

## Grantee Perceptions Survey 2024: UKDF free text answers

### Do you have any comments on our priorities?

- **Why do you think we should prioritise in the specific areas you ranked the highest in Q17?**
- **Are there any areas that you don't think we should prioritise, and if so, why?**
- **Do you have any other suggestions for where we should prioritise?**

Constituent reform needed to combat disillusionment, same with trust.

Voter participation to increase numbers of people registering to vote.

Police powers would be an interesting avenue to explore and would work with the wider mission or understanding the civic importance of government and governance.

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The fund needs to be focused on democratic issues as the only Democracy funder in the UK.

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Trust in politics must be a priority because if people cannot trust their politicians and politics, they won't trust the policy decisions they take, however rational they are. Improving voter participation is also critical because politicians prioritise talking to registered voters who vote.

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I think systemic changes are the most important in the long run, even if they are the hardest to get. Therefore I think it's vital that Rowntree continues to support these. I also think, given resource limitations, that Rowntree steers clear of those areas where there already are big players.

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I believe that addressing the longstanding gaps in civic engagement and representation within underrepresented communities is very important and need to be prioritised.

Prioritising efforts that amplify the voices of these communities and support educational initiatives on democratic participation is essential for fostering greater inclusivity and equity.

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I find the approach to democratic reforms - PR, AVR, votes for 16 yos, votes for residents as well as encouraging participation of those not often involved in politics - voter reg, ethnic minorities in politics a very clear aim for the fund.

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Young people report they do not feel confident engaging in voting, democracy as it is not taught widely in schools.

Added to the curriculum, encourage young people to take action locally to make change in their communities and link to democratic engagement. So they feel they can make a difference in their community first, then develop their knowledge and skills to be able to feel confident to vote and participate.

Social action projects to develop their interest.

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There is a particular opportunity to embed votes at 16 and high quality political education for young people across the UK within the next few years.

**Have you got any additional comments about our impact on your field or organisation?**

Our interests and those of the Democracy Fund overlap only a little so it's not a problem that it has limited influence in our primary field.

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Really useful organisation, you can see the genuine impact the fund has provided to fantastic, innovative organisations wanting to do great work to increase civic engagement.

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I think the fund has a lot of influence as the only funder and we really need there to be a strategy as actors in this space.

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JRRT is the only consistent funder of our sector so has a significant impact on the activities of the mainly small orgs in the sector and can play (and does play) an important role in helping the sector to avoid overlap and competition.

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Whilst we appreciate the huge financial support, it seems the fund often offers more direct advocacy support on other campaigns eg through open letters, meetings with key stakeholders, etc. Our campaign doesn't seem as passionately defended by the fund.

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Your support has had a significant impact on our ability to engage with the community through Skate Cabal's 'Rolling for Change' initiative. By focusing on civic engagement and voter registration, we've been able to reach underrepresented groups in innovative ways that resonate with their lived experiences. The resources and guidance provided have empowered us to amplify community voices, fostering greater awareness and participation in the democratic process. This kind of impact has strengthened our role as a community-focused organisation and helped us create lasting change

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I like the way you gather feedback. The event in London was really valuable and make us an organisation feel valued and that our contribution and experience as a youth work service was valued. You understand that Democracy is a part but not all of what we do and that we can use our influence to support young people in this field.

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You are one of our smaller funders, but the support has been especially important in increasing our impact

**Overall, what do you find helpful and/or frustrating about our application process?**

I remember spending a lot of time developing and refining the proposal, though this ultimately helped our project. There was a fair bit of back and forth in order to get it approved, but this meant that there was no single definitive proposal and budget to refer to when it came to implementing the project. That is clearly the responsibility of the grant recipient to deal with, but some support on this post-approval would have been appreciated. Maybe even just a kick-off meeting to check everything is in place would help.

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Not in your control, but the surprise timing of the GE meant we had to really quickly pivot our approach and amend our application.

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The engagement of your staff in helping to shape a fruitful process is very helpful.

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Speaking to an individual was exceedingly helpful to discuss how our plans and funder plans could best align

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Very helpful staff from JRRT in submitting funding application

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The support and guidance from Ellen and Betsy has been exceptional.

