

Policy name	Grant Making Policy
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles by which NSUN makes grants.

2. The Objects of the National Survivor User Network (“NSUN”)

As set out in the Constitution, NSUN’s objects (the “Objects”) are specifically restricted to the following for the public benefit, to promote the rights and wellbeing and advance of knowledge in particular but not exclusively by:

- creating a network which will engage and support the wide diversity of mental health service users and survivors across England in order to strengthen the user voice
- facilitating active links between service user groups and individuals
- building capacity for service user groups
- brokering and facilitating access to service users for purposes of influencing and informing policy-makers and planners.

Making grants is an effective means of achieving these charitable objects, particularly building capacity.

3. Principles of grant making

- The Board of Trustees has ultimate collective responsibility for all grant making decisions in line with NSUN’s charitable objects and any restrictions agreed with donors and funding partners.
- Trustees will usually assign certain decision-making responsibilities to staff within its scheme of delegation. Such delegated authority is subject to scrutiny and review from time to time.
- Prior to the acceptance of new grant funding for a new small grants programme, or the development of a new programme, the nature of the programme and any unusual terms will be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair (or at least 2 trustees in their absence).
- The criteria, purpose and application processes for grants programmes will be slightly different, depending on factors such as the funder who has provided the funds, the specific communities and work prioritised by the grant, and staff capacity. The design and delivery of grants programmes will be carried out in keeping with this policy. All grants will be made in line with NSUN’s overarching purposes and for the public benefit. Care will be taken to ensure grants do not give rise to more than incidental personal benefit.
- Because of their unique relationship with NSUN, as projects held within the charity, NSUN hosted projects will not be eligible to apply for micro-grants funding.
- Grants will be made within NSUN’s area of operations, England. Grants to groups and individuals in the rest of the UK may occasionally be made at the request of a funder at small levels. Overseas grants will not be made.

- NSUN will not normally make grants to individuals. Hosted projects, acting through NSUN, may sometimes make grants to individuals, in keeping with their aims.
- Grants will be subject to a simple transparent grant agreement which sets out clear and flexible parameters to ensure that the funding provided is used in line with NSUN's charitable purpose and for the public benefit. Grant agreements will also explain how grants will be monitored, and what to do if things don't go to plan.

4. Grant making ethos

NSUN makes a variety of grants, including but not limited to:

- occasional targeted grants to improve access, eg grants for groups to contract BSL interpreters
- time limited microgrants programs, funded by grants from other organisations and funders
- ongoing microgrants from ringfenced funding from donations and individual giving
- ongoing microgrants in support of user-led campaigning work
- grants made by and through hosted projects.

Because these grants have different audiences and purposes, they are communicated and designed differently. Our grant making ethos covers all of them and directs the design and delivery of all grants.

We commit to:

- **Flexibility.** Our potential and actual grantees tend to be small informal organisations with limited capacity. We recognise that funding often comes with strings attached and commit to being flexible and responsive in our administration of grants. We fund to increase groups' flexibility and adaptability, not to hinder it.
- **Accessibility.** Our grant making work should improve rather than limit access to funding.
- **Sustainability.** The grants that NSUN makes should support the sustainability of a group's work. We also want to ensure that our grant making work is internally sustainable, well-resourced and well-connected to the rest of our work, such as our policy work and our other capacity-building endeavours.
- **Curiosity.** When an application to one of our grants surprises us or challenges our preconceptions, we take that as a good sign. We think of grant making as an opportunity to learn and to share that knowledge generously.
- **Trust & Transparency.** NSUN believes that small user-led groups are experts in their own work and what they need, so when we make grants, we operate from a position of trust. We also know that trust needs to be two-way, so we commit to transparency around the decision-making processes for each grants programme. Grant making should be a trust-building process that results in stronger relationships.

- Centring care. We recognise the potential impact that lived-experience-led grants programmes can have on everyone involved and take a trauma-informed approach when administering funding. This could look like providing specific well-being support for applicants and decision-makers.

