ethical foundation in freedom, social participation, democracy, means that it potentially has a broad and cross-party support. It is the only trust that openly supports political campaigns, which is an extremely valuable role, since most trusts support only charitable activities. JRRT has a much more approachable manner than other trusts, for example in discussing an application, and also allows groups space to carry out campaigning as they see fit – without lots of box ticking or pointless assessments. Therefore, it takes a 'light touch' and keeps an eye on the important things, in terms of the results of the campaign, rather than micromanaging. A couple of more critical points, perhaps. The recent shift away from civil liberties issues meant that the Trust potentially moved away from important issues on which it had been the main liberal (non-free market) funder. Civil liberties issues are also key for any form of democratic participation, since if society is unfree it cannot associate. Therefore, it could be argued that the new funding priorities meant that it cut the Trust off from an area of funding in which it had a good reputation and had long supported. Freedom issues could also not be more important in the current period, of course. There is also perhaps a perception that the Trust is allied with the Liberal Democrats, which may limit cross-party and no-party support.
- The Trust is a trusted funder of the women's participation slice of the democracy sector that we work in. It has been a real pleasure to see the work of so many organisations doing vital work in this field, who struggle to raise funds, supported by JRRT. It is only a positive thing!
- JRRT is hugely respected. The team have provided much needed guidance for our grass-roots campaign, especially in assisting us with the administrative process when applying for funding. The grant has been invaluable in helping us take the next step towards building a more structured organisation that can really offer support to women who would like to stand for elected office. JRRT seems to be unique in funding projects that aim to improve democratic engagement and campaign to build more responsive and accessible democratic systems. Thank you JRRT!
- I think I am quite harsh in my feedback but it reflects a frustration that there are so few funders in this space, and that there is so little support. But the reality is that JRRT is doing what nobody else seems to be doing, or is brave enough to be doing, for which I will always be 100% grateful. My recommendation is that the additional activities be taken on asap to support the sector – these will have a transformative effect. I imagine it will require a different set of skills, but it will be worth it. It's great that you are asking for feedback.
- As far as I'm aware the Trust is viewed very favourably. You are seen by some as being too close to the Liberal Democrats, which in an era where they are hardly in the ascendancy politically seems like a poor choice of emphasis. But

I know many people and organisations who have benefitted from your support, both financial and in other ways. I expect that you will rightly want to reflect on your areas of focus in light of Brexit and the election of a Johnson majority Government. I hope that you continue to support efforts to remove them, to change political discourse in the UK and to restore a better, more capable politics to our country and as a result better governance. It has rarely been needed more.

- In my view: extremely positively. As I've said in reports, I've never had such a good and effective relationship with a funder. Been very impressed with the sensitivity and skill with which the relationship has been managed.
- I am struggling to think of a negative here. Without exception, every interaction I've had about JRRT has been positive and well-received. The respect in the sector for JRRT is immeasurable and your self-awareness to even conduct this survey speaks volumes as to why that is the case. In short, you're legends.
- The Trust is perceived positively in the areas which we work in, in its work supporting important initiatives around democratic accountability.
- I don't think the Trust needs to do too much soul-searching. You are already playing a valuable role by supporting some of the bolder initiatives in this field and I don't see the need for a major change of priorities. However, you could extract more value from your position by convening and strategising with the sector.
- Overall, I am a big fan! JRRT is friendly, innovative, and I feel like we are developing a good working relationship. You have shown us a lot of trust, and that's deeply appreciated. I have benefited from some very useful introductions, as well! I would like to understand your overall strategy more, and how we fit within it, so that we can more effectively work together. I understand that funders often like to act as relatively quiet partners to give space for grantees' leadership, but there are ways to provide useful orientation without stifling people. Also, perhaps the Trust could do more to promote its grantees to other funders (individuals, foundations, other?), and help them apply successfully? This could help your money go further and do a lot to strengthen the sector over time!
- Perception: a vital player — perhaps the *only* funder in this space, willing to fund non-charitable projects (actually Lush is quite interesting too, but they're smaller... maybe there are a few other activist funders that keep a low profile)... BUT also set in its ways, a Lib Dem front, 100yrs old, not clear if there's a plan/priorities Suggestions for improvement: First, I think I never understood just how small the trust is — perhaps spending more on internal capacity might be worthwhile? Second, given its size, I think you either go very tightly focused on 1-3 grants a year, or you try to let a thousand flowers bloom with max £10k grants for ideas&pioneers/one-off projects. I'd go for the former. Risk of falling between those gaps is that you end up with 10-20 zombie organisations staffed with 1-2 people doing just enough to get by but never really transforming anything.

- The key need is for advice, formal or informal, as to the Trust's current priorities and rough guidance on the scale of possible support if the subject is deemed worthy of support.
- Our interaction with JRRT has been supportive beyond just financial support. The team at the Trust are extremely passionate about our cause in helping support young people engage in democracy, and the Trust has opened a lot of networks and doors for us that didn't exist. Our hope is that the Trust continues this line of support for the future, as it has helped strengthen the sector.
- The shift to 'democracy' has been a little vague and appears to fail to challenge systemic issues and disempowerment in society, created through social injustice. A suggestion: The Royal Society manages a 'pairing scheme' and a similar approach might be interesting for new campaigners. ie a week in Westminster learning how Parliament works and all the intricacies of legislation and policy making, opportunities to influence debates, questions, committees etc and lend insights to parliamentarians from expert groups, research, and their areas of work, that may be outside the Parliamentarians' usual scope but need attention: royalsociety.org/grants-schemes-awards/pairing-scheme/
- One of the best trusts we have ever worked with. Incredibly flexible, willing to listen and really focused on collaboration and impact. We feel like partners rather than grantees, which feels very positive and empowering and allows us to be honest about challenges.
- I'm a strong supporter of the Trust and it was one of the first organisations I came across when I began my organisation several years ago now. I think meeting with other grantees and sharing learning would be super-useful and may help prevent the repetition of mistakes across campaigns.