

Civil Society Grant Programme 2023-2024

strengthening democracy through civic engagement and participation

Guidelines and Criteria for Applicants

Background

St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) is an independent social justice grant-maker which works across the island of Ireland. Our primary purpose is to make grants to groups to allow them to effect positive social change in areas which trustees deem to be critical. SSGT believes supporting advocacy and activism to achieve social change is the best use of independent funding and this forms the basis of our strategic philanthropy. We aim to work in solidarity with grantees in a way which respects their dignity and leadership in the causes we fund. We commit to effective stewardship of the funds entrusted to us by our donors. More information about our work is on our website, www.ssgt.ie.

Learning from SSGT's grants programmes over many years has demonstrated the importance of and need for engagement and participation by civil society to strengthen democratic structures. Systems change driven by civil society organisations is an integral part of SSGT's grant programme strategies. SSGT's Strategic Plan 2023-2027 includes an objective to respond to the importance of opening up power to more people through increased participatory counterbalances to corporate and state power.

Grant Programme Outcomes

SSGT produced a paper exploring the [current context for civil society on the island of Ireland](#), from which the strategy for this grant programme emerged. We have received one-off funding for an exploratory programme to contribute to the creation of a 'high energy democracy' in which a progressive, inclusive civil society engages at a constant and high level through representative, participative and deliberative processes.

This is a limited grant programme which will fund approximately 8 groups across the island with the capacity to contribute towards programme outcomes. Due to the one-off nature of the programme, the small number and amount for grants, successful applicants are likely to be testing approaches, building on current work, or creating space for mobilisation and building a movement for change. The work can take place over 12/18 months (Nov 2023-April 2025) and the maximum grant amount available is £12,500/€15,000. Grant decisions will be made by November 2023, after which the work can begin.

The strategy will support collective action initiatives which deepen democracy across a number of levels and draw out the learning, including actions around:

- Participative and deliberative democracy initiatives - aimed at harnessing the power of civil society to transform democratic decision making processes.
- Developing progressive civil society platforms for collective power and influence which use values-based approaches to identify elements of transformative change.
- Creating space for participation and voice, particularly for people whose voice is normally marginalised. The opportunities for engagement raise awareness of points of tension and divisiveness

and equip activists to manage them. There is an emphasis on strengthening media and digital literacy skills of activists.

We acknowledge the limitations of this programme and understand that the ability of funded groups to contribute to these outcomes is constrained by grant amounts and the timeframe. This programme is part of a wider collaboration with like-minded groups working towards the same objectives. In particular, we will be working closely with the [Social Change Initiative](#), which has a significant track record in this space, and it is anticipated that there will be some joint working and convening that will require engagement from some or all of the programme's grantees. Funded groups will need to have an understanding of the context and environment within which the projects will be delivered and have an ambition for change.

We do not want to be prescriptive about the initiatives to be funded but our [Context Paper](#) gives some insight into our strategy and how we expect change to happen. We envisage funded groups will have some track record in developing pathways for their communities (geographic, interest, identity etc) to have their voices heard in spaces which hold power over their lives. We are particularly interested in exploring models of direct and participative democracy and new models of engagement with our democratic institutions. The Context Paper accompanying this document gives more insight into our thinking, particularly the five elements of 'high energy' democracy. The issue of accessible and factual information, linked to community dialogue is also an area of interest, particularly for groups who are generally excluded from democratic processes. The need to support accountable and democratic associations of people within civil society along with space for reflection, participation and activism and introducing people to new ideas and ways of thinking also fits into our strategy.

As an all island funder, we consider it important that progress should take account of both the North-South dimension with due attention to the East-West dynamic. We encourage collaborative approaches to build collective power across geography and themes to advance transformative change.

We recognise the exploratory nature of this grant programme and are realistic about what's possible within the resources available and the timeframe. Groups may use this opportunity to discuss and plan for these pathways to change, renewing trust in the effectiveness of activism as a way forward.

Grant Programme Criteria

SSGT will accept applications from non-profit groups across the island. Groups do not have to be registered charities, but a minimum level of governance is required. Networks may apply but a lead group must be nominated to apply for and manage the grant.

We will fund activities which build on the current work of an organisation, network or community, but which are targeted at the areas specified in the programme outcomes. We are not excluding particular types of expenditure as we recognise that the resources needed to test new approaches, convene, mobilise and organise will be different for different organisations and communities. However, we are unlikely to fund salaries for additional staff due to the limitations of the programme.

Applicant groups should design approaches which: focus on learning; ensure the voice of those most affected are included in the design and delivery of the outcomes; seek to build relationships that last

beyond the funded work, including the strengthening of relationships at both a horizontal and vertical level¹ and have a clear idea about what they want to achieve.