It can be difficult to find the UKDF application on the JRRT website and more generally to clearly distinguish information provided for each (especially for those of us who are ND, the fact there is no visual differentiation in colours, branding etc doesn't help).

It would be helpful to have a shorter application form for grants up to £10k.

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I want to shout out Betsy in our last application round who was an incredible support and gave some really helpful feedback.

For the last three bids we have submitted to the Democracy Fund we have been asked at the last minute to decrease the funding ask (once on the day of submission) which has led to us having to cover the core costs from the grant from other work. It would be useful for core costs to be considered important to allow organisations in the space to build their financial resilience.

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The lack of certainty around the likelihood of success when applying!

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Changing goal posts: were encouraged to apply after an initial call but then were told it wasn't appropriate for the fund.

There is a disproportionately high focus on academic rationale on parliamentary processes in the application that other funds don't require. I believe this disadvantages those that are campaigning on issues from lived experience and don't have as much formal knowledge of the Parliamentary system and don't benefit from connections to politicians and the media

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I did have to provide extensive information on my experience in community engagement and community research, and explain how we are rooted in the community. While it was detailed, I found it helpful as it allowed me to reflect on the work I've done and how the skills and experience I've gained are transferable to support democratic engagement efforts. It was rewarding to see how our community-focused approach aligns with the goals of this initiative.

The support from Local Champion CIC was also invaluable, and I found the information on your website—particularly the criteria and guidance on tracking metrics for campaigns—extremely helpful.

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Unknown - I am new to our organisation (after the bid was awarded)

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I found the application process fairly easy compared to big academic funders. The application form felt manageable and appropriate. I particularly valued that JRRT staff took time to talk to me about our application in the process. Feedback came very quickly. The interview process was slightly daunting as we weren't sure what questions would be asked.

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Clear and well supported process. Friendly and supportive staff and while we were anxious about meeting Trustees, they were wonderful and had great insights and questions

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I think the process was a pain at times. Having to pass a 'test/interview' in order to get to the next stage doesn't seem fair. Although I understand it's about saving people time not doing a full application etc. I didn't appreciate the rewrites.

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To have personal support on how to improve the application was fantastic. Not something you receive often during the grant application process.

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We found the process really simple compared to other funding portals

**Overall, what do you find helpful and/or frustrating about our reporting processes?**

This is a learning for us as we do more short term projects, but the reporting timescales, particularly on finances, didn't line up with our own internal processes, which meant that an initial figure reported had to be corrected a few weeks later.

I may have missed a substantive discussion that a colleague had with the Fund, but to my knowledge there hasn't been one per se.

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Not frustrating - but we produced an external evaluation of our project and there was a little confusion about this and our final report

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We haven't had the resource to work with JRRT and the UK democracy fund. It would be nice to have the support back.

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Useful to take the time to reflect on the impact and report back.

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It would be great to be able to write more than 2 pages for larger grants.

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The reporting processes are not overburdensome which is welcome

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The report itself is fine but the grants are for a short period of time and realistically not much tangible policy change happens in a year so it's difficult to plan ahead and feel safe that we will have funding for the campaign

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I found the JRRT team extremely approachable. It was the first time I managed and led on a grant and it gave me a lot of confidence to have people available that I could ask questions. At the time, particularly the UK Democracy Fund manager and Nicky Milsted in the office were super helpful. Huge thanks to them!

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Very helpful - submitting a two page report is very refreshing and also challenges us to be clear and succinct

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The edits.

The amount of reports and meetings to labour, excuse the pun, the same findings over and over.

**If you are a member, what do you value about the Democracy Network? And/or what would you like to see the Democracy Network improve or do differently?**

Would love the Democracy Network to focus more on increasing representation in the room - whether that's making young people or those from underrepresented communities feel more welcome at conferences.

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The diversity, the open-mindedness, the enthusiasm.

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Its coordinating ability. I would like it to demonstrate that it can activate its wider membership in support of a small number of national campaigns

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It has built an impressive network of organisations.

Focus on the networking side, forget about trying to do campaigns. It's too broad to make things work.

