

Call for Proposals: a democracy network

“Our democracy faces serious challenges... one of the most effective ways to support this work is to connect the efforts of those pursuing such goals”

Networking for Democracy

Strengthening the democracy sector is a priority for JRRT. Our [grantee survey](#) in 2020 showed strong support for “strengthening democracy” – it was top of the weighted rankings on what applicants and grantees thought JRRT priorities should be.

We are currently undertaking a number of initiatives including:

- commissioning Koreo to build a [UK Democracy Map](#) as an open source resource for the sector
- expanding our research and convening programme
- setting up [Democracy Action](#) as a resource for the sector
- commissioning Joe Mitchell to produce [Networking for Democracy](#), an analysis of sector needs and views on networks based on interviews across the sector and a literature review.

Networking for Democracy broadly concludes that there is such a thing as a democracy sector; that it is weak, fragmented and underfunded; that building better connections within and outside the sector is a priority capacity building need; and that there is a good case and support for building a “network”. It also reflects on past attempts to better network within the sector, and what the democracy sector can learn from other sectors.

The growth over the past year in collaborative initiatives across the sector, often on specific issues, is encouraging. There remains however space – and we believe demand – for a network or hub that can help to connect people working for a better democracy, build capacity among weaker emergent groups, access and share diverse perspectives and enhance information exchange and learning. Over time it may cohere on values, aims, messaging and influence – and align action – but that will depend on the sector.

Based on responses to our grantee survey, Networking for Democracy and our own conversations including an event with c. 50 organisations from across the sector in December 2020, JRRT has decided to issue a Call for Proposals to set up a network.

What is the network for?

JRRT does not start with a fixed view of what the main functions of a network should be. We recognise the importance of enabling networks themselves to set the agenda and strategy for their collective work. A network needs to be shaped and trusted by the sector and responsive to it.

The following lists examples of potential roles for a Network based on responses to JRRT's grantee survey, those interviewed for Networking for Democracy, and attendees at the Network event in December 2020. Potential functions include:

Connecting

- Building connections within the sector and outside, strengthening access to politicians, media and academics.
- Linking national to local and local to national.
- Bringing together existing clusters and thematic networks.

Information sharing and coordination

- Sharing resources: a shared calendar, mapping, case studies, contacts, events, tracking research, evidence and policy, reducing duplication, horizon scanning.
- Building a democracy community: mentorship, action learning groups, annual festival.

Capacity building

- Building sector infrastructure and capacity: operational assistance, shared work or event space, governance or evaluation support, practical resource).
- Empowering new activists and leaders.
- Bringing more funding into the sector.

Vision and influence

- [Developing a shared understanding of what a good democracy looks like]
- Support better public engagement and framing of communications.
- Greater influencing power, a sector-wide policy platform, with a view towards influencing the 2024 manifestos. Pool resources for shared activity.

This is not intended to be comprehensive or prescriptive, but to illustrate what we are hearing from people in the sector and some of the needs this initiative should aim to meet. Applicants interested in developing a response to this Call for Proposals will need to think carefully about areas of activity to include or exclude and whether you anticipate your focus would be mainly on connecting, campaigning, or capacity building or a mixture and how this might change over time.

For this initiative to flourish, it will have to build trust and legitimacy across the sector and be open and responsive to the perspectives of a diverse ecosystem of groups. Its success will be dependent on the buy-in and contributions of participants.

Who would run the network?

We anticipate potential applications from any of the following:

1. An individual to set up a network
2. An existing organisation to host a network
3. Hybrid models (rotating hosting arrangements, connecting pairs or trios to collaborate on managing a network)

What we will fund

JRRT is committed to funding a network for up to three years if assessment of progress at the end of each year is positive.

We aim to fund the equivalent of at least one full-time post or consultant and a good reasonable operating budget to cover day-to-day costs, online presence and some projects each year.

Right to cancel or vary the procurement process

JRRT reserves the right to cancel or vary this procurement process at any time. We are not bound in any way to enter into any contractual arrangement with potential contractors. We reserve the right to terminate, suspend, amend, or vary this Procurement Process by notice to all potential contractors in writing.

Application process and timings

Please submit your application by **Mon 22 February 2021** to info@jrrt.org.uk. We are likely to hold interviews between **17–24 March 2021** so please let us know if there are any working days during that period you are not available.