This is a one-off grant programme to fund groups on the island of Ireland up to £12,500/€15,000 for work taking place over 12 to 18 months. Grantees are required to participate in two Learning Network meetings which have an objective to gather and share learning among grantees and other stakeholders and drive the impact of the programme. There will be opportunities to participate in convenings with partner organisations of SSGT. There will be a focus on learning and funded groups will be supported by SSGT to report on progress over the project period – exploring enablers and barriers to project activities and impact.

We have a two-step application process, and the first stage is an expression of interest in which the group outlines what it wants to do and broad costings. If the expression of interest is accepted, a more detailed Step 2 application is filled out and assessment will include a meeting between SSGT and each applicant. Organisations invited to Step 2 are not guaranteed a grant and there is likely to be more applications than funds available.

We strongly encourage potential applicants to talk to us in advance of making an application – a short email outlining the project activities (in three or four paragraphs) should be emailed to sara@ssgt.ie and we will arrange to telephone you to discuss it.

Grant Programme Process

- Applications will be accepted from groups working across the island of Ireland. Groups not legally constituted or not registered as charities should contact us in advance of making an application to check there is a minimum level of governance which is acceptable to SSGT.
- Grant activities can take place over a 12-18 month period and the maximum grant available is approximately £12,500/€15,000. Work can begin in November 2023 and should be completed by April 2025, if not sooner.
- Grantees are expected to have a good understanding of the context in which SSGT has developed these outcomes and have the capacity to contribute to systems change.
- SSGT places emphasis on learning from its grant programmes and has proportionate monitoring, evaluation and learning activities. The participation of grantees in evaluation is mandatory.
- Groups have to have a safeguarding policy and processes in place proportionate and appropriate to the context of its work or if they don't, have a clear explanation of why not, which is acceptable to SSGT.
- SSGT operates an online grant application system and the link to start the application process is [here](#).
- Questions on the application form are below – you might find it helpful to review these before you start the process. A budget has to be uploaded. You can use your own budget template or we provide a guide.
- The deadline for receipt of applications is **Thursday 14th Sept 2023.**

Civil Society Grant Programme Timeline	
Opens for application	Mon 17 th July 2023
Deadline for receipt of Step 1 applications	Thurs 14 th Sept 2023
Decisions on Step 1 applications	Thurs 5 th Oct 2023
Deadline for receipt of Step 2 information	Thurs 12 th Oct 2023
Trustees make decisions on grants	Thurs 2 nd Nov 2023

¹ A horizontal relationship is where there is equality of status while in vertical relationships an individual/entity is superior to another in some way (e.g., in relationships of power, authority, knowledge, or wisdom).

Funded work can begin	November 2023
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If you are having difficulties with the online process, please contact Sharon Mutesi at: 085 755 2009 / info @ssgt.ie. Sharon is available Monday to Thursday.

The online process allows you to save and resume. We strongly recommend you use this function so information is not lost.

You will be requested to submit the form and an acknowledgement email will be issued.

Deadline for applications 14 September 2023 at 16:00

[Click here to begin your online application](#)

**St Stephen's Green Trust, Guinness Enterprise Centre, Taylors Lane, Dublin 8,
Tel: +353 (0)85 755 2009; Email: info@ssgt.ie; Website:www.ssgt.ie**

THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FORM – IT IS FOR GUIDANCE

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE MADE THROUGH THE ONLINE FORM AVAILABLE [HERE](#)

Questions marked with an asterix (*) on the online form have to be answered

PART 1: ORGANISATION DETAILS

Organisation Name

Are you a registered charity

Charity Number

Website/Social Media

Address line 1

Address line 2

City

County

Postcode

Is this a collaborative proposal

(If yes) Name of other partners

Please describe the role of each partner in the project

Contact Details

First name

Last name

Role at organisation

Email

Telephone

Your Organisation

Outline the main activities of your group, including type and level of activity

Are you currently or have you previously been involved in working towards the outcomes identified for this programme?

Please tell us about the activities involved and describe the progress made towards the outcomes. How you will know you were successful, what information you gathered and how it was used.

PART 2: PROJECT DETAILS

Project Name

What do you want to do with the funding applied for?

Describe the main grant activities and timeframe. Are they part of a wider project or programme – if so set out how this grant will add value to current activities

What will be the result of these activities?

Focus on outputs rather than longer term impact

What do you expect to happen in the medium term as a result of these activities and outputs and how will you know you have been successful?

How do you think this work contributes to the outcomes for this programme as set out in our guidelines?

What are the risks associated with the work and how do you expect to address them?

Budget

In which currency are you requesting funding? € or £

What is the total cost? Amount requested from SSGT?

Please attach an estimate of the total costs (not just the element you are seeking from SSGT). You can download our budget template [here](#)

You can download and save the SSGT budget template, fill it in and upload or you can upload your own budget if that is preferable.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

No other documents should be sent at this time but if your application goes to Step 2 we will require a copy of your most recent Annual Report and Financial Statements. We will also have questions on your Safeguarding policy and practice.

Is there any additional information you would like to include for which you have not had an opportunity above?