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As a member of the Democracy Network, I value the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and organisations that are deeply invested in strengthening democratic engagement. The platform provides valuable resources, insights, and networking opportunities that allow us to learn from each other and collaborate on shared goals, especially around engaging underrepresented communities.

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Only recent – can't comment yet.

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It is useful to be a part of it though most of the posts are England-centric and more so Westminster-centric. Would be good to see more regional discourse. Also being in Belfast makes it difficult to participate in real-world meetings and events.

**If you are not a member, or are not engaging in the activities of the Democracy Network, why is that and how could the Network better accommodate you?**

We have been involved in other networks but not the Democracy Network to my knowledge.

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Our project was to support the realisation of new legislation extending voting rights in Scotland to refugees and migrants in Scotland - we were not necessarily a traditional grantee of the fund. We have sought to maintain engagement but this has been challenging with other priorities and issues

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Someone to explain how to get involved again.

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We have attended events before and never really felt seen. We're keen to work with the network though to make it more representative and welcoming to those working with underrepresented groups.

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More email contact?

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Happy to be a member, it is just that as an organisation we are more focused on art and creativity.

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I think at the time our involvement was all too much

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We will definitely look into joining

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We find most things are London centric and more needs to be done to engage the wider cities.

**Please specify any areas not in the list above where your organisation needs to strengthen:**

We need to register with charity and we need support

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There was a significant interest around the elections for organisations to have training and support on delivering digital campaigns.

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Research

**We would greatly appreciate overall feedback about how we are perceived – positive or negative – and suggestions as to how we can be more effective.**

We were fully supported by the fund in developing and delivering our grant - conversations were transparent, supportive, realistic and there was a real desire to learn (and to ensure learning was built in).

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We are a community organisation, Called Bangladeshi Women's Association Wales and received a funding three years ago.

We have a greater need to grow and establish with a charity number and need some funding to do that, so that we could proceed with more constructive work with JRRT and UK democracy fund.

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The Democracy Fund is one of the most effective funders that we work with. Ellen and Betsy are incredibly supportive to our work and the opportunity to bounce ideas around normally leads us to a better solution or strategy. The quick turnarounds for grants are rare and really helpful.

We have also been able to benefit from longer-term funding which has made a huge difference in what we have been able to achieve, I would encourage the fund to do more of that work to give organisations stability.

At the moment the fund doesn't have a strategy which is difficult for the sector as many organisations are designing their strategies for the new government and parliament. We would also really welcome more engagement between the board and the sector as they currently feel very distant from the work.

If the fund is moving away from voter engagement work that will leave a significant hole in the funding landscape which will lead to a lot of practice being lost (and likely needing to be rebuilt before the next general election). It would be great to have some clarity on that sooner rather than later.

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JRRT is perceived positively and more be even more so if JRRT was able to work with other funders to grow the pot available for democracy-related work.

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We are grateful for our relationship and the support we have received. As a relatively new charity, we need to build our organisational capacity so for us it would be helpful to be able to access longer-term funding to help us plan and grow.

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Overall, the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust / UK Democracy Fund is perceived as a highly credible and impactful organisation that plays a critical role in supporting democratic engagement, especially within underrepresented communities. Your commitment to advancing democratic reform, funding grassroots initiatives, and ensuring that marginalised voices are heard is highly respected and appreciated.



One suggestion for improvement would be to further amplify your communication and visibility within smaller, local organisations that may not yet be aware of your resources and support. Making your work even more accessible to groups who might not have experience with large-scale funding could help diversify the range of initiatives benefiting from your support.

Lastly, increasing opportunities for networking among grantees like the Lessons Learned Event held in October 2024, creating spaces for collaborative learning, and sharing insights would further strengthen the collective impact of everyone involved in advancing democracy.

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I feel that we as an organisation are valued and listened to. I like that you take on board flexible approaches to working with young people to engage them in democracy. (Let us do what we feel is helpful)

More communication with us as partners/grantees. Maybe commisioning of orgs. that have been successful.

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Very professional and supportive.

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Our process was amazing but I don't know about other things that are going on, would love to be more involved as the last meeting was really powerful.