

UK Democracy Fund Call for Proposals: Engaging Low Voting Communities

The UK Democracy Fund

The UK Democracy Fund (the Fund) is a pooled Fund set up by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust (JRRT) in 2019 and supported by a group of committed funders, including a number of charitable trusts. Independent and non-partisan, the Fund is helping build a healthy democracy – one in which everyone can participate and where political power is shared fairly. The Fund has three broad goals:

1. Enabling everyone to vote. Building support for reforms to ensure a simple, seamless and accessible voting system fit for the 21st Century.
2. Extending the right to vote. Advocating in support of expanding the franchise for 16- and 17-year-olds and settled UK residents from overseas.
3. Increasing participation of everyone in our elections. Making an effort to raise the turnout of low-propensity voters to improve fairness in our democracy. The work aims to support a million more people from lower-propensity voting groups to register and vote in the next General Election.

Overview

Millions are missing from the electoral register – the Electoral Commission [estimated](#) that 17% of eligible voters, up to 9.4 million people – were not registered ahead of the 2019 General Election. These people [are not spread evenly across the population](#). They are more likely to be young, born overseas, from a minoritised ethnic community, rent their home, have a lower income or fewer qualifications. The huge gap in democratic and electoral participation results in millions having no say over who represents them or the consequent decisions and policies that shape their lives.

The Fund seeks to support the registration and turnout of low-propensity voting groups including racialised and minoritised ethnic communities. The Fund has commissioned research into [The Democratic Participation of Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Voters](#) in the UK by Sobolewska and Barclay which provides some useful insight into the gaps and provides recommendations for campaigners.

Data on low-propensity voting groups can be found [here](#) from the Electoral Commission. The data looks at registration levels for the population broken down by age, nationality, ethnicity, and other factors such as whether they own or rent their home and duration at their address. There are of course significant intersections between these groups.

In 2022, we commissioned mapping and outreach work into organisations working with South Asian communities which led to a successful pilot programme. Three organisations successfully applied for small grants from the Fund and delivered effective small-scale voter registration campaigns. Together they registered 3,500 voters from the South Asian diaspora.

We now wish to repeat this for the UK Black African, Caribbean, Black British and Black Mixed Communities. Learning from the first pilot will be available for successful proposals. We expect this to be a useful resource, but appreciate that learning from one community may not be directly applicable to another. We are therefore seeking thoughtful applications which demonstrate a deep knowledge of how to best engage these communities, and expect useful learning to be produced which can be shared with others seeking to do similar work.

We do not expect that consultants will necessarily have a deep level of expertise with elections and voter registration, and will seek to share learning and offer support in this respect. We are seeking responses from individuals who have the networks and ability to engage and support community groups to take forward this work.

The focus of the work is to identify appropriate organisations, build relationships and support them through applying for grants (ideally two to five organisations), and if successful in their applications, in delivering the pilot. In addition to that, the consultant should also identify ways in which this work could be amplified through larger or institutional partnerships, via media or social media organisations with reach into these communities. Supporting these communities to register and to vote is an important outcome of this work, but so is learning about motivators, barriers and what works in activity like this and we see this work as a learning pilot.

Specification

The UK Democracy Fund is calling for proposals from consultants who can identify routes to register and turn out new voters from those ethnicities and nationalities less likely to vote, with a current focus on UK Black African, Caribbean, Black British and Black Mixed communities. This will contribute to reaching the Fund's goal of registering a million people from low-voting groups by the next General Election. Depending on capacity and existing relationships, consultants can apply to do this work for one or more of the above communities (and may feel working across these groups is beneficial).

Deliverables

Mapping and outreach:

1. Identify and reach out to organisations with a strong presence within target communities, begin to build relationships.
2. Build understanding into these organisations' appetite, capacity and any potential barriers towards engaging with voter registration work.
3. Identify potential ways of working that would enable these organisations to run voter registration and get out the vote work. Assess the scale of additional registrations these organisations could reach.

Delivery:

4. Support two to five organisations with the appropriate interest and capacity to apply to the Fund to deliver registration campaigns (including supporting their application process).
5. Act as key contact point for successful grantees from this project, helping to identify challenges and provide support, including in data capture and reporting back.
6. Identify lessons learned to support the Fund and other funders in supporting this work in the future. Produce a report providing useful learnings for community organisations wishing to do similar work in the future and funders wishing to support.

Amplification:

7. Identify potential paths to amplify (for example institutional partnerships or regional or national bodies who could scale this work, media organisations with reach into these communities).
8. Reach out to those organisations, assess their appetite and build relationships.
9. Capture findings in a detailed report and introduce them to the Fund, if useful.

Budget: Approximately £5,000 inclusive of VAT.

Proposed timeline:

Deadline for submission of proposals	6 March 2023
Appointment of consultants	14 March 2023
Kick off meeting	15 March 2023
Submission of the final report	To be agreed

To apply

Please submit the following:

1. CV/resume.

2. 2-3 page proposal outlining your workplan and demonstrating your ability to identify and build effective relationships with these organisations. Please be clear which community/ies you propose to focus on and include a realistic timeline.
3. Below costing model filled out.

Please Email to DemocracyFund@jrrt.org.uk with “Engaging communities /YOUR NAME” in the subject heading.

If you have any questions regarding this call for proposals do email us and we can arrange a call or respond to any questions.

Costing model

Item	Number of days	Day rate	Cost (inclusive of VAT)
Mapping and outreach			
Delivery			
Amplification			
Presentation of findings	1		
Travel expenses	tbc		Cost for travel and other expenses, if any, to be agreed between the Fund and consultant in advance.
Total (inclusive of VAT)			