5. Decision-making process

For each grants programme we develop, we will be transparent about the decision-making process. Our decision-making processes will be:

- Lived experience led. This means that decision-makers will be people with lived experience of mental ill-health, distress and trauma. Where funds are specific to other identities and communities, decision-makers will come from those communities. We also look to be led by decision-makers who have experience of the user-led work we are funding.
- Accessible. We want to give money, not hold it back. We're not interested in gatekeeping or being middlemen. It is possible to successfully apply to our funds through a variety of different formats, and we will support people to apply when we can.
- Transparent and accountable. We will be clear about who makes decisions and how, and our decision-making conversations will be minuted. These may be provided to external examiners and auditors.

6. Monitoring and reporting

We monitor grants to understand how our funding has contributed towards achieving our charitable purpose, and what impact it's had for the groups we fund.

Different grants programmes have different monitoring and reporting requirements, in line with funder requirements. We aim to make our monitoring and reporting proportional and reasonable, and for it to be useful for our grantees as well as for us. Monitoring and reporting should build rather than diminish trust. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation will differ between grants programmes, and the specifics will be made clear in grant agreements. Our monitoring processes may include:

- returns forms confirming and describing expenditure, which may sometimes include requests for receipts
- conversations with grantees about expenditure, impact and learning
- collaborative events sharing knowledge and feedback
- visits to funded projects and groups.

7. Specific situations

1) Payments to directors of companies or leaders of unconstituted groups.

Some funds may accept applications for payment of staff costs or freelance costs. In instances where these costs represent the costs of a director or shareholder of a company or a leader of an unconstituted group the following will be considered before deciding to shortlist the applicant:

- a) Whether the legal structure of the group allows for the distribution of profits and whether making a payment may lead to profits being generated and giving rise to further benefit.
- b) Whether the suggested rate of pay/freelance rate are consistent with that which would normally be expected for the same type of work.

A decision whether or not to shortlist an applicant after considering these criteria will be at the discretion of the CEO.

2) Small grant pots.

From time to time, NSUN will be able to make small amounts of funding available for specific circumstances e.g., grants for British Sign Language (BSL) provision at events run by member organisations. The total value of the funding pot will be no more than £1,500. In these circumstances, funds will be advertised in the NSUN bulletin, website and social media. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis as applications come in and will be available until the funding runs out. Applications will be assessed by two members of staff rather than a panel. Due to the value of these grants being under £200, formal grant agreements are not issued and proof of expenditure is not required.

3) Publicity

There may be some instances where receiving funds could give risk to safeguarding concerns for a group. Whilst we are keen to publicise the work of the groups we fund, if receiving funds raises safeguarding concerns for a group, we will work with the grant holder to find the best way of minimising risk which may include not publishing details of a group.

4) Payments to unconstituted groups who do not have an organisational bank account.

For many reasons, some unconstituted grassroots user-led groups that apply will not have a bank account in the group name. In this instance NSUN will work with the group to find a suitable alternative that meets the grant programmes' requirements.

5) Member Grants

NSUN seeks to work in partnership where possible as a means of furthering its charitable objectives specifically around building capacity and brokering and facilitating access to members [service users] for the purposes influencing and informing policy makers. Where we have funding in place to support campaigns or projects specifically delivered by members (rather than something led by NSUN) funds are passed to members by way of a grant. We also offer non-financial logistical and communications support to members around these projects.

Currently this is a new way of working for NSUN and we have secured very limited levels of funds to distribute, so decisions on which projects to offer financial support through a grant will be based on a number of factors including: team capacity, ability of the group to secure funding elsewhere, alignment of the campaign with NSUN's Theory of Change, objects and strategic direction. Decisions will be made internally through agreement of at least two NSUN staff at manager level or above and the final decision to award a grant, and any restrictions to be place on its use, will be made by the CEO. Grants authorised by the CEO will not exceed £5,000 to one organisation. Larger grants must be authorised by at least one Trustee.

We will seek to bring further clarity to the decision-making process as we evaluate the limited number of arrangements we have in place throughout 2023/24.

8. Review

This policy will next be reviewed in May 2025.