VSSN Small Grant Scheme

Guidance Notes for 2026-27 Funding Call

The Voluntary Sector Studies Network invites applications from members for proposals to support and develop an idea or activity that will benefit voluntary sector studies in the UK.

To be eligible for funding, the lead applicant must be a VSSN member.

We welcome applications from any VSSN member, but especially welcome applications from people from under-represented groups.

What we fund
The grant can be used to fund seminars, workshops, roundtables, webinars, and other activities linked to research, learning and teaching. We encourage using the grant to support creative approaches such as arts, podcasts, film/ animation. Please don't feel limited by these suggestions - but do contact us if you're unsure before making an application

The focus is to bring researchers, practitioners and/or policy makers together to facilitate a dialogue on a voluntary sector or volunteering related issue.

We encourage applications that offer opportunities for on-going discussion.

The types of things we have funded in previous rounds include:

- a 'Women in Philanthropy' podcast by and for women working in the giving and social impact sector.
- a workshop to establish a research network to support the expansion and development of the opportunity of cricket for women and girls across Scotland
- a series of online sessions exploring the issue of emotions and feeling in voluntary sector work.
- an in-person day event running a series of sessions exploring and acknowledging complexity and learning from failure during evaluation research.
- training for small charities in making no/low budget films which led to developing an online course.
- a short documentary on the value of place leadership in small communities by Food Friends

We do not fund service delivery, cost for time for employed members (unless in exceptional circumstances such as for the self-employed or students for up to half of the bid amount) or activities aimed at campaigning or lobbying.

Eligibility and suitability

Successful applicants will be expected to:

- Ensure that the proposed activities are undertaken and the grant is spent within 12 months of the notification of the award
- Ensure the date of activities does not clash with any major religious holidays that could exclude participation
- Publicise their activity as widely as possible, including through VSSN channels e.g. newsletter, discussion list, website and social media
- Write a short report for the grants committee and a public facing note, blog or poster presentation for the VSSN website
- Use the activity as an opportunity to advertise the VSSN to potential new VSSN members (including marketing via other channels, distribution of VSSN leaflets, use of VSSN logo, etc.).

Application procedure

Applicants for the Small Grants are required to fill out the application form.

The application form asks for details of the applicants involved (name, role, institutions), and a clear outline of the activities proposed, purpose of these selected activities, rationale for this proposal and timescale.

Please include a provisional budget providing a breakdown of anticipated costs (e.g. travel, venue and equipment hire, editing etc.) and whether any other funding has been applied for or received from other sources. These costings need to justify the proposed activities.

We do not expect applications to include costs for time for employed members but would be happy to discuss this matter for exceptional circumstances such as for the self-employed or students for up to half of the bid amount.

You may bid for an amount up to £750 and can bid as an individual or as a group (although there will need to be a lead on the application as the main contact who will be responsible for the small grant). The lead applicant must be a member of VSSN.

If the application involves a group, please specify the reason for this collaboration.

The deadline for applications is **Friday 4th December 2026**.

If you have any questions regarding the application process, please get in touch with us by emailing us at grants@vssn.org.uk.

Selection process

The VSSN Small Grant assessment panel will consider all applications that have been submitted by the deadline. Successful applicants will be notified by the end of December 2026 and will be notified shortly afterward.

Payment

Unless there are exceptional circumstances (in which case please get in touch with us to discuss), we expect that you will be responsible for paying upfront costs, reclaiming these from VSSN no later than 6 months after the project ends (30th June 2027). Payment will be made on receipt of both a breakdown of costs with associated receipts/invoices, and a short (1-2 page) report of your activity (Guidance will be provided)

Key Dates

Deadline for applications: 4th December 2026

Successful Applicants notified: End of December 2026

Announcements: January 2027

Completion of funded project activities: December 2027

Reports Submitted: January 2028

Deadline for reclaiming costs: January 2028