Between these dates we may come back with questions of clarification and/or ask for more detail on any sections of the application which would benefit from more development.

You can contact JRRT staff to talk through any questions as you are developing your proposal.

- Ben Williams Programme Manager benwilliams@jrrt.org.uk 07808 936368
- Fiona Weir CEO fiona.weir@jrrt.org.uk 07890 910373

Format for proposals

We are not creating a form specifically for these proposals. When drafting your proposal, it would be very helpful if you could follow the running order we have suggested:

- Contact and organisational information:
 - Contact name
 - Organisation name and type (including company and/or registered charity number if appropriate)
 - Email address
 - Phone number
 - Website
 - Social media accounts
- An introductory paragraph summarising who you are and why you are submitting this proposal
- Paragraphs in the order requested on the 10 criteria for assessment (see below) adding any additional comments you would like to add.
- A summary budget in the format outlined below
- For individuals, please provide a copy of your CV
- For organisations, please supply your most recent annual report

Criteria for assessing proposals

Applicants can be individuals or organisations and will need to address:

1. Understanding of democracy – a short summary of what you see as the main threats to and opportunities for strengthening the health of UK democracy and the main challenges facing the sector.
2. Understanding and experience of networks and sector capacity building – you will need to set out your understanding of what makes an effective network, relevant experience of nurturing and supporting collaboration and the approach you would take to building capacity across the network.
3. Understanding the democracy sector – a short summary of what you see as the building blocks for collaboration including how you will work with existing and emerging initiatives across the sector.

4. Trust – how you currently work with others and how you would build trust in this role and address concerns other groups might have. Providing supportive statements from groups or individuals would be helpful.
5. Responsiveness – how the applicant would develop plans that are responsive to the needs and priorities of a diverse mix of organisations and add value to their work and how this responsiveness would be maintained over time. This might include what governance arrangements/operating model might facilitate accountability to the sector.
6. Priorities – while understood that any plans would need to be developed in conjunction with others, your initial views on what activities you would see as priorities, in particular for year 1. This should include examples of outcomes you would set and how you would assess progress.
7. Inclusivity and diversity – covering who the network is for, how you would work to bring together a broad mix of groups, both charitable and non-charitable and support diversity across the sector and geographical reach.
8. Financial sustainability – a strong independent network should be able to diversify funding sources and potentially secure contributions from others in the sector. While we are not anticipating specific proposals, initial thoughts on approach would strengthen the application.
9. Organisational – your ability and experience of project management or direct implementation of core activities from website to data management, to facilitation or online resources.
10. Organisational structure – *you will need to set out whether you are applying as one or more individuals or as part of a hosting arrangement with one or more established organisations.* Depending on which model you will also need to address the following:
 - a. Organisations:
 - how you will recruit/redeploy to the network a post/posts meeting the skills and experience required
 - how you will manage and support this person
 - what facilities or resources will be available from your organisation
 - how the project will be managed, decision-making structures and independence from your own organisation's campaign priorities
 - how your organisation relates to others in the sector and how you will build trust and confidence in this role
 - whether the intent is for a long-term hosting arrangement or as a platform from which a standalone network would build.

b. Applicants from one or more individual

- experience of self-managing performance, accountability and personal wellbeing
- how you relate to others in the sector and how you will build trust and confidence in this role
- personal experience of networks, ideally in a facilitating or coordination role

No section, except 10, should exceed 250/300 words.

Budget required

Please provide a breakdown of the budget for up to three years (skeletal in Y2 and Y3) in the format of the table below. Ask for the amount required but be realistic.

The Trust will pay:

- Staff or consultant time
- Reasonable support costs or overheads required to deliver the project (in the case of a hosting organisation this would be the proportion of overall support costs linked to this project).
- Project costs associated with a limited number of priority activities and specific start-up requirements such as a basic website.

We are not expecting applicants will have secured income from other sources for this initiative or have specific plans to raise funds in place – but if you have secured or anticipate additional funds please include these.

Expenditure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Staff or consultancy Staff or consultancy x days/fte at £xx	£		
Main activities e.g. Communications Resource production Travel Venue hire	£ £ £ £		
Support costs [Share of organisational] support costs associated with the project	£		
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£		
Income			
Income secured (source)	£		
Income anticipated (likely source)	£		