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# JRSST Charitable Trust

## Our Funding Guide

### 2026

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**This guide sets out our approach to grant funding**

**Please read it carefully and in full before  
enquiring about funding possibilities**

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# Contents

<b>About JRSST Charitable Trust.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What we want to fund.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Diversity of representation in politics.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Our priorities.....	3
What we don't fund.....	3
<b>Participation in democracy between elections.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Our priorities.....	4
What we don't fund.....	4
<b>Who is eligible for funding.....</b>	<b>5</b>
What we fund.....	5
We cannot fund.....	5
We are unlikely to fund.....	5
<b>How to apply.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Routes to funding.....	6
Application process.....	6
Budget preparation.....	7
Reporting requirements.....	7
Accessibility.....	7
Racial justice monitoring.....	8
Transparency and 360Giving.....	8
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).....	8

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## About the JRSST Charitable Trust

The JRSST Charitable Trust (JRSST-CT) is a charitable trust independent of, but connected to, the [Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust](#) (JRRT).

In 2025, JRSST-CT agreed a new strategy to address [political inequality](#), the uneven distribution of power and influence in the UK, and how it fuels low trust in democracy, disengagement with politics, and the sense that most people have [too little say](#) within our democratic system.

The Trust has decided to spend out its small endowment within ten years, releasing additional funds for grant making on voter engagement and system reform, democracy education, participation in democracy between elections, and diversity of representation.

Central to addressing this is the work of the [UK Democracy Fund](#), which JRSST-CT hosts, to engage the millions of citizens who do not register or vote – predominantly young, from communities experiencing racial inequity, born overseas, renting their homes or living on low incomes – and advocates for system reform that makes voting easier. You can find the UK Democracy Funding Guide [here](#).

## What we want to fund

JRSST-CT's four priorities are:

- 1 Voter participation and election system reform
- 2 Democratic education

The above priorities are supported by the UK Democracy Fund. For more information see the [UK Democracy Fund Funding Guide](#).

- 3 Diversity of representation in politics
- 4 Participation in democracy between elections

This funding guide focuses on priorities 3 and 4 – see following sections.

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## Diversity of representation in politics

Improving diversity of representation in politics helps to ensure that parliaments and other elected bodies look more like the publics they serve.

There are many barriers that can prevent people from standing for elected office, including lack of time, financial costs, or party selection procedures. Long hours, inaccessible facilities or poor work culture, including harassment and intimidation, may also put people off from entering politics.

More understanding is needed about whether and how diversity of representation in politics can lead to better policy outcomes for people who share certain characteristics, particularly those who experience injustice, inequity or discrimination. This includes interventions that can support all elected representatives to pursue meaningful reforms in the interests of people from these groups, and what the barriers to this might be.

### Our priorities

Our focus is on improving diversity of representation in politics through system reform. We want to fund research, advocacy and campaigns that either:

- Improves diversity of elected representatives, by tackling the barriers that prevent people from standing for election or working in politics.
- Improves understanding and uptake of interventions that support all elected representatives to pursue meaningful policy outcomes for people or groups who share certain characteristics, particularly those that experience injustice, inequity or discrimination because of these characteristics.

This might include research, advocacy or campaigns on or for:

- Transparency requirements to collect and publish data on diversity of candidates and representatives
- Statutory funding to improve access
- Requirements for political parties to improve selection processes
- Changes to culture and/or working conditions in Parliament
- Measures to improve safety of candidates and representatives
- Measures to identify and/or address other barriers to representation

### What we don't fund

- Direct interventions to support candidates or groups of candidates that share characteristics to get elected

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## Participation in democracy between elections

Participation in democracy between elections can have many benefits. When done well, it can lead to people feeling more positive about democracy, help to counter fragmentation, polarisation and disinformation, and enable better policy making.

However, participatory processes that are extractive, tokenistic or poorly implemented can reinforce feelings of exclusion or lead to backlash and resentment.

There are many kinds of participatory processes. Citizens' assemblies have been well tested globally and are most effective when supported by decision makers and when well designed and run. Other processes include deliberative polling, citizens' juries, people's assemblies, networked conversations, participatory budgeting, digital crowd sourcing, legislative theatre, and citizen involvement in campaigns.

Participatory processes are not always well designed for everyone. There is a need to understand the barriers to participation, including by people from communities experiencing racial inequity, and how participatory processes can be improved to engage them.

### Our priorities

Our focus is on interventions aimed at building support of decision makers for participatory tools and embedding in policy and legislation the use of such processes by public authorities. Our priorities are:

- Campaigns for system reform to embed use of deliberative and other participatory processes at national level.
- Building decision-maker support and champions across the political spectrum for specific measures.
- Influencing the content of democratic education so that young people understand how citizens can participate and have influence.
- Research and learning to understand the barriers to participation including by people from communities experiencing racial inequity and how participatory processes can be improved to engage them.
- Supporting national campaigns to embed participatory requirements into local and regional policy and decision-making processes.

### What we don't fund

- Direct funding to run deliberative or other participatory processes.
- Initiatives that do not take account of the need for well-designed, inclusive processes.

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## Who is eligible for funding

### What we fund

We accept applications from organisations and individuals who are hosted by an organisation (e.g. an academic or researcher working for a university).

As a charitable organisation, there are important legal duties we must follow. Your organisation does not need to be a registered charity, but all the activities you are seeking funding for need to fit within charitable purposes. Please contact the Fund if you have any questions about this.

We expect our grantees to ensure that all posts which are wholly or partially funded by us are paid [the real Living Wage](#).

JRSST-CT particularly welcomes applications from organisations working at the intersection of our democracy priorities and racial justice.

### We cannot fund

- Partisan activities
- Work outside the UK
- Individual campaigners or researchers without a host organisation
- Work that has already taken place
- Legal fees or costs
- Personal support for individuals in need
- Educational bursaries
- General appeals

### We are unlikely to fund

- Academic research without clear learning or campaign impact
- Movement building
- By-election and local election activity
- Small-scale campaigns or outreach work

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## How to apply

### Routes to funding

The JRSST Charitable Trust offers two routes to funding:

1. Applications for more than £10,000 made on a quarterly basis (larger grants).
2. Applications throughout the year for £10,000 and below (small grants).

Applications for both types of grant look identical. The difference is in the speed with which the Trust can make a decision and the processes by which decisions are made.

### Application process

There are five steps to applying for funding from us, whether you are applying for a small grant or larger grant:

- 1 Read our guidelines to check your eligibility and fit with our funding criteria
- 2 Share a brief description of your idea in an email to [info@jrsst-ct.org.uk](mailto:info@jrsst-ct.org.uk)
- 3 We may request to meet with you to have an initial conversation about your idea
- 4 If we think it's a good fit, we will ask you to submit a short outline proposal
- 5 We will then advise you whether to move forward to a [full written application](#)

#### *Applications for £10,000 and below (Small grants)*

Small grant applications may be submitted at any time and are processed according to the capacity of the Grants Manager and Trustees. Please be aware that our capacity to process these applications is less between the outline deadline and decision dates for larger applications.

#### *Applications for more than £10,000 (Larger grants)*

Larger grant applications are considered by the Board. JRSST-CT has four funding rounds a year. If you wish your application to be considered at a particular funding round, please contact us at the earliest opportunity to enable staff to provide you with feedback on your application and any other support you may require.

Advice on structuring and writing your JRSST-CT grant application is [available here](#).

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After submitting your full written application, some applicants may be invited to meet up to three Trustees online. The purpose of these meetings is to help Trustees to learn more about your organisation and your application. It is not a decision-making meeting. Whether or not you are invited to a meeting should not be seen as an indication of the eventual outcome of your grant application.

Final decisions on all applications are made by JRSST Charitable Trust's Board of Trustees. Upcoming deadlines for applications for larger grants can be found [online](#).

### **Budget preparation**

Your application should be accompanied by a budget that is completed on the [template you can find on our website](#). It must account for the following elements:

- Staffing costs including employer costs applicable (e.g. NI and pension contributions)
- Day rate posts/consultants
- Direct support costs for the proposal (e.g. printing, venue hire, travel)
- A proportion of overheads/indirect costs (e.g. rent, insurance, IT support etc)

### **Reporting requirements**

Reporting requirements are light touch and will be set out in your grant offer letter. There is a standard requirement for large grants and small grants, though in some instances there may be some additional requirements specific to your grant. If this is the case, they will be set out in your grant offer letter.

Our standard reporting requirement is for two sides of A4 that reflect honestly and openly against the outcomes on whether they were achieved, what worked, what didn't work, and what lessons have been learned during the lifetime of the grant.

### **Accessibility**

Support with preparing your application is available for blind, deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people. For instance, this might be some time from a Personal Assistant, or a Sign Language Interpreter if you are asked to attend a meeting with Directors. Other appropriate assistance will be considered. You can request an Access Payment of up to £500. Please contact the Fund to discuss any special requirements.

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## Racial justice monitoring

We use questions developed by the Funders for Race Equality Alliance to monitor the number and value of racial justice grants awarded. When you apply, you will be asked the following questions:

- Can your organisation be described as led by and for people from communities that experience racial inequity? This is defined as an organisation whose leadership (50% senior leadership and 75% of the Board) is majority drawn from communities that experience racial inequity and whose mission or purpose is to serve all or specific communities that experience racial inequity.
- Is the grant intended to benefit communities experiencing racial inequity?
- If you have answered “YES” to the previous question, please estimate the proportion of the grant that will be directed to activities designed benefit communities experiencing racial inequity

While many applications will not fit with the above, we would expect all applicants to apply a racial justice lens as they develop their application.

## Transparency and 360Giving

JRSST Charitable Trust’s transparency policy requires us to publish a list of grants on our website and in our Annual Report and Audited Accounts. You will be asked to agree this on our online application form. If you have any concerns relating to the disclosure of your grant, e.g. if it may expose you or those working on the project to increased personal risk, or potentially jeopardise the work, you will be encouraged to discuss this with us. We also publish details of our grants with [360Giving](#).

## Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We understand that some people will use AI to help prepare their applications. We will not take this into account when assessing your application. We do not use AI at any stage to assist in the assessment process.

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**JRSST** Charitable Trust